

2011 Officials Training Workshop –
Dallas, Texas
October 14-16, 2011
Report

Virginia Swimming Attendees:

Dan Demers

John Squires

AGENDA - 2011 Officials Training Workshop
Dallas, TX – October 14-16, 2011

Friday (October 14th)

5:00pm – 6:00pm	Registration
6:00pm – 8:00pm	Welcome Dinner and Ice Breaker
	Officiating from an Athlete's Perspective by Steve Sholdra

Saturday (October 15th)

7:00am – 8:00am	Breakfast
8:00am – 8:15am	Welcome and overview of weekend – Clark Hammond
8:15am – 8:30am	FINA – What is it and how it works – Clark Hammond
8:30am – 9:15am	USA-S Rules - Recent interpretations, FAQs – Dan McAllen
9:15am – 9:30am	Break
9:30am – 10:00am	Chief Judge at local meets – Lucy Duncan
10:00am – 10:45am	Deck Referee – Jim Sheehan and Jamie Cahn
10:45am – 11:00am	Break
11:00am – 12:00noon	Situations Breakout Session I
12:00noon – 1:15pm	Lunch
1:15pm – 2:00pm	Breakout Group Reports
2:00pm – 2:45pm	Meet Referee – Dan McAllen
2:45pm – 3:15pm	Starter – Jeannine Dennis
3:15pm – 3:30pm	Break
3:30pm – 4:15pm	Situations Breakout Session II
4:15pm – 5:00pm	Reports from Breakout II Sessions
5:00pm – ??	Happy Hour and Dinner on Your Own

Sunday (October 16th)

7:00am – 8:00am	Breakfast
8:00am – 10:00am	Burning Issues and Open Forum

Safe Travel Home!

Workshop Overview:

This workshop allowed officials from across the United States to gather in a group environment and be challenged with presentations of ideas and philosophies. The format included small and large group interactive discussion as well as individual presentations from members of the USA Officials Committee.

Each LSC was asked to provide a maximum of two officials. Both should be first time participant and have been a referee for no more than two years.

Seventy-five officials were at this workshop. Out of the 58 LSC's in the USA, 46 were represented.

Friday, October 14, 2011

I. Registration and Dinner

Clark Hammond opened the event by welcoming the different LSCs in attendance. He also introduced the USA Officials Committee who would be facilitating the workshop. They are as follows: Dan McAllen, Lucy Duncan, Jim Sheehan, Jamie Cahn and Jeannine Dennis. Carol Birch and Lori Shumate two USA Swimming Staff Liaisons were also in attendance. In addition we had a guest speaker, Steve Sholdra, a senior swimmer who is also one of the two athlete representatives on the USA Officials Committee.

Steve's topic of discussion was "A Swimmer's Perspective of Officials". In his presentation he mentioned that many swimmers do not read or understand the rules of swimming as compare to athletes in other sports. For instance, football, baseball, basketball players have to know the rules of their sport to compete. When Steve asks swimmers if they read the rules, the reply most of the time is "I know enough, or I know what I am doing."

Additionally, he mentioned that since many coaches are former swimmers, that a lot of them do not know or read the rules. He thinks the reason is that coaches are intimidated by the size of the rule book. He often suggests to swimmers to read just the blue pages of the rule book. Steve feels that if a swimmer understands the rules, they can use them to their advantage. He also suggested that officials help educate the coaches through clinics to learn and help them understand the rules of our sport.

Steve pens an online newsletter called "*PNS Athlete Newsletter*". The newsletter is full of quick read information for swimmers. In each issue, the newsletter discusses a rule, provides statistics on USA Swimming and publishes the local meet results in his LSC.

He also discussed how "My Deck Pass" works on USA Swimming. The unique feature allows swimmers to earning digital patches for best times and these patches can be sent to their Facebook page. Additionally, coaches can award patches to swimmers who have completed various goals.

Saturday, October 15, 2011

I. FINA – What Is It and How It Works – Clark Hammond

FINA is the governing federation who develop the rules for water polo, synchronized, competition and open water swimming. FINA is made up of member countries (roughly 270) and each country has one vote, regardless of the quantity of swimmers one country may have.

Clark then discussed how USA-S nominates officials for the Olympics and the other international meet opportunities. The guidance documents for the selection process are located on the USA Officials website.

