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The Newsletter

(Published Quarterly)

Communicates with the Swimming Officials of:
Georgia Swimming Inc.

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Rob Schreer

Officials' Committee Chair

Georgia Swimming's mission is to provide a program designed to encourage Georgia athletes to pursue opportunities available through competitive swimming and to educate organizations of the benefits of Georgia Swimming.

Georgia Swimming's vision is to increase opportunity, recognition and growth in competitive swimming.

NOTE FROM ROB Let's start off by saying a big **THANK YOU, GLENDA!** for being our friend and for all you accomplished as our Officials Committee Chair. You have always thought first about our athletes and what was right for them and you have not let any of us forget that. Right along with the athletes you have been there looking out for your officials thinking about what is right for us. On a personal note: Thanks for being my mentor; a lot of what I am today as an official you had an important hand in. The next time you run into "Goddess" on the deck be sure there is a big thank you hug involved.

Although Glenda is stepping down as the Officials Committee Chair, she is not leaving Georgia Swimming. She was appointed Disability Swimming Chair and will lead the efforts of the LSC to establish and maintain a viable program for athletes with disabilities in Georgia. Those athletes long for and deserve the opportunity to compete and with her they have a great advocate.

As we move forward, Your Officials Committee will be working toward achieving the goals and vision of Georgia Swimming that are noted in the header of the newsletter. In the weeks and months ahead you will hear more about recruiting, mentoring and retaining officials. To each of you reading this note, I designate you an **Officials Recruiter** of Georgia Swimming. Those of you not reading this note, "Lucy, you got some splaining to do!". Go out and recruit one new official before the end of the year. Mentor your recruit. Help them get "How To" information. Be a friend. Encourage them.

Share you thoughts with me about what we do well and/or not so well. If it is something we may not be doing well, also share with me how you see it being corrected. We will be doing some tweaking of our officials programs. Step up. Be a part of it! Don't linger in the background and grumble.

One last share: NEVER, Never, never fail to share your questions with me, together we will find an answer.

See you on deck

Rob

GEORGIA SWIMMING NEWS

SAVE THE DATE: The 2012 Georgia LSC Spring Meeting is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, April 14-15, 2012. All are invited, particularly athletes! See how the LSC works, join in at the Officials' Committee Meeting, participate at the Age Group or Senior Meetings, find out what Technical Planning is all about. Of note: Officials' Committee Meeting will be Saturday Morning. Georgia Swimming House of Delegates Meeting is Sunday morning. The All-Star Banquet will be held April 15 at the Georgia Aquarium. Hope to see you there!

Minutes from 9/24/11 Officials' Committee & 9/25/11 House of Delegates Meetings:

<http://www.gaswim.org/boarddocs/> (available mid-late October)

Notes from United States Aquatic Sports Convention 9/13-9/18/11: see attachment

Reminders from the USA Swimming 2011 Rulebook:

102.24.3A(3) When manual timing is the primary system, 3 watches per lane, each operated by a separate timer shall be used.

102.13.2 Place Judge- One or two place judges shall be positioned on the side of the course near the finish end and judge the order of finish of all swimmers. (2 are preferred -- 102.10.3)

102.10.3 For all swim meets or time trials **except dual meets** there should be not fewer than the following officiating positions filled or approved by the LSC in authority. Officials other than the Referee may act in more than one officiating capacity only when sufficiently qualified officials are not available, but no one may simultaneously time and judge the order of finish. An LSC House of Delegates may establish additional minimum requirements.

1 Referee

1 Starter

3 timers per lane (one minimum if automatic equipment with touch pads is used)

1 Clerk of Course (if applicable)

1 Place Judge (2 are preferred)

2 Stroke Judges and 2 Turn Judges or 2 Stroke & Turn Judges

Relay Takeoff Judges (if applicable)

1 Administrative Official/Referee

1 Announcer

Timing Equipment Operators (as needed)

Marshal(s) (number determined by the LSC)

NEW AND IMPROVED

Congratulations to the following **NEW** officials who have been certified in Georgia Swimming in 2011:

Administrator: Jessica Meadows (ASL)

Stroke & Turn: Jim Hansen (SA)

Firman Sakir (SMAC)

Kathy Spruiell (GA)

Davella Pursner (ABSC)

Warren Scribner (SST)

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN ADVANCING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Check out the Georgia Swimming Certification and Re-Certification Procedures approved April 16, 2011:

<http://gaofficials.webexone.com/r.asp?a=5&id=138188>

UPCOMING OFFICIALS' QUALIFYING MEETS

Following is a listing of local, not so local, and national meets that are remaining in 2011:

GA Sr State Champs 12/9-11 Athens, GA MR: Kathleen Schmaltz/Al Cave, kathleenschmaltz@rocketmail.com

2011 AT&T Winter Nationals 12/1-3 Georgia Tech MR: MaryJo Swalley

2011 Speedo SC Jr Nationals 12/8-10 Austin, TX MR: Lucy Duncan

Contact Rob at h2oref@bellsouth.net for more information.

