

Report from the 2011 LSC Officials Chairs Meeting
Kansas City, June 17-19, 2011
Submitted by Jack Neill

The 2011 LSC Officials Chairs meeting was held at the Kansas City Airport Marriott Hotel, June 17-19. All but two LSCs were represented; also attending were the members of the National Officials Committee and the four Zone Officials Chairs.

The formal meeting began with a presentation on rules and interpretations. PVS seems to be spared some of the “controversies” that are popping-up in other LSCs. One interesting issue: swimmers in some parts of the country are using large arm and leg bands, as well as vast quantities of tape, in an effort to compress the body and enhance buoyancy. Yes, their swimsuits are legal, but the bands and the tape are clearly an effort to circumvent the suit rules, and should be considered illegal. It was emphasized that tape used for legitimate medical reasons can be approved by the referee on a case by case basis. One point on which we all agreed: the false start call is the most inconsistent call across the country. There was much discussion on this and a fair amount of disagreement, even among the leadership. The presentation concluded with a brief discussion regarding some of the proposed legislation that will be considered at the convention in September—nothing controversial here.

FINA and YMCA updates were presented. In areas where YMCA swimming is big, there is a major push to promote reciprocity between USA Swimming and YMCA in the certification of officials. While the two groups share the same rulebook, significant philosophical differences still exist. FINA is very quiet right now, but undoubtedly something controversial will occur at the 2012 Olympics and there will be talk of rules changes afterward.

The new Open Water regulations were discussed. Open Water swimming is becoming a major emphasis in several LSCs. Potomac Valley needs to increase opportunities in this area or our athletes will be at a disadvantage in future years. Yes, one can train in a pool for OW swimming, but competitive strategies are unique and can only be honed in actual OW competition.

A presentation on “Women in Officiating” followed. As compared to other LSCs, Potomac Valley is below the average in the overall percentage of women on the

roster of officials, but slightly above average in the percentage of women who advance to Starter and Referee.

A major point of discussion was the training and mentoring of officials. This is an area in which Potomac Valley was cited for being especially successful, not so much by national leadership, but mostly by other LSCs whose officials had worked PVS meets and sang our praises when they returned. Many LSCs cited our training materials as being effective and well-written. As a result, many of our procedures were shared during full sessions, breakout sessions, and informal networking time. In addition, the National Certification program is undergoing a bit of a transformation, from one that assesses and evaluates officials to one that focuses more on mentoring officials. A national “Train the Trainer” program is being developed.

The online Officials Tracking System was discussed and demonstrated at length. Potomac Valley was an early adopter of OTS and we use it extensively, so there was little new territory covered here for us. Many other LSCs no doubt found this topic useful though.

Breakout sessions focused on the organization and logistics of LSC Officials Committees. This was a terrific forum for sharing what works and for collecting new ideas. One thing that became clear to me: In many LSCs the Officials Chair was suddenly thrown into the position with little or no preparation or experience. This underscores the need we have in Potomac Valley to identify the next generation of leaders and to begin preparing them to replace us when the time comes. We need to expand leadership opportunities for officials, share responsibilities at meets, renew efforts to mentor officials serving in new roles. The old Chinese saying had it correct: “If you want to prosper for a year, grow rice. If you want to prosper for a decade, plant trees. If you want to prosper for a century, grow people.”

I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to attend this meeting and to represent Potomac Valley Swimming.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Neill, LSC Officials Chair