One other note, there are only two starters selected for the Olympics; one starter for boys, one starter for girls. The host country is awarded one of the starting positions. The second is chosen from a pool of world applicants. For the last seven out of the eight Olympics, the selection committee has chosen a US Official as the second Olympic Starter.

II. USA-S Rules- Recent interpretations, FAQ's – Dan McAllen

The USA Rules Committee only provides **rule interpretations** for the “blue pages” of the rule book. The blue pages are developed and approved by the 270 or so members of FINA. These rules are first scribed in French then are translated into several different languages. Therefore, the rules are not always grammatically correct and some may have a “misplaced modifier” or two. However, keep in mind that there are French words with no English translation.

If there is a question or an interpretation is needed about a rule, discuss with your LSC Chair first. If further clarification is needed, an email can be sent to Dan and he will respond within 24 hours.

If you have a suggestion for a rule change in the blue section, good luck. Remember there are about 270 members that must agree to the rule change and that is like herding cats and can be very difficult to get through the system.

So what can the USA Rules Committee change? **Answer:** The white pages of our rule book. If you have a suggestion for a rule change in this area, submit by May 15th. Rule changes submitted by this date only require a majority vote (51%) to be passed by the House of Delegates. This is because it gives the Rules Committee plenty of time to vet the change. If requests for rule changes are submitted after May 15th, requires a 90% vote by the House of Delegates. The House of Delegates meets every two years.

One other note, any changes to the USA By-Laws require an approval from 66% of the House of Delegates.

Recent Interpretations:

Breaststroke - The initiation of the first arm pull during the pullout.

To determine if the swimmer initiated the first arm pull, the pull must be “purposeful” versus “reactionary”. The hands/arms moving because of the undulation in the water is not “purposeful”, that is “reactionary”. You must see clear and purposeful lateral separation of the hands or downward movement.

There is legislation that has been proposed to FINA to allow the downward butterfly kick to happen at any time versus after the initiation of the first arm pull. That proposal, if passed, would alleviate this wonderful quagmire that FINA created for S&T officials.

Butterfly - Some part of the **entire** arm must clear the surface of the water during recovery of the arms. Not just some part, but **some part of the entire arm** must clear the surface of the water during recovery of the arms.

He also mentioned that once the swimmer reaches the surface of the water, they must remain on the surface of the water, regardless of age. He also mentioned that with some younger kids, they may tend to swim butterfly similar to a porpoise which may cause them to not recover their arms as defined above.

There was some discussed about what the arm entailed, which Dan defined as the shoulder to the wrist.

Backstroke – Totally submerged prior to the finish is not legal. What is the finish of the race? As Dan said, “When the clock stops for that lane”. Finishing underwater is not the concern. It is whether the swimmer was submerged during the swim prior to the finish. The “technical” rules apply in this case and if the S & T Judge observes a swimmer submerged (prior to shifting their eyes to observe the touch), then it is a disqualification during the swim.

Individual Medley – For some reason, Dan has been fielding a lot of questions lately about the freestyle leg of an individual medley. In Dan’s opinion, in order to determine if butterfly, backstroke or breast stroke is being swum in the freestyle leg, he must be absolutely certain, without a shadow of doubt that the swimmer is swimming one of those three strokes before he would make that call.

Kinesiotape – Kinesio tape is not allowed. It is compresses the body just like the illegal suits. Any tape such as athletic tape must be approved by the Referee but Kinesio tape shall never be approved.

Compressive bands are not allowed, however, swimmers can wear LiveStrong bands and jewelry. But anything that compresses the body is not allowed.

III. Chief Judge at Local Meets – Lucy Duncan

A PowerPoint presentation was used for this section and a copy will be forwarded to all attendee’s.

Basically the Chief Judge can be viewed as the “Right Arm” of the Deck Referee. The Chief Judge is the primary interface between the Stroke & Turn judges and the Deck

Referee. Usually a very experienced S&Ts typically serve as a Chief Judge. Some LSC's have specific training for Chief Judges.

At local meets you should "always" try to have Chief Judges.

The Chief Judge can function and handle many different assignments. Typically the CJ handles the Officials Briefing and deck assignments. The CJ receives direction from the Deck and/or Meet Referee. CJ can also serve to enter official's information into the OTS.

