

VSI Officiating Update

No. 5

18 October 2005

Welcome to the Start of the 2005/2006 Short Course Season

A big thank you to all our officials that are returning for the 2005/2006 season. As we all know, the sport of swimming is highly dependent upon volunteers, and it is only with your help that we can provide "fair and equitable standards of competition" for all our athletes.

The start of the season also means new trainees on deck. Please remember how you felt when first training and help make this a pleasant, educational, and rewarding experience for our next generation of officials.

And remember, it's never too late to recruit a new volunteer. The number one approach to recruiting new volunteers is to use the personal approach-ask someone you know to volunteer. Let them know of the many volunteer opportunities that we provide and let them know that we'll provide them with all the training they need, all in exchange for the best view in the house!

Please note that we've revised some of our certification requirements, all of which can be reviewed in the [VSI Certification and Recertification](#) document.

Recertification of Officials

All of our officials are currently certified on an annual basis with everyone's certification good through December 31, 2005. Recertification requirements are position-dependent and can be found in the [VSI Certification and Recertification](#) document.

Once you have met the recertification requirements, you may recertify at any time during the months of October, November, and December. Everyone except Referees can complete the process through your district co-chairs. In many cases you may be able to recertify at a meet while in other cases your club officials chair may collect copies of your current certification/session card and forward them to your district co-chairs. Referees must recertify through the Officials Committee Chair and can also be done at a meet or by mailing copies of your current certification/session card. Please include a return address if your card is to be mailed to you.

Recorders Meet *Meet Manager 2.0*

Hy-Tek has upgraded their Meet Manager software from version 1.4 to 2.0. Because of file compatibility issues and because V1.4 will no longer be supported beyond April 30, 2006, we highly encourage everyone to upgrade to V2.0.

While V2.0 has much of the look and feel of V1.4, it has incorporated many new features and some subtle changes that you need to be aware of. A future edition of this newsletter will highlight some of these changes but in the meantime it would probably prove very helpful to you to "play" with the program before your first meet. This will not only allow you to get used to some of the minor refinements, but will also allow you to figure out some of the new features. The [software manual](#) for V2.0 is also available online and can be downloaded and viewed as a PDF file using Adobe Reader

Inclusion Guidelines for Disability Swimming

Virginia Swimming, Inc (VSI) has adopted guidelines for the inclusion of disabled athletes in our swim meets ([VSI Inclusion Guidelines for Disability Swimming](#)). These guidelines encourage the inclusion of disabled athletes on our clubs, they encourage a common sense approach to including these athletes in practices, and they welcome the athletes to participate in our meets.

Effective with the start of the 2005/2006 short course season the following statement will appear in the Meet Invitation for all VSI sanctioned meets:

"VSI and host clubs along with their Meet Referees are committed to the VSI Inclusion Policy for Disability Swimmers. Athletes with a disability are welcomed and shall provide advance notice of desired accommodations to the Meet Director. The athlete (or the athlete's coach) is also responsible for notifying the session referee of any disability prior to the competition."

Please help these athletes feel welcomed on deck. All of us (officials, parents, coaches, and athletes) can likely learn something from these athletes who overcome their disabilities on a daily basis.

Breaststroke and Backstroke Rules Changes

USA-S recently revised the technical rules for breaststroke and backstroke. Both the text of the new rules and official interpretation of the new rules have been widely distributed throughout our LSC and have been sent to all Referees, Training Referees, Club Officials Chairs, and Coaches. Because some discussion ensued as to the intent and interpretation of the new rules, we sought and obtained additional clarification/ interpretation of the rules from the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee. This committee is the final authority on the interpretation of the technical rules and their interpretation is final. These additional interpretations have also been widely disseminated and must be adhered to at our meets.

Referees will be highlighting these changes at pre-session stroke briefings and at coaches meets. The [rule changes and interpretations](#) can be found on the VSI website (a [clean copy](#) of the new rules is also available and has been formatted for both the large and small rulebooks). The highlights of the changes are as follows:

Breaststroke – Much of the breaststroke rule has been rewritten with the major intent being to allow a downward butterfly kick in the first cycle at the start and following each turn. The butterfly kick is optional and does not have to be taken. If it is taken, it can only be taken during or at the end of the first pull-down of the arms. It then must be followed by a breaststroke kick. The downward butterfly kick may not take place before the first arm pull and may not take place after the breaststroke kick. If the downward butterfly kick is taken, only one such kick may be used. There is no requirement that the downward butterfly kick occur while the swimmer is “wholly submerged”-when read in its entirety “wholly submerged” is viewed as permissive but not required.

The kick portion of the rule now requires that the kick occur in the “same horizontal plane”. This change was meant to align the USA-S rule with the FINA rule. When judging this rule it is important to remember that we are not placing a level on the swimmers legs to determine the angle of the plane in which they are in and we must give the swimmer the benefit of the doubt if there is any question as to the position of the legs.

