

VSI Officiating Update

No. 1

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Communications

In an attempt to keep everyone up-to-date on rules changes and interpretations, upcoming clinics, and other items of interest to officials, the Officials Committee will occasionally be publishing a newsletter.

While the VSI website, www.virginiaswimming.org, will remain a primary means of communications, we also recognize that not everyone checks that site on a regular or frequent basis. To the extent that there is news that we need to get out, we will attempt to use this newsletter as a vehicle for doing so. One advantage of a newsletter is that it can be e-mailed to a wide audience, and perhaps more importantly, it can be printed and distributed to the officials on your club.

Please let any member of the Officials Committee know if you have questions or burning issues that you would like to have addressed. Communications is a two way street and we'd like to hear from you.

Recertification

All VSI officials are certified on an annual basis, with the current certification period expiring on 01 January 2004. Officials having met the recertification requirements may recertify at any time between 01 October and the end of the year. After recertifying, sessions worked in 2004 will count towards the 2005 requirements.

With the exception of Referees, recertification is handled through the Regional Officials Chairs. Referee recertification is handled through the VSI Officials Chair. Everyone should have been contacted by this point explaining how recertification will be handled in your region. If you haven't received this information yet, please check with your Club Officials Chairperson and/or Regional Officials Chair.

Recertification requirements are detailed in the "Minimum Standards for the Certification and Recertification of Officials" document.

Certification Requirements

There has been some regional variation in the test taking requirements for the different officiating positions. We have now standardized on the test taking requirements and they are listed in the "Minimum Standards for the Certification and Recertification of Officials" document.

We have also slightly revised the "Initial Education & Training" requirements for Starter, to reflect a requirement from the previous requirements that was accidentally deleted during the last revision of the document. The following requirement has been added:

"Other: Requires recommendation from two referees, one of whom must not be affiliated with the candidate's club."

This requirement is not meant to be a roadblock to training, but rather a mechanism to ensure that S&T Judges are working at a variety of meets, and that they have the leadership attributes that we are looking for in our Starters. If you are currently a S&T Judge and would like to train for Starter in the future, please discuss this with the Referees with whom you work, your Club Officials Chair, and your Regional Officials Chair.

Club Officials Chairperson – Job Description

Although each club should have a Club Officials Chairperson, not every Club Officials Chair necessarily knows what the job entails. In some cases, the person taking over the position may have been told little to nothing about the position. As the Club Officials Chair actually has a number of important roles, we've put together a "Club Officials Chairperson" document to serve as a guide.

Regional Officials Chairperson – Job Description

Each of the regions in VSI has a Regional Officials Chairperson. A major function of the Regional Chair is to oversee the recruitment, training, certification, and recertification of officials within the region. To help everyone understand all the roles of the Regional Chair, we've created a "Regional Officials Chairperson" document.

The Regional Officials Chairs are:

- 1P: Michael Downs
 - 1S: Cathy Rudolph
 - 2: Pat Donohue
 - 3: Greg Ryder
 - 4: Skip Gaskill
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Advancement Through the Officiating Ranks

We frequently receive a variety of questions with respect to advancing through the ranks of officiating. To address the most frequent questions, we've created a document entitled "Advancement Through the Officiating Ranks." If you have questions that aren't addressed in this paper, please contact your Regional Officials Chair.

If you're interested in advancing -- for example a S&T Judge wishing to become a Starter, or an administrative official wishing to become an Administrative Supervisor, please discuss this with Referees with whom you work, your Club Officials Chair, and your Regional Officials Chair. We're all here to help you with your professional development and would be happy to provide guidance along the way.

Consistency in Officiating

Nothing drives coaches and swimmers crazier than inconsistent officiating, and nothing is more important to the Officials Committee than providing the necessary training and guidance to training and certified VSI officials to achieve consistency in officiating.

Towards this end, we have created a variety of training material that is available on the officials' section of the VSI website. Material is available for Timer, S&T Judge, Timing Judge,

and Referee. Also available are publications from USA-S.