Some LSCs use radios all the time. Good Idea or not? If radios are used, make sure you follow the standard protocol for radio etiquette. A discussion ensued about how many LSC's have a radio's and when they are used. Georgia LSC gives a radio to every S&T.

Some LSCs take the DQ's to the swimmer, some use their radios to notify the swimmer. It was unclear whether the Deck Referee accepted their call over the radio before they notified their swimmer.

Chief Judge should keep a relaxed and focused deck and serve as a mentor to other S&T officials. Additionally, they should thank all of their S&T officials.

A discussion followed about deck credential verification. That could be another job for the Chief Judge, just depends on how each LSC handles it.

Another discussion was held about obtaining your N3 Chief Judge. There seems to be a large difference in responsibilities going for an N2 Chief Judge Certification to an N3 Chief Judge Certification. It was suggested that a "shadowing" position be developed on National Decks for officials who first want to observe an N3 Chief Judge. This would they could apply for the certification the following year and be more prepared for that level of responsibility.

IV. Deck Referee – Jim Sheehan and Jamie Cahn

Jim and Jamie also used a PowerPoint presentation for their Deck Referee discussion. Being a Deck Referee is like being a President of a corporation. The technical experts are the Stroke & Turn. The Chief Judge(s) is the "Manager(s)" as they are the eyes and ears for the Deck Referee. The Starter is the "Subject Matter Expert" and is the second set of eyes for the Deck Referee. The Announcer at a meet is in charge of communications. The Meet Referee is the "CEO" and establishes the protocol.

The Deck Referee is in charge of the pool and the procedures to run the swim meet in the water. As Deck Referee you need to work closely with the Starter and establish a relationship so you know what to expect from each other.

Things to consider in the discussion with the Starter are: 1) positions on the deck; 2) who approaches who with a potential false start; 3) timing for the short and long whistles; 4) taking order of finish; 5) checking next heat for open lanes; watch for issues/situations that might cause a problem.

As Deck Referee you need to review the meet invitation to determine what has been established for the meet and discuss with the Meet Referee: 1) scratch procedures for the meet; 2) the procedures for no-shows and declared false starts; 3) DQ procedures (who is writing the slip and delivering/informing the coach); 4) radio protocol for the meet.

Deck Referee's are responsible for fair environment.

A discussion ensued about how to handle a missing swimmer and whether "delay of meet" is appropriate. Scan the pool looking for kids hurrying to the blocks. If not and giving a fair amount of time, go ahead with the race or call the alternate if championship meets. Probably better to write a DQ using "The Referee shall disqualify a swimmer who fails to appear at the starting platform ready to swim at the initial start of his/her heat." 101.1.5B

This discussion followed up with a question as to when the meet is closed. When the Referee hands over the race to the Starter with the outstretched arm, that does not signify the "heat is closed", because, the Referee can lower their arm at anytime. The outstretched arm was never intended to "close the heat",

This led to another discussion about the protocol of prelim and final meets with missing swimmers in finals. For safety reasons, especially the blocks with the side steps, you should not call the swimmers up to the blocks, and then ask them to step down to call in the alternate. If you know you need the alternate, have them go to the block. Also, swimmers have to get their race mind set and calling them up and stepping them down can be a distraction for them. Someone can get hurt climbing up and down the blocks so it is recommended to stop this practice. Keep the swimmers on the deck so there is no change of injury.

Deck Referee shall watch the race, officials, know what is going on and keep people informed and move from the start area.

If specific rules are listed in the Meet Invites the penalty for not complying with the rules must also be listed.

When talking to Chief Judges or Stroke and Turn about adjudicating a call, do not give the leading questions.

A question was asked about how does a Deck Referee handle an official who may be slack or are not fully executing their job on deck? They used an example of an S&T official who was a foot or two away from the wall and repeatedly not watching swimmers in their jurisdiction. Talk to the official and start out by saying, "Just in case, a coach questions me about one of your calls, it would really help me if you stepped to the edge of the pool and watch your swimmers in your jurisdiction. If you do that, I would feel more confident if you made a call."

Also, set up your deck by experience. Place the most experienced away from you and move the other closer to your position so you can observe them.

