

**USA Swimming Referees/Facilitator's Clinic**  
**Dallas, TX**  
**May 30-31, 2004**

**Attending from VSI:** Mary Scott Garrett and Kevin Hogan

**How People Learn** (Frank Ching)

- The more senses we involve in the uptake of information, the more likely we are to retain the information
- Seeing, hearing, repetition, etc. all contribute information retention
- Focus of past Swimposiums has been on how things are done on a National deck; emphasis in the future, and in this clinic, will be on how to make things work at the local level

**Training of a Stroke & Turn Official** (J.R. Pooler)

- Focus of his presentation was on what is needed to run a clinic
- Materials needed (rules, test, videos, DQ slips, etc.)
- Equipment needs (VCR, TV, computer, etc.)
- USA Swimming 101 (Swimposium intro to officiating – on web)
  - What is USA Swimming all about
  - Vision statement: Inspire and enable our members to achieve excellence in the sport of swimming and in life
  - Core objectives: Build the base, promote the sport, achieve success
- What will be covered at clinic
- What are the certification requirements (membership, testing, apprenticeship)
- Mission in officiating
  - Fair and equitable officiating
  - Consistent knowledge of the rules
  - Be professional
- Other officials at the meet (Referee, Starter, etc.)
- Mechanics
  - Where do I stand
  - What do I do

- The video
  - Play in “interactive mode”, e.g. attendees ask to have it paused when they need something clarified
  - Trainer pauses tape to ask questions
  - Moving to DVD availability (might be after next update following FINA changes)
- Time commitment for clinic and test is a major barrier to many people getting involved
  - Georgia has developed a “home study” course on CD
    - Now used by about 85% of trainees
    - Trainee sends in a check and membership application and gets CD and test
    - Upon finishing test, there is then a 1.5-2 clinic with video at meets
  - USA Swimming Officials Committee is charged with having a national version out by September 15, 2004 (customizable for LSCs)
- Recertification
  - Some LSCs are allowing up to 50% of the session requirements be met with NCAA/HS/YMCA/USMS meets; Officials Committee will likely recommend that up to 25% of the session requirements be met these type meets

### **Starting** (Helen Brown)

- Ways to run a clinic
  - Spur of the moment, we need a starter
  - Dry clinic, followed by wet deck sessions
- Important items/qualities
  - Calm demeanor
  - Body language-relaxed not stiff
  - Gets 1st choice of where to stand
  - Observe swimmers approach the blocks—be aware of what is happening prior to the start
  - Work as a team with the Referee
  - If reactions to whistle aren’t good, may need to improve communications
    - Louder whistles, better timing
    - Crowd noise
  - Calm, conversational voice; not sing songy

- Best meet is where you where invisible
- Consistency in starting routine (doesn't mean a predicable interval between "take your mark" and the starting signal; but whistle commands and the total package should be predictable—don't take your time on one heat and then rush the next)
- Starter and Referee are on the same side of the pool to:
  - Allow for quick and easy communication
  - Same perspective
- Starter can be the voice for the Referee
  - "Stand-up" command is a judgment
  - Recall can be necessary
    - Unfair start
    - Broken flags, lane lines, balls in pool, etc.
- Show up early and check out equipment
- What is a false start?
  - Must allow swimmers to become stationary
    - Must allow them to achieve their set position, with all the gyrations that this might involve
    - Tremors (small, isolated muscle movement is okay)
    - If a swimmer has set, the Starter commits to a start, and before the signal sounds the swimmer flinches (big elbow twitch, for example) and the flinch continues into the starting signal, this is probably a false start
    - (It is relatively clear that different people are using the terms "tremor" and "twitch" in different ways, and that it sometimes makes a difference in what they think is allowable)
    - Moving backwards can be a false start if moving backward is part of the swimmer's starting motion
    - Head moving downward could be a false start if part of the swimmer's starting motion
    - Idea that some "false starts" are not false starts per se, but rather are a reflection of the Starter not having waited long enough for the swimmer to become set – Helen's opinion is that this is where most of our problems originate
  - Frank Ching (Officials Committee Chair) offered "purposeful forward motion" as one description that has been thrown out, but he later modified this to "purposeful starting motion" based on the idea that going backwards could be part of a starting motion

- Don't want to DQ for being clumsy, e.g. falling into water
- The idea that “incidental motion” that wasn't part of the starting action was thrown out from the audience
- Mike Saltzstein (USA Swimming Programs Operation VP)
  - A false start is like art—it is very difficult to verbalize what makes the Mona Lisa a great painting, but it is easy to see
  - We can't have a simple definition
  - Throw out all the definitions you've heard and revert to the rules—“Any swimmer starting before the signal is given shall be disqualified...”
  - Leaving a stationary position
  - Remember that we are not there to punish a swimmer for doing something wrong, but rather to protect the other swimmers who are starting/swimming legally
- New Starter training video due September 15, 2004