2011 OFFICIALS TRAINING CLINICS SCHEDULE

Following is a schedule of training clinics anticipated. Others may be added as required by interest.

REFEREE and STARTER:

Bi-annually, April & September, in conjunction with the LSC HOD meeting

- April 14 or 21, 2012, Location TBD

STROKE & TURN JUDGE:

Home School Program (HSP)

Open schedule based on participant's completion of HSP

Conducted at swim meet that participant is attending

- October 1, 2011, Location TBD
- February 25, 2012, AG SC Championship, Atlanta, GA

Full Clinics (No Pre-Study Required)

5-day advance pre-registration required to assure training material availability)

Tri-annually (October, February, June), Minimum 5 attendees.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIAL/CLERK OF COURSE:

Quarterly (March, June, September, December*), Minimum 5 attendees

- October 15, 2011, MVAC, Marietta
- November 17 or 18, 2011 Augusta
- March 17, 2012, Location TBD

AUTOMATIC TIMING EQUIPMENT OPERATOR:

Open schedule depending on interest.

Conducted at swim meet that participant and trainer are attending.

Contact Steve Drew (sdrew@imagecounts.us) for more information.

SITUATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Managing Swimmers Before and After Races ... Officials and Timers Working Together Recommended Protocol for In-Water Starts -- submitted by Mark Case

Large meet or small, one of the more elusive tasks of the officiating team is crowd control behind the blocks. Our attention, as it should be, is focused on the swimmers in the pool. It also seems that during the backstroke and medley relay events, waiting competitors are more prone to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This problem is amplified when the venue has a gutter. When the eager swimmer hears the series of whistles signaling them to prepare to swim, they often will step into the gutter onto a touchpad and triggering the finish of a race in progress. The timing official is shouting in harmony with the starter and referee, "Lane 6! Get out of the gutter!"

We can make life in the backstroke much more manageable by establishing a more enforceable and consistent protocol. The ready position for the backstroke and medley relay, as for all other races, should be behind the blocks. Swimmers should not be allowed to stand at the edge of the pool at the finish of the previous race. At the edge of the pool, swimmers are interfering with officials and timers. At the ready series of whistles, the swimmers take a position behind the blocks while securing their caps and goggles. At the long whistle, they step forward and enter the pool as the timers and officials step back. Additionally, this eliminates the problem of swimmers stepping into a gutter and firing the touch pad while a race is finishing.

To establish this protocol, Starters, in their Timers Briefing, should brief Timers about their valued help in managing swimmers before and after their races. Timers can also be briefed to assist officials by asking a swimmer to wait to speak with an official when multiple DQs occur within the same heat. Once on the pool deck, we involve all hands enforcing the protocol. Working together, we can help ourselves run meets more smoothly.

A Philosophy of Starting

By: John Wilson, USA Swimming and NCAA, Starter and Referee

(Editor's note: John is a Georgia Swimming Official who was the Starter for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games)

There is a document I suggest you read before reading this article. Listed on the USA Swimming web site under Member Resources, Officials, Education and Training, Education and Training Resources and called The Starter – Protocol and Philosophy, it provides a good understanding of the National view on starting. Following is a link to readers online: <http://www.usaswimming.org/Rainbow/Documents/3e31d61b-d848-4afb-abde-25e889237a4a/The%20Starter%20-%20Protocol%20and%20Philosophy.pdf>

I want to open with a philosophical statement that guides all of my thoughts, actions and decisions as an official: we are here for the swimmers. We are here to make sure that every swimmer gets a chance to swim every event they came to the meet to swim. We are here to make sure that there are “fair and equitable conditions of competition” for all swimmers. As a starter, we are here to give every heat the best start of the meet.

Charles Mallery, a former National Officials Chair and Olympic Official, once said, “The rules are permissive. If something isn’t prohibited, it is permitted. We should not use the rules to get the swimmer out of the event but should use the rules to keep them in the event.” Certainly, if there is stroke violation or false start, the swimmer must be disqualified.

What are we not here for? We are not here to punish swimmers and coaches for administrative errors. We are not here to find ways to keep swimmers from competing. We are not here to make picky little calls. We are not here play “got ‘cha” games.

Now, to what you are reading the article for: What is the most important quality for the Starter to have? Patience! Patience is needed before *and* after you say “Take Your Mark”. Before -- to be sure the swimmers are ready to hear you say TYM, and after -- to be sure every swimmer has had time to find a stationary position. If you wait for them to be ready to hear TYM, they should all come down together and become stationary at about the same time. Patience before the TYM will set the heat up for a great start and patience after will almost guarantee it.

