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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter

July 2017

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## **Athletes and Officials: We're on the Same Team**

*By Patrick Hunter, Athlete Representative, National Officials Committee*

Recently, I had the opportunity to present to the LSC Officials Chairs at their biennial meeting in Houston, on the subject of building a stronger relationship between athletes and officials. While sometimes seen as completely isolated parties with little interaction, I suggested that athletes and officials are much more closely related, that, in many cases, officials are capable of providing the solutions to issues raised by athletes and coaches at meets, but only if everyone works as a team.

So, how can we achieve this? How can athletes and officials better communicate and relate to one another? While this is by no means an exhaustive list, some ideas include:

- Teach and share the philosophy. The philosophical aspects of officiating are designed to protect the swimmer, namely, that the swimmer always receives the benefit of the doubt. But, how many swimmers are actually aware that this is how officials are trained to operate? Share this philosophy with your coaches and swimmers whenever possible!
- Be professional and personal at the same time. While always important to maintain a professional image and demonstrate professional conduct, it is encouraged to be a presence on deck. Smile, say hello, and be warm and friendly towards both the coaches and swimmers. If you know a swimmer, don't be a stranger. A simple "Hello," "Good luck," or even a smile can send incredibly positive energy in the direction of the swimmer.
- Develop partnerships with clubs. Work with local clubs to use practice time as a means to develop both the swimmers and officials. Bringing in an official to a practice to explain whistle protocol, what officials are looking for, and maybe even deliver an age-appropriate stroke briefing will provide critical information to the athletes and also allow them to better understand the individuals observing their swims. Likewise, using practice time to train new starters or demonstrate different legal and illegal variations of swims will serve to develop a more competent brigade of officials on deck—and, send the message to the coaches and swimmers that the officials are working hard to "get it right"!

Additionally, I presented the concept of athlete-centered officiating. Essentially, it means to prioritize the things that directly affect the athletes. Once these priorities are satisfied, you will often discover that so many other concerns are actually entirely irrelevant.

I suggest that there are five core principles of athlete-centered officiating:

- Plan ahead. Involving both athletes and officials in meet planning can reduce major headaches of swim meet operations, as both athletes and officials can foresee potential issues that others oftentimes cannot. Wording meet information clearly and remembering important details sets clear expectations for everyone. Put important deadlines and reminders on timelines and in heat sheets so that this information is directly accessible to the athletes. Nobody likes surprises!
- Be practical. Understand why the rules exist, and refrain from over-analyzing or providing your own interpretations. Look for reasons to allow an athlete to swim, not bar him or her from doing so. Remember that everyone—athletes, coaches, and officials—makes mistakes, and therefore, try to be understanding. And, most of all, remember that this is not rocket science or brain surgery, but rather a swim meet—don't over complicate things!
- Offer customer service. Coaches and swimmers are your customers. Approach every situation, no matter how tense, with a warm, friendly, "How can I help you?" Be a solution to the swimmers and coaches, not an additional problem. Explain to them the things that they do not understand, and remember that above all, that you are looking out for the swimmers!
- Be consistent. Treat all levels of meets with the same level of professionalism and strive to provide the same high-quality officiating at all meets. Remember that no swimmer wants to be disqualified for the first time at a championship; help them correct their mistakes early by being consistent! Always keep in mind that every decision has the potential to set a precedent, but do not allow the slippery slope fallacy to inhibit your use of common sense!
- Be human. Remember that your attitude sets the tone for the entire pool deck, including the swimmers. Look like you are having fun on deck and that you enjoy what you are doing. Positive energy is contagious, and your positive energy on deck makes an incredible difference!

By taking these simple steps to think in an athlete-centered way, we can make great strides to create the best possible experience for our athletes.

## **National Certification at the N2 Level for Administrative Officials**

*By Bob Griffiths, National Officials Committee*

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It's finally in place!

**Who is eligible?** Any currently registered official with LSC certification as an Administrative Official or Administrative Referee who has worked at least 16 sessions since certification as an

administrative official, or AR, as evidenced in USA Swimming Meets recorded in the OTS. All of the sessions must be at meets with some “check in” events and at least 8 sessions must be at meets with preliminary and final sessions. No certification in another LSC or National position is required to become an N2 AO.

Then what? Once eligible, the candidate may request evaluation over at least 3 sessions at an approved OQM (the candidate must work at least 4 sessions at the OQM – the fourth, or more, session can be in other positions).

**Who by?** The evaluator, who must be approved for the meet and must have N2 AO, N2 AR or N3 AR certification, uses the “the Professional Administrative Official” document as a guideline. Candidates should download and study this document before requesting an evaluation so that they understand what is expected of an N2 AO. See “more Information” below.

**Then what?** If the evaluation is successful, and recorded in the OTS by the evaluator, the candidate may then use the online application to apply for N2 AO certification. It is accessed by clicking on “Click here to APPLY FOR NATIONAL CERTIFICATION” at the bottom of the “National Certification and Evaluation” page ([www.usaswimming.org/nationalcertification](http://www.usaswimming.org/nationalcertification)). At least one “learning” activity must also be recorded in the candidate’s history in OTS. If all is in order, certification will generally be processed within two weeks.

