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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter

October 7, 2013

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Grand Prix Applications

Applications for the following meets are now available.

Minneapolis Grand Prix
Austin Grand Prix
Orlando Grand Prix

[CLICK HERE](#) to apply

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Greetings from Alabama. Just when I thought things might quiet down a bit, I received a call about the need for more officials in various parts of the country to meet the growing demand of the additional athletes. It appears that our growth is providing both opportunity and challenges as coaches are trying to find meets for their athletes before the meet is closed out. In certain cases, this means no meet at all for some athletes because of various reasons. One of the reasons seems to be a lack of officials in a particular area. This situation is certainly one where we as officials should roll up our sleeves and make sure that no athlete is denied the chance to swim because there were not enough officials to run a meet. It could also mean that some officials might wish to consider working across town in order to make sure that all meets can run efficiently and effectively. I know it may be a hardship, but I am hopeful the spirit by which we all offer our services will prevail on those who are able.

In light of this situation, the National Committee is going to put on its thinking cap (not swimming, as some of us might, well, sink) and brainstorm some ways to attract new officials. If you have any interest in working with this group, please let me know. Another area that I have discussed with the LSC Officials Chairs is the need to make sure that each LSC's certification and recertification requirements are not driving officials out of our sport. While I am an advocate for good training and standards, I ask every LSC chair to revisit their minimum standards, certification and recertification requirements to make sure that they are appropriate and necessary "minimum" standards. Thanks to everyone for their service and commitment to our athletes and our sport.

Thank you for your dedication, and see you on deck.

Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair

IMPORTANT UPDATES

GOING BY THE BOOK – Latest rule changes and interpretations:

- FINA: FINA met in Barcelona, Spain, this past summer (ever wonder why they don't come to Iowa?) and decided, among other things, not to turn the breaststroke into a 15-meter dolphin kick race. USA Swimming adopted these technical rule changes on Sept. 23, 2013. To learn more about the technical rule changes, [CLICK HERE](#)
- USA SWIMMING: USA Swimming's House of Delegates approved the corresponding changes in our rule book. Nothing huge, but you still might get quizzed by one of those "helicopter" parents. [CLICK HERE](#)
- Officials' Briefing: to help you better communicate this with your officiating team, the officials' briefing has been updated with the new rules. [CLICK HERE](#)

ATHLETE PROTECTION TRAINING (APT)

Many of you just received free months of APT! In order to better coordinate all our expiration dates, the APT expiration date for everyone will now be Dec. 31 of the current registration year. This means if you take the APT in September-December, it will expire on Dec. 31 of the following year. If you take it in January-August, it will expire on Dec. 31 of the current year. All of our APT expiration dates have already been changed to Dec. 31 of the year in which they were originally set to expire.

4-HOUR RULE INTERPRETATION

Everyone should be serious about this 4-hour meet rule for our 12 & under swimmers. Long meets are turning off parents and swimmers who would rather go to a 1-hour soccer match, Little League or even a flag football game. Help swimming win by planning shorter meets! [CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

NEW RESOURCE FOR TIMING ADJUSTMENTS

Timing adjustments are a bugaboo for most of us, but they are important. Swimmers work all season to shave-off a half second, which our mistakes could add right back if we are not careful. We have just written a step-by-step guide called "Reconciling Times in Meet Manager 5.0." I know that does not sound like a thriller, but it is. Furthermore, it is the answer to, "Help, how do I do this?" [CLICK HERE](#) for this handy reference.

Chief Judges Need To Have "FIN":

How to Survive the Officials' Briefing and Other Maladies

By John C. Gagliardo, Pacific Northwest Swimming LSC

You're contemplating being a Chief Judge for the first time or maybe you have just been selected to be a Chief Judge at a big meet. What to do? Here is a short pop quiz that might help you.

1. Why did you become (or why are you still) an official?
 - A. Son or daughter in the sport
 - B. Hate having to sit in those uncomfortable bleachers for LONG hours
 - C. The "free" food and meet shirts
 - D. Fun and camaraderie of your fellow 'blue & whites'
 - E. All of the above

2. What is a primary reason we hold officials' briefings prior to a meet/session?
 - A. See who has the whitest shoes in the room
 - B. It's really only for the benefit of the CJs so they can create the deck-staffing plan
 - C. Give everyone a chance to sit down before those long shifts standing on deck
 - D. Provide vital, meet-specific information regarding protocols, jurisdiction, etc.
 - E. All of the above

3. What is the one item that most meets have that is so often dreaded by the officials?
 - A. All distance events over 400 meters/500 yards
 - B. 8 & under butterfly in a Challenge meet
 - C. Taking Order Of Finish for 50 free at a Sectional, Zones, or higher meet
 - D. The same old, tried and true Stroke Briefing
 - E. All of the above

Well, "E. All of the above" might sound like the best answer (admittedly, in many cases, it is). However, as our focus is on being a Chief Judge, the answer we are looking for is "D".