How much time does it take to be patient? Won't it slow the meet down? We are talking about a half second or so before and after – maybe an extra second or two in all. If you have to stand the heat or deal with someone falling in, that will take much more time.

We want the swimmers to be comfortable on the blocks. If they are relaxed and trust that the starter will give them time to get set, things will go smoothly. Your voice has an effect on the athletes. The TYM should be inviting; it is not a command but an invitation. You set the tone of the meet if you present yourself as relaxed, caring and confident. The athletes behind the blocks waiting for their heat will watch and listen. If they see a patient, relaxed and confident starter, they will also be relaxed and confident when they step up onto the block.

Certainly don't let the referee rush the start. We can rush everything else but not the swimmers after they step up onto the block. They should be confident that they will have time to get ready for a great start.

If the heat doesn't get set in a reasonable amount of time, say "stand please" in the same voice you used for TYM. It is also an invitation. Give them time to get set – you don't want to use "stand please" very much; it only slows things down. Be patient and the heat will set.

What constitutes a false start? The rule book puts the responsibility on the starter to wait for the athletes to be stationary (101.1.2C "...When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal."). The rule implies patience to wait for the swimmers to be ready. If you don't wait for the swimmers to be set, how can you charge a false start? We are talking fair and equitable conditions here.

101.1.3A says "Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified...". So we aren't talking about some minor movement. We are talking about starting before the starting signal. If you think of a flagpole in windy conditions, you will see the pole waving back and forth, but we all know it is stationary. It isn't leaving its mark. Swimmers have to move on the starting blocks in order to maintain balance on a surface that slopes toward the water. They have to breathe. They may even have a muscle twitch under the stress of the position. None of those things constitute "starting before the starting signal is given."

Another common occurrence is a swimmer who jerks just before the starting signal is given. If it is too late to say stand up, the question is did the swimmer "start before the starting signal"? If the swimmer is the first off the block, then the answer is yes. If the swimmer is the last off the block, perhaps the answer is no. If the swimmer stopped prior to the starting signal and now has their weight back on their heels, I doubt you could say they started before the starting signal. They were probably at a disadvantage. This is often a difficult judgment call but one the starter has to make independently. No one should have told you starting is easy.

Remember - calm, confident and patient. Athlete centered. Set a calm tone for the meet, and the starts will be great.

If you have questions or comments or would just like have a conversation about starting, please contact me at 706-369-1212 or jwilson@pjfweb.com

MAY I HAVE THIS DANCE?

A briefing on National Deck Protocol -- submitted by Bruce Adams

Ok, so what is it they (the officials) are doing on deck at higher-level meets anyway?

If you have ever been to a State, Sectional, Grand Prix or National meet I'm sure you have watched the Officials just as much as you do the swimmers ("How could they have missed that!"). In USA swimming, we generally follow some form of choreography on deck while officiating these meets. (FINA is nowhere as good as we are!) The reasons for this are several. One, to ensure that you as an official doing stroke and/or turn duty have the correct vantage point to observe the swims. Two, to make the officials on deck essentially disappear and blend in with the back ground. As much as we would like it, we aren't the show, the swimmers are. Three, to make sure that Chief Judges (CJs) and their lot can easily watch you and react quickly when you have a potential call. You observe the swimmers, the CJs observe you, and the TLCJ watches everything. And also a "tight deck" helps you pay attention. Lastly the coaches are watching you. If you make a call on their athlete, you following a tight, set procedure helps the Referee be able to confidently uphold calls.

All this is generally referred to as the "National Deck Protocol", and every Chief Judge and Team Lead Chief Judge has their own version – including me.

In Georgia we strongly encourage our officials at every level to try to follow as much of the NDP as possible for the same reasons as above and as well as to get you ready for that first time on deck at a high level meet. Here are the basics (we'll ignore the three-to-an-end stuff at Nationals and Trials for the time being).

We will talk about this over the next several Newsletters. While it may be fairly simple, explaining the reasoning and so on can get long. I think it's easier to follow if you know the why as well as the what. This issue we will look at Turn Judges for long course events.

Long Course:

At LC, officials are generally provided a chair. Know it. Love it. Use it, but wisely. It's there for you to stay as rested as possible during those 5-6 hour sessions at Sectional Prelims. You should sit with your feet on the floor or crossed at the ankles if you care to, but don't cross your legs with one foot up in the air. The reason for this is inevitably if we allow it, you will have one guy splayed out, draped across his chair looking like he is watching wrasslin' on TV. It calls attention to the officials and we want to stay in the background. Keep your hands in your lap, an occasional stretch or two or going for the water is fine. You can also take a peek at the scoreboard behind you now and then but don't stay glued to it, your job is in the water, not the scoreboard.