#### **Chief Judge (Jamy Pfister)**

- Philosophy
  - Extension of Referee
    - Rules briefing, jurisdiction, right people in the right places
    - Strong officials in center of pool
    - Newer, weaker officials on the outside lanes where they can be more easily mentored/observed
- Jurisdiction, checklist, briefings, etc. are on USA-S website
- Make sure that you are doing things the way the Meet Referee wants them done
- Make sure that equipment is ready to go (on a National deck is responsible for all supplies)
- Watches officials to make sure they are doing their jobs
- Get info from the S&T official to the Referee
- Post-meet evaluations
  - Want to encourage the good officials
  - Want to mentor and provide positive guidance to officials in need of work

## **Deck Referee (Jim Sheehan)**

- Resource materials
  - Officials test
  - Officiating Swimming manual
  - Situations
  - USA Swimming DQ slip
  - USA Swimming Rule Book
  - Guidelines
    - Positioning of officials
    - Radio protocol
    - Deck Referee and Starter guidelines
- The “Team”
  - Responsible for fair environment for competition
  - Must be a facilitator to help the staff get their jobs done correctly
  - Must allow everyone the freedom to get their jobs done
  - Needs to know the jobs of all others on deck, but it is not his/her responsibility to do them all
- The Team components
  - S&T-the people working the line
  - Chief Judges-the managers-your eyes/ears on deck, communications link
  - Starters
    - Key individual for a smooth flowing session
    - A second set of eyes and ears to help “watch your back”
  - Announcer
    - Valuable resource for communications
    - Needed for handling prelims/finals
  - Meet Referee
    - CEO
    - Establishes guidelines regarding protocols/procedures for a given meet that the Deck Referees, Starters, and Chief Judges need to follow
    - The next level to which coaches can go on an issue

- Procedures
  - The pool is yours while you are the deck referee
  - Work closely with the starter-be sure that each knows what the other is expecting
    - Where do we each stand
    - Who approaches who for a false start
    - When will the whistles be blown
    - Who is keeping order of finish
    - Who is checking on the next heat to see if there are any open lanes/missing swimmers
  - What are the scratch procedures for the meet
  - What are the procedures for “no shows” and declared false starts
  - What are the procedures for a DQ
    - Who is writing the slip
    - Who tells the swimmer/coach
  - Radio protocols
    - Make sure everyone knows the procedure
    - Guidelines on USA-S webpage
- During the race
  - Primarily focus on the race- the Chief Judges are watching the officials
  - Don't “hang out” with the Starter
  - By observing the race, you might see the infraction as well as the judge
  - Keep the “table” informed of DQs, no-shows, lane/heat changes
  - Remember, it is your pool
  - Avoid distractions if at all possible
  - You have a good team-use them, let them do their jobs, let them help you have a great meet
  - Keep track of your time line-the swimmers set their preparation based on that time line and we want to avoid any unnecessary delays
- Handling the DQ
  - The three questions
    - Judges position/jurisdiction
    - What did he or she see
    - What rule was broken

- The Deck Referee should be able to “see” the infraction from the description without actually having observed it
- If the description is not clear, ask the CJ or judge to repeat the call—do not ask leading questions
- Recording the information
  - Follow radio procedure if using them
  - After accepting the call, make sure the admin table gets the information
  - Check the DQ slip against what you have recorded
    - Reject incorrect slips-have them rewritten
    - If Okay, sign the slip and get to admin table
    - Is there enough information to define the infraction
- Who tells the swimmer/coach
- Relays-look for positive confirmation that all lanes were legal
- Working with coaches
  - Coaches are not the enemy-they are looking out for the best interest of their swimmers
  - Coaches are generally smart when it comes to their swimmers and swimming-take advantage of it
  - Keep the communications lines open
  - We are here to support the efforts of the swimmers to excel in a fair and impartial environment
  - If a coach comes to you with an issue, listen-don't try to provide an answer prematurely
  - Be calm-do not become defensive
  - Understand what the issue is about and then investigate
  - Use your team-ask for advice from other officials or even other coaches as needed
  - Make your decision based on the best information
  - Be firm but fair
  - If the coach is not happy, he or she can see the Meet Referee
- Swim-offs
  - Goal is to determine which swimmer should qualify for what place in the finals or as an alternate (when it makes a difference, e.g. ties for 8th, 16th, 24th, 25th, and 26th in an eight lane pool)

