

Report on
2007 Officials Training Workshop
St. Louis, Missouri
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Submitted by
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Day I

I. Coach and athlete perspectives on officiating

Head Coach of Parkway swim team, Nick Rouherny wanted to thank all the officials for the great job they do. Nick's main perspective is that the officials be consistent on interpretation of the rules for the benefit of the athletes at all levels of swim meets. Swimmer Haley Specter of Rockway Swim Club echoed the coach's concern with consistent calls by the officials. Haley also wanted the officials to maintain a level playing field for all competitors.

II. Meet Referee – Dan McAllen

Six P's to remember in being a Meet Referee

Philosophy: The main goal of the Meet Referee is Leadership while presenting a game plan for the Meet. The Meet Referee must be a leader and demonstrate as such while on deck. Selection of the leadership team by the Meet Referee is very important. The deck referee carries out the game plan of fair and equitable swimming. Another important selection is that of the Chief Judge who organizes and maintains an informed and alert deck. Don't try to do everything yourself; let your deck officials do their jobs. Always consider the question: Are we having fun? Think of ways to make the meet fun for the swimmers, officials, coaches and spectators.

Priority: Priority 1, 2 and 3 should be the athletes. Following are the coaches as a support group for the athletes. Finally, the last priority should be officials, since they are trained to take care of themselves.

Preparation: In real estate - location, location, location is prime; just as in swimming officiating - preparation, preparation, preparation is prime. Referee should contact the Meet Director early and review the venue and be aware of any potential problems or issues. Hold coaches meetings to define start times and deadlines. Set meet jury, check water temperature and do officials meetings. Get out of the way and let your team do their job. Remember leadership is not a dictatorship.

Practical: Don't try to be god. You are just the Meet referee. Be open and honest with people. Seek out opinions from coaches and fellow officials for solutions to any and all problems.

Pliant: Deal with present situation and adjust. Make adjustments on the fly. Be flexible, not rigid. Don't be a slave to the timeline.

Professional: Know your job and execute it with excellence.

Patience: This is the most important quality that is needed from preparation to the end of the meet. Always remember patience, patience and more patience!!!

III. Administrative Referee – Joel Black

Pre-Meet Preparation:

Give the Meet Director a "hey". Give him your e-mail, phone and address and be open to being contacted.

"Touch down with Meet Referee". Call and let him know you have contacted the meet director and inform him of any pending problems.

Check and verify the following items:

Entries

Date and time

Date and time of swims being entered

Eligibility

Team Registration

Know your Clerk of Course

Scratch Cards: **Do not accept for Finals**

Positive check-in Sheets (posting and deadlines)

Relay Cards

Prepare ¾" binder Notebooks to keep track of all necessary reports, forms, results, etc. that will be generated during the meet. Make individual folders for each event. In the notebook you can keep folders for such items as Team summaries, positive check ins, DQ logs, No Shows and exception reports.

Important Points to Remember:

1. It's okay to be obsessive/compulsive and anal-retentive when you are Admin. Referee.
2. Get Close & Personal with your Meet Referee.
3. Make sure if there are any records set, ensure all paperwork is processed and signed by the correct people.
4. The Assistant Admin, Computer Operator, and Clerk of Course are your support team. **Protect them from everyone.**
5. Stay CALM!
6. Make sure DQ's and DQ log are in an envelope and addressed to the LSC Officials Chair.
7. Make sure you return all borrowed supplies after the Meet. After the Meet, send a report to the Meet Referee about the Admin job. The Report will include the number of events and the number of swimmers actually competing. Include number of DQs and number of no-shows. Congratulate the host team for a great job and compliment the Assistant Admin for the wonderful job done.

IV. Deck Referee – Jim Sheehan

The Deck Referee is responsible for a fair environment in which the swimmers will be competing. To accomplish that, the deck is staffed with a number of people with different jobs. The Deck Referee is the facilitator for allowing the staff the freedom to do their job. The team consists of Stroke and Turn Judges, Chief Judge and Starters. The Deck Referee must work in unison with the starter. Referees are bound by the rules – we are not god with a little “g”. Always remain calm and, remember the benefit of doubt always goes to the swimmer.

V. Rules Update – USA Swimming & FINA – Carol Zalesniski

The one rule change Carol spoke about concerns the right of LSCs to impose conditions and sanctions that are in the best interest of the LSC and USA Swimming. The Interpretation is as follows: Additional requirements/conditions for sanction or approval may be established by the LSC provided the requirements/conditions have been approved

by a majority vote of the LSC. The other item Carol spoke on was the intention of USA Swimming to use replay cameras. These cameras will first be used at the 2008 Olympic Trials. The cameras will only be viewed by officials and not offered to broadcast television. There will 22 cameras in the pool. The cost of the cameras will be around \$25,000 with an additional \$25,000 needed for technical support at the venue. The cameras will be used as replays of official races for the first time in Rome 2009 World Games.

