

Officials' Newsletter - April 2024

USA Swimming Officials <Officials@mail.usaswimming.org>

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OFFICIALS' NEWSLETTER



Greetings from the Chair

By: Dana Covington

Last newsletter, I shared with you the accomplishments of the NOC over the past four years. Now, I would like to share our goals that we developed from the winter championship meet surveys. We have 12 members on the NOC, four of whom are athlete members. Each NOC member has responsibilities and a working group:

Curtis Myers (Missouri Valley) is the LSC Liaison, **Jason Johnson** (North Texas) works on education for officials, **Jack Swanson** (Minnesota) integrates with officials testing and athlete projects. **Trish Martin** (North Carolina) oversees our National Evaluation and Mentoring program, **Marianne Walling** (Indiana) is our OTS, OQM and National Certification guru. **Anne Lawley** (Colorado) manages our communications and **Mike Murphy** (Pacific Northwest) is our Open Water champion. Our four athletes are: **Colin Gibson**, **Hannah Cousins**, **Harper Freeman** and **Dylan Nelson**.

Each working group has developed goals for their working group:

Curtis plans to increase communications with the LSC OCs and develop an LSC OCs handbook. He

also plans to learn the ins and outs of the bimonthly Officials Excellence Award.

Jason is working to coordinate educational pieces for each newsletter along with a survey question so we can hear more from you. We have some great articles lined up for you. Jason's group will also develop this year's Hot August Nights virtual educational series. Lastly, his group will be updating the Officials Stroke Briefing.

Jack's group plans to continue to work with USA Swimming staff to monitor test questions that need clarification. This work will continue with the new online training modules. They also plan to streamline the online tests.

Marianne's group continues their work with the existing processes and reporting with minimal change until OTS is further developed. Additional National Meet application data is being tracked to support the NOC projects surrounding officials at national meets. OTS development is ongoing, with new releases and regular communication with USA Swimming staff on functionality.

For open water, Mike's group will look at how more officials may have access to LSC open water certifications. He is also facilitating open water training this Spring, will update open water clinic presentations, and publish clinic information.

Anne will continue to develop these information-packed newsletters. She will also look at how Facebook can best be used as a social platform. Her group is working to organize the information on the website.

The evaluator and mentoring group, led by Trish, plans to review National Certification criteria as it relates to R9, they will plan officials training for the Annual Business Meeting this fall, and they also plan to revise the Evaluate the Evaluator form.

The athletes would like to develop an "Athletes Survival Guide" to the NOC.

Finally, I plan to increase transparency surrounding National Meet selection and increase the number of individuals in assigned positions on national decks.

If you would like more information regarding our actions, you can follow the [link to our meeting minutes](#).

If you see one of us on deck, please do not hesitate to share your thoughts or ideas with us. We love hearing your solutions to issues you may face in your LSC. We hope that we can help make the place where you choose to spend your volunteer time a better place.



American Officials in Paris!

Congratulations to our very own Lisa Vetterlein and Kathleen Scandary. They have been **invited to the Paris Olympics** to represent the United States! Lisa will be a Starter and Kathleen will be an Inspector of Turns (Stroke & Turn judge).

Read more about their officiating journey [here](#).

Announcements

- Futures Championships July 24-27 or July 25-28* (*N2 Certification preferred*)
 - You may apply to be on a site specific Wait List. Currently all sites are full
 - Austin, Texas - MR Edgar Caraballo
 - Huntsville, Ala. - MR Anne Liles Lawley
 - Minneapolis, Minn. - MR Ken Graham
 - *Richmond, Va. MR - Marianne Walling
 - Sacramento, Calif. - MR - Kevin Hogan
 - If you missed the pre-order deadline of December 1, 2023, you can purchase a 2024 USA Swimming Rule Book through SwimOutlet: [2024 Rule Book](#)
 - We are excited to announce the appointment of two new N3 evaluators: Lynn Tippetts-Fazen, N3i AR from North Carolina, and Nancy Harmon, N3i CJ from Georgia. In addition, three of our current mentors added N3i positions to their resumes and six mentors advanced to N3f evaluators in key positions. The deadline for the next round of N3i/N3f evaluator applications is June 1. Application links are on the National Certification and Evaluation tab in the Officials section on the USA Swimming website. [N3i Evaluator Application](#) and [N3f Evaluator Application](#)
 - A call was held March 27 to go through how to load Evaluations into OTS. If you are an N2 or N3 Evaluator with questions, please contact your Officials Chair.
 - If you are having issues with any of the online modules, please use the IT ticket system - [Swim Support](#). The IT department and education staff monitor that account to get things handled quickly. You can send an email to education@usaswimming.org, but tickets are solved faster than emails.
 - If you are a Referee or Starter, please review a companion piece to the False Start scenarios that are found on the Officials/National Certification page ([False Start Scenarios](#)).
 - The most recent Officials Chair Quarterly call was held Wednesday, April 3. Please contact your Officials Chair if you would like information on any of the topics covered.
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April Survey Question - Jason Johnson

A survey question will be appearing in each Newsletter. Responses are ANONYMOUS, and will help direct efforts of the NOC. Thanks in advance for answering this month's question.