Generally you stay seated until the Referee blows the series of short whistles. Those are to tell the athletes to prepare for the race, and you too. At the whistles, stand up and walk to your position behind the blocks. This varies from pool to pool, and CJ to CJ, but I usually tell you to stand behind the swimmer in your lane, or the middle of your jurisdiction if you have more than one lane at some particular distance behind the swimmers (a mark on the floor or something). All the officials at the start end should be in a straight line, again to not call attention to our selves, so sneak a look to your left and right and line-up. That one guy standing three feet behind the others will have a thousand eyes on him.

At the long whistle, I have my officials step up to about one or two steps away from the edge of the pool. If it's a wide bulkhead, up on the back, if it's a short bulkhead, on the floor just behind. This is for two reasons, one so you can get to position quickly but be far enough from the athlete to not be in their way and two, safety, your safety. I don't want you having to run to the edge of the pool. (Backstroke may have differences depending on the pool.)

At the horn, step directly to the edge of the pool smack-dab in the center of your jurisdiction if possible, one foot at the edge of the pool (some CJs will even tell you which foot! Not me, but some...). Now you are in position. (All that prep for 3 seconds of work...)

Watch the swimmers until they are out of your jurisdiction, hands behind your back if you can, (not mandatory, but a good look, but never crossed in front of you like showing contempt.) Stand straight leaning forward just enough to see the wall, not bent at the waist, not casually slouched back. Turn your head side to side to scan your portion of the pool. As soon as they all leave your jurisdiction, not a second later, turn and walk back to your chair and sit down. Again, no high-crossed legs, spread-eagle posture, be prim and proper. If you go to the OTS page on the USA web site you will see a picture of our own Rayleen Soderstrom doing a wonderful demonstration.

Pay attention to the race. During the first few heats, get a feel for where the swimmers are and how long it will take you to get back into position. I watch for the first swimmer to cross some line, a 15 meter mark or other and stand and walk to the ready place, not the edge of the pool yet, and then step into position just in time to meet your swimmer as they enter your jurisdiction. Figure the timing so you can do this comfortably, and not rushed, but not like a leisurely Sunday stroll either. Again, safety is the main concern. Don't ever be rushed.

Watch, turn and return to your seat like before. Same goes for the finish. (As you go back to your seat after the race this is a good time to glance at the scoreboard.)

All this goes for turn ends as well. You will have a “ready” spot to stand before you go to the edge of the pool. If more than one judge at the turn end is preparing to go to the pool at the same time, you should all be lined up more or less the same distance from the edge of the pool.

Know your races. What are you watching anyway? Don’t go to the edge of the pool at the start or finish of freestyle (unless the CJ wants you to) because there is really nothing for you to observe.

Long Freestyle:

There is debate about this, what races to go to corners on, should you even go to corners? Personally, I’m torn. I don’t think you can really see turns in lane 5 well from the corner, but on the other hand you can’t see a turn in lane 1 and one in lane 5 at the same time from lane 3 either. At National level meets, you generally will watch 50’s not at all, 100’s only at the turn, and 200’s only at the 3 turns, and from the end of the pool in your normal position. Prelims are sometimes done at corners for all distances, and these days you may watch nothing for any 50, 100 or 200 freestyle. For longer races, two of the turn judges will be assigned each heat to move to the corners to watch turns. You will generally stand during the time that any swimmer is in your jurisdiction for the first turn at each end. At the CJ’s discretion, you may be asked to stand any time a swimmer is in your jurisdiction except for the start and finish. I like it. I think it shows well deserved respect to the athletes.

One last thing. Heat sheets and cell phones. You won’t have either, at least not on the National deck, so problem solved. At lesser meets you may have one or both. But you should keep your heat sheet in your pocket, out of sight unless you have to refer to it. If you have it in your hands you may be tempted to wave it about like a white flag. If the CJs are doing their jobs you will not need to attract attention. If you have it sticking out of your pocket, it looks like a white tail. Leave it on your chair.

At meets less than Nationals, have your cell phone on deck only if you absolutely must. Better to leave it in your bag. Still have it? *Sigh* Fine. Put it on vibrate or silent. If you detect it going off, let it go to VM, and get the attention of the CJ who will find a relief official so you may go off deck to tend to whatever business you may need to. Do NOT talk, text or whatever on your phone anywhere on deck visible by athletes, coaches or spectators. Doing so give the impression that you are paying more attention to personal business than the swimming business at hand. Go off deck. You want to see a CJ really move really quickly? Just let a cell phone ring on deck.

Next time--backstroke and walking stroke.

IDEAS? COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?

Great! We want to hear from you! Send an e-mail with your ideas, comments, suggestions, articles and whatever you think may be of interest to the other officials in Georgia to Julie Allen, editor-in-chief at:

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