

Referees Clinic

Minutes – May 29-30, 2005

Doubletree Hotel

Colorado Springs, Colorado

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM Guest **Coach Presentation:****“The Art of Officiating – From a Coach’s Perspective” by Pat Burch**

Mike Saltzstein opened the workshop introducing our first guest speaker, Pat Burch of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Pat has been an age group coach since the days of the AAU. Pat presented the group with the following outline:

- I. **Think of a swim meet as a three-legged stool.** (Swimmers, Coaches, Officials)
- II. **Pre-meet meeting set the tone.** The referee needs to be informative. This is the key to the tone. Information includes Scratch procedures and positive check in.
Lane & heat information procedures (if there is a clerk of course)
DQ slips & procedures of how calls will be handled. Do you inform swimmers (&/or) coaches?
Review any new rule changes from last season.
Talk about rule infractions that may be subjected to various interpretations
Review how you want any protest handled. Remember the coaches have a right to protect their swimmers and it is our place to help them with this procedure.
- III. **Education of Coaches.** Pat pointed out that many of the younger age group meets have new coaches that really need information and guidance. This is an opportunity to help mentor coaches to make sure they know how to handle protest and write it up.
- IV. **Talking to a swimmer about a DQ:** Make it a positive statement. Be specific so the child understands what you are telling them. Pat encouraged the officials to be consistent. Watch the semantics and the way we use our language. Pat suggested many of us should read the One-Minute Manager. It has wonderful guidelines on talking with people.
- V. **The Start:** Coaches watch the starts and will educate their swimmers on what to listen to and watch for. The starts should not be so rhythmic. Do not hold the swimmers on the block. Remember to use the stand command if you do not think all the swimmers are set. Pat also suggested to start slowly with the first two events and gain momentum as the meet goes on. This is particularly important for the younger age group swimmers. Do be so caught up on the time that you affect the purpose of the meet.
- VI. **Swimmers Time & Placement:** Make sure the posted information is correct. Also make sure the administrative people can handle malfunctions of the equipment that means timing adjustments may have to be made. Make sure the results do go out until all corrections have been applied.

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM **Guest Athlete Presentation:** Rowdy Gaines, Olympic Swimmer

Mike thanked Pat for a great presentation. Mike then introduced our next guest speaker, a former athlete who had been a representative of the 1984 United States Olympic Team and is a Gold Medal holder in three events, Rowdy Gaines.

Rowdy is also one of the commentators of NBC.

- Rowdy thanked the all the members for volunteering their services and how much the athletes appreciate the service the officials give to swimming. Rowdy then stated that it is the officials that help in “shaping the competition” and “shaping the athletes life” Rowdy stated this is done by eight (8) words and he would show how.
- The first word was **“Consistency”**. Be consistent in all you do when working the meets.
- Hand in hand with consistent is **“Fairness”**. Rowdy stated the athletes would accept a disqualification or an upset when they know the official has been totally fair in the competition.
- Rowdy then told the officials they need to be totally honest with their **“verbalization”** Treat the athlete with respect, and be honest when talking to the athlete. Do not treat any athlete different from each other.
- Rowdy said the athletes & coaches watch for **“authority”** from the official. It is important for the official to know exactly what they are referring to whether it be a procedure of the meet or a disqualification of a stroke.
- He stated it is important to have **“integrity”** when officiating and this is a perception all athletes watch for.
- Rowdy said that **“accuracy”** is vital to the swimmer so be positive when dealing with the athlete.
- The athlete also looks to the official for **“safety”**. Rowdy said the swimmers assume all the equipment is prepared and contained so the environment is a safe haven for the competitor.

- The last word Rowdy gave us was **“ROLEMODEL”** He said the swimmers look up to the officials as role models. The athletes are aware of the preparatory work officials accomplish in their training and conducting of a swim meet and when all the other words apply the official becomes a role-model for the athlete.