[April Survey Question](#)

Officials Tracking System

By: Marianne Walling

Officials Tracking System (OTS) has announced its latest update, which focuses on the Evaluation Entry feature. Referees, LSC officials' chairs, and mentors are working together to ensure that all evaluations from September 2022 to April 1, 2024, are entered into OTS. While the "holding tank" will remain, there is no need to enter evaluations for storage. The process is expected to continue for the next few months. Beginning April 1, 2024, all evaluations should be directly entered into OTS.

The latest release of OTS includes several improvements, such as evaluators direct access to mentees' history and evaluation reports, the ability to assign a meet assistant to enter sessions and officials, and each official can now run their evaluation and history reports. Plans are ongoing for the transition of national certifications into OTS, but no timeline is currently available. Other upcoming improvements include more tools for LSC Officials Chairs to assist with recertifying officials in alignment with R9 requirements and more reports.

Online Testing for Officials

By: Jack Swanson

All online certification and recertification tests for officials in USA Swimming University are now up to date with 2024 rule changes. Please use your 2024 rulebook to complete your online tests. Beginning this year, there will be no down period for tests.

The online Stroke and Turn Certification Module replaces the certification and recertification Stroke and Turn tests, which were shut down on April 15.

The Starter and Administrative Official certification tests will be replaced with certification modules in late 2024, and the Referee certification tests will be replaced with certification modules in 2025. Until the release of the new modules, the certification test and an LSC clinic will remain required for certification.

If you notice an error on any online test, please email your LSC Officials Chair. They can get in contact with the Online Testing working group.

Updated situations and resolutions documents will be published by the Online Testing working group in the coming weeks.

Special Offer From the USA Swimming Foundation

Did you know that at the 2021 Olympic Trials, USA Swimming Officials raised over \$39,000 for the USA Swimming Foundation?!

This year, the USA Swimming Foundation will be offering an exclusive opportunity to all USA Swimming officials during Olympic Trials. To say thank you for everything this group does for our sport, the Foundation is auctioning off one-of-a-kind items such as signed flags, Olympic Team parkas, and other exclusive swimming memorabilia in a **setting only open to current USA**

Swimming Officials across the country.

The auction will be live during the week of Olympic Trials but you can pre-register and check out what will be available for bid [here](#). All proceeds from the auction will go directly towards the USA Swimming Foundation's mission of Saving Lives, Building Champions, and Impacting Communities.

Feel free to reach out to the Foundation at foundation@usaswimming.org with any questions!

The Deck Referee and Starter Team: It's All About Communication

By: Kathleen Scandary and Denice Wepasnick

Note: (This article has been updated since its original newsletter appearance in May 2019)

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 is 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 are to be handled, should the 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. To avoid repeatedly saying TYM, the SR should practice it in the manner that they perform for the athletes by mixing the TYM with, "Lane 1, 2, 3..." 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 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. For the forward start, the short whistles are blown and are followed within seconds by the long whistle to initiate the athletes' transition onto the blocks. Once the athletes are steady, meaning there is no evidence of imbalance on 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 enter the water 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, any issue that has the potential to create inequity may require the DR to retract their arm. The outstretched arm does not relieve the DR from full control of the heat. The DR can direct the SR to issue commands for the athletes other than the TYM and "Stand, please." commands that are specific to the SR.

If need be, the DR may ask the SR to "Stand", "Relax", or 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 (i.e. false starts, fall-ins) 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 or fall-in 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.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to these Officials who served at their first national meet recently:

Note - We apologize for any omissions or errors.

TYR Pro Swim Series Westmont

Stephen Adams - Sierra Nevada Swimming

Frederick Chin - Pacific Swimming

Jerod DeLay - Wyoming Swimming

Todd Gray - Illinois Swimming

John Jonihakis - Illinois Swimming

Eileen Pei - Illinois Swimming

TYR Pro Swim Series San Antonio

Mike Beehler - Metro Swimming

Deanna Calderone- Kaufman - Florida Swimming

Trisha Chambers - Inland Empire Swimming

Chris Hetzler - Minnesota Swimming

Christena Linford - Inland Empire Swimming

Jeremy Mueller - South Texas Swimming

Jill Schlenker - North Dakota Swimming



Officials Excellence Award

Travis Nelson, Adirondack Swimming

Travis began his officiating career (as many of us did) as a result of his daughter joining the Duaneburg Eels Swim Team located in upstate New York. He quickly volunteered starting with attending a S&T clinic. Once Travis was LSC certified, there was no stopping him. He jumped in with both feet. He worked endless hours in every position asked, no matter how wet he got.

As part of the Adirondack officiating team, he recruited others, mentoring many and welcoming everyone. As time passed, Travis became proficient in all Adirondack certified positions: S&T, CJ, Starter, and Referee. He volunteered for many meets his team or daughter didn't participate in, making sure all Adirondack meets had adequate coverage. Travis is truly what officiating is all about, ensuring all swimmers have the best possible swim. His presence on the pool deck is always calming and upbeat. He gets along well with all swimmers, coaches and, of course, the officials. Travis, on behalf of Adirondack Swimming, thank you for all your volunteer hours and dedication to the sport of swimming.

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