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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter

September 10, 2012

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2. Want to recommend a N3 mentor/evaluator?

### Going to Convention?

Click [here](#) for a list of learning opportunities.

### Valuable Mentoring & Evaluations Resources

You now have access to the "2012 Mentoring Swimming Officials Webinar" along with the "Mentoring Swimming Officials Slide Presentation."

Go to this [link](#) on the USA Swimming website under Officials/Education and Training Resources.

Or, you may click each link below to view them individually....

[2012 Mentoring Swimming Officials](#)

[Webinar](#)

[Mentoring Swimming Officials Slide Presentation.](#)

Welcome to the September 2012 Officials Newsletter. If you have never worked a national or Grand Prix meet, I encourage you to think about it. It's a great opportunity for you to learn and grow as an official while helping our athletes achieve their goals. Besides, how else could you get a deck-side view of some of the best swimming in the country! Check out what some of the officials at Junior Nationals had to say about why they work national meets by clicking [here](#).

I invite you to consider working at one of the Grand Prix meets during the next season. The meets and dates are as follows:

November 9-11, 2012 – Minnesota Grand Prix, Minneapolis, Minn.

January 18-20, 2013 – Austin Grand Prix, Austin, Texas

February 14-16, 2013 – Orlando Grand Prix, Orlando, Fla.

April 11-13, 2013 – Arizona Grand Prix, Mesa, Ariz.

May 10-12, 2013 – UltraSwim Grand Prix, Charlotte, N.C.

May 30-June 2, 2013 – Santa Clara Grand Prix, Santa Clara, Calif.

If you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions for stories (or even want to submit an article), please e-mail us at [officials@usaswimming.org](mailto:officials@usaswimming.org).

Look forward to hearing from you.  
*Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair*

### Mentoring National Swimming Officials

*By Melissa Hellervik-Bing*

Recruiting, training and retaining officials is the most challenging job every officials' chair, coordinator, meet referee or team director takes

on, at both the local and the national level. Many parents will take the initial plunge towards becoming an official, but soon decide the volunteer position isn't for them. Everyone has heard stories about a sour evaluation experience that lacked being taught some of the skills for a particular officiating position or that involved working with an evaluator who needed some refined mentoring skills.

To address these issues, the National Officials Committee changed emphasis on the National Certification Program. It now has evolved into a mentoring program that emphasizes education and teaching the processes and protocols used at national meets. While this part of the program has been updated to specifically to teach N3 mentor/evaluators, there are skills that can be used at the LSC and N2 levels.

### **Mentoring Skills**

The five main skills to be used when mentoring include patience, encouragement, listening, questioning and feedback.

**Patience:** Try not to rush to judgment on skills or ability; allow the official extra time to improve their skills; avoid doing it for them; be reassuring.

**Encouragement:** Nervousness, anxiety and insecurity can be roadblocks to success. Encourage officials that they have the "right stuff" and help guide their talent in a new and different direction than they might have experienced previously.

**Listening:** "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Try to find discussion areas that are free from distractions; focus just on that conversation; allow the official time to finish communicating without interruptions; and ask questions if clarification is needed.

**Questioning:** Frame questions in a positive way. Focus on what has gone well and then what can be improved. Consider using empowering questions that facilitate thinking and help the official discover his/her own answers. Examples of empowering questions include: "How do you feel about your performance so far?" or "What key things would you like to change? Why?" or "How are you thinking of changing that? What kind of support would you like?"

**Feedback:** "You may not remember what someone says or does, but you'll never forget how they made you feel." Use a blend of compassion, tact and diplomacy both to encourage and to help teach new skills. Use positive verbal reinforcement and consider using non-verbal communication, including hand signals (thumbs up, high five, quiet clapping or fist pump), as well as smiles and head nods.

It's imperative to provide feedback at a time that is most comfortable for the recipient. Ask if he/she would like feedback often during a session, only when a skill absolutely has to be corrected, or at the end

of a session. Remember to start the discussion using positive reinforcement before talking about skills that need refinement. Try to avoid overloading the officials with suggestions. Try just three top suggestions at a time.

### **Some Helpful Mentoring Hints**

It's not unusual for officials who are learning new skills to ask the mentor to model and demonstrate those skills. When that's requested, consider modeling the skill off-deck, perhaps during warm-up time or at the conclusion of a session. It also may be helpful for the mentor to step into the role during a meet, but that should be done only with approval from the meet referee.

Remember to keep the mentoring and performance coaching private. Avoid recommending advancement until the core skills have become a habit; otherwise the person being mentored may have a more difficult time achieving the next step. There also is a possibility that an unprepared official will reflect poorly on the mentor. Document everything in OTS to make sure the mentor, official and future mentor are all on the same coaching page

### **Want to recommend a N3 mentor/evaluator?**

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Consider these questions first:

- Are they people-oriented; do they like and enjoy working with other officials?
- Are they good listeners who respect their colleagues?
- Do they recognize when others need support vs. independence?
- Do they regularly contribute to the professional development of other officials and share what they have learned?
- Do they find reward in service to others?
- Are they able to support and help without smothering, parenting or taking charge?
- Are they usually patient and tolerant when teaching someone?
- Are they confident and secure in their knowledge of current rules and officiating protocols, and do they make an effort to stay up-to-date?
- Do they enjoy teaching?
- Do they have high standards for themselves?
- Do others look to them for information or advice about officiating? And can others be assured they're receiving the correct advice and direction?
- Are they overall a competent professional?
- Are they able to explain things at various levels of complexity and detail so others can understand and implement?

If you would like to recommend an N3 Mentor/Evaluator click [here](#).