

USA Swimming Officials' Newsletter // February 2023

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USA Swimming Officials <Officials@mail.usaswimming.org>

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**OFFICIALS' NEWSLETTER****Greetings from the Chair**

The calendar says we are at the end of February, so that means it's Championship Season! It is such an exciting time of year, watching all the athletes who have worked so hard to prepare for this moment. We often only hear it when things don't go quite right, but please know that your time, talents and efforts are absolutely appreciated. Meets every weekend cannot be done without you. Thanks again for everything each and every one of you do for the sport of swimming!

Sincerely,
Matt Wilson

Announcements

- **Rule Books:**
 - Shipped the week of Feb. 21
 - [Updated stroke briefing](#)
- **2023 USA Swimming Workshop presented by LiveBarn:**
 - [Event Website](#)
 - Registration link sent to invitees via email
- **Applications / Meets:**

- [Meet applications](#) can be found at [USASwimming.org](#) > Officials menu > National Meet Applications. There are many opportunities to work this summer for those with an N2 certification.
- **2023 TYR Pro Series Meets:**
 - Fort Lauderdale, Fla. // March 1-4 (MR - Kathleen Scandary) // application closed
 - Westmont, Ill. // April 12-15 (MR - Matt Wilson) // application closed
 - Mission Viejo, Calif. // May 17-20 (MR - Trish Martin) // application closed
- **2023 National Meets:**
 - Open Water Nationals // Sarasota, Fla. // April 21-23 (MR - Pam Wilson) // application closed
 - Phillips 66 National Championships // Indianapolis, Ind. // June 27-July 1 (MR - Jamie Cahn) // application closed
 - 2023 TYR Pro Championships - Irvine, Calif. // July 26-29 (MR - Mickey Smythe) // application posted
 - Futures Championships // July 26-29 // application posted
 - Richmond, Va. (MR - Kenneth Chung)
 - Ocala, Fla. (MR - Marcus Stromberg)
 - West Fargo, N.D. (MR - Ellen Colket)
 - San Antonio, Texas (MR - Derigan Silver)
 - Sacramento, Calif. (MR - Fran Werner)
 - Speedo Junior National Championships - Irvine, Calif. // July 31-August 4 (MR - Anissa Kanzari) // application posted

New Rules and Interpretations: Jay Thomas, Secretary World Aquatics Technical Swimming Committee

In December 2022, FINA adopted a new constitution, including significant restructuring of the organization and rebranding to World Aquatics. Prior to this reform, Rules could be changed every four years at a Technical Congress. Under the new structure, the Technical Committees can forward rules change proposals directly to the World Aquatics Bureau on a more regular basis for review and potential adoption. The World Aquatics Bureau is now charged with the ultimate responsibility over the World Aquatics rules in all of the sports. The significance is that now rules changes can be enacted anytime the Bureau meets. This will result in a more nimble, progressive and forward-thinking organization.

One challenge that rulemaking bodies have is that whenever even one word is changed in a rule, some users of that rule feel that it implies a change in meaning or interpretation. In some instances, that is not the case. It's very important that new interpretations don't creep in. Because USA Swimming follows World Aquatics rules, whenever changes are made, we will immediately follow suit. Please be mindful of explanations and discussion provided by the USA Swimming Rules Committee and the Officials Committee.

USA Swimming has done an excellent job interpreting if the athlete started before the starting signal was given. Although the word "initiating" has been added, nothing should be changed in the way we are interpreting what constitutes a False Start. World Aquatics added that word to emphasize that things like adjusting a suit or cap, twitches that are reset, or readjusting foot placement prior to starting do not constitute a false start.

The most significant stroke change is in breaststroke, where the requirement for the arms and legs to move simultaneously remains but the requirement to be in the same horizontal plane no longer exists.

The change for the backstroke ledge is that once they are installed, they should be set to zero, which is the level surface of the water. Any changes beyond that should be made by the athlete. It was also clarified that a toe from each foot must be in contact with the touchpad.

In both the Individual Medley and Medley Relay, the requirement to be past vertical towards the breast during the freestyle prior to any stroke or kick is now a rule rather than an interpretation. Again, no change to how we officiate.

Now it is specifically permitted to use technology to collect data. The data may be stored on

the device or transmitted to the coach or team in real time. Devices may not be utilized to electronically transmit back to the swimmer in real time if it provides aural, visual or haptic feedback during the race. However, coaches may receive data and then provide standard coaching to the athlete.

The whistle protocol is changing, mostly impacting finals. Rather than blowing the short whistles while the swimmers are parading, this is done once introductions are complete and the athletes have removed all clothing except for swimsuits. It's a way to alert the athletes to prepare for the signal to get on the starting blocks or enter the water in backstroke.

Our Kids Initiative Jay Thomas

Our Kids Initiative (OKI) is a committee formed in 2000 in an effort to bring leaders from all governing bodies together to discuss what could be done to help all swimmers in the U.S. have the ability to compete without fear of being disqualified, regardless of whether the competition was held under World Aquatics (AQUA, formerly FINA), NCAA, NFHS, USA Swimming, USMS or YMCA rules.