- Look for other ties in the top 30 as scratches may create a tie for the last place in a heat
- Get the coaches together to identify the best time to hold the swim-off as provided by the rules
- Better to run a swim-off for something you don't need than not to run one and find out it is needed
- Know the rules about when to schedule to help the coaches with the decision
- The Rules-
  - Read the rule book regularly
  - Read the Meet Invitation
  - Know which events are yours and be ready to do your job prior to the start of the event
  - Referees are bound by the rules-we are not god with a little 'g'
  - Always remain calm and remember, the benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer

### **On-Line Tests (Dave Coleman)**

- Why test
  - Professionalism requires the mastery of a body of knowledge, in this case the Rules & Regulations of swimming
  - Learn and relearn through clinics, review, testing
- Test are on-line
  - 5000-7000 taken so far
  - Migrating test from ASCA website to USA-S site
    - Aiming for September 1, 2004
    - September 15, 2004 latest
- On-line and hardcopy versions of the test are now the same except that Clerk of Course test has a "clumsy" interface, e.g. can't do the seedings on-line so will answer questions about which swimmer is where
- On-line tests
  - Will sign-on (need USA-S ID #)
  - Creates a unique tests for each individual from a pool of questions
  - Randomizes questions and the order of answers
  - Will get one question at a time, but not instantaneous feedback (at least not initially)



- Can save test at any point and come back at a later time
- Unclear as to whether or not you can print a paper copy to complete first, but a “clinic” version can be printed
- Recertification test – some questions will be replaced with situational questions rather than simple rules regurgitation

### **Administrative Referee (Joel Black)**

- Many useful forms are on USA-S website
- “Officiating Swimming” manual is a useful reference
- Review Meet Invitation before sanctioning
- Pre-meet preparation is very important—an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure
- Make sure that there are no entry problems—resolve any issues before the meet
- Prelims/finals
  - Be proactive about scratches, especially on Sunday (last meet day)
  - A number of LSCs fine for no-shows in finals; others don’t run finals on Sunday
- Experienced Administrative Referees need to mentor newer Referees

### **Meet Referee (Dan McAllen)**

- Philosophy-Why have a Meet Referee, what are they suppose to do
  - Fair and equitable competition
  - Ensure that everyone has fun
  - Passing a test is not what makes a good referee—the key is leadership skills
  - Show them what you want done and get out of the way
- Priorities
  - #1 – The athletes
  - #2 – The coaches
  - #3 – Everyone else
- Preparation, preparation, preparation
  - Meet Invitation
  - Site preparation
  - Follow-up on previously identified problems for that venue or meet

- Provide follow-up for the present meet which can be acted on for the next meet
- Practical – Do not assume that the rule book has all the answers
  - “Sometimes there is very little common sense, but if you have any, use it”
  - Ask questions, get opinions, involve your team in the decision making process
  - Let those affected by the decisions to be made play a role in the decision making process
- Mentor – Find a mentor
- Proactive
  - Where are my problems
  - What do I need to do to head them off
  - Do I have a Meet Jury in place if I need one
  - Interact with the coaches on deck and get the pulse of the meet
- Flexibility
  - Sometimes decisions don’t work out—don’t be afraid to change something that you put in place
- Coaches meeting
  - Start times
  - Time lines
  - Anything unusual-overhead starts, chase starts, two to a lane
  - How swim-offs will be handled (if you leave the venue you do so at your own peril; if the other swimmer stays they’re in)
  - Scratch procedures and penalties
  - Who’s on jury
  - Water temperature—if for no other reason than to demonstrate to the coaches that you are on top of everything
  - Never lie to or deceive coaches in any way—if you have a problem, get it out in the open
  - Gather information about swimmers with disabilities
- Officials Meetings
  - How meet is to be administered, expectations
  - Chief Judge-jurisdictions, DQ paper trail
  - Deck Referee-false starts, declared false starts, swim-offs
  - Deck Referee/Starter interaction-need to discuss details of interaction

- Order of finish-who will take
- Where will results be posted
- Don't be a slave to timelines
- Information pertaining to swimmers with disabilities
- Above is not meant to be all encompassing
- Post-meet wrap-up
  - Recommendation for improvements to the specific meet and/or venue; recommendation for all (many) meets in general
  - Evaluation of officials

### **Task Force Activities (Various)**

- Our kids initiative (trying to bring together officials from different organizations)-new "rules differences" and "depth requirements" have been put together and will be posted to web
- Proposing at Convention that National and National Championship certification be done away with effective 2005; to be replaced by Level 1, 2, 3 officials. Level 1 will be LSC certification, with levels 2 and 3 having additional requirements. Levels 2 and 3 will require sessions at local meets. One driving force behind the change is the desire to "force" officials that only work national level meets, to work at the local level. The hope is that this will place experienced officials in a mentoring level. In the absence of working local level meets, you will not be eligible for level 2 or 3 certification.
- Communications-website has been revamped. Will be trying to place fresh content on the officials' section every week so that there will be an incentive to come back to the site.