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**Officials' Newsletter - August 2022**

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**USA Swimming Officials** <Officials@usaswimming.org>  
Reply-To: Officials@usaswimming.org

Mon, Aug 29, 2022 at 11:30 AM



## Officials' Newsletter



### Greetings From the Chair

Wow...Where has this year gone? As they say, "Time flies when you're having fun!" It is hard to believe that we are now almost three-quarters of the way done with 2022. A big thanks goes out to all those who helped make this summer's championship-meet season another successful one! From LSC Championships to Sectionals, Futures, Summer Juniors and Summer Nationals, the officiating "village" consistently pulled together to complete any tasks that came their way, and the swimmers and coaches appreciate all the hard work everyone does to get the job done as efficiently and professionally as possible. Hopefully everyone was open to learning opportunities that presented themselves because they were, and are, always there for the taking!

On that note, I want to thank Dana Covington and the members of her Mentoring subcommittee (Jamie Cahn, Edgar Caraballo, Trish Martin, Marianne Walling), who have been working to improve how our mentors can work even more cohesively and consistently as a team. This, in turn, will allow us to improve and evolve how we educate and train officials to prepare them to successfully officiate at all levels of national level meets. The subcommittee has been putting

together additional training documentation over the summer to further train the trainers, including additional mentoring documentation and a guide to the "Walk of Stars" for mentors. Thanks, Dana!

Finally, as most are aware, USA Swimming is in the process of moving from the old version of SWIMS to SWIMS 3.0, and because of this, OTS will be transitioning as well. Members of the USA Swimming Officials Committee have been meeting regularly with Patrick Murphy and his team at USA Swimming to help us through the transition and help navigate potential issues that may be on the horizon. Making these changes will help us get onto software that is much newer and more powerful, and it is everyone's hope that in the coming weeks and months we will see huge benefits from this effort. We would be naïve to think that it will come without any bumps during what will likely be an iterative process, but I am confident that USA Swimming's team is working as hard as they can to get us up and going as quickly as they possibly can.

Short Course season is just around the corner. I look forward to seeing you all on a deck somewhere soon!

Matt Wilson  
Chair, USA Swimming Officials Committee

## **Announcements**

National Officials Committee Meeting - September 14 at 5:30pm MT. This meeting requires pre-registration from this link ([Annual Business Meeting - Officials Committee](#)) or from the Annual Business Meeting page of the USA Swimming website.

## **Officials Tracking System (OTS) - IMPORTANT UPDATE**

With the launch of USA Swimming's new SWIMS database on September 1, 2022, there will be temporary interruptions to the Officials Tracking System (OTS). Please review the information below for important updates and release dates related to OTS functionality.

USA Swimming staff and members of USA Swimming's Officials Committee have been meeting regularly to prioritize the development of various aspects of OTS. LSC Officials chairs were invited to a meeting on August 25th to help answer pending questions. Going forward, your LSC Officials Chair will be your contact for OTS updates.

### **OTS Meet Tracking**

OTS Meet Tracking will be the first portion of OTS to relaunch. OTS Meet Tracking will launch October 3, 2022. Meets will already be loaded into SWIMS by LSC sanction chairs. Officials, sessions, and positions worked will be input for each OTS meet. One of the benefits of SWIMS

3.0 is that sessions are already created for all meets, so it will be much simpler to set up OTS meets.

### **National Officials Certifications**

National Officials Certification Application, Workflow Approvals, and Officials History will become available again starting December 5, 2022. Updating current National Officials Certifications or adding new National Officials Certifications will not be available until December 5, 2022.

### **Online Testing**

The release date for an updated Online Officials Testing application is still being determined. In the interim, certification tests will be available using Google Forms. USA Swimming will provide the links to the applicable tests which will be auto graded in Google Forms. Tests are being finalized on Google Forms this week. Once completed, officials will automatically receive a copy of their results. Officials will then need to forward the test results to their LSC Official's Chair for manual tracking. During the interim period, the USA Swimming Officials Committee will also utilize Google Forms to track test completions. More details on this system will be forthcoming. Please make sure to include this information in any upcoming officials' clinics.

