



AROUND THE DECK

POTOMAC VALLEY SWIMMING OFFICIALS

NEWSLETTER

2015
FEBRUARY



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The PVS Short Course Championship Season will be here before you know it. It would be great if all our officials could support one or more of our PVS championship meets. It starts with the 18&U Age Group Championships on February 20-22. March brings our Senior Championships, Junior Championships, and the 14&U Junior Olympics. Applications to officiate these March championship meets can be found on the PVS website at <http://www.pvswim.org/official/applications.html>. Both the Senior Championships and Junior Olympics meets will be Officials Qualifying Meets (OQMs) for national certification. See the articles below about the National Certification program.

There are also three Sectionals meets and the SC Zone meet run by the Eastern Zone in March. All four of these meets will be OQMs. I will be at the LC Sectionals in Buffalo and PVS official Bonnie Lechten will be the Team Lead Chief Judge. We'd be happy to have you join us. You can find applications to officiate these meets at the link above.

For our 8&U mini swimmers and those that don't qualify for the championship meets there are a number of club-hosted meets in March. They too could use your help.

If there are still any outstanding registration and/or certification issues for 2015, please let me know how I can help solve them. I hope to see you at a PVS meet in February or March.

Tim Husson
OfficialsChair@pvswim.org

Are You New?



It can be easy to get lost if you're a new PVS official, but your first point of contact should be your club's Officials Chair. If you don't know who that individual is, you can find the listing [here](#). Your Club Officials Chair can provide you with additional information on what officiating positions are available, as well as when and where training clinics are held.

Just because your club doesn't host meets doesn't mean that you're not needed. Many of our clubs don't have enough officials to host a meet on their own. By working together and working at each other's meets, we all make sure that we have a sufficient number of officials and that no particular individual is overworked.

Mentoring Apprentice Officials in PVS

By Barb Ship, Officials Committee Member



Goals

- Encourage volunteers to train and become certified as a Stroke and Turn Official
- To mentor and teach swim officials to perform at a consistent high level of swim officiating

A good mentor...

- Has good communication and listening skills
- Is able to develop a relationship with his/her mentee
- Is able to provide guidance and encouragement
- Is committed to the development of the Mentee
- Has experience and is knowledgeable

Mentoring Skills

- **Patience:** Try not to rush to judgment on skills or ability; allow the official extra time to improve their skills; avoid doing it for them; be reassuring.
- **Encouragement:** Nervousness, anxiety and insecurity can be roadblocks to success. Encourage officials that they have the “right stuff” and help guide their talent in a new and different direction than they might have experienced previously.
- **Listening:** “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Try to find discussion areas that are free from distractions; focus just on that conversation; allow the official time to finish communicating without interruptions; and ask questions if clarification is needed.
- **Questioning:** Frame questions in a positive way. Focus on what has gone well and then what can be improved. Consider using empowering questions that facilitate thinking and help the official discover his/her own answers. Examples of empowering questions include: “How do you feel about your performance so far?” or “What key things would you like to change? Why?” or “How are you thinking of changing that? What kind of support would you like?”
- **Feedback:** “You may not remember what someone says or does, but you’ll never forget how they made you feel.” Use a blend of compassion, tact and diplomacy both to encourage and to help teach new skills. Use positive verbal reinforcement and consider using nonverbal communication, including hand signals (thumbs up, high five, quiet clapping or fist pump), as well as smiles and head nods. It’s imperative to provide feedback at a time that is most comfortable for the recipient. Ask if he/she would like feedback often during a session, only when a skill absolutely has to be corrected, or at the end of a session. Remember to start the discussion using positive reinforcement before talking about skills that need refinement. Try to avoid overloading the officials with suggestions. Try just three top suggestions at a time.



YOU MAKE THE CALL



Situation: Three stroke and turn judges are positioned at each end of a 100-yard breaststroke event. During Heat 2 the stroke and turn judge having jurisdiction over lanes 1-2 disqualifies the swimmer in lane 2 for a scissors kick. Subsequent calls are made for the same violation by the same judge in heats 3 and 4. This particular official was recently certified as a stroke and turn judge.

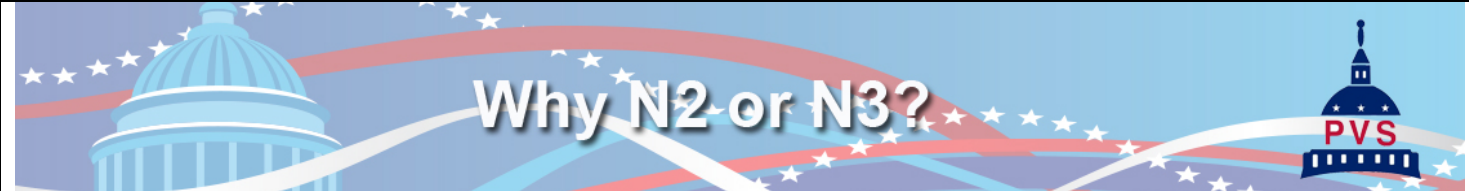
Question: Should you do anything? What should you do if you subsequently determine that the scissors kick call being made by this judge was, in fact, a legal kick?



National Certification for Officials



USA Swimming recognizes two distinct levels of National Certification for officials: N2 and N3. N2, the first National level in a position, is administered by the National Officials Committee and recognizes that an official is experienced and has been evaluated as capable of working the position at Sectional, Zone, Grand Prix and similar higher profile meets. N3, the second and highest National level in a position, is likewise administered by the National Officials Committee and recognizes that an official has the experience, skills, and knowledge to be considered for selection to work National Championship level meets in the position. Requirements for progression to N2 and N3 levels in the positions of Stroke and Turn Judge, Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee, and Administrative Referee can be found on the [USA Swimming website](#).



Why N2 or N3?



Several of the upcoming meets have been approved by USA Swimming as an Officials Qualifying Meet for N2 and N3 certification. The meet will include opportunities to be observed for N2 and N3 certification in most positions.

Why would you want to attain National certification as an N2 or N3 official?

- To have the satisfaction that you're recognized as a highly motivated official who demonstrates superior performance standards on deck.
- To receive practical constructive feedback regarding your performance from very experienced nationally-recognized officials.
- To qualify to work at higher level meets. N2 certification recognizes that an official is experienced and has been evaluated as capable of working the position at Sectional, Zone, Grand Prix and similar higher profile meets. N3 certification recognizes that an official has the experience, skills and knowledge to be considered for selection to work at National Championship level meets in the position.
- To strengthen and enrich the sport of Swimming and Swim Officiating in the National Capital area.
- To be viewed as a mentor by your fellow officials.

- To help insure that all swimmers, from novice to Olympian, will have the most professional, most consistent, and fairest officiating possible.

Complete requirements for progression to N2 and N3 levels in the positions of Stroke and Turn Judge, Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee, and Administrative Referee can be found on the [USA Swimming website](#).



- Apprentice official should complete necessary requirements before training on deck (register with USA Swimming as either an apprentice official or as a non-athlete member) <http://www.pvswim.org/official/certification.html>
- Apprentice official should contact meet referee or officials coordinator prior to meet (ideally several weeks in advance) and request an opportunity to train during the meet (specify day and session)
- Apprentice official should review Evaluation Form prior to the session and use training sessions and work with Mentor to ensure that he/she acquires the necessary skills for the position:
<http://www.pvswim.org/official/StrokeEvaluationForm.pdf>
- Apprentice official should arrive at the training session at the beginning of warm-ups and report to the meet referee
- Meet referee should assign apprentice official to work with experienced certified S&T official during session (mentor should be certified for at least 1 year)
- During session, certified (mentoring) official should make all calls. Mentor should review calls with apprentice official as well as discuss rules, protocol, etc., with mentee during the session. Mentee should ask questions of Mentor during session and ensure that he/she understands all the requirements and skills on the PVS Stroke and Turn Evaluation form. At the conclusion of session, Mentor should meet with Mentee and review session, answer any questions, provide feedback and recommendations for future training sessions, etc. Training card should then be signed by deck or meet referee who should also review the session with the apprentice official.
- Prior to the evaluation session, the apprentice should make sure that he/she has completed all necessary requirements for the position.
- Once apprentice official feels ready to become certified (note – the required number of sessions is a suggested minimum; apprentice officials are encouraged to train for more than the minimum number of sessions prior to requesting evaluation for certification), apprentice official should contact either his/her Club Official's Chair (<http://www.pvswim.org/clubchr.htm>) or the Meet Referee/Official's Coordinator for a meet (see meet announcement) and request an evaluation. This request should be made as soon as possible to allow time for the recruitment of evaluators. The Official's Chair and/or Meet Referee/Official's Coordinator should make every effort to find an evaluator for the apprentice.
- During the Evaluation Session, the Apprentice Official should make all calls by raising his/her hand. The Evaluator should be standing near the Apprentice Official as an observer only. The Apprentice Official should discuss the calls with the Chief Judge or Referee with the Evaluator confirming the observations. The DQ slip should be signed by the Evaluator after review by the Apprentice Official.
- After the evaluation session, the Evaluator should find a quiet place to sit and complete the evaluation form and review with the Apprentice Official. An evaluation session is part mentoring and part evaluation.
- If the evaluation session was successfully completed, the Apprentice Official should submit the training card and evaluation to the PVS Certification Office, Lynne Gerlach, 11910 Callow Terrace, Laurel, MD 20708-2802.



Jack's Corner

Food for Thought from Jack Neill



You're Being Watched!

There are lots of new officials on deck these days and lots of opportunities for veteran officials to serve as mentors. Mentoring plays a significant role in the training of new officials, helping the trainee attain the skills and confidence needed to become an effective deck official.

PVS assigns mentors to apprentice officials at each session as part of the formal training program. But all experienced officials are de facto mentors—newer officials watch us to see how we act, what we say, what we do, how we handle various situations, and then base their actions and words on what they've observed. While we aim to be inconspicuous and "invisible" to swimmers, coaches, and spectators, we are all constantly being studied by our apprentice officials.

The dictionary defines a mentor as "a trusted counselor or guide" and "a wise, loyal advisor or coach." The original Mentor was a character in Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. When Odysseus went off to fight the Trojan Wars, he entrusted his son, Telemachus, into Mentor's care. Mentor was a tutor, guide, and protector to the boy for many years, teaching by words as well as by actions. We take our lead from this character.

The goal is to educate by example. Conversations can be motivating, but teaching by example has impact. It's one thing to tell a trainee to "observe but do not scrutinize," but it's much more powerful to demonstrate this on a consistent basis. As John Wooden once said, "Being a role model is the most powerful form of educating."

Model respect. Don't criticize swimmers, coaches, or other officials. Respect and support decisions made by the Referee. It's especially important for apprentice officials to see and hear us interacting appropriately with swimmers and coaches. This is particularly true when delivering bad news; if we consistently approach these occasions respectfully, professionally, and with empathy, our new officials will likely do the same when placed in a similar situation. While these incidents can become stressful, it's critical that apprentice officials see us handle the stress in a positive manner.

Think out loud. Give the apprentice some insight into your thought process and how you arrive at your decisions. Make it a conversation, not a lecture. Don't focus solely on performance or behaviors that need to improve; let your apprentice know when he/she is doing something well. And when you have suggestions for improvement, use language that supports without criticism.

Model a professional look. The new officials have all heard that they need to be neat in attire, and attentive and focused in department. But this needs to be reinforced by seeing every deck official demonstrating these behaviors consistently.

Throughout the year all of us are mentors, regardless of whether we've been formally assigned or not. As a mentor, your actions are being appraised, so you must set the bar for yourself just as high, or higher, than you'd expect from your new officials.

The less-experienced officials on deck are watching you, looking for a role model. Be their mentor.

YOU MAKE THE CALL RESOLUTION



Recommended Resolution: A number of questions need to be asked. Are the other judges making similar calls at the same frequency? If not, it would be a good idea to have someone observe the official during subsequent races. This is where a chief judge can be of great benefit. If the referee finds that the scissors kick being called was actually a legal kick, the referee should overrule the disqualifications.

Applicable Rules: 102.13.1, 102.13.4



FEBRUARY

Date	Meet	Host	Location
7	February Qualifier	SNOW	Claude Moore
8	PVS February Distance	FAST	Fairland
8	Munchkin Mania	FAST	Fairland
8	February Friendship Mini Meet (by invitation)	YORK	Providence
13-15	29th Annual Black History Meet	DCPR	Takoma
12-14	Arena Pro Swim Series (LCM)		Orlando, FL
14-15	Gender Blender Mini Meet	RMSC	KSAC
14-15	Winter Gator Mini Meet	AAC	Wakefield H.S.
14-15	President's Day Classic	OCCS	WARE
14-15	PM 14&U JO Qualifier	PM	Cub Run
20-22	PVS 18&U Age Group Championships	FBST	Lee District
21-22	RMSC February Qualifier	RMSC	MLK

MARCH

Date	Meet	Host	Location
5-8	PVS Short Course Championships	NCAP	GMU
5-8	PVS SC Junior Championships	NCAP	GMU
7-8	Mini Championships	NCAP	Claude Moore
12-15	PVS 14&U Junior Olympic Championships	MACH	Univ. of MD
19-22	Speedo Championship Series Eastern Zone Northern Sectional Meet	SYCH	<i>Ithaca, NY</i>
19-22	Speedo Championship Series Eastern Zone Southern Sectional Meet	VA Swimming	Christiansburg, VA
20-22	March Madness	YORK	Oak Marr
21-22	MAKO Spring Invitational	MAKO	GMU
21-22	Mini Championships	RMSC	Olney
27-28	RMSC Spring Finale	RMSC	Germantown
27-29	Spring Championships	MSSC	Fairland
26-28	<i>Eastern Zone SC Championships</i>	<i>Fairport Swimming</i>	<i>Webster, NY</i>
26-29	Speedo Championship Series Eastern Zone Spring LC Meet	<i>Star Swimming</i>	<i>Buffalo, NY</i>

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT GOES TO THE SWIMMER

Call what you see and see what you call