Having gone over these eight words Rowdy wanted to share a very positive experience he had in an Olympic Competition. Rowdy explained how he was with a coach new to him, as were the other Olympians. He said the coach had been watching the starters in the previous heats and told Rowdy that he had to change the way he set himself on the block for the race. Rowdy claimed that he was one of the slowest swimmers to get completely set at the beginning of a race. His coach then told him, that the starter is on a very rhythmic pace and does not wait for all the swimmers to get set and starts the race. The coach told Rowdy that if he wanted to win this race he would have to get the best start of his life. Rowdy explained he and the swimmer from Australia were seeded first and second. There were just a few tenths separating them. The coach said the start will win the race. Rowdy then showed the film of his start in the Olympics and Rowdy did get the best start of all the swimmers! Rowdy won the race. The officials loved watching the film clip of the start. Many officials would love to have this film to use for Starter Clinics. Rowdy closed his remarks again with a thank you to all the officials. Following the guest speakers there was 15 minutes of questions to our two guest.

Joel then thanked Rowdy and Pat for a wonderful start to the workshop and asked the members to take a ten minute break

10:30 AM – 11:20 AM **DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE REGARDING ATHLETES, COACHES AND THE RULES:** Larry Johnson presented an outline for the group to follow.

- I. **The Triangle:** The triangle is the symbol used for developing a positive attitude. At the base of the triangle are the athletes. On one side of the triangle are the rules that govern them in their competition. On the other side of the triangle is the coach as the educator of the rules. In the center of the triangle is the Large Letter R. This letter stands for RESPECT for each side of the triangle.
- II. **Understanding your role as a Referee:** the role of the referee is to be a facilitator. The R for respect of the three is the first step in having a positive attitude.
- III. **Respect:** One sign of a good leader is demonstrating respect for those he or she is dealing with. Larry gave us nine words to use as a guideline.
 - a. Knowledge, thoroughly know the rules. Learn the background of why there is a rule change.
 - b. Common Sense, use your common sense when dealing with a rule. Make sure it is for the benefit of the swimmer.
 - c. Fair, always be fair when dealing with the athletes.
 - d. Calm, always have a calm demeanor when working with the athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers.
 - e. Honest, always be honest in everything you do.
 - f. Alert, be proactive and know what is going on around you.
 - g. Consistent, always be consistent. Don't change your direction in the middle of a stream.
 - h. Sense of humor. It is easy to keep your sense of humor. Have fun in what you are doing.
 - i. Role model. Remember, that with the job of responsibility you have set yourself up to be a role model. If you incorporate all the previous words, this position of role-model fall into place. It is a responsibility and it is an honor to be respected.

Next Larry asked the members to list their views on What does it mean to have respect for, the athletes, coaches and the rules and how is this demonstrated. Larry then asked the members what are the Qualities of a good Referee. Next Larry asked what are the practical steps to do a good job. Out of this discussion came

1. Leave ego home
2. Be a Server – serve others
3. Observant – Always know what is going on
4. Education – Take advantage of mentoring athletes, coaches and officials
5. Constructive – Praise in public – criticize in private
6. Firm – stand on your word. If you are fair and knowledgeable your word is good.

Larry then stated it is important for a official to be flexible. There are allowances in all rules that give the official some flexibility. Larry stated that most normal problems will take care of themselves through the established rules. It is when the unusual problem occurs that the Referee must remain calm and handle it in an effective manner using Common Sense.

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM Lunch

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM **“Situations & Break out Groups”** There were six groups and six presenters that broke up into group discussions. The presenters were given a series of situations that could be discussed by their members. Each group was to pick a secretary and spokesperson to represent their situation and the agreement on how their group would handle it. There was much discussion and Joel said that there was not enough time to continue this discussion at this time but there would be more situations to deal with later at another round table on the schedule.

2:45 PM – 3:45 PM **“De-Mystifying various aspects of officiating: - starting, chief judge, admin. Referee.”** Joel presented six definitions of the word **starter** with a power point presentation. The three most important words were Patience, Patience and Patience. Joel explained that the starter's only responsibility is to make sure the swimmer gets a fair start. How does he do that? The starter does that by allowing the swimmers to assume the starting position and as soon as they are all **stationary**, the starter can start the race. Joel then showed the way the word stationary developed from the word motionless. Joel said the starter needs to remember it is the swimmer that starts the race, not the starter. This is where the word Patience, Patience and Patience developed.

