

Subject: Officials Newsletter: The Deck Referee and Starter Team

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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter | May 2019



OFFICIALS NEWSLETTER

FUTURES MEETS - Officials Still Needed

Officials are still needed for all four Futures Meets, August 1-4 in Geneva, OH; Greensboro, NC; Mt Hood, OR and Des Moines, IA. Please submit your application at www.usaswimming.org/natlmeetapp. Thanks for supporting our future star athletes!

New USA Swimming Social Media

USA Swimming is consolidating its social media pages. Be sure to follow or like the new accounts.

- Member news can be found on Twitter at @USASwimInsider
- Live event updates can be found on Twitter at @usaswimmingnews
- Information about up-and-coming athletes can be found on Instagram at @usaswimmingnextgen
- **The USA Swimming Officials Facebook page is being phased out. Please search "USA Swimming Officials" on Facebook and join the new USA Swimming Officials community group.**

The Deck Referee and Starter Team

It's All About Communication

Kathleen Scandary and Denice Wepasnick

No matter the size or level of the meet, the deck referee and starter must be a team that communicates. The teamwork begins when you are assigned to one of these two roles, whether it be for the entire session or a few events within a session. Even before starting your pre-session checks, you both should have a conversation regarding potential circumstances that might come up, such as how false starts should be handled, should SR communicate empty lanes/full heat, etc. While the athletes are in the pool for warm-ups, the SR can check the integrity of the start system as the DR inspects the blocks. While the DR is inspecting blocks, he/she can also listen to the voice of the SR projecting through the speakers, checking for clarity. The DR's feedback allows for the necessary adjustments to be made before the athletes are even on the block or in the water and possibly on the ledge. During this time, or in the minutes before the event, the SR is the first to pick their spot for the best view of all lanes. The goal for the DR in choosing their position to stand is the same: an unobstructed visual gaze over the lanes.

However, the DR must also keep in mind that their outstretched arm, signifying the heat has been given to the SR, must be easily and peripherally visible. This is another example of the teamwork necessary to ensure the SR, as well as the DR, maintains sight of all athletes at the blocks before the start.

The SR may report to the DR when the anticipated number of athletes are all present, or only when there is an empty lane, depending on what is established in the pre-session dialogue. The short whistles are blown and as the athletes are transitioning onto the blocks, the DR hands over the heat to the SR. It is now up to the SR to decide when to give the start command and the start signal. If all is well, the two watch the swimmers break the surface before going into their distinctly different roles. The SR, who is aware of the amount of time the DR is spending processing calls, can be very helpful by providing information on which swimmer is trailing behind and anything of importance regarding athletes in the next heat. The DR can help the SR by their own demeanor and walking away to take calls. This allows the SR to calmly observe the behavior of the swimmers in the next heat.

Prior to the start, an issue that has the potential to create inequity may require the DR to retract their arm and tell the SR to stand the heat. If need be, the DR may ask the SR to have the athletes step down carefully. The field has been returned to the DR, at this point. The team may spend a moment in conference, take action if needed, and bring the heat back onto the blocks with the DR blowing the long whistle. The SR is equally responsible for making sure that the athletes are settling and are not distracted. In some instances, the command to stand is used at the discretion of the SR if the starter feels that there may be the possibility of inequity at the start while the arm of the DR remains extended. Should a false start occur, both the SR and DR mark their sheet independent of one another. The SR initiates the call by approaching the DR, observing first whether radio communication is taking place. The SR uses a phrase that will get the DR's attention, like, "I have a potential..." or "Did you see anything?" The two show their sheet with the markings on the lane of the swimmer who committed the false start, thus solidifying the independence of their calls.

The goal of effective communication between the SR and DR is to develop a team approach to ensure the best possible outcome for the athletes we serve.

Important Upcoming Dates

- May 17th-19th, 2019 – Eastern/Central Zone Workshop – Chicago, IL
- June 4th, 2019 – USA Swimming winter meet applications open
- June 21st-23rd, 2019 – LSC Officials Chairs Workshop – Charlotte, NC
- September 10th-September 15th, 2019 – USAS Convention – St. Louis, MO

Summary of the Nationals Officials Committee (NOC) Meeting – April 27 *Kathleen Scandary, National Officials Committee Chair*

Results of a survey taken by LSC Officials Chairs and those attending the winter national meets this past December and January revealed common themes and interesting data. The strongest message was one of being more transparent in our decisions. Another frequently made comment to the NOC was that officials do not publicly celebrate accomplishments, or showcase those who are moving into meet referee positions for the very first time. While at dinner, we celebrated the officials who are serving as meet referees for the 2019 USA Swimming five-star national meets and international assignments. They are listed below. Acting within the theme of transparency, committee members were asked to submit their suggestion for Olympic Trials Meet Referee. The choice of Clark Hammond was announced at our dinner for celebrating with the other meet referees referenced earlier. Furthermore, we have asked the LSC Officials Chairs to contribute to the Olympic Trials deck officials nominees list by submitting five names of deserving officials from their own LSC who meet rather stringent criteria.

