

## SPECIAL SPRING CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION



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### **POTOMAC VALLEY SWIMMING MISSION STATEMENT**

*Potomac Valley Swimming (PVS) shall promote swimming and foster equal access for competitive opportunities for the benefit of swimmers of all ages and abilities, in accordance with the standards, rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA), USA Swimming (USA-S) and PVS and its Articles of Incorporation. The objectives and primary purpose of PVS shall be the education and assurance of instruction and training of individuals to develop and improve their capabilities in the sport of swimming.*



**From the Chairman**  
**PVS Officials Committee Chair Tim Husson**



This is the month for the championship meets to mark the end of the short course season. This is also the time for us officials to be in championship mode. Two of our meets are Officials Qualifying Meets, where mentoring and evaluation by national evaluators take place. But even if you aren't being evaluated or working one of these meets that is not an OQM, take the time to read the articles in this newsletter to help make you a better official.

Self-evaluation is something all officials should do whether you have been an official for 2 months or 20 years. For those being evaluated this month, there is a good article about the evaluation process and what is expected. There is also an article about officiating championship meets. Although some of the protocols may be more formal at the championship meets, they are just swim meets and the rules are the same as we always follow. Finally, Jack Neill provides us with some good advice in his column.

I hope to see you at one of the meets this month. Email me your comments and questions anytime.

Tim Husson  
OfficialsChair@pvswim.org

# 10 Points of Self-Evaluation

by Joel Black, North Carolina Swimming



## THE SWIMMING OFFICIAL - 10 POINTS OF SELF-EVALUATION

### Acknowledgment

Joel Black has been an Official of North Carolina Swimming and a football official for the North Carolina High School Athletic Association for more than 20 years. He is the current Officials Chair for North Carolina Swimming and is Vice Chair of USA Swimming Officials Committee.

### 10 POINTS OF SELF EVALUATION

When it comes to self-evaluation, honesty is crucial. Keeping your self-esteem high can be healthy, but when you really want to get serious about improving your officiating, embellishing the truth is a false start. Here is a starting point for a complete self-analysis.

How many times after working a meet do you drive home thinking your work as an official is done? Maybe you spent a few moments thinking back on your performance. Perhaps you came out with the vague notion that you had a good meet or a bad meet. How often do you expand on those notions and ask yourself why? How often do you actually sit down shortly after a meet and ask yourself the tough questions?

In reviewing the manuals for officials of various sports and listening to the training suggestions of instructional chairmen of different organizations, one thing appears almost conspicuous by its absence: Recommendations for any kind of post game self-evaluation. The NFL, however, has a particularly intensive post-game review process for its crews, including videotape analysis of each play in which an infraction was called.

Indeed, it seems to be the practice of many groups to dissuade officials from ever looking back. It is not uncommon to hear or read such maxims as, "Forget the bad games" or, "Never second-guess yourself," or, "Leave the game on the court or field." Those are unfortunate practices.

A great deal can be learned by officials who review recently completed work. Only by recognizing past errors, and the situations in which they occurred, can officials take the necessary steps to avoid them from that point on. Don't ever think your work is done when you walk off the deck. If you're interested in improving as an official, you need to ask yourself the following 10 questions after every meet or contest.

Keep in mind that the purpose of the questions is to alert you to any undesirable tendencies in your work or situations that are particularly troublesome to you. As a result, any question answered "Yes" should be followed by the companion questions "Why?" and "In what situations?"

You can only answer the questions about yourself; others cannot answer them. No one but you have access to your experiences. For that reason, complete honesty is a must if these questions are to be of any value. Let's get started.

