

VSI Officiating Update

No. 14

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Short Course Ends, Long Course Begins

The end of April has brought our 2007-2008 short course season to an end, but not before the months of February and March provided a host of championship level meets. Four District Champs, three Regional Champs, Age Group Champs, and Senior Champs provided a wide range of opportunities for swimmers and officials alike. As always you rose to the challenge of providing championship quality officiating for these meets. A big "Thank you!" to all who helped officiate these meets.

May brings the beginning of the long course season. For those who haven't worked a long course meet you'll find that there are differences that go beyond the length of the pool.

First, long course meets are almost always LSC-wide meets and this means we frequently have the opportunity to work with individuals from other districts. This is not only an opportunity to meet officials who are new to you, but it is also an opportunity to learn from others. Keep your eyes and ears open – you just might learn something new.

Second, we more frequently walk the sides when swimming long course. Because this is uncharted territory for some it is worth spending some time in our officials' briefings about how this is done. As always, please don't be afraid to ask questions if you have them.

Third, dealing with the elements can be challenging. Inside or outside, long course meets are frequently hot. Stay hydrated! If you're outside protect yourself from the sun. Hats, sunscreen, and staying in the shade when possible are all good ideas.

Rules Clarifications

The 2008 USA-S Rules & Regulations go into effect beginning 15 May 2008. Those with a sharp eye or good memory will notice that the portions of the breaststroke and backstroke rules have been reworded. The intent of the wording differences is that they are clarifications meant to make the rule easier to understand. The wording differences are not meant as material changes to the rules.

Practically speaking this means that we have the same rule before and after the re-wording and there is no change in the interpretations or enforcement of the rules.

This intent is reinforced on the inside cover of the 2008 rule book where these rewordings are not mentioned under the heading "Major Legislation and Rule Changes for 2008." Also, any discussion at the national level of the rewording is always framed in the context that these "are not changes" and any reference to the rewording as a rule change is corrected as being a rewording.

Save the Dates

Sumer Awards at MAC and GMU-Fairfax 11-13 July.

Senior Champs at Cary, NC 17-20 July. Note that this meet is being held in NC. Need we say more?!

Age Group Champs at MAC 24-27 July.

Eastern Zone Long Course Age Group Champs 6-9 August. This meet is being co-hosted by VSI and PVS.

Officials Swimposium, Richmond, 4 October.

Recruiting Officials

Officials are volunteers and that means most individuals officiate when they have active swimmers in the family. When a child leaves the sport for whatever reason we frequently lose an official. While some will continue officiating for a shorter or longer period of time after their children are no longer involved in the sport, for most we have to accept that this is a natural progression over which we have little control.

How then can we continue to recruit and retain a sufficient number of officials that we don't place an undo burden on our existing officials?

Outside of our certified officials, who are some of the most dedicated volunteers at our swim meets? The timers! Didn't most of us start as timers? Don't we frequently see the same individuals timing meet after meet? Have you considered approaching one or more of these individuals and letting them know we'd like to have them on our team? How about

mentioning officiating at a timers briefing? Remember, when asked, people frequently cite the fact that they were never asked as one of the main reasons that they never volunteered.

Summer also means summer swim leagues, and summer swim leagues mean lots of parents volunteering to officiate at that level. If these individuals have swimmers participating in USA-S swimming they're perfect recruits for the next level.

Another key to recruiting is to recruit early. If we wait until someone has already been involved in swimming for 3, 4, 5 years and they only have 1, 2, 3 years left, we can't help but have a high turn over rate. If we recruit and train these individuals earlier we have a chance of adding years to the amount of time an average volunteer serves.

The biggest help that any of us can be is to be an advocate for recruitment of officials within your club, at meets, and when serving the greater community in summer league, high school, etc. If we all take a collective responsibility for recruiting new officials we'll cast a larger net and have fewer potential volunteers swim by.

Officials Swimposium

The Officials Swimposium will be held on Saturday, 4 October 2008 at the Koger Center in Richmond. The hope this year is to expand the Swimposium such that it not only includes a strong officials' component, but also has offerings available for swimmers, coaches, and parents.

Jim Knically will again be coordinating the officials' component of the Swimposium and would welcome your suggestions for topics. In comparison to last year there will be two big differences this year. First, we have funding to bring in a "national" level official from outside the LSC. We'll announce the name of the facilitator once we know who it will be. Second, officials from Potomac Valley will be joining us and officials in Maryland may do so as well. This will give us an opportunity to share and learn with a new group of officials.

Officials Handbook

The Officials Committee has recently approved a number of changes in the VSI Officials Handbook. The updated handbook will be posted to the website as soon as we make sure that we've incorporated all of the changes.

The most noticeable changes deal with Chief Judge and Administrative Referee certification.

We have formalized Chief Judge certification with a two-fold intent. First, will allow experience Stroke and Turn officials to assume more responsibility on deck. For some, this may be a step towards Referee, for others it maybe the perfect niche to assume more responsibility without going the route of becoming a Referee. Second, it will provide Chief Judges with the knowledge needed to function in that position at a championship level meet. Although there are many functions that a Chief Judge can perform, many don't know what those functions are and have a big learning curve at championship level meets.

We have also changed the certification and recertification requirements for Administrative Referee. Our intent here is provide training that will allow Administrative Referees to comfortably and competently function in that position at championship level meets.

Referee training will continue to have an administrative component to it as our expectation is that all Referees should have a basic understanding of the administrative functions that occur at all our meets. Individuals certified as Referees and not as Administrative Referees can continue performing administrative functions at regular season meets – a certified Administrative Referee will not need to be present at every meet. Our goal, however, is to get to the point where we have a certified Administrative Referee for each of our prelims/finals format meets.

Please take a look at the revised handbook for the changes and let us know if you have any questions.

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, swim@embarqmail.com).

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Swimposium

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