**Who can’t be an N2 AO?** Anyone with current, or re-certifiable N2 or N3 AR, cannot apply for N2 AO. And, if an N2 AO certifies as an N2 AR the N2 AO certification will expire the day before the N2 AR certification becomes effective.

**More information?** More information on National Certification can be found in “N2 Evaluation and Certification Requirements” and “N2 and N3 Re-Certification Requirements” on the “National Certification and Evaluation” pages in the Officials Section of the USA Swimming Website.

The “Professional” Official documents for Administrative Officials, and Stroke and Turn Judge, Chief Judge, Starter, Administrative Referee and Deck Referee, can be found and downloaded from the same location.

## **Postponements and Changes in Program**

*By Jay Thomas, Rules Committee Chair*

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NOTE: ***Bold and Italicized*** text represent exact wording from USA Swimming rules.

Reference USA Swimming Rule 102.7

As we roll into the Summer swim season with much more outdoor swimming, we regularly have weather related issues impact our meets. Rule 102.7 covers Postponements and Changes in Program. This article will clarify the appropriate application of the rule.

***Rule 102.7.1 - .1 The order of events, as stated in the meet announcement, shall not be changed. The announced arrangement of heats in any event shall not be added to or altered, except by the authority of the Referee, to the extent of consolidating the heats.*** 102.7.1 provides additional direction and restrictions regarding changing the program.

The premise in this section of the rules is to protect the swimmers

and their expectations when entering the meet. This applies to the stated order of the events as well as the stated order that heats will be swum. If the Meet Announcement does not state specific order that the heats are to be swum, then the order in Rule 102.5 governs. Some LSCs grant sanctions which provide flexibility to the event order under certain specific situations. Example: "The meet host reserves the right to change session start times or move events between sessions with the approval of the LSC Age Group Chair. If such changes are made, all teams will be notified by (date) via (email, web posting, etc.)" This would be permitted since the sanctioning authority approved it, and because all participants entering the meet were put on notice of the possibility in the meet announcement.

Rule 102.7.4 governs postponement or cancellation. When events are postponed to a subsequent day in the meet the following applies:

***102.2.4-If, due to conditions beyond the meet officials' control (e.g., a thunderstorm), an event or events are postponed to a subsequent day of the meet, such postponed events shall not be included in the above events-per-day limitations.***

Further guidance regarding postponement is provided here:

***102.7.4D - Should an event have actually commenced but is terminated prior to an official finish, and is postponed to another time or date, it shall then be conducted between the swimmers who were officially competing in the event at the time of the termination.*** If an event has commenced and has been re-scheduled due to weather or other reason, swimmers who choose not to compete in the event at the re-scheduled time should not be penalized. The Meet Committee should determine the appropriate method for swimmers to withdraw from the re-scheduled event.

Re-scheduled events that have been seeded, but not commenced may be re-seeded so as to ensure the most efficient use of time. The decision regarding re-seeding should be made by the Meet Committee at the time the re-scheduling decision is made.

And finally, events that are cancelled:

An event that has commenced but is subsequently cancelled is governed by ***102.7.4E - Incomplete events will not be awarded or scored; however, times achieved in accordance with 102.24 up to the point of cancellation shall be considered official.*** Times achieved at an initial distance of a longer event that would normally be considered valid under 102.24 may be considered official even though the swimmer did not complete the event as required under 102.24.1A(1)(d) since the reason the event was not completed was beyond the control of the swimmer. Direct contact the LSC Times Officer will probably be necessary to get these times loaded for the swimmer.

Working through postponement and cancellation scenarios can be challenging and somewhat frustrating. Our rules provide solid guidelines which should be peppered with a good dose of common sense to ensure our swimmers have the best chance for success.

Wishing everyone clear blue skies!

## **Maxwell Award Winner Dana Covington, Sierra Nevada Swimming**

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Each LSC can submit a candidate that is deserving of recognition and the winning official is selected by the National Officials Committee to be recognized in Swimming World magazine every two months. June's recognition goes to Dana Covington of Sierra Nevada Swimming.

You might say that Dana has always been involved with helping others since she is a professional nurse in her paying job. She has found much joy in volunteering in the short amount of time she has been involved as an official. She is a good role model for women, in regards to showing them what is required to become the best you can be on this journey toward being a better swimming official. She was certified as a N2 Stroke and Turn Judge shortly after her required year was up as an LSC stroke and turn judge. In 2010, Dana was the recipient of the Sam Uriu Award in Sierra Nevada Swimming, which represents the stroke and turn official who works the most sessions in the year and is the most dedicated and professional.

She is now one of Sierra Nevada Swimming's most asked for Meet Referees. She is active on the Sierra Nevada Board of Directors as the Secretary. Dana doesn't only work local LSC meets, but has traveled across the country numerous times to work at national-level meets. She is an asset to her LSC and the decks of meets outside of Sierra Nevada Swimming. She stands tall and is proud to volunteer as a swimming official and show everyone how to be the best that they can be.