One piece of advice is that if there are any decisions made on deck, it must be consistently applied throughout the meet. For instance, if a swimmer is late to the blocks and you allow them to swim, then that must be the precedent for the entire meet.

Make sure you run swim off's for any potential problems like 9th and 10th, not just 8/16/24.

Over judging calls. Clark used an analogy of a dollar bill. It has certain markings to that make it real. The same with swimming, S&T officials should be looking for things we expect to see, not what we do not expect to see.

V. Meet Referee - Dan McAllen

1. Game plan – Develop one

A. Communicate the game plan to your leadership team (Deck and Admin Referee's, CJ's etc)

b. After game plan is in motion, step out of the way, let your team run the show.

c. The goal of a Meet Referee is to become Mr. Irrelevant when the meets starts. All of your planning and hard work should be finished when the first whistle is blown.

2. Leadership Skills

a. Find a way to have fun at the meet. That way they will come back!

3. Know your priorities

a. Make athletes center-decisions; this is priority 1, 2 and 3.

b. Let the coaches give their attention to their swimmers.

c. Keep your officials trained so they can take care of themselves.

4. The critical path to a successful meet:

a. Preparation, Preparation, Preparation

b. Researching and have contingencies even for the smallest details

c. Use a meet log to keep any site issues at certain venues. Ask previous Meet Referees at those venues what issues they faced at the site.

d. Select carefully and created a strong leadership team. (Deck Referees, CJ's, Admin Referees, Admin Supervisor's and Starters).

e. Detailed Coaches Meeting

1. New rule interpretations if any

2. Types of starts

3. How time trials will be handled

4. Session start times,

5. Where 50's will start from (A guaranteed question that is always asked at National's despite starting them at the same end for the last 40 years!)

6. Discuss any unusual things that may occur in the meet like chase starts, flighted sessions
 7. Discuss the order of the swims
 8. Discuss the check-in and scratch procedures, swim-off procedures
 9. Develop a Meet Jury both technical and eligibility. Best to have 5 members on each jury.
 10. Provide them with the pool water temperature, why because I want them to know I have covered even the smallest of details.
5. Be Practical – Be open and honest with people. See out opinions from coaches and fellow officials for solutions to any and all problems. Do not be afraid to ask for help!
 6. Be Professional
Considerate, attentive, thoughtful, polite, open and honest
Use common sense
 7. Be Proactive
Contingency plans. For instance bad weather coming in at night of finals. Skip breaks to complete the swims, have the awards at the ends instead of the breaks?
Medical Emergency plan – What is the facility's SOP?
 8. Be Pliant - Flexible
If you make a mistake, admit and fix it. Do not let your ego get in the way. In case you forget, remember the swim meet is for the athletes.
 9. Be Patient
Be patient with the swimmers, coaches, fellow officials and other meet volunteers!

Traps and Pitfalls:

- a. Ditch your God complex. There are people on deck that are smarter and have more experience than you! Ask for help. "I am frequently wrong but I am never in doubt"
- b. Live with the precedence you set.
- c. Inform all personnel affected by your decisions.
- d. Delegate, teach and learn
- e. Give every issue a full hearing
- f. Respectful to everyone. If a call is overturned give the feedback to your S&T
- g. Select a lead chief judge with great care. You want one with great people skills
- h. Walk the deck and take the deck temperature. Talk to coaches and listen to any of their problems or concerns.

i. the most important person on deck is your S&T official. That is where the rubber meets the road and they are on the line making the calls determining the outcome for the athletes.

VI. Starter – Jeannine Dennis

1. Every start should be your best start every time.
2. Arrive early – know your equipment
3. Remember as a Starter- Patience, Patience, and Patience.
4. Once the Referee gives you control of the race, take your time. You want a voice that is inviting. You are inviting the swimmers to swim. With 8 and unders, take the time to educate the little ones. This can be done at 8 and under meets. These kids may not understand how to start because they have not been trained. Talk to them over the microphone.
4. Decide upfront who should take order of finish.
5. Know your rules, keep your concentration and talk with a conversational and inviting tone.
6. There was a long conversation on what constitute a false start, because of elite reputation we were asked to clarify how to judge a false start.
7. Stand up the swimmers when you think things are going the wrong way.
8. Egregious acts of slowly getting into the TYM position should be called out. You can stand them, but eventually you or the referee will have to go over and talk to them. Some swimmers have no idea they are doing that, you will be surprised!
9. Prelims/Final do not bring swimmers up to the blocks and send them back down. Just call the alternate if someone is missing. SAFETY ISSUE

Jeannine provided the following interesting tidbits of Info:

Does anyone know why the no recall rule was developed? It was instituted after the 1984 Olympics in Atlanta when a recall occurred and it cost NBC a lot of money due to lost advertising! So, they pushed for a rule change with FINA.