Backstroke – There is no longer a requirement for the swimmer’s feet, including the toes to be below the surface of the water prior to the start. At no

time, however, may the swimmer place their toes above the lip of the gutter or bend their toes over the lip of the gutter. Such action is prohibited both before and after the start.

The rule has been restructured, but not changed with respect to allowing the swimmer to be submerged at the touch at the finish of the race, with the new language being moved to the stroke portion of the rule which now says that the swimmer may be completely submerged at the...finish.” Again, there is no change from how we’ve been judging the finish.

Finally, a sentence has been deleted from the turn portion of the rule which some have mistakenly taken to mean that a continuous turning action is no longer required if the swimmer turns past vertical toward the breast. We have confirmed with the USA-S Rules & Regulations Committee that there is still a requirement for a continuous turning action if the swimmer turns past vertical toward the breast and the turn should be judged accordingly. While the words have changed, the interpretation of the rule has not changed.

When is a Watch Just a Watch?

Bruce Stratton, Chair of the USA-S Rules & Regulations Committee has provided us with a revised interpretation of the pace device rule 102.10.10. In his own words-

“Swimmers should not be disqualified for wearing a watch unless the referee or official determines it is, in fact, a pacing device. A watch in and of itself is not a pacing device if the only thing it does is tell what time it is. I think the best approach is for the referee to announce at the coaches meeting that they would like the swimmers to remove their watches during competition so that it will not become an issue and they will not put the referee/official in the position of having to make a determination.”

To help minimize potential problems with watches we should still encourage athletes not to wear watches during competition. If they are wearing a watch in competition then there must be clear evidence that it is being used as a pace device (for example, it is set to beep at regular intervals), otherwise the benefit of the doubt goes to the athlete and there is no disqualification.

Out With the Old (National/National Championship Certification) and In with the New (N1, N2, N3 Certification)

The National Officials Committee has spent the past year putting together a new certification program. The program was approved at USA-S Convention in September and announced to be in effect on October 8, 2005. We've just received the details of this new certification process, although there are some additional details yet to be worked out. The new requirements are expected to be posted on the USA-S website very soon. Once we've had time to digest the new requirements and their impact on our own certification program we'll be back to you with the nuts and bolts of the program.

Why a new national certification process you might ask. Among the reasons are the following-

USA-S was seen as the only Olympic sport in the United States in which the national certification process was viewed as a recognition program for having served at a particular level of meet, rather than an evaluation process that certified that an individual was qualified to work meets at a particular level. The new program is designed to certify that an individual is qualified to work meets at a particular level.

The reduction in the number of qualifying meets at the national championship level as well as a reduction in the number of officials at these meets has further limited the training opportunities that are available. Moving the evaluation and training process to lower level meets provides more opportunities for more officials to pursue higher level certification.

There was a concern about some officials only working national level meets. This concern has been addressed by now requiring participation in local meets for all levels of certification.

There was a desire to have senior level officials acting in a mentoring role for junior level officials. A mentoring component is also part of the new requirements and is a requirement for advancement.

John Thompson (CGBD) who has significant experience officiating at the national level will be joining the Officials Committee to help implement the new standards into our certification process

MR² = Meet Referee x Meet Report

If you are the Meet Referee for a meet please remember that one of your responsibilities is to complete a post-meet referee's report ([MS-Word](#) or [PDF](#) version). The report is sent to Louise Limerick in the VSI office. The report and rosters of officials working and trainees should also be sent to at least one of your district co-chairs. Thank you for your cooperation.

Officials Database

Francis Badavi (CGBD) maintains our database of approximately 500 volunteer officials. The database includes the names, contact information, and certification dates/status of all our officials. On a monthly basis, Francis updates the rosters that appear on the VSI website.

After several years of service, Francis will be stepping down from this activity at the end of the year. Fortunately for us, Francis has agreed to stay on through the end of the year so that we could find a volunteer to replace him. If you know how to use Access (or you want to learn how to use Access) and would like to volunteer to help with this activity, we'd like to hear from you. Francis plans to write-up a "how to" to make the transition as easy as possible.

Thank you Francis and thank you to the person waiting to fill Francis's fins.

Hyper-links

For your convenience and to cut down on the number of attachments sent with the newsletter, all of the documents referenced in the newsletter can be found by clicking on the blue/underlined text. This requires you to be on-line when you click as the links are to the documents on the VSI website.

Questions?

Do you have a question about officiating or a tip you'd like to share? Is there a rule that you'd like to have clarified? Is there something that you'd like to see the Officials Committee do? Do you have a suggestion for a future item in this newsletter?

If so, please send your questions/comments to Kevin Hogan (Chair, VSI Officials Committee, kevinhogan56@earthlink.net).

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