To help ensure that that on-deck training covers all aspects of the position, we have created training cards that list all the major items required of the position. By checking these items off as training progresses, the trainee not only has a record of what they have learned, but they also have an indication of what remains to be learned.

In the coming months, we will be establishing a standard training outline for our clinics. This will help to ensure that the same core components are covered at each of our regional clinics.

Consistency in officiating cannot, however, be achieved without everyone's help. How can you help?

Many questions can be clarified at a meet by simple communications. If the application or interpretation of a rule is explained differently at one meet in comparison to other meets that you have attended, ask questions. Referees should expect these questions (although we hope that they are few in number) as the questions generally indicate that an official or trainee is genuinely trying to understand what they've been told. In some cases (again, hopefully new in number) there may be disagreement, and in these cases the Meet Referee has the final word. It is important, however, that these questions be brought to the attention of both the Regional Officials Chair and the VSI Officials Chair, so that a "definitive" answer to the question can be given. Not only will this provide us with the opportunity to provide you with the correct application/interpretation of the rule, but it will also allow us to broadcast the question and answer throughout VSI so that everyone is on the same page.

Questions may also arise when an official works at meets outside of the VSI LSC, or when an official reads information posted on the USA-S website or the website of another LSC. If the information that you obtain under such circumstances differs from the way you have been instructed in VSI, it is important that these differences not automatically be incorporated into VSI meets, but rather they

should first be brought to the attention of the Chair of the VSI Officials Committee. It may be that a new application/interpretation is in effect, in which case the change can be broadcast throughout VSI so that it is uniformly being applied throughout our LSC. In some cases, it may be that something was done wrong at the meet in question, and we don't want to automatically assume that it is correct because it is being done elsewhere.

It should be appreciated that sometimes different officials will have different interpretations of the same rule. When such circumstances arise the Officials Committee Chair requests a ruling from the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee, and their ruling is then shared with the officiating community.

Officials Deck Attire

Standard practice at championship level meets is to have all the officials dress in white and blue for prelims, and to "dress-up" for finals. Dressing for finals is meant to convey a sense of respect for the athletes qualifying for finals, as well as a means of recognizing the heightened importance of a finals session.

Dress for finals has constantly evolved over the years, and VSI has generally followed the attire used on a National Deck. In the past, standard practice has been for the Referees, Starters, and Chief Judges to dress up even more so than the other officials on deck. This practice has recently changed, and all officials now dress the same for finals.

In keeping with this practice, the Officials Committee has updated our recommended practice for "Officials Deck Attire." For finals sessions, the following attire is now recommended:

Shirt: Powder blue, short sleeve, oxford dress shirt. Additional provisions indicated above for shirts also apply.

Pants/Skirts: Navy blue pants (not shorts) or skirts. Jeans are not appropriate attire.

We'd like to get the word out on this early so that it doesn't come as a surprise when we get to the championship season.

Clerk of Course

Did you know that USA-S Rules & Regulations require a Clerk of Course at all meets except for dual meets? Despite this rule, we have very few volunteers wishing to certify for Clerk. This is due in part to the fact that most of those new to officiating, volunteer for S&T Judge as this is one of the most visible positions on deck. It is also due in part to the fact that most of our meets are pre-seeded and most people don't see the need for a Clerk. Although we seldom use a Clerk with older swimmers, there is still a great need for Clerks at sessions with 10 & younger swimmers. The classic "sheep herder" function of the Clerk at such sessions ensures that our younger swimmers make it to the blocks on time for the start of races.

Less appreciated is that Clerks can provide other vital help at a meet including: seeding late entries; overseeing positive check-ins, seeding, and distribution of heat sheets for distance events; and the check-in, seeding, and distribution of cards for relays.

Let's not forget this important position as we recruit volunteers to join the officiating ranks.

Save the Dates

March 11-13 – Senior Champs
March 17-20 – Age Group Champs
March 17-20 – Eastern Zone Speedo Championships (Hosted by VSI)

We always strive to provide the best possible level of officiating for our championship meets. Please consider supporting these meets by volunteering to officiate. Details will be forthcoming, but in the mean time, mark these dates on your calendar.

Questions?

Do you have a question about officiating? 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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