1. **DID I BLOW ANY CALLS?** Blowing calls will always occur regardless of an official's experience and expertise. Officiating is simply not a perfectible craft. It is, however, inexcusable for an official to continue making the same kinds of mistakes or mistakes with the same frequency throughout his career. The purpose of self- evaluation is to eliminate certain kinds of errors and to reduce their overall frequency. By identifying your blown calls you can begin to learn why you blew them and how to avoid blowing the same calls in the future.
2. **WERE THERE ANY TIMES WHEN IT WAS FORTUNATE THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO MAKE A CALL?** In almost every contest there are situations (or potential ones) which could cause officials embarrassment if they were required to make a ruling. Fortunately, most lapses in concentration, improper positioning and failures to hustle go unnoticed by others (coaches excepted). You should not, however, ignore those lapses. Sooner or later such shortcomings will catch up to you.
3. **DID I DO EVERYTHING I COULD TO ENSURE A JUST OUTCOME?** In every sport there is a great deal of latitude available for officials in the sanctioning of play. As a result, this arbitrary power could strongly influence (if not determine) the outcome of a contest. The best you can hope to do is to choose a course of enforcement that will be just and bring about a conclusion that reflects the relative performance by the participants. In other words, do not become a part of the competition.
4. **WERE MY CALLS/DECISIONS CONSISTENT?** Want to drive coaches crazy and keep the spectators buzzing? Inconsistency will do it every time. In fact across all sports if you polled coaches you would find that officiating inconsistency is their largest concern. Inconsistent calls between officials, as well as relative inconsistency by a single official are problems.
5. **DID I FAIL TO MAINTAIN PROPER CONTROL AT ANY TIME?** An important part of any official's job is to control the behavior of athlete, coaches and spectators so the meet can proceed in an orderly fashion. Arguments, spectator interference and other unexpected disruptions often endanger the likelihood of orderliness and proper conclusion. Anyone can be

surprised and confused by new experiences, but each such situation should be used as a learning experience for future incidents.

6. **WHEN DID I FEEL MOST VULNERABLE TO OUTSIDE INFLUENCES?** All officials experience situations in which their confidence and independence waxes and wanes. That is a normal response to an activity that relies so heavily upon subjective judgment. It is important, however, for you to know when you are most vulnerable so that necessary steps can be taken to keep those influences in a proper perspective. By identifying when you are most susceptible to those outside influences, you can bear down with a little discipline and follow your own course.
7. **WERE THERE ANY SITUATIONS WHERE I AVOIDED OR USURPED RESPONSIBILITY FOR A RULING AT THE EXPENSE OF ANOTHER OFFICIAL?** It is a human tendency to avoid potentially threatening situations while seeking those that are likely to be rewarding. You should be careful, however, of any action that might reflect badly upon a brother or sister official. Whether you allowed your co-worker to take responsibility for a ruling you should have made or you stepped in and overruled your partner, you should be certain it is done in the interest of the meet rather than for any personal motive.
8. **WAS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT MY SIGNALS, GESTURES OR STYLE THAT EVOKED AN UNEXPECTED OR UNWANTED RESPONSE?** An official is often unaware of how his work appears to others. As a result, his work may be seen as inappropriate or incompetent. For example, although you may want to appear relaxed during the course of your work, you may be perceived as appearing disinterested. Good officials, on each occasion, should know something about the character of their audiences and adjust their performances to produce the best possible results. Such insight takes time, experience and attentiveness to the changing character of audiences.
9. **DID I UPHOLD, DEFEND OR RATIONALIZE ANY IMPROPER RULINGS?** Many officials live by the old adage that to change a decision is to provoke criticism and undermine credibility. It should be kept in mind that the purpose for which an official is appointed is to "call em right." If you are unable to handle criticism or are too concerned with an untarnished image, you probably shouldn't get involved in such work. When a mistake is made, you should accept the responsibility rather than penalize the participants by insisting upon its correctness. In the long run, that type of inflexibility does more damage to your credibility than almost anything else. However, you should never allow those mistakes to continue. If you are consistently accepting responsibility for the same blown call over and over again, you will end up losing credibility.
10. **WAS THERE A PARTICULAR ASPECT OF MY PERFORMANCE THAT I COULD WORK ON AT THE NEXT MEET?** The perfect game or meet has yet to be worked. If you ever answer "No" to this question, you are either deceiving yourself or not

interested in perfecting your craft. There are always areas in need of improvement. Officials who are satisfied with all past performances are either lazy, disinterested or simply haven't had their weaknesses exploited (they will eventually). You should always work under the assumption that you are only as good as your next call and should make every effort to ensure a good one.

By understanding yourself and identifying your strengths and weaknesses as an official, you open the door for improvement every meet. If you're committed to improvement and have a desire to succeed in your work, memorize the 10 questions and commit to answering them in detail shortly after every meet.

### **10 MORE QUESTIONS DID I...**

1. Arrive at the meet site on time?
2. Dress smartly and appropriately?
3. Conduct or participate in a beneficial pre meet conference?
4. Look confident without appearing over-confident?
5. Give the proper signals (whistles, raised hand, etc.) in an appropriate manner?
6. Develop and maintain genuine teamwork with my partners?
7. Maintain proper positioning?
8. Place my hands on an athlete for any reason?
9. Treat all participants with the appropriate amount of respect?
10. Make every effort to defuse potentially volatile situations?