### **LSC Officials Certifications**

LSC Officials Certifications will be temporarily interrupted starting September 1. USA Swimming and the USA Swimming Officials Committee are giving LSCs the option to extend their current officials certifications for an additional year. If your LSC accepts this option, USA Swimming will automatically extend the applicable certifications and all certification expirations will be updated when LSC Officials Certifications relaunches.

If an LSC chooses not to have their Officials Certifications extended, the LSC will be responsible for manually tracking all certification updates during the OTS down time. Additionally, the LSC will be responsible for manually adding that data back into OTS when the application relaunches. USA Swimming will not import manually-tracked data into the new OTS after the application relaunches.

LSCs will be able to manually enter LSC Officials Certifications starting December 5, 2022.

### **Evaluations & Activities**

Given the need to prioritize the above components, a release date for Evaluations and Activities is still being determined and will be communicated at a later date.

For questions, please contact your [LSC Officials Chair](#)

To learn more about the launch of SWIMS, visit the SWIMS Resource Hub linked here: [SWIMS Resource Hub](#)

## **Officiating the 2022 FINA World Championships**

We were honored to have two USA Swimming officials selected to officiate at the FINA World Championships. We asked them to provide their perspective to share what this experience was like for them.

### ***Trish Martin - Pool***

"The 19th FINA World Championships felt like a truly special meet but it also felt very familiar.

Many of the FINA protocols are the same ones we use at our meets every day, even though we don't normally keep our hands down when we observe an infraction, report straight to the DR instead of a CJ, or observe freestyle turns from over the lanes. But the stepping up, stepping back "deck aerobics" we all practice so diligently? Just the same!

ITOs worked on deck as well as in the underwater camera room. At this meet, cameras were being used to make calls as well as to verify calls made on deck. One official was assigned to watch two lanes on a monitor. The new viewing perspective (from slightly under and to the side of the swimmers) took a little getting used to! I observed my two swimmers in real time and, if I saw an infraction, I alerted the head referee. I described my observation in the FINA DQ slip language just as if I were on deck. The head referee reviewed the race and determined whether the call should be confirmed or overruled. The head referee was also responsible for verifying calls made on deck and communicating his recommendations on all calls to the Deck Referee.

Observing swimmers with underwater cameras is an entirely different experience than officiating from the deck but the combination of both perspectives provides a very robust officiating experience and the optimal level playing field. I no longer worry that cameras can replace deck officials but I also value the enriched officiating capabilities that cameras provide when the stakes are high. But with advancing technology, we must all work hard to preserve our values of being swimmer-centered, observing rather than inspecting, and ensuring that athletes always get the benefit of the doubt."

### ***Mike Murphy - Open Water***

"I was privileged to officiate at the Open Water World Championships as one of thirty six officials from all corners of the world that ensured the swimmers had safe and fair swims. The thought of being involved in something as significant as a World Championship was daunting. To say I felt a bit out of place is an understatement, but I also had a blast!

Budapest is a beautiful city with fascinating history and old-world charm. I learned only one Hungarian word, *köszönöm*, which means thank you. I used it a lot.

The routine for each day was pretty much the same: Get up, get dressed and go for a 25-minute bus ride to Lake Lupa. When we reached the venue, we would all file through the security tent to our air-conditioned meeting room. Did I mention it was hot and humid? We had our pre-event meeting, got our assignments, gathered our gear, and headed out into the heat. Officials assigned to registration were the busiest prior to the event: Suit checks, nail checks, feed pole checks, numbering the swimmers, attaching the Omega transponders, running after swimmers that missed a station, looking for swimmers that were on our list but didn't show up, answering swimmer's questions ... and the list goes on. After all that, be in your assigned position 15 minutes before the start of the event. Afterwards, we gathered in the meeting room to debrief and have a meal. Then back to the hotel on the bus – a much more subdued ride than in the morning! Officiating at an Open Water World Champs meet is a lot of work!

The events got progressively longer, so each day we got up a little earlier to avoid the afternoon heat. The 4x1500 meter relays were on day one. Day two was for the 5k, and day three was the 10k. The 25k event was on the last day of competition, which meant we had to be on the bus at 5 a.m.

