
Officials' Newsletter - February 2022

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Thu, Feb 24, 2022 at 3:04 PM



Officials' Newsletter



Greetings From the Chair

Championship Season is upon us! As we work to attend these championship meets all over the country, I want to thank you all for the work you have done and continue to do for our number one swimming consumer: the athletes. You may not hear it directly from them, but they are so appreciative of the time, talents and effort you put forth to make sure their meets are run fairly and equitably.

On a national and international level, the past few weeks have also been very busy from a calendar perspective. After numerous changes to FINA's international calendar, USA Swimming made the decision to update its national calendar to best prepare a team for success at the newly-added FINA World Championships in Budapest this upcoming June. To get to that point took numerous meetings and discussions to ensure that all national events will be handled appropriately and that the staffing for those meets would be affected as little as possible. We appreciate everyone's understanding and grace during this hectic period as everyone worked to pivot as needed (sometimes multiple times!) and arrive at the proper decisions.

Sincerely,

Matt Wilson
Chair, National Officials Committee

Announcements

- **New Additions to National Officials Committee** – The National Officials Committee is pleased to announce the following additions to the Committee:
 - Matt Wilson
 - Jack Swanson
 - Mike Murphy
 - Danny Kovac
 - Kevin Cai
 - Evan Steffy
 - These new additions will join the committee alongside existing members Dana Covington, Jason Johnson, Anne Lawley, Curtis Myers, Marianne Walling, Kathleen Scandary, Eddie Hughes, Derek Paul, Carol Zaleski and Anisa Nelson.
- **Updates to National Events Calendar** – Following FINA's recent announcement to host its World Championships competition in Budapest, Hungary from June 18-July 3, 2022, USA Swimming [recently announced](#) a few revisions to its domestic events calendar, including:
 - [March 2-5: TYR Pro Swim Series Westmont \(Westmont, Ill.\)](#)
 - [June 1-4: TYR Pro Swim Series Mission Viejo \(Mission Viejo, Calif.\)](#)
 - The rest of the 2022 USA Swimming national events calendar remains the same.
- **Applications to Officiate** – Applications for the 2022 Summer Championships, including the Futures Championships, Phillips 66 National Championships and Speedo Junior Championships, will be posted to the [National Meet Applications](#) in the coming weeks. The TYR Pro Swim Series Mission Viejo is still accepting applications to officiate.

Colorado Mentoring Program - Mike Dilli

Colorado has implemented a program designed to give all officials the opportunity to learn and hone their officiating skill set. Officials rarely receive feedback after training unless they are being evaluated. This program is designed to help officials become comfortable at any position; giving them confidence to advance to new positions and to improve their officiating experience. The mentoring feedback is designed to be constructive, instructive and a positive experience. It is not considered an evaluation.

Mentors are selected by the Colorado Swimming Officials Committee. They possess a breadth of experience at all positions and at all types of meets and have strong interpersonal and educational skills. The program is designed to be helpful and informative, offering suggestions (not mandates) for officials at any type of meet.

Program Implementation

- A. Mentors are expected to blend in at a Meet – offering advice to officials who seek it out at any position – no records are to be kept of these interactions.
- B. Mentors should not work a deck position at a meet – they should focus on mentoring.
- C. Meet type and size will/can dictate the type of Mentoring - CSI Meets are not National Championships – and Meet appropriate Officiating is a must
- D. Mentors are NOT to take the job of mentoring and interacting away from Meet Referee's or Chief Judges at any Meet. They will NOT dictate meet operations.
- E. Zone Representatives will look at Meets in their Zone and decide which Meets the Mentor Program might be beneficial for. The Officials Committee/Chair will help find a Mentor. They will also work with the Meet Referee in implementing the program for that Meet.
- F. Mentors should remember that they are there to offer input and suggestions to officials who ask – not force an opinion on officials not wishing input.
- G. Officials will sign up for mentoring at a meet and will then be observed by the mentor.
- H. As with all things Officiating – Mentors will not receive any compensation for working a meet.
- I. Mentorship will also be entered into the OTS for USA Swimming to get credit for the time.
- J. Feedback on mentors and the program are always welcomed, in fact encouraged. All feedback should be sent to the Colorado Officials' Chair.

Making Heads or Tails of It - Derek Paul Rules and Regulations Chairman

Based on a change to Article 102.5.2 of the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations approved by the USA Swimming House of Delegates in September 2021, alternatives to in-water swim-offs are officially codified. The updated language, proposed by Lake Erie Swimming, is intended to give swimmers alternatives to swim-offs consistent with previous practice and interpretations of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations and Officials Committees.