VI. Chief Judge – Jim Sheehan

Contact Meet Referee to review protocols, assignments, deck staffing and special situations. Contact Meet Host regarding equipment such as radios, stop watches, clipboards, bells, meeting room, and forms. Contact other chief judges to review information from the Meet Referee and Meet Host and discuss responsibilities and deck assignments. Before every session, review strokes, jurisdictions and protocols and adjust assignments. During the Meet, make sure officials are in position, watch for and communicate DQ calls. A Chief Judge should be positioned at each end or more preferable one in each corner. **Please do not hang out with the referee and starter.** When a hand is raised, start communication with the official, make notes on the heat sheet and then communicate with the deck referee and make a recommendation on acceptance. Before Relays, make sure all judges have take-off slips and observe the officials for proper positioning. After the Meet, discuss any issues with the Meet Referee and/or other officials. Complete and submit any evaluations and thank all officials for their help.

VII. Starter – Pat Lunsford

The most important tool for the starter is to be patient. A starter has to get in a comfortable zone with the swimmers. Once the referee extends his arm, the pool belongs to you and your job as the starter is to get a fair and equitable start for all swimmers. Pat showed everyone the new Starter DVD. Since the starter teaching video was filmed during swimming competitions, the viewer can witness actual Starter-Deck Referee protocol and compare it to recommended protocol. In the viewing of the DVD, you may see some difference between recommended protocol and what happened during the taped swimming competitions. You may go to the USA Swimming website and download the 2007 Starters DVD Divergence Points.

VIII. Situations and Break Out Groups

During this time we formed groups of about ten officials and were given a list of situations to discuss and recommend rulings. These situations were submitted by officials attending the workshop and did occur at actual swim meets. This prompted lively discussions and was one of the most enjoying parts of the workshop.

Day II

IX. 10 Points of Self Evaluation – Joel Black

1. Did I blow any calls?

Blowing calls will always occur even with the most experienced officials. It is, however, inexcusable for an official to continue making the same kind of mistakes throughout their career. The purpose of the self evaluation is to eliminate or reduce these calls.

2. Were there any times when it was fortunate that I didn't have to make a call?

In almost every contest there are situations which could cause officials embarrassment if they were required to make a ruling. Most lapses in concentration, improper positioning and failures to hustle go unnoticed by others. You should not ignore these lapses.

Sooner or later they will catch up to you.

3. Did I do everything to ensure a just outcome?

Do not become part of the competition. Do not let emotions control you and end up affecting your performance. Always give the athletes the benefit of the doubt. Never look for ways to DQ athletes.

4. Were my calls/decisions consistent?

Calls must be made fair and consistently. Want to drive a coach crazy, inconsistency will do it every time.

5. Did I Fail to Maintain Proper Control at any time?

An important part of any official's job is to control the behavior of the athlete, coaches and spectators so the meet can proceed. Arguments and disruptions can endanger the flow of the meet.

6. When did I feel most vulnerable to outside influences?

Identify when you are most susceptible to outside influences. Watch the body language. Listen, think and then react accordingly.

7. Were there any situations where I avoided or usurped responsibility for a ruling at the expense of another official?

You should always be careful of any action that might reflect badly on a brother or sister official. If you overrule another official, it should be done for the interest of the meet or athlete.

8. Was there anything related to my signals, gestures or style that evoked an unexpected or unwanted response?

Good officials, on each occasion should know something about the character of their spectators and adjust their performances for the best results.

9. Did I uphold, defend or rationalize any improper rulings?

When a mistake is made, you should accept it and not penalize the participants by insisting upon the correctness. By not admitting a mistake was made you run the risk of damaging your credibility. Never allow mistakes to continue.

10. Was there a Particular aspect of my performance that I could work on at the next meet?

The perfect game or meet has yet to be worked. If the answer is no to the question, you are deceiving yourself or are not interested in perfecting your craft. There are always areas in need of improvement.

10 more questions Did I.....

1. Arrive at the meet on time?

2. Dress smartly and appropriately?
3. Conduct or participate in a beneficial pre-meet conference?
4. Look confident without appearing over-confident?
5. Give the proper signals (whistles, raised hand) in an appropriate manner?
6. Develop and maintain genuine teamwork with my partners?
7. Maintain proper positioning?
8. Place my hands on an athlete for any reason?
9. Treat all participants with the appropriate amount of respect?
10. Make every effort to defuse potentially volatile situations?

X. Traps and Pitfalls for the Referee – Dan McAllen

1. Don't be a slave to a timeline. Watch and plan the meet size and make it work.
2. As a referee, respect your Stroke and Turn Judge. They are the most important official on deck. The Stroke and Turn Judge has the most direct contact with the athletes. The better they do their job, the easier your job will be.
3. Be prepared to live with precedents you have set. When you follow a course of action, you will be expected to follow that course every time. People expect Consistency! Think about your decisions before you make them.
4. Be a Leader not a Dictator. Be a professional at all times. Leave your god complex at home, you are not a god, just a meet referee.
5. If you overrule a call, talk to the official who made the call. Explain your reasons clearly.
6. Involve everyone with your decisions. Ask members of your team and draw from the leadership which you put in place.
7. Be seen on deck. Walk the deck to thank your stroke and turns. Introduce yourself to the coaches and talk with them. Thank the host team and all the dry deck people.

XI. Hot Topics and Burning Issues

The only hot topic discussed was that of required background checks for all officials. USA Swimming says the time is coming in the near future when all officials must have completed background checks as part of their certification process. Although no official is required to have a background check at this time, USA Swimming would like any member LSC to take the lead in this area.