
Officials' Newsletter - August 2024

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

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OFFICIALS' NEWSLETTER



Greetings from the Chair

By: Dana Covington

It's a wrap! We have another Championship season under our belts. These meets could not have happened without you! A heartfelt THANK YOU to all of you who spent your precious time on a deck officiating at one (or two or three) of these LSC Championships, Sectionals, Zones, Futures or Summer Speedo meets. What a gift you have given to these teams and athletes. Additionally, during this Summer OQM season, the N2 and N3 evaluators conducted about 750 evaluations. Thank you to each one of you who has taken the opportunity to seek out this mentoring opportunity to advance your knowledge and skill as a volunteer official. I am very proud of the effort of the National Evaluators to share their expertise with others in a positive learning environment. As we support and elevate others, we become better as a body of officials. We are a wonderful team of officials in 59 LSCs, and it shows!

I hope you get to enjoy a little down time during August and September. Don't get too comfortable though, as the NOC is prepared to present the virtual Hot August Nights this month focusing on the role of Administrative Official/Referee. We also are preparing an action-packed schedule for the LSC Officials Chairs at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in Denver next month.

Announcements

- **Hot August Nights:** This year's clinics are sponsored by the NOC cover the role of Admin. Registration is on the USA Website and was distributed to your LSC OC. Several of the sessions have prerequisites. Please respect those.
 - Championship AR - Wednesday, August 28. Prerequisite is minimum N2 AR
 - **Open Water Clinic:** There are two virtual clinics for Officials working the Western Zone Open Water Meet on September 28. These clinics satisfy part of the education and training requirements for receiving Open Water certifications. Space is limited to 100 and the registration links have been sent to all LSC OCs.
 - Aug 22, 2024, 7:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada) - covers more in depth components of OW races and challenges officials may face as well as race specific information
 - **National Meets:**
 - Winter National meet applications are now closed. Thank you to all who applied.
 - TYR Pro Series: Applications Available in early September
 - Westmont, Ill., March 3-8, 2025 - MR: Rich McMillen
 - Sacramento, Calif., April 2-5, 2025 - MR: Trish Martin
 - Ft Lauderdale, Fla., April 30 - May 3, 2025 - MR: Traci Johnson
 - **USA Swimming Workshop/Annual Business Meeting presented by LiveBarn:** September 26-29 for LSC Officials Chairs
 - **Last Officials Chair Quarterly Call:** July 3, 2024. Talk to your OC to learn what was covered.
 - **Next NOC Call:** Thursday, September 12 at 5:00 p.m. MT
 - **Next Officials Chair Quarterly Call:** October 9
 - If a registered official is not receiving the Newsletter, have them check their spam/junk folder. If not found, then have the LSC registrar check the email used for registration. If that is correct, then have the LSC submit IT ticket for USA Swimming to investigate.
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Junior Official (Effective September 1)

By: Zach Toothman

The Junior Official program goes into effect September 1, 2024. In order to participate, the LSC must choose to recognize the category of Jr Official. The following are highlights of the program:

- Must be 16-17 years old
 - Must be a registered member, with no additional cost if already registered as an athlete
 - Sessions are limited to 12&under sessions, where the Official did not also compete
 - Each Jr Official must be paired with a registered Official (1:1)
 - Training required:
 - Same as adult Officials
 - Safe Sport for Youth Athletes (replaces APT training until age 18)
 - Concussion Training
 - No background check
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Underwater Cameras and Swimming Officiating

By: Trish Martin and Kathleen Scandary

Have you heard about underwater video review? This technology uses underwater video cameras to supplement conventional deck officiating. Cameras have been used for many years in a variety of applications, and in 2012, USA Swimming expanded camera use to include underwater video review cameras. They were initially used at National Championships and U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming meets to verify infractions officials reported from the deck.