The committee members represent ASCA, CSCAA, CSOA, AQUA, NCAA, NFHS, NISCA, USA Swimming, USMS, USOPC and the YMCA and have accepted the challenge of communication for the betterment of the sport for all of our athletes. The beneficiaries of this effort are the U.S athletes who practice and compete in each other's pools throughout the country and who represent us internationally.

One challenge Officials have when they are working meets across different rule making bodies is having a keen understanding of the differences between the sanctioning organization. OKI has maintained "Rules Differences" and "Water Depth Differences" summary charts to assist. These documents can be found at www.ourkidsinitiative.org under the "Rules" tab.

Building Your Team Matt Wilson and Kathleen Scandary

You all have experience in leadership roles on the decks of USA Swimming meets. Whether it's a Developmental, LSC Invitational, or one of the high-performance meets, we rely on a commitment from one another for planning and staffing these meets. We say yes to the request (should be a new reality show) to attend when we fill out the application, knowing that it means a Meet Referee is going to rely on your pledge.

Much is taken into consideration when building a team: availability, certifications, needs of the officials for the achievement of their own goals, and the individual attributes that collectively result in a successfully run meet. When one's reliability comes into question, it affects decisions made about selections, especially going forward.

Recently, there have been meets up to and including our National Championships where individuals made a promise to be at a meet through their application but subsequently withdrew. What makes this even more curious is that most of these withdrawals come after assignments are made and known, but far in advance of the actual meet.

Over the past year, we have had national meets where upwards of 12 to 18 officials have dropped out of a single meet after acceptance letters have been sent. This leads to additional work in order to ensure the meet is appropriately staffed. We certainly acknowledge that unpredictable life events, such as family or health matters, occur.

No doubt part of the problem is the COVID hangover, causing us to have many meets that are occurring in tighter intervals where sometimes leadership has not been able to respond with notification as quickly as we once did. The result is officials are left to guess and make other plans.

As we move forward in this untraditional three-year quad, let's all be intentional about our time and dedication when we fill out the application for meets. Just as with our officiating of swims, if there is a doubt about your availability for a meet, don't apply. That's perfectly okay.

Understand and appreciate that every position is critical, and that we still have the best seat in

the house. Going forward you will see a reminder on the application you are declaring your availability to attend the meet. Thank you for your loyalty.

Standardization of Training for USA Swimming Officials: Striving for National Officiating Excellence

Efforts to standardize education and certification of officials for all positions across LSCs have been underway for nearly a year. The impetus came from frustration in the officiating community with inconsistencies across the country, barriers to advancement and difficulty in applying requirements while recognizing geographic and demographic differences.

Our goals are the inverse of these points, and we'll utilize an online learning model like the one now being used by the coaching community. The plan is to build a core curriculum for training and certifying officials using programs that are transparent and consistent so that officials can develop and advance to their own desired levels and positions on deck. Much like the national (N2/N3) certifications that are based on three levels defined by the meets we attend, the LSC will be able to utilize a similar structure for officials based on the needs of athletes and their teams. This tiered structure will also allow officials to see from a common start pointing what their officiating journey at the LSC level can look like.

Mentoring, as with our national certification program, is the common thread throughout what will be an accessible educational process. The benefits to our athletes, coaches and officials include: 1) greater confidence in the knowledge base being reliable and transferable and 2) greater comfort level in the skills learned producing confidence, which then attracts others to volunteer, thereby ensuring an increase in numbers and eventually securing succession planning at the LSC level.

It is our hope that our officiating community will recognize and appreciate this tangible investment and recognition of the importance of our volunteers and officials. Many thanks for all you do for our athletes.

Congratulations and thanks to Officials who recently represented USA Swimming in International Competition!

FINA World Championships (25m)

Kathleen Scandary

Congratulations and thanks to Officials who recently served at their first national meet!

TYR Pro Swim Series - Knoxville

Johnny Busby, Southeastern Swimming

Robert Jorgensen, Middle Atlantic Swimming

James Starron, Southeastern Swimming

We apologize for any omissions or errors.



Officials' Excellence Award: Cathy Foy, Alaska Swimming

Cathy Foy has been a registered USA Swimming Official for 12 years and currently serves as the Officials Chair for Alaska Swimming, being appointed in 2019. Alaska is a very large and diverse LSC with many teams separated by great distances. She has wasted no time during her short tenure as Officials Chair – especially through COVID – undertaking several tasks to improve and advance officiating in Alaska.

Cathy has helped update the Policies & Procedures for officiating, making clear the steps to take for advancement. She has trained, advanced, and connected Alaska officials, using technology as a means of fostering education and teaming with other LSCs for clinics (more than 70 Officials attended recent clinics!). She and the Alaska Officials Committee have strived to increase the quality of officiating and advancing of officials throughout the LSC. She spear-headed Alaska's return to having OQM Meets helping to raise the officiating bar and expectations for Alaska Officials by learning best practices from leaders outside the LSC.

Cathy's dedication to swimming takes her to the pool decks for not only numerous USA Swimming meets, but also high school competitions throughout the year. With humility, she brings a relaxed and approachable style of leadership that has naturally progressed to athlete-friendly officiating. There is no doubt that with her role on the committee, the direction of Alaska Officiating will remain on the right path.