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Greetings from the Chair - Dana Covington

The Holidays are upon us, and I would like to say an extra thank you to all the officials who have been working swim meets this holiday season, giving your time, talent and treasure to make these meets happen. What a gift you give to teams and swimmers!

Additionally, thank you to all the officials at winter championships meets and the LSC OCs who have filled out the survey that was made available to you. This survey was created so that the NOC can

develop goals for the upcoming year based on what you want. Please know that each comment will be read and considered by the NOC members.

By the way, the NOC members are:

- Athletes: Hannah Cousins, Harper Freeman, Colin Gibbons and Dylan Nelson
- Jason Johnson, Education
- Anne Lawley, Communications and Social Media
- Trish Martin, Evaluation and Mentoring
- Mike Murphy, Open Water
- Curtis Myers, LSC Liaison and Athlete projects
- Jack Swanson, Testing and Athlete projects
- Marianne Walling, OTS and National Certifications
- Dana Covington, Chair

Enjoy this season with family and friends, and I hope to see many of you on a deck somewhere in 2024.

Announcements

- Please consider applying to meets that have open applications: Open Water Nationals, 18 & Under Spring Cups, Futures (five sites) and Speedo Summer Championships.
- National Meet Applications including status:
 - **2024 TYR Pro Swim Series** (*All applications closed*):
 - Knoxville, Tenn. - January 10-13, 2024
 - Westmont, Ill. - March 6-9, 2024. MR - Dana Covington
 - San Antonio, Texas - April 10-13, 2024. MR - Scott Powell
 - **2024 Open Water National and Junior National Championships** (*Application OPEN*)
 - Sarasota, Fla. - May 3-5, 2024. MR - Tom Lombardo
 - **18 & Under Spring Cups**, May 2-5 (no national certification required, N2 preferred. *ALL APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN!*)
 - Elkhart, Ind. - MR Kathleen McNeill Fish
 - Fort Lauderdale, Fla. - MR Allan Golding
 - Mesa, Ariz. - MR Curtis Myers
 - **Speedo Summer Championships**, July 23-27, 2024 (N3 National certification required. *Application Open*)
 - Irvine, Calif. - MR Derigan Silver
 - **Futures Championships**, July 24-27 or July 25-28* (N2 certification preferred. *Applications are OPEN at all sites!*)
 - Austin, Texas - MR Edgar Caraballo
 - Huntsville, Ala. - MR Anne Liles Lawley
 - Minneapolis, Minn. - MR Ken Graham
 - *Richmond, Va. - MR Marianne Walling
 - Sacramento, Calif. - MR Kevin Hogan
- WWOWW - The Wonderful World of Open Water Webinar was held on Thursday, November 9. This was an introduction to Open Water Swimming and Officiating, not an Officials Clinic. The

meeting was recorded and the link was distributed to your LSC OC.

- The next OC Quarterly call will be held Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at 6 p.m. MT. This is an open meeting (no comments or questions). You may request the Registration link from your OC or by accessing the event calendar [here](#).
- Officials Chairs can nominate N3i Evaluators from their LSCs on a quarterly basis. Qualified nominees must have demonstrated successful performance in recent National Meet assignments and as an N2 mentor. Nomination guidelines can be found [HERE](#). Quarterly nomination deadlines for 2024 are 2/28, 5/30, 8/30, and 11/30. The application can be found [HERE](#).
- The USA Swimming Office will be closed beginning Noon MT on December 21 through January 1.

Survey Questions

From Jason Johnson

This survey is a new feature that will be appearing in each Newsletter. Responses are anonymous and will help direct efforts of the NOC in areas such as education, support and topics