At the 2019 World Championships, World Aquatics began making calls with underwater video cameras. They were used to officiate during the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Making calls for the first time in the United States, USA Swimming used cameras at the 2023 Phillips 66 National Championships. To mirror the progression seen at World Aquatics events and to best prepare Team USA for international competitions, underwater video review officiating equipment was used to make calls at the 2024 US Olympic Team Trials – Swimming this summer in Indianapolis.

How does officiating via underwater cameras work? Certified officials, titled Video Review Judges, view monitors showing a camera view focused on swimmers in their two lanes of jurisdiction. They observe their swimmers via the cameras and report any infractions they observe, just like deck officials. A separate Video Review Judge observes the 15-meter marks.

While observing a race, the Video Review Judges watch swimmers in their jurisdiction with the same level of confidence as observing the race from the pool deck. The Video Review Judges observe the race in real time at full speed. However, because the camera views provide such a high level of clarity that is not possible on deck with lighting, splashing, positioning, and other visibility challenges, the Video Review Judges are trained to only report infractions that are indisputable and egregious.

Even with that high level of certainty, the Video Review Supervisor validates all calls. They watch the same video footage, sometimes at slower speeds, to make sure a rule was absolutely broken and the call meets the standard and precedent set for all swimmers. That same approach is used to review any calls made by deck officials.

Underwater video officiating is a valuable tool for providing a fair playing field for all athletes. Not only do cameras ensure all lanes can be officiated equitably, but as history has shown, some infractions simply are not visible from the deck. Although technology has rapidly advanced the capabilities of observing infractions during competition, the fundamental principle of officiating in this sport still guides every decision — the swimmer always gets the benefit of the doubt.

Article 105 GUIDELINES for Officiating Swimmers with a Disability in USA Swimming Meets

By: Jim Peterfish

During the September 2023 HOD Meeting, R-5 passed by acclamation creating the most comprehensive change to Article 105 since its inception. Numerous inconsistencies in officiating swimmers with disabilities reported to the Disability Subcommittee was the motivation for this legislation. Article 105 promotes **parallel competitive experiences** for all athletes with a permanent disability and has seen minimal changes over the last decade. Starting with the premise that swimmers with disabilities are athletes deserving a fair and parallel experience, the newly revised language focuses on clarifying three core points.

1) Accountability/Communication:

- A) The swimmer is responsible for communicating with the Meet Referee any necessary accommodations/modifications.

- B) The Referee will instruct the Deck Referee and Starter how the accommodations/modifications will be made for the swimmer.

2) Guidelines for officiating:

- A) The Meet Referee will determine which of two options the officiating crew will use to report observed violations.
 - a. Observe and report ANY violation and vet the call against the approved modifications and apply Article 105 to overturn the call.
 - b. Or, share specific modification(s) and report any violation except the approved modification(s).

3) Emphasizing the significant difference between Accommodations and Modifications:

- A) Accommodations are conditions related to the ability to access the venue.
- B) Modifications are specific to the technical rules allowing a parallel experience.

When referring to reasonable accommodations ADA laws speak to accessibility and removing physical and communication barriers that exclude individuals with disabilities allowing them safe access and unpretentious communication. E.g. access to pools, locker rooms, pool decks, use of PAs, etc. Accommodations always directly relate to the individual.

When referring to reasonable modifications ADA laws speak to modifying existing policies, practices and procedures. In other words, allowing an individual the ability to participate in a manner similar to those without a disability. E.g. modifying our technical rules so that the individual may have a parallel experience with their peers. The term “modification” refers to rule modifications.

These two terms, while similar in context, create significant confusion when used interchangeably. Perhaps viewing them in the context of meet operations may provide much-needed clarity. Any adaptations for a swimmer with a disability that are necessary from arrival at the venue up until the time they are under the authority of the starter is an “accommodation.” Any change related to the technical rules while racing should be labeled a “modification.”

Article 105 may be the least referenced article in the rule book due to the relative low incidence of swimmers with disabilities. Meet Referees are encouraged to review Article 105 and determine how they will handle the reporting of rule infractions while observing swimmers with disabilities.

