

VSI Officiating Update

No. 7

4 February 2006

Championship Season

The championship season is almost upon us and that means that there are numerous opportunities to volunteer. The following meets are coming up:

District Champs, February 17-19, 4 locations
Regional Champs, February 24-26, 3 locations
Senior Champs, March 9-12, at UVA (note that a Thursday evening distance session has been added to this meet)
Age Group Champs, March 16-19, at Radford

While walk-ons are always welcome it is especially helpful to have the roster filled-out before the meet. If you know if and when you can help, please contact the officials coordinator for the meet as soon as possible. (contact information is in the individual meet invitations). [Applications to officiate](#) for Senior Champs and Age Group Champs are also available, although their use is not required unless you wish to be evaluated for National Officials certification at Senior Champs.

Meet event shirts (white polo, VSI logo, meet name) are also available by pre-paid order for Senior Champs and Age Group Champs (the application to officiate also serves as an order form).

Questions frequently arise at this time of year as to whether or not trainee officials can train at championship level meets. The simple answer is that only limited training is available. A more detailed answer can be found in the [Championship Meet Staffing](#) recommended practice document. While the limitation on training is sometimes frustrating to those trying to finish up their certification, please remember that we are also trying to balance our obligation to provide our athletes with the highest level of officiating possible during their championship meets.

Thank you for volunteering!

Registration & Certification – There’s a Difference!

USA-S rule 202.3.3 states: “*All meet directors, referees, starters, marshals, and stroke and turn judges, serving in an official capacity in a sanctioned event, must be members of USA Swimming...*” Registration is accomplished by

submitting a completed “Non-Athlete Registration Application” and payment to Louise Limerick, the Registration Chair for VSI. Upon registration you will receive a registration card that is good through December 31. If you have not registered for 2006, you cannot function in one of the above listed positions until you have done so. If you think you’ve registered but haven’t received a 2006 registration card you need to check with [Louise](#).

Neither USA-S nor VSI requires USA-S registration for clerk of course, timing equipment operators, timing judges, or recorders, although we encourage registration.

USA-S rule 102.12.2 states: “*All officials acting in the capacity of Referee, Starter, or Stroke and/or Turn Judge at a swimming meet shall be certified in such position by their LSC prior to being assigned to officiate in that capacity.*” VSI provides training and certification in these positions, as well as clerk of course, timing equipment operator, timing judge, and recorder.

Certification in VSI is done on a calendar year basis. In order to officiate in 2006, you must be certified through 2006. If you were certified in 2005, but have failed to renew your certification, you cannot officiate unless and until you do so.

This means that to function as a referee, starter, or stroke & turn judge you must be a currently registered USA-S non-athlete member *and* be currently certified in that position.

It is the responsibility of the Meet Referee to ensure that these requirements are met. This is best done by checking the USA-S registration credential of each official before the start of the session and by collecting the certification/work card of each official prior to the start of each session. By being proactive you remove the possibility of having a non-registered or non-certified individual on deck.

Coaches Credentials

The Policies and Procedures manual of VSI states the following: “*All coaches are required to have their coaching credentials visible (on their person) at all meets. The date of expiration will be shown on the credentials. The Registration Chairman will issue these credentials. Coaches who are registered and in good standing but do not have*

their credentials with them at a particular meet, will be issued temporary credentials by the meet director.” USA-S rule 202.3.3 further states: “...and all persons acting in any coaching capacity in a sanctioned event must be coach members of USA Swimming.”

Ideally, coaches credentials are checked by the Meet Director. In reality, this responsibility frequently falls to the Meet Referee or his/her designee. Prior to each meet, Louise Limerick sends out two informational lists to assist with this process. One list is a roster of coaches with expired credentials. An individual on this list cannot coach until they have satisfied all the outstanding requirements. A second list is a roster of coaches with up-to-date credentials. Checking against this latter list is helpful when a coach does not have their credentials with them at a meet.

Under no circumstances should an individual with expired coaching credentials be allowed to coach at a meet. Likewise, if an individual does not have their coaching credentials with them and their name does not appear on the list of coaches with up-to-date credentials, they may not coach.

Only Louise Limerick has the authority to determine that a coach has met all the requirements to be credentialed as a coach, and Louise works very hard at getting updated information out in the days leading up to a meet. If a coach is on the inactive list because his CPR certification has lapsed, for example, and he presents the Meet Director/Referee with a current CPR certification card at the meet, he still may not coach unless Louise confirms that he has been reactivated (this is because only particular certifications meet the USA-S requirements and Louise is the person responsible for determining that the requirements have been met). The bottom line is that it is the coaches responsibility to ensure that they are credentialed in sufficient time that they can coach at a meet.

Words to Officiate By....

Don't infer. Call what you see, not what you don't see.

The benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer.

Ugly ain't (necessarily) illegal.

“All competitive swimming events held under USA Swimming sanction shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules which are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of

competition and promote uniformity in the sport so that no swimmer shall obtain unfair advantage over another.” (Preamble to the USA-S Technical Rules)

Observed Swim Guidelines

Sanctioned swim meets must meet two general requirements. The meet must be conducted under USA-S technical and administrative rules, and the participants must all be registered members of USA-S (including the athletes, coaches, and officials). Times achieved in a sanctioned meet are recognized by USA-S.

Meets that do not meet the above requirements cannot be sanctioned, although under some circumstances the meets can be *observed*. Such meets generally must be championship level meets, and they frequently include high school, NCAA, and YMCA championships. At this time of year, district, regional, and state high school swim championships are frequently observed.

Meets are not automatically observed; a request must be made and approved for the meet to be designated as an observed meet. A requirement that must be met is that a sufficient number of USA-S stroke and turn officials must be present to ensure that the swims are conducted in accordance with USA-S technical rules. The times achieved by USA-S registered athletes are then recognized by USA-S.

As there are some nuances to properly observing meets, we've put together [Guidelines for Observed Swims](#) that can be used by the USA-S officials at the meet. The [High School](#) section of the VSI website also has detailed information on observed swims.

And for those inquiring minds that want to know what it means for a meet to be *approved*, see the [Sanctioned-Approved-Observed](#) document.

Keeping Track of USA-S, NCAA, NFHS Rules Differences

For any official working meets that use different technical rules it can sometimes be challenging to remember which rules are being used at a particular meet. This same challenge is also faced by the athlete. To help resolve this difficulty, the Our Kids Initiative (OKI), begun in 2003, brings together representatives of the different governing bodies (FINA, USA-S, USMS, NCAA, NFHS,

YMCA) to discuss the rules and how common ground might be found among the various organizations. This effort has borne some fruit as the rules differences have shrunk in recent years and promise to continue to do so in the future.

A useful document produced at these meetings is the [Rules Comparison](#) chart which serves as a great reference for comparing the differences and similarities of FINA, USA-S, USMS, NCAA, NFHS, and YMCA.

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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