Based on the results of the survey, the twelve of us at the meeting looked critically at the five areas identified for strategic change and developed plans. Going forward, we will expound upon these and create measurable outcomes. For each of the five topics, two members will continue the work over the summer and present the final product at convention.

Our committee is fortunate to have Jim Holcomb, who has agreed to remain on the committee as an active member. Jim is instrumental in blending historical perspectives to our discussions, with suggesting multiple avenues by which we can the adopt changes identified by the survey. Our athletes also contributed greatly to the process by providing their perspective. Thanks to both Shelby Mullendore who gave up time as a student-athlete to be present, and Jack Swanson who was part of the action by way of cell phone!

Here is a quick summary of other items:

- The Mentoring and Evaluation sub-committee will be led by Dana Covington. LSC Officials Chairs will be informed of the process of advancement to, or within the list of national evaluators when they meet next month, in Charlotte.
- Sandy Drake and Matt Wilson spoke to Open Water events and will be overseeing education and promotion in this area of officiating.
- Matt Wilson heads up the OTS and has a two-member sub-committee to attend to the number of requests for OQM status and changes in certification levels of officiating.
- Anne Lawley, Education and Forms, prepared a number of potential form changes for our discussion and decisions. Look for these on the USA swimming website soon. She will be active in the development of materials for our workshops as well.
- Clark Hammond brought up five specific rules that will receive attention at the Rules and Regulations meeting at the end of this month, in Florida.
- Scott Mengelkoch has taken over the quarterly conference call with the LSC Chairs and will help Jack Swanson, athlete, with the bi-monthly newsletter.
- Bill Rose and his committee have finished the updates on the online tests, and they are live for use on the website.
- Eddie Hughes updated all of us on issues regarding the YMCAs.

Meet Referee Selections and Officials Representing at International Events

Summer Meets

- Nationals - Dave Coddington
- Junior Nationals - Trish Martin
- Futures - Phil Lakota (Oregon), Peter LaGow (Iowa), Mickey Smythe (Ohio), Anne Lawley (North Carolina)

Winter Meets

- Toyota US Open - Jamie Cahn
- Speedo Winter Juniors East - Jason Johnson
- Speedo Winter Juniors West - Don Hougardy

International Meets Officials

- World Champs - Fran Werner (SR), Wayne Shulby (ITO), Sandy Drake (Open Water)
- World Junior Champs - Robert Broyles (ITO)
- Pan Ams - Lisa Vetterlein (Deck Official/SR), Pam Wilson (Open Water)
- Pan Am Junior Open Water Champs - Matt Wilson, Pam Wilson, Sandy Drake, Tom Lombardo
- World University Games - Amy Hoppenrath (ITO)

Officials' Excellence Award April 2019

James Hanton - Minnesota Swimming

Jim Hanton served as Admin Vice Chair for the Minnesota Swimming from 2009-2013 as well as General Chair from 2013-2017, and was instrumental in the adoption of the Competitive Excellence Initiative. Jim has officiated at every level in the state of Minnesota, and continues to volunteer his weekends even after his children have left the sport. Jim can usually be found on a pool deck at least three out of every four weekends a month, offering his time in any role to fill the need of the LSC. Jim is willing to travel to any corner of the state, often with late notice, to lend a hand wherever needed. Jim is also continually mentoring officials, young and old, providing encouragement and resources to keep officials informed and engaged. Still, Jim holds the athletes above all else and is frequently keeping balance and fairness across the competitions. As one official put it, Jim is the example for which all officials should aspire to be.



Furthermore, Jim has taken the lead on organizing this year's Swimposium for Minnesota; Setting the schedule, finding speakers and building up the programs offered. This opportunity for their officials, coaches and athletes to congregate and learn together would not have been easily accomplished without Jim's leadership and persistence.

Lastly, Jim remains active as Immediate Past General Chair on the Board, sharing his knowledge and experience which aids the Board in decision making. Jim deserves recognition for his continual contribution to officiating and the sport of swimming as a whole.

Congratulations, Jim!

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