Paris Officiating Recap

Musings from an Olympic Starter - Lisa Vetterlein (Starter)

Being selected to officiate in Paris was an honor that felt surreal for months. The experience will remain very real in my memory.

From the opening ceremonies on the river Seine, to the Olympic Rings on the Eiffel Tower and the Paralympic Three Agitos on the Arc De Triomphe, there were icons on the iconic!

Others have shared about the incredible team of officials from around the globe when recollecting their international swim meets. Paris was all that too. The team was forged in new friendships from the first couple days of meetings, and we knew that we would always have each other's backs in all things pool related. There is a universal bond between officials in the sport of swimming.

Oh, and how about the incredible swimming from Team USA?!

Merci beaucoup, to USA Swimming and the support from USA Swimming officials during the 2024 Olympics.

Wearing the Shield - Kathleen Scandary (Technical Official)

I began my journey to Paris with a long layover in Chicago. Earlier that morning, I proudly donned the quarter-zip with the USA Swimming patch. The shield did not go unnoticed by other travelers. They were excited about the upcoming Olympic Games, and it made for good conversation with those who wanted to know more about my experiences as an official and the athletes on the team. Who knows, maybe there will be new officials or young swimmers who are inspired to take a closer look at our incredible sport. After many flights were delayed or rerouted, I was joined by Lisa Vetterlein for the trip across the Atlantic.

The next few days were all about the uniform and meetings. There were a few key messages that hit home as I thought about all of you who show such devotion to this volunteer position. You provide the best experience for the swimmers by being your best self on and off the deck. The first was from Dale Neuberger from the U.S. and member of the World Aquatics Bureau. He said "Congratulations for being chosen because of your integrity and capability." Then, Craig Hunter added that those of us in the room who represent many Federations would be the only ones who could ever say they were a part of the team of officials at the XXXIII Olympic Games held in Paris in 2024. It was, at that moment, when I fully realized how fortunate I was to be sitting in that room representing my country and all USA Swimming officials.

Every time we went out on the deck, I looked up at the Olympic Rings and was humbled by the task ahead. While I could not wear the shield outwardly, I did so in my heart. While I could not place my hand over my heart during the number of times I watched our flag being raised above the crowd lest partiality be suspected, I did so inwardly. And all of you were with me.

Thank you to the athletes who made us proud, and to the staff and volunteers of USA Swimming who supported us. It was an unimaginable gift.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to these officials who served at their first national meet recently at the Speedo Summer Championships in Irvine, California:

Note - We apologize for any omissions or errors.

Sivaramakrishnan (Siva) Chandrasekarar - Allegheny Mountain Swimming
Matt Gapinski - Florida Swimming
Edward Kuang - Potomac Valley Swimming
Mark Marshfield - Lake Erie Swimming
Sam Smith - North Texas Swimming
Kelly Warnagiris - Virginia Swimming



Officials Excellence Award

Vicki Marsh, Snake River Swimming

In 2012, Vicki moved to Boise (Snake River Swimming LSC) and has been THE driving force in recruiting, training/mentoring, encouraging, and retaining officials ever since. Always positive, always welcoming, everyone wants to work when she is the meet referee. Officials eagerly answer her calls for help on deck. She's both a coach and official and often wears both hats, trading off days for where her team (and officials) need her most. Boise YMCA meets are the largest in the area and, of course, she's also part of the hospitality crew. There is nothing she doesn't volunteer for!

Involved with USA Swimming, YMCA, and NFHS, Vicki shares her energy and skills wherever needed. Vicki has been a certified USA Swimming official for more than 15 years. During that time, she has served in many capacities in our LSC and beyond. She holds a USA Swimming National N2 certification as Referee and Chief Judge, and is nationally certified as an N3 Starter and Stroke and Turn Judge. In Idaho NFHS, she serves as the Meet Referee for dual, district and state meets. She is a respected official, coach, parent, and volunteer, and is truly treasured in the Snake River LSC.