

# VSI Officiating Update

No. 2

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## Recertification

With the start of the new year, all VSI officials should have recertified if they wish to continue officiating as USA Swimming officials. All previous VSI certifications ran through the end of 2004. Details of the recertification process can be found on the officials section of the VSI website. If you haven't yet recertified, please contact your Regional Chairperson. Referees should contact Kevin Hogan. Contact information is available at the end of this newsletter.

## Using Correct Language to Describe a Technical Rules Violation

A common instruction given by Referees or Chief Judges to Stroke & Turn officials is to automatically provide answers to the following three questions when reporting a technical rules violation. (1) What was your position; (2) what did you see; and (3) what rule was violated.

It is often said that correct language should be used when describing what was seen. But what does it mean to use correct language? The answer to this question is best given through a couple of examples.

In the first example, a swimmer is observed to be kicking with a downward, propulsive action during the breaststroke. Rather than reporting this to the Referee, the Stroke & Turn official recommends a disqualification because the swimmer's kick resulted in "rooster tail" splashes of water. While a rooster tail splash *may* be indicative of a downward, propulsive kicking action, a rooster tail splash is not illegal. It is the downward, propulsive kicking action itself that is illegal in breaststroke, and unless the action is observed the infraction cannot be called. Should a Stroke & Turn official report a rooster tail splash as a violation, the Chief Judge or Referee should follow-up this report with one or more open-ended questions designed to get at whether or

not the official observed an infraction. For example—Could you see the legs of the swimmer at the time of the rooster splash? What were the legs of the swimmer doing?

In a second example, a Stroke & Turn official recommends a disqualification in butterfly because the swimmer did not keep their feet together. The kick rule for the butterfly does not, however, specify that the feet must be kept together. The rule specifies that: "All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted." Under these rules it is legal for a swimmer to kick with their feet apart, as long as the position of the feet does not change in relationship to each other as would occur, for example, with a scissors or flutter kick.

When a Chief Judge or Referee asks questions to clarify what has been observed, it should be remembered that these officials are not trying to give the Stroke & Turn official a hard time, but they are in fact protecting the swimmer by making sure that an infraction has been observed.

## Clarification of the Butterfly Stroke Rule

A frequent question that is asked deals what constitutes a legal butterfly stroke. The rule requires that "both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously."

First, the arm is located between the shoulder and the wrist. If *any* portion of the arm recovers over the water, the requirement for being brought forward over the water is met. This means, for example, that it is sufficient if only the elbow or only a small portion of the forearm is recovered over the water.

Second, over the water has been interpreted as meaning that some portion of the arm must

be over the surface of the water. We do not interpret the requirement so stringently that there must be a gap or space between the arm and the surface of the water. Thus, a swimmer that is just getting a postage stamp sized piece of the elbow above the surface of the water meets the requirement.

Third, “simultaneous” does not mean “symmetrical.” For example, one arm can be recovered high, and the other arm recovered low. Or one arm might have a short recovery over the water while the other arm has a longer recovery.

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## **Tips for CTS Operators**

*Normal or Reversed Lane Order?* When the CTS consol is connected to the touchpad/backup button cable harness with lane 1 closest to the timer, the lane order is said to be normal. The configuration of some pools is such that lane 8 (or 6, 10, etc.) is closest to the timer. In this configuration, the lane order is said to be reversed. In this latter case, the CTS must be configured such that it knows the lanes are in inverse order. If this isn't done, the times will be reversed for the lanes (1 with 8, 2 with 7, 3 with 6, 4 with 5). “Normal” or “Reversed” lane order can be selected by going to the “SETUPS” menu, selecting “pool”, and then toggling between option 1 “Lanes Normal” and option 2 “Lanes Reversed.”

It is especially critical to check this setup when using a CTS unit owned by VSI as these units travel from venue to venue. If the configuration for your meet is normal and the configuration from the previous meet was reversed, the Timing Judge will be none to happy once this problem comes to light!

A “best practice” suggestion is to always print a record of the setups prior to the start of the session. This record provides a quick record as to the system having been setup correctly, and it can be kept with the meet results in case a future question arises. This can be done by first selecting the “SETUPS” soft key and then selecting the “Printer Setup” option. The

“PRINT SETUPS” soft key can then be pressed.

A quick double-check to make sure that the system is setup correctly is start the system and trigger the pad/buttons in a single lane. If the time stops in the corresponding lane on the timing consol, the system is setup correctly. If you find that triggering the pad in lane 1 results in a time appearing for lane 8, then you know the setups are wrong.