Jamy then presented why the LSC should use **chief judges** at the local meets with a power point presentation. She reminded the officials that the one word that the coaches and athletes both used was consistency. Jamy gave the history of how the C J position developed over the years. In addition to all the National meets she showed how all the LSC's are now using them for the Sectional and Zone meets and why there is a great need for training prior to these meet.. This is where the LSC is effective. Jamy stated using a chief judge is a sure way to establish consistency for the swim meet. She explained that a needed number of officials are irrelevant in most meets. A meet with as few as five officials can use a CJ and that proves that it is not a need for many officials to have a chief judge for a meet.

Bruce Stratton spoke on the needs for the **Administrative Referee** at a swim meet. All the National Championship and National Meets always have the Administrative Referee. The local meets use the Administrative Referee, but more often in a much more limited capacity. Bruce explained how there is much written on the subject and one can obtain the information from the USA web site. Bruce talked about how he trained with an official and he uses his notes as his guidelines. Being consistent with the rules is most effective with the administrative referee. Most often he/she is the first official a swimmer or coach comes in contact with at the meet and this is important to be consistent and knowledgeable about the rules of the meet.

3:45 PM – 4:15 PM **“Why attend a National, a Sectional, or a Regional Meet anyway?”** Joel presented a slide show (Power Point) on Why attend a meet out of your LSC.

- Broaden One's Level of Experience: It offers different venues, different meet formats and different meet administrations. It also offers the opportunity to share “experiences with others and the competition has “kicked it up a notch”.
- Expose one to new ideas and concepts: The meet entry rules may be different as well as the scratch rules. The deck protocol may be different and the deck jurisdiction could also be different so these are all great learning experiences.
- Sharpen One's Skills: the swimmers may be faster. The execution of strokes and turns may be more proficient and faster than what you normally watch. The reaction to starting commands may be different and the pace of the meet might be different. The adjudication of situations may be challenging. Joel stated that this may whet your appetite for officiating!
- ‘Get us out of the same old rut’: This is “Kick it up a notch” something new, something different!
- Professional Advancement. This is a wonderful opportunity for officials to work in a different position under different condition and many times with some of the leaders of our sport. These are the greatest opportunities to pick up the “peals” of learning of officiating.
- Promote an increased awareness of professionalism: This is an opportunity to become part of a smooth running team and a great feeling of accomplishment. This is “pride in ownership” syndrome. I was part of the officiating team at the “Ultra Swim”, National Meet, Sectional, Zone, or National Meet. This is an accomplishment. This is a change and a great learning experience.
- Renew our “excitement for the sport”
- Make new acquaintances and renew old friendships.
- Enjoy really good Hospitality!

4:15 PM – 4:45 PM The Role of the Referee:

Dan presented eight steps in a good or knowledgeable Referee:

1. **The main role of the referee is as a Mentor:** The philosophy of the referee is it is a leadership role, there should be a game plan for this leadership and how do you execute this leadership. Most importantly in executing this plan of command remember to make it fun for the athletes. It is their competition, not yours.
2. **Priority on Athletes: Remember** that the athlete is **#1**. If the coaches are not happy, the athlete is not happy. Create your own fun.
3. **Preparation:** Meet with the meet director early.
 - Know what the facility has to offer and who is available to help you with this meet.
 - Have a coaches meeting. This is where you demonstrate your leadership. You announce your game plan. You know when the time trials are, you tell them where you will post their information, where the scratch box is and what the scratch procedures are. You tell them when you will stage a swim off if needed and how to check in for what events. Be positive in your leadership role.
 - Announce your leadership team. These are the officials that will help you accomplish all of the items you have stated.
4. **Practical – Use Common Sense.** If there is an outdoor meet know when to call it quits. If equipment fails, know how to circumvent problems. Be practical, use common sense.
5. **Seek help from others:** Sometimes it will be a coach that will give you great advice. Be receptive to ideas that will help the swimmers achieve what they are after. Sometimes it is just a matter of being totally fair to everyone that will make a decision for you.
6. **Proactive:** Be proactive. Know all your emergency routes. What if you have a medical problem? What if you have an equipment problem? What if you have an environmental problem? Think all of these scenarios out and be prepared. Do you have your juries in place that you announced at the pre-meet meeting? There is a technical and an eligibility jury. Have you named all your people and can you reach them at all times.
7. **Flexibility:** Make changes if needed. Know when you need to make changes. Don't be afraid to seek help and always use common sense.
8. **Patience:** As the starter should have this as his first three definitions for a fair and equitable start, a referee needs this throughout the meet.