One of the many things that a good Chief Judge does (and I've had the good fortune to study and observe from many of you out there) is to keep things interesting from the moment we walk in the door. Keeping this in mind, I try to do something special for every meet in which I participate, whether big or small. I like to call this the "FIN" approach. Corny? Perhaps. But "what exactly is FIN?" I hear you cry. Simply put, at all times – whether it be in the officials' briefings or on deck, with the appropriate eye on professionalism of course – try to keep things *Fun, Informative, and New*.

Nothing can make a meet seem longer than it needs to be (never mind those distance races) than when an officiating team is not having any fun. When officiating becomes work we tend to lose focus on why we're really out there (for the athletes of course). A great place to start this **Fun** is in the briefings. Of course, you must be careful with how much you push this as not everyone has the same sense of humor. Also, it is important to maintain a certain level of professionalism. If you try to keep things light while conducting your meetings though, it's a great place to start building your team of smiling officials.

Next, make sure that you share the **Information** in your briefings before you send everyone out on deck. Resolve with your meet referee and fellow CJs what protocols you wish to follow. For example, do we judge freestyle from the corners for all or merely for the longer events when officials are to stand (short or long whistles)? Also, what jurisdictions are in play for stroke judges versus turn judges and the like? Nothing hurts your team's effectiveness more than trying to manage things too much on the fly after the officials' briefing has ended. Remember those meets where you're told something for the first time on where or how to stand when a swimmer is already in the water coming at you? Covering this information in the briefing rather than on deck is vital.

And finally, at your next briefing, try something **New**. Ask a seasoned official to give the stroke briefing. Or, hey, ask a newly certified person. Don't put them on the spot without help, but sometimes hearing the stroke briefings in a new light can keep everyone engaged. Try to approach the entire officials' briefing with an eye on keeping things light and fresh. Your audience—the officials—will appreciate it. Remember, too, that every meet has something different to offer each one of us. Whether it's a record set, an equipment malfunction, or something in between, no two meets are exactly the same and therefore, each one offers us all a new experience to enjoy.

I urge all of you to try to utilize the "FIN" approach as you face each meet. If you can do this, each and every meet will be a kick (you really didn't expect me to pass that pun up, now did you?!)

In closing, I would like to offer up a little something that might help liven up your next officials' briefing; see below for "A Stroke Briefing in Rhyme." At your next meet, remember our pop quiz fundamentals: share information, encourage everyone to enjoy whatever new comes their way and have fun out there!

["A Stroke Briefing in Rhyme" by John C. Gagliardo](#)

Hy-tek Corner

One topic being discussed in many LSCs is timing adjustments, particularly with the new requirement that every USA Swimming sanctioned meet must have an administrative referee or an administrative official.

Meet Manager 5 has some exciting new features to help in this process:

1. An adjust status column, which will display whether a time in a lane that is highlighted in yellow, green or blue has been adjusted (A), a decision has been made not to adjust the time (K), or a decision is still pending (?).
2. The heat buttons now display five different colors showing their status. Gray means that the heat has entries without results. Green means the heat has results for every lane/position and there are no problems. Red means the heat has results for every lane/position, but there are problems with one or more lanes. Blue means the heat is the selected heat and there are either no results in any lanes or there are full results with no problems. Yellow means the heat is the selected heat, has full or partial results, but there are either problems with one or more lanes, or one or more lanes are missing results.
3. If a lane has one or more splits or backup button times, but no pad time, Meet Manager 5 will not put an NS in that lane when the results are imported. Rather the time for that lane will be blank, indicating that it needs to be investigated further.

In addition you have all of the features for highlighting lanes where the backup times are more than 0.3 seconds different than the pad times and for calculating the timing adjustments.

Meet Manager 5 also has a new eLesson Training Video on Timing Adjustments that you can access either through the software itself or by using this link: [CLICK HERE](#)

My hope is to use this corner to acquaint you with some of the features in Meet Manager that you may not be aware of – but find to be useful. If you have suggestions or comments, please email, Bob Matlack at bob.matlack@gmail.com