For the 25k I was the Turn 2 judge. The course was a 2.5k loop that the swimmers must swim around 10 times! My boat captain (who couldn't speak any English) and I (who knows one word in Hungarian) were at our post for over six hours. And did I mention it was hot? I was tempted to jump in the lake a few times. I will admit to taking my socks and shoes off and dipping my feet in the lake occasionally – when there were no swimmers in my jurisdiction.

I realize how fortunate I am to have been invited to work at a FINA World Championships meet. I wish there were more of these so more officials could experience this. Many people were involved in helping me get there, and I am grateful. To all of you, *köszönöm!*"

## Recruiting and Retaining Officials

It's that time of year again. The season is starting and training for officials ramps up. No matter what your LSC requirements are to become or stay certified, one thing is certain - it would be great to have more of us on deck. Here are some things you can do to help increase our numbers:

- **Directly invite someone to join you on deck.** There is nothing better than a personal invitation. Pick a meet and arrange to show them the ropes and introduce them around.
- **Get your coaches to ask parents** who they think would make good officials to step up. No one likes to say no to their child's coach, and many are flattered to be asked.
- **Go to new parent meetings/orientations in your uniform.** Explain what you do, why it is so important to ensure fairness, and how they can become involved. Assure them that we will train them appropriately.
- Does your team have a **volunteer requirement? Get it waived for all certified officials.**
- Have your team or LSC **cover all fees associated with becoming certified.**
- **Waive meet fees for visiting swimmers** when their parents officiate at your meet.
- **Make training convenient** - between session clinics, on demand training, whatever it takes to remove that barrier.
- **Reward officials for increasing their skills**, whether that be a shirt, whistle, clipboard, headset, or something else useful for officiating. Everyone likes to feel appreciated.
- **Throw a social gathering for officials** with the LSC covering appetizers and a round of drinks.
- **Recognize officials that have achieved significant milestones**, whether that is years of service, number of sessions, or advancement either within the LSC or through national certification.
- **Provide name badges for all officials.** Everyone likes to be called by their name.

The more fun and welcoming we are, the more likely people will want to join our ranks.

## Congratulations and Thank You to the Following USA Swimming Officials!

**Congratulations and Thanks to the following USA Swimming Officials that Represented USA Swimming in International Competition:**

**Duel in the Pool** (August 19-21 in Sydney, Australia)

- Mike Dilli
- Jason Johnson

**Congratulations to These Officials Who Served at Their First National Meet Recently:**

*Note - We apologize for any omissions or errors.*

- **Phillips 66 Nationals** (July 26-30 in Irvine, California)
  - Lisa Frederick - California
  - Iouri Gordon - California
- **Speedo Junior Nationals** (August 1-5 in Irvine, California)
  - Jeremy Cooper - Colorado



**Officials Excellence Award**

***James R. Stromski | Niagara Swimming***

James (Jim) Stromski became an official more than 15 years ago. He has always been active, officiating at the smallest of local meets to the Phillips 66 National Championships. In 2011, Jim was asked to take over as Officials Chair of Niagara. He then won elections for two successive [two-year] terms. During his tenure, while USA Swimming was transitioning to the Officials Tracking System, he was instrumental in transferring old paper records into OTS. Jim also stressed recognition of officials during this time. Under his leadership, Niagara instituted several local awards and he also began a program to get name tags for Niagara officials. He also was able to find national evaluators for many sectional and zone meets which were held in the Niagara LSC. Many officials, including Jim, advanced to N3 in multiple positions. When Jim's term as Officials Chair was ending, he was asked to run for General Chair of Niagara. He was

the unanimous choice. Under his leadership, Niagara improved its by-laws and policies and procedures, becoming more viable.

Although Jim has no current swimmers in his family, he still is an active official, most recently attending the 2020 Sectionals in Ithaca, NY. The week before that, Jim was the Meet Referee in Niagara's 14 and Under Championship. He continues to work at local meets and he will surely be at some of them this summer.

Talk to us today

**719 866 4578**

**1 Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909-5780**

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