How about the 2nd whistle prior to the backstroke? That came about from the World Champs in Madrid when swimmers would not expeditiously come back to the wall after the 1st whistle. A US Referee said he could get them back to the wall by blowing another long whistle. He did, it worked and the additional whistle was added to the backstroke start.

Sunday, October 16, 2011

I. Burning Issues and Open Forum

Clark was very pleased that some many officials stayed through Sunday. He was very happy to see the numbers of officials that were in attendance for the last session!

The following are highlights of the various breakout sessions noted in the agenda

1. Discussion of specific calendar training for Officials. Some LSC's have a set timeline. 'X' number of years as an S&T, then Starter, then to Referee. The discussion talked about whether or not this was good for moving officials up or does it create problems. One argument was that if an official shows the drive to learn and does 54 sessions in the first year, why not give them a shot a starter and ignore the specified dates. The counter argument to that was if USA Official Committees is suggesting that to an LSC the structures their training based on time in certification, then why does USA Swimming have time limits on N2 and N3 Certifications?
2. Overwriting versus underwriting on a DQ slip. The consensus was that it is really up to the LSC. However, as a meet referee or deck referee, do not leave a whole for the coach to argue whether an S&T knows the rules based on the verbiage of a DQ slip. That's a slippery slope. They would rather have that excessive info on the heat sheet and keep good notes in case it is several events later that the coach questions the call.
3. Admin table, should that have qualified officials or parents? Some LSCs have parent running admin, some have qualified officials. Those that have officials can offer help or provide training info.
4. Should Referee's know Hy-Tech? Michigan provides Hy-Tech to all of their Referee's. They sent in a letter telling them it was for training, and Hy-Tech provided copies for them to use.
5. How to make your visiting officials come back and work at your LSC. Some teams/LSC provides gift cards. One Tallahassee team provides a gift card for each session you work and the card value depends on what positioned you worked!

There was one bad experience where a team gave the visiting LSC officials a coupon for a turkey sandwich and a drink for one day. They then told them that is all they are getting!

One thought was let the visiting officials pick where they want to work and let them have it. Everyone wants to be treated fairly.

This discussion ensued to how to you get officials to cover meets? One team has a rule that if a visiting team does not provide officials, their kids will not get any ribbons!

6. Lucy Duncan asked if there are any LSC chairs scheduling Meet Referee's for your meets. Some were, most said the meet director for the host team has a list of Meet Referee's in the LSC and it is up to the host team to find one.
7. USA Swimming has S&T and Starter videos; will there ever be a Referee video? Clark responded with there are several projects in the pipeline, however they all take money. One that they are currently working on is a webinar for several positions. You will be able to access it anytime and go back to it as often as you would like. It is coming, just not there yet.
8. Athlete Protection Discussion – what about trainees? Clark stated that he has received several inquiries about this. A registered USA Swimming non-athlete is required to complete the training. A trainee is not required. They may be a threat, but the threat is minimized because they are under observation. Additionally, in some LSC's they may only train for 4-6 sessions before they must register with USA Swimming, complete a background check and complete the athlete protection training. The trainees are also excluded from the insurance requirements.

As for the training, everyone who completed the training was impressed and thought the video was excellent. A few officials have had extensive experience with criminal law and child protection and they were very impressed. Just remember we are not doing anything different, we have always done this. We are just more aware of the problem than we were before.

Clark mentioned that if we seem something inappropriate, like a coach giving someone a backrub on the deck, let them know that is not appropriate. They may have just spaced out and it is our job to let them know about it.

One other thought is some LSC's are requiring any Meet photographer to complete a background check.

9. Dive Start certifications: How are the LSC's tracking this required training?