Earlier versions of the language codifying swim-offs offered no alternatives to in-water competition of the event for which the athletes had tied. However, previous guidance from the USA Swimming Officials and Rules and Regulations Committees had, in practice, offered swimmers alternatives to simply racing again. Recent guidance had allowed for one athlete to simply defer, or, if mutually agreed upon, allowed the flipping of a coin to determine the result.

The new language of Article 102.5.2 codifies the practice of allowing alternatives to simply re-swimming the original race. By adding “unless the swimmers, coaches and

Referee mutually agree to resolve the tie in an alternative manner, such as coin toss or racing a different distance / event”, the new rule makes it clear that ties may be resolved using a variety of different methods.

The most common methods may remain flipping a coin or the traditional swim-off, but Referees, coaches and athletes now have the flexibility to resolve a tie in a way that makes sense to them. In addition to adding an element of fun to a sometimes dreaded necessity, this could benefit a swimmer who may have been required to swim a longer, more grueling race three times in one day. For example, if two athletes tied for the first alternate position in the 200 Fly, they now have the option to race in the 50 Fly rather than swim the 200 Fly for a second time as part of the preliminary session.

Recently, you may have seen two teammates from the University of Tennessee resolving a swim-off with a game involving the two athletes grabbing at a cup. As in all instances where an alternative method is to be used, the swimmers, their coaches, and the Referee were required to mutually agree with this proposed method. While the goal is to allow for an easy resolution to the tie, it is anticipated that the Referee will not disagree with a method or an alternate distance or event agreed to by the athletes and coaches. It should be noted that this rule applies only to USA Swimming sanctioned events and there is not an equivalent in the NCAA or high school swimming.

We look forward to hearing more creative and entertaining ways to resolve a tie!

Diversity in Officiating

Stepping onto an active pool deck can be quite an experience. A wide range of musical genres play, international competitors hop in and out of the water, coaches and parents are speaking many different languages; diversity abounds. Or does it?

Last year the Diversity in Officiating working group was tasked with exploring ways to bring about cultural change to ensure a more diverse and representative officiating deck at all levels within USA Swimming.

Through the development of a strategic plan, the goal of this group was to grow the representation of officials of color over the next five years, while fostering an inclusive environment where opportunities are continually available for all officials.

The first step in this process was an assessment of the diversity of the USA Swimming membership versus the diversity within the officiating ranks. The 2020 membership data was used to develop the baseline statistics with 67.58% of members identifying as white, while 32.42% identified as people of color. Among officials, 82.29% identified as white, while 17.71% identified as people of color.

Stroke and Turn officials at all levels (N2, N3, etc.) follow roughly the same 82%/18% ratio. However, as we look into the Chief Judge, Starter, Referee and Administrative Referee positions, the representation of diverse officials is far less, with the greatest disparity of 89%/11% at Administrative Referee. National deck representation was also reviewed and showed even less diversity across the board.

What causes the greater disparity in the more experienced positions? Since most officials are certified at Stroke and Turn, the ratio there matches overall. Stroke and Turn officials, however,

will need the most support to bring about growth. If individuals volunteer for these positions without a support system in place, they're less likely to continue, let alone work to advance in their officiating careers.

One of the strategies the Officials Committee is encouraging in training and mentoring officials is the ladder principle. The ladder principle calls for members to identify and mentor two officials - one that may be of a similar racial or ethnic background and another of a differing background. By guiding these individuals from their initial steps as an official, we can help everyone develop a sense of belonging to the community.

In addition to the efforts being developed within USA Swimming, it is upon all of us to provide the support and encouragement required for new or potential officials that may one day join our ranks.



Officials Excellence Award

Dar Gerber - Hawaiian Swimming

Hawaiian Swimming's Dar Gerber started officiating in 2000. She soon took the lead in developing the officials on the Big Island. Dar has been very dedicated to her LSC, not really seeking advancement, but accepting responsibilities that help advance the program. Her motivation for attending the national meet was primarily for developing credentials and credibility to bring to Hawaiian Swimming and to encourage its local officials to do the same.

She always was available to volunteer to officiate with Junior Pan Pacs over the years and to work with FINA officials at Oceania swim meets in Auckland and Fiji. Getting selected to officiate at the U.S. Olympic Trials was a highlight for Dar and so very well deserved, as she has been a mentor to all officials of the LSC. A special quality of Dar is her deck persona. Recruiting and retention of deck officials has been and will always be a major issue. Dar has created an environment that is welcoming for new and continuing officials. She has encouraged an atmosphere of education on deck, guiding rather than criticizing, and providing lots of positive feedback.