



Virginia Swimming, Inc.
Officials Committee
RECOMMENDED PRACTICE



ADMINISTERING DISQUALIFICATIONS

SUMMARY

Officials will not discuss disqualifications with swimmers immediately after the infraction has been called. Notification per Rule 102.10.2 shall occur by providing the coach's copy of the Disqualification Report to the swimmer's coach as soon as practicable after it has been confirmed by the referee. Coaches may make inquiries of the referee who, if necessary, will obtain clarification from the official who made the call.

ISSUE

Traditionally deck officials have notified swimmers directly and explained disqualifications to them immediately after calling the infraction. While this process has been in use for many years, several concerns have arisen about the method. Moreover, some changes have occurred in the size of meets and the type and level of staffing at these meets, with corresponding changes in the management of the meets.

One specific concern is the loss of coverage as officials first get into position to discuss calls with swimmers and then actually conduct the discussion. The larger the venue, the longer this takes, and the greater the potential for uneven and inequitable coverage patterns. Another significant issue is that swimmers are being informed of disqualifications before the referee has upheld the call so that a swimmer may be told that he or she has been charged with a rules infraction that is not, in fact, an infraction and/or is overruled by the referee. A final concern has been that officials, in their explanation of the rule infraction, may either do a poor job of describing the error or may cross the line into coaching by trying to tell the athlete what to change about his or her stroke.

With respect to meet management, the increased use of radios and the Chief Judge position has in some ways compounded the problems noted above. Now, the official confronting the swimmer may be two or three times removed from the judge making the call, and is relying solely on what is said—and can be understood—over the radio. Unless the coach personally observed the infraction, he or she often has to come to the referee for clarification because the swimmer is not able to describe the problem from the explanation they received from the official.

TRIAL

During 2001-2002 Short Course season, the new procedure was tested in Hampton Roads. Meetings were held with coaches and they agreed to try the new system. At the conclusion of the Short Course season, all parties evaluated the system and there were no reservations in declaring it successful. Coaches felt that they received timely notification of disqualifications and were better able to explain to their athletes what the infractions were and how to correct them without having the official talking with the swimmer first. Officials, some of whom were never at ease talking with athletes, and especially the younger ones, were relieved of this distracting emotional burden. Coverage remained more consistent throughout the course of sessions and the referee review of calls tended to be more thorough, especially through the use of Chief Judges.

COMMITTEE DECISION

The Virginia Swimming Officials Committee is publishing this recommended practice to take effect throughout the LSC commencing with the 2002 Long Course season:

The USA Swimming Disqualification Report is to be used at all meets sanctioned by Virginia Swimming, Inc. (VSI) in conjunction with the Disqualification Log available for download from the VSI web site. Deck officials will not inform swimmers directly of rules infractions. The Coach/Swimmer copy of the Disqualification Report is to be delivered to the coach of the swimmer who committed the infraction as soon after the referee has signed it as is practical. A runner may be assigned this task, but a referee (usually other than the deck referee) is the preferred choice. The disqualification is also to be logged and the Disqualification Log is to be accessible to all coaches at the meet at any time. Referees will need to be prepared to discuss infractions with coaches and obtain whatever additional input is required to fully address questions from coaches.

The Officials Committee welcomes thoughts, comments, concerns, and experiences with this procedure from the VSI officiating and coaching community.

24 May 2002