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## **Officiating Champs**

March is shaping up to be a busy time of the year with three championship meets being held within the span of two weekends. Two of these meets, Senior Champs and Age Group Champs, are VSI championship meets, while the third meet will be the Eastern Zone Speedo Championships which is being hosted by VSI. We will be especially challenged to provide a high level of officiating at these meets, as two of them will be held the same weekend at opposite ends of the state.

March 11-13 – Senior Champs (University of Virginia, Charlottesville)

March 17-20 – Age Group Champs (Radford University, Radford)

March 17-20 – Eastern Zone Speedo Championships (George Mason University, Fairfax)

Applications to officiate at these meets will soon be available on the “Officiating Champs” page found on the officials’ section of the VSI website ([www.virginiaswimming.org](http://www.virginiaswimming.org)). An automated on-line sign-up form will also be available. If you don't want to use one of these methods, an email or phone call to the Meet Referee will also get you on the roster.

*National Officials’ Certification*—The Senior Championship and Eastern Zone Speedo Championship meets have been designated as National Officials’ Certification meets. The requirements for obtaining National Certification are to: (1) be a current member of USA Swimming; (2) be a currently certified LSC official for at least one year in an equal or

higher capacity than the position for which certification is requested; (3) attend officials' briefing sessions for the sessions at which you work; (4) performed satisfactorily, in the opinion of the Meet Referee and/or Chief Judge, the functions of the position requested at a minimum of three meet sessions; and (5) complete an application which will be available at the meets. The application fee will be paid by VSI. Please note that National Officials certification does not replace or supersede VSI certification. Although National Certification is nominally given for a two year period, it is only in effect as long as your LSC level certification is maintained.

*What can I do ensure that I get my requested assignment at a championship meet?*—First, it must be appreciated that it isn't always possible to give everyone their choice of assignments. This is especially true at positions such as Starter or Timing Equipment Operator, where only a limited number of individuals are needed over the course of a meet. There are, however, things that you can do to increase your chances of being chosen.

Experience counts. As a general rule of thumb, our better officials are also our most active officials. No matter what the officiating position, nothing counts like experience. All things being equal, an assignment is more likely to go to an individual who works 20-30 sessions per year than to an official who works 4-6 sessions per year.

Volunteer for all or most of the sessions and be flexible in the assignments that you will take. If you only want to start, and can only work Sat Prelims, Sat Finals, and Sun Prelims, it may be very difficult to work you into the schedule when other individuals have indicated that they are available for all sessions, will work at any position needed, and would also like to get their National Certification at Starter. It may be that in using these latter officials to fill in "holes" in the schedule at other than Starter roles, the only time they can be worked in at Starter are at the sessions requested by the first volunteer. Everything else being equal, if an individual has then worked four or five sessions doing whatever is needed, it is likely that they are

going to get their chosen assignment over someone that is volunteering for a more limited number of sessions.

Work when you volunteer to work, and volunteer for only those sessions that you can work. We all recognize that emergencies arise and that sometimes plans must be changed. It is not unusual, however, for someone to volunteer to work all the sessions of a meet, and then decide otherwise after receiving their assignment. It is also not unusual for someone to simply not show up. While this can be somewhat easy to absorb at a position like Stroke & Turn, it can be very difficult with other positions such as Referee, Timing Equipment Operator, Timing Judge, or Recorder. While it may seem simple to replace a single person, this is not always the case. The loss of a single person can have a ripple effect throughout the schedule, especially if it means reassigning individuals that are just meeting the three session minimum for national certification.

Volunteer early. Waiting until the last minute to volunteer may mean that you don't get an assignment that you otherwise would have received had you volunteered earlier. If a sufficient number of officials have already been assigned, it is unlikely that the schedule will be redone. Unfortunately, for some meets we get very few early volunteers and assignments may not get made until shortly before the meet. While we don't like to do this to those that have volunteered early, sometimes we have to balance the feelings of our officials against providing the athletes with the best possible level of officiating.

*Role of the Club Officials Chairs in staffing championship meets*—Club officials chairs play a critical role in staffing all or meets, and that is especially so with state-wide championship meets. With almost 500 certified VSI officials, it is impossible for any one person to contact everyone. The club officials chair is a vital link in our "email tree" when it comes disseminating information and relaying volunteer information back to the Meet Referee and/or Officials Coordinator for the meet. When asked, please help us to staff these meets in an efficient manner.

## 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](mailto:kevinhogan56@earthlink.net)) .

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