Joel thanked Dan for the presentation. Joel then told the members there was a short break and they were to attend a dinner meeting in the Windows Room of the hotel. Joel assigned the presenter with their new numbers and the meeting adjourned until the dinner hour.

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM Dinner Meeting: Two Situations were handed to each round table for discussion:

There was an eligibility rule for discussion. An athlete had swum 4 events in one day. On the following day the swimmer was presented with a four award. It was a parent in the stands that alerted the referee of the mistake. The second situation was a young male athlete who was a discipline child athlete attending a meet without a coach. What do you do as a referee if the coaches refuse to supervise this child for warm up, warm down and competition? There was much discussion on both situations. The first item with the eligibility happened at a swim meet and there was reference to the rulebook and a adjudication on the result approved by a committee. The second situation is an ongoing problem that exists in many LSCs today.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Sunday

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM **PANEL DISCUSSION:** Joel & Dan presented question for the group on situations and how would they deal with them. Many of the members contributed to this discussion.

9:45 AM – 10:15 AM: **Self-Evaluation:** Joel spoke to the group on self-evaluation. The evaluation list is on the web site. Joel stated that he felt it is really important for officials to evaluate themselves. Many officials are evaluated when they work a swim meet, but as a referee there are many checks and balances one needs to look at when judging their own actions and progress according to the meet they are working. The evaluation list helps officials to observe their own actions.

10:15 AM 11:00 AM **"Traps and Pitfalls for the Referee"**

There are many guidelines for a referee. There are also pitfall to escape or detour from.

1. **Don't be a dictator.** (Colleagues need to assist and help mentor).
2. **Defensive:** Don't be defensive when talking with a coach or to a swimmer
3. **Set precedence:** The rules you set for the meet- you must be able to live with them. What you do for one, you must do for all. Remember the swim meet is about the athlete.
4. **Discourage clicks:** Don't get in a rut of selecting only a few officials to socialize with outside of the meet. Remember there are many officials that are part of your team. Treat them all with the courtesy you would want them to treat you with.
5. **Separate Set of Rules:** Remember one for all and all for one. There are no separate rules for certain coaches and or officials. Everyone is equal and on equal terms.
6. **Respect Everyone:** It is important to remember you are in charge of a meet that is meant for the athlete. The coach is the trainer or educator for this athlete. The officials are the people that are making sure there is no unfair advantage to any athlete. The facility has people that are providing a place to hold this competition and with it are many people that have various roles to incorporate into the competition. All of these people are to be treated with respect. An example is whom do they stop a swim meet for? It is the timer. This is the person listed on the official's card that is the lowest in position, but not importance. Remember everyone has a role to play and you are the role leader.
7. **Watch overzealous officials:** Remember that we are not out to get anyone. We are there to make sure there is an equal playing field for all participants.

Dan & Joel thanked everyone for attending. They both complimented the officials for their participating and enthusiasm for all the discussions. Dan & Joel again thank Carol and Mary for their work in providing the workshop and thanked Mike Saltzstein for his guidance.

Meeting adjourned: 11:00 AM, Monday, May 30, 2005.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamy Pfister,
Secretary