



AROUND THE DECK

POTOMAC VALLEY SWIMMING OFFICIALS

MAY 2014 NEWSLETTER



FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Potomac Valley now has more officials than ever; 542 as of the most recent count. As the numbers of swimmers in PVS increases, and with the steady rotation of officials leaving the sport as their swimmers age out, we must continue to recruit and train new officials. The best recruiting is done one-on-one, so encourage your fellow swim parents to join us on deck. It is a rewarding way to give to the sport of swimming.

In addition to providing the training and certification of officials, the Officials Committee is responsible for ensuring that the training program first of all meets the minimum standards of USA Swimming and also produces the best prepared officials that we can. This year the Officials Committee will implement changes in the certification process for some of the officiating positions. They will go into effect in September, but they will be posted on the website over the next few weeks. One change is that all apprentice officials must pass their required USA Swimming tests before their final on-deck training session. Also, an official must attend a clinic before beginning their on-deck training sessions.

For the position of Stroke & Turn Judge, a final on-deck evaluation session will be required. This is to ensure that the apprentice is ready for certification. This follows the process we use for all the other officiating positions. A final evaluation session will also be required for the position of Administrative Official. This is a key official in insuring the correctness and accuracy of the swimming results at a meet.

The most changes are to the referee certification process. The referee candidates will no longer be required to be certified in the "dry side" officiating positions. This is a result of the USA Swimming requirement for a certified Administrative Official at every session. The referee candidates will still need to work some familiarization sessions at each of the "dry side" positions prior to certification. The referee certification will now require prior certification as a chief judge as well as a starter.

We think these changes will improve the quality and experience of our newly-certified officials.

After Michael Phelps swam the first race of his return to swimming at the recent

Grand Prix Meet, he remarked that he felt like a 10-year old kid again, nervous and excited before his swim. He said he even reported to the blocks early, like a 10-year old. This kind of joy and pleasure that is seen at every meet is what keeps us coming back to contribute. See the article right below this one for another observation about swim meets that span all ages and abilities.

I hope to see you at a meet this summer!

Tim Husson

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Swimming Without Age Limits



At a recent swim meet, Charlie was swimming the 400 Yard IM. His teammates were cheering him on from the end of the pool – encouraging him as he swam. His coach was along the side of the pool hollering at him –

“stroke into the wall” during the Butterfly leg,
“get your legs up” during the Backstroke leg,
“reach” during the Breaststroke leg,
and “kick” during the Freestyle leg.

Coaches at the meet were overheard discussing the frustrations of coaching Backstroke – for some reason their swimmers just can’t seem to get the technique correct no matter how they try to explain it. Some of their swimmers don’t seem to like the water running down their face.

Donald was challenged by the 100 Yard Butterfly. He took a small break after 50 Yards, by 65 Yards was not maintaining a legal stroke, and realized after 75 Yards that it was just too long a distance.

A swimmer in the 200 Yard Butterfly was using a Breaststroke kick.

At two other swim meets, the crowd watching the meet cheered the swimmers completing their last 75 yards of the 400 Yard Freestyle and the 500 Yard Freestyle.

While you have likely experienced these situations at any swim meet, they were notable because Charlie was 76 years old, Donald was 82 years old, and the Butterfly swimmer was swimming a legal Butterfly; it was a Masters Meet. The 400 Yard Freestyle swimmer was a Special Olympics athlete who took over 17 minutes to complete his event; the 500 Yard Freestyle swimmer was Katie Ledecky, setting an American Record. These examples are real life reminders that swimming is a life-long, inclusive sport.

- **Anonymous Contributor**

You Make the Call!



Situation: Mary was swimming the 100-yard backstroke. At the first turn, the turn judge indicated a disqualification stating that the swimmer missed the wall on the turn. Mary and her coach both say that she did touch the wall and that her feet just slipped. They also state that Mary could not have pushed off the wall if she didn't touch it.

Upcoming Meets



MAY

Date	Meet	Host	Location	Notes
2-4	Spring LC Classic	RMSC	KSAC	Psych Sheet Estimated Timelines Timer Sign up Saturday and Sunday 11-12 session changes: Warm up: 12:30, Events: 1:30
2	SNOW SC Spring Classic Invitational	SNOW	Claude Moore	
3-4	SNOW LC Classic Invitational	SNOW	Claude Moore	
3-4	LC Derby Meet	FISH	GMU	Timer Sign up
3-4	Early Bird LC Invitational	MSSC	Fairland	
3-4	Mini Olympics	MACH	Madeira	
9-11	Long Course Classic	MACH	Lee District	Timer Sign up
15-18	Grand Prix Series (LCM)		Charlotte, NC	
23-25	Virginia State LC Championships	PM	Oak Marr	Application to Officiate
30-1	Maryland State LC Champs	RMSC		

JUNE

Date	Meet	Host	Location	Notes
6-8	SNOW LC Invitational	SNOW	Claude Moore	
7-8	June Invitational	FISH	Fairland	
15	PVS LC Open 1	MACH	Lee District	
		PAC	Fairland	
19-22	Grand Prix Series (LCM)		Santa Clara, CA	
20-22	Black & Red LC Invitational	UMAC	UMD	
21-22	PVS LC Distance Meet	FBST	Fairland	

29	PVS LC Open 2	PM	Lee District
		FAST	Fairland



Last month I had the unique opportunity of being invited to work as a deck official at the 2014 South American Para Games in Santiago, Chile. Athletes from 8 countries participated and swimming was one of 7 sports in the games. The games spanned 5 days with the swimming competition being held over three days. Athletes from Chile, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador competed. The Games were held on a large athletic “campus” which contained many venues including two large outdoor stadiums, a huge indoor arena and a dining hall for the athletes, coaches and officials. The swim venue consisted of 3 indoor pools: a 50 meter competition pool, a 25 meter warm-up/warm-down pool and a diving well which had numerous diving boards including a ten meter platform. There were also two outdoor pools. Security was very tight: the venue for each sport had a delegation of Chilean army soldiers.

The Games started with an evening opening ceremony at which the new President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, spoke and formally opened the Games. The athletes were the most enthusiastic group of competitors I have ever witnessed as they paraded into the stadium that night!



Swimming began the next morning. The meet moved quickly and watching the athletes on deck provided a new perspective to swimming. Regardless of the disability, these folks are athletes first. As a stroke judge, I needed to walk at a fast pace to keep up with the backstroker who had no legs. Observing perfect starts by athletes with no arms made me realize that these athletes do not let their disabilities get in their way.

On several levels, officiating at a para meet is more complex than officiating at an able bodied meet. You start with the able bodied rules and then those rules are modified to accommodate the athletes' disability. For example, a para breaststroker must comply with the able bodied rules for breast stroke. However, para athletes who do not have legs or the use of their legs, are unable to push off of the wall with their legs after the turn. The able bodied rules are thus modified: after the touch is made at the turn in breaststroke, the para athlete may take one arm stroke that may not be simultaneous or on the same horizontal plane to attain the correct position on the breast. As an official, you must know the able bodied rules *and* all the exceptions to the rules that apply to para athletes. It is challenging but very rewarding.

Several people have asked me about differences in how the meets are run in South America from how they are run here. My answer: the differences are few. Walking onto the deck in Santiago felt very much like walking onto a deck here at home. One difference, however, which I really came to enjoy, is that at both para and able

bodied meets throughout South America, rock and roll music is played *during* each of the swims. This added a tempo and feel to the meet that was unique, especially during the distance events!!

I came away with many great memories and unique experiences. If anyone is interested in learning more about officiating para swimming, please feel free to contact me.

Elizabeth Jester
Contributing Editor

“Making My First Call” - A Series from Jim Thompson



I started my officiating career in the mid-1990s as a timer. After about two seasons of working as a timer and observing the folks “in white” (at that time), I decided that I could become an official. Actually, the thing that got me over the decision to become a certified official is that the uniform changed from “all white” to the current “white top over navy blue pants”. I figured with the “white over navy blue,” I did not look like the Pillsbury Dough Boy or the blimp monster from the first Ghost Buster movie. :-)

I still remember my first time on deck as an apprentice stroke and turn official. I was perspiring even more than the temperature warranted. I remember working with a senior official during that session. He was very helpful and helped me to feel more comfortable on deck.

Even though I could not write-up a DQ, he wanted me to raise my hand when I saw a disqualification. When I raised my hand the first time, I remember my heart rate going up to at least a thousand beats per minute. And I'm sure when I described the DQ to that senior official it came out sounding like, “um...the swimmer sort of did...this...um...kind of thing with his arms...that...um...did not look right...so I think it is a DQ. You should write it up.” Luckily for my officiating career, even though I must have sounded like I never been to a meet before, he had faith in me and encouraged me to keep at it.

Over time I got better at describing the infractions and being able to write to the rules. It is one of those things that get easier with practice. I found working different kinds of meets, especially mini-meets, allowed me to see all types of infractions and the opportunity to practice verbally describing the infraction. In the next installment, I'll talk about my “first coach initiated discussion”.



You Make the Call Resolution

Recommended Resolution: Stroke and turn judges are taught to call what they see and not what they don't see. This philosophy is most evident in the missed touch at the turn where it is a requirement of the turn judge to say, "the swimmer did not touch the wall" rather than "I didn't see the swimmer touch the wall." The judge also cannot infer an infraction from other evidence such as a slow departure from the wall that normally accompanies a missed touch. The coach and/or swimmer should go to the referee and question him/her about the call. It is the duty of the referee to make sure that the call was, in fact, correct by checking with the judge and reviewing exactly what the judge saw. The referee should find out exactly how the judge knew the swimmer missed the wall.

Applicable Rules: 101.4.3, 102.13.1



One Last Thing

If you have any stories or pictures about experiences you have had concerning any of our officials please send them to [Bob Vincent](#) so that we can get them in the newsletter.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT GOES TO THE SWIMMER

Call what you see and see what you call