## **Evaluation Process and Guidelines** by USA Swimming Officials Committee



*Before going through the evaluation process it might be good to understand the role of the evaluator and the suggested evaluation procedures and guidelines.*

### **Evaluation Procedures and Guidelines**

The purpose of the National Certification process for USA Swimming officials is to ensure high quality officiating consistent with the National Standards. The process will achieve and maintain the requisite knowledge, skills, experience, qualities and participation of each individual USA Swimming official. Evaluators should provide education, mentoring and constructive feedback to improve and retain officials, as needed.

### **Evaluator Responsibilities**

1. Only those evaluators approved for an Officials Qualifying Meet (OQM) have access to the Officials Tracking System (OTS) to enter evaluations.
2. Prior to the meet, ensure that each official requesting evaluation for

- advancement has current certifications required for the evaluation as described on the National Officials Certification Summary.
3. Provide each official requesting evaluation a copy of the checklist for the position being evaluated (Stroke and Turn, Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee or Administrative Referee). Use the checklist as the standard guideline when evaluating each official.
  4. Provide education, mentoring and assistance to the official early in the evaluation process to improve and motivate, allowing for newly-learned information and techniques to be successfully implemented.
  5. Make sure each evaluated official understands that they will have to go online and apply for National Officials Certification if they are eligible to advance or recertify in a position. Also make sure they know where to find the application on the "Officials Tracking" page and that they are aware of the Certification and Recertification Summaries, "FAQs" and other documents on the "Certification" pages and the documents available on the "Training Resources" pages of the "Officials" section on the USA Swimming web site.
  6. At the conclusion of the OQM, complete the on-line OTS evaluation for each official that you evaluated. If possible, print and hand a copy of your evaluation to the official and review it with him or her. All those evaluated will have access to their evaluations through the OTS and will receive an email summary when it is entered. Be sure to note "standout" officiating, satisfactory levels, and areas where "improvement is needed" to meet the requested certification or re-certification level.
  7. The Meet Referee is responsible for ensuring that the OTS is completed for all officials evaluated at the meet.

#### **Evaluation Procedures and Guidelines Evaluator Guidelines**

- National Evaluators may give only one passing N2 or N3 evaluation, within a 24-month period, to an official advancing in the same position.
- Certification and Re-certification evaluations for multiple positions may be completed at the same meet provided the minimum number of full sessions for each position was met.
- Evaluators may participate as an official at an OQM provided the number of candidates for advancement is limited to allow fair and objective evaluation and interaction. While the maximum limits may vary from evaluator to evaluator it is recommended that an evaluator limit the number of candidates per session to three (3) when also acting as an official for the meet. When acting strictly as an evaluator, it is recommended that an evaluator limit the number of candidates per session to six (6).
- An evaluator should also consider the combination of positions being evaluated in a session. For example, when evaluating starters and deck referees, an evaluator will likely be able to handle more candidates than if it was stroke & turn judges and admin referees. Certain combinations of positions will contribute to how many evaluations can be done at a

given session.

- National Evaluators are also expected to:
  - Represent USA Swimming in a professional manner to mentor and motivate fellow officials;
  - Evaluate officials to ensure the official is ready to work that position on the Sectional/Zone deck (N2) or National Championship deck (N3); this includes the official knowing the rules, the position protocols/procedures and demonstration of a team orientation.
  - Provide meaningful feedback on the process; and
  - Continue their own education through participation in formal or informal forums and discussions at National or other high level meets, Convention, meetings, clinics, etc.
- Evaluators should give priority to those officials who have submitted a request. Requests for evaluations when you arrive at the meet should only be accepted if you have the capacity to do a complete and effective job. Otherwise the evaluation could be for “education” purposes only.
- Responsibility for the meet remains with the Meet Referee.
- National Evaluators approved to give Initial or Final N3 evaluations may earn their own re-certification evaluation, participation, education and mentoring credit by accomplishing the following:
  - Full-time National Evaluator (including prompt completion of reports) at three OQMs in the 36 months before expiration will satisfy (personal) requirements at all positions.
  - Full-time National Evaluator at one OQM will satisfy the evaluation, education and mentoring requirements, but full credit still requires working two additional OQMs in the 36 months before expiration.
  - It is suggested that National Evaluators request periodic evaluations by a National Evaluator: in the S&T Judge position;
  - In the Starter position, if N2 or N3 certified.

All Evaluators should keep their records of all evaluations for at least three months following each evaluation in the event that further questions arise regarding the evaluation.

**You Make the Call!**



**Question:** The meet announcement of a championship meet states that the fastest heat of the 13-14 and 15&over men and women 1650 yard freestyles will be swum during finals with all other heats being swum during the morning prelims. The

evening before the 1650-yard freestyle, the Meet Committee notifies the Meet Director that they had previously voted to swim only two heats of the 1650-yard freestyle during finals—one heat of men and one heat of women with the age groups combined. The Meet Director thereupon notifies the coaches of the swimmers involved and effects the change directed by the Committee. Only some of the coaches were aware of the Committee's vote.

**What should be done?** Was the situation handled properly? What, if anything, should have been done differently? Should the Meet Referee have played a role in this decision? Should a meet jury have been convened to rule on this issue?

## Expectations for Officiating at Championships

by USA Swimming Officials Committee & Bob Vincent



### Expectations for Officiating at a

#### **National Championship Level Meet**

(National Championships, US Open, World Cup, Olympic Trials)

#### **National Level Meet**

(Sectionals, Zones, Arena Pro Series, Futures and other approved "Qualifying" meets)

#### **Potomac Valley LSC Championship Meet**

(SC Sr. Champs, LC Sr. Champs)

An Official shall have:

1. For National Championship meets - current N3 certification in the position and current LSC certification.
2. For National meets - current N3, N2, or eligible for N2 evaluation, and current LSC certification.
3. For Potomac Valley Swimming LSC Championship meets - current LSC certification.
4. Knowledge of current USA Swimming Rules.
5. Knowledge of Championship Meet Protocol or a willingness to learn Championship Meet Protocol.

An Official is expected to:

#### **1. Dress in appropriate swimming official's attire.**

Make sure you know what the uniform of the meet is going to be. Different meets have different uniform requirements. While we like to be recognized as individuals, the goal of officiating is that we all look professional. The best



way to do that is to make sure we don't stand out for any reason. Officials always represent USA Swimming and not LSCs or clubs.

**2. Be punctual.**

Don't just show up on time, show up ready on time. If you need some time to get dressed, eat, make phone calls, etc., make sure you allow yourself enough time before you are expected to report. Showing up early also allows you to have some social time before the meet starts.

**3. Attend pre-meet briefings.**

It is not only responsible, but it is required. You will hear important information during the pre-meet briefing. It is best to give out that information to all officials at one time so that we are consistent in our officiating duties.

**4. Work any position assigned.**

When you apply to work a meet, at any level, you should be willing to work in any position you are assigned. It is ok at the local level to send a note requesting a position so that you can be evaluated, or gain valuable experience, but you are volunteering to work the meet in any position. Our focus is always on staffing the deck to meet the requirements of the meet.

**5. Work all sessions he/she has committed to.**

Make sure you keep your commitments. And that means working the entire session. Just because you have a swimmer that is done before the meet is over, please consider keeping your commitment to the other athletes that are not done swimming. There are always times when we have to leave, but they should only be in emergency situations.

**6. Execute proper deck protocol.**

Protocol will differ at each meet. The Meet Referee sets the protocol because each meet is different. There are some common protocols, but be flexible in how things are done. Just because we do them one way at a National Meet or in Potomac Valley does not make them the only or the best way. Be flexible.

**7. Describe any rule infraction clearly and concisely.**

Realize that the Chief Judge has to relay the call into a referee for possible acceptance. Being clear and concise in your discussion with the Chief Judge about what you observed and what the infraction is will make that process easier.

**8. Maintain a positive attitude.**

Not everything will go your way. Sometimes a call might not be accepted, or might even be overturned. It is not personal; it is about being fair to the athletes. There are many reasons why things are done during a meet. If you have a question, please ask, but make sure you wait for the appropriate time to ask. Your attitude is contagious, keep it positive.

**9. Be a “team” player.**

Do what need to be done when you are asked to do it. Being a team player means making sacrifices for the team. When you are known as a team player, you become welcome on every deck. You will be surprised in how people will go out of their way to do things for you when they know you are willing to do whatever needs to be done.

**10. Show up prepared.**

If you are being evaluated for advancement or recertification make sure that you understand the responsibilities of the position. The best place to start is by reading the “Professional” descriptions that USA Swimming has provided for each position on the deck.

**You Make the Call Resolution**



**Recommended Resolution:** The Meet Committee has no authority to change the order of events as stated in the meet announcement. The authority to change the order or arrangement of heats lies only with the Meet Referee and only to the extent of consolidating heats. The change should not have been made.

**Applicable Rule:** 102.8.1

**Upcoming Meets**



**MARCH**

Date	Meet	Host	Location
3-5	<a href="#">Arena Pro Swim Series (LCM)</a>		Orlando, FL
3-6	<a href="#">PVS Short Course Championships</a>	NCAP	<a href="#">GMU</a>
3-6	<a href="#">PVS SC Junior Championships</a>	NCAP	<a href="#">GMU</a>
5-6	<a href="#">Mini Championships</a>	RMSC	<a href="#">Olney</a>
10-13	<a href="#">PVS 14&amp;U Junior Olympic Championships</a>	MACH	<a href="#">Univ. of MD</a>
18-20	<a href="#">RMSC Spring Finale</a>	RMSC	<a href="#">Germantown</a>
18-20	Spring Championships	MSSC	<a href="#">Fairland</a>
19-20	<a href="#">MAKO Spring Invitational</a>	MAKO	<a href="#">GMU</a>
24-26	<a href="#">Eastern Zone SC Championships</a>	Fairport Swimming	Webster, NY
31-3	Speedo Championship Series Eastern Zone LC Northern Sectional	STAR	Buffalo, NY

	<i>Meet</i>		
31-3	<a href="#"><u>Speedo Championship Series Eastern Zone LC Southern Sectional Meet</u></a>	PSDN	Richmond, VA
31-3	<a href="#"><u>Speedo Championship Series Eastern Zone Spring SC Sectional Meet</u></a>	SYCH	Ithaca, NY

### APRIL

Date	Meet	Host	Location
2-3	<a href="#"><u>FISH Spring Fever LC Invitational</u></a>	FISH	<a href="#"><u>Fairland</u></a>
8-10	March Madness	YORK	<a href="#"><u>Oak Marr</u></a>
8-10	<a href="#"><u>Open Water Nationals</u></a>	USA Swimming	Miromar Lakes, FL
9	Spring Penguin Meet	PAC	<a href="#"><u>Fairland</u></a>
14-16	<a href="#"><u>Arena Pro Swim Series (LCM)</u></a>		Mesa, AZ
16	Spring Invitational	ERSC	<a href="#"><u>PGCC</u></a>
22-24	Machine LC Classic	MACH	<a href="#"><u>Lee District</u></a>
23	Dive into Spring LC	PAC	<a href="#"><u>Fairland</u></a>
30-1	Early Bird LC Invitational	MSSC	<a href="#"><u>Fairland</u></a>



## Jack's Corner

Thoughts to Ponder by Jack Neill



### OVER-OFFICIATING?

A couple of years ago at a short-course national championship, the bulkhead on the turn end was quite narrow. The Meet Referee determined that it was not safe to place eight turn judges (along with lap counters, CJs, etc.) on such a small bulkhead. So he decided that, while the start end would have eight judges (each judging a single lane), the turn end would have four judges, each one judging two lanes. When someone questioned, "Isn't that over-officiating at the start end?" the Meet Ref replied, "Of course not. Every lane is receiving the same level of judging. No swimmer is being judged by more eyes than any other swimmer."

If an athlete is being judged by different criteria than the people against whom he/she is competing, that qualifies as unfair officiating in my book. In the scenario described above, the athletes in all lanes are being judged by the same standard. This is fair and equitable. And it's a great example of staffing the deck in response to the peculiarities of the venue.

We strive to avoid unfair officiating at all sessions, providing a consistent level of observation for all swimmers in all heats. That's why turn judges actively observe the empty lanes in their jurisdiction. That's why stroke judges strive to provide balanced observation to the inner lanes, even though the near lanes are much easier to see while walking.

I would define "over-officiating" as instances where an official is actively looking for a violation, rather than observing the competition and calling what he/she sees. Some examples: The judge who tells a CJ, "The swimmer did his breaststroke pull-

out at 5-10 degrees short of horizontal” is probably over-officiating. As is the judge who wants to disqualify a young backstroker who performs a very ugly (but very legal) turn. The CJ who over-emphasizes one or two specific rules during the stroke briefing may be setting us up for some over-officiating.

Officials are charged with providing fair and equitable conditions of competition for all swimmers. A huge part of this is guarding against both over-officiating and unfair officiating.



**BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT GOES TO THE SWIMMER!**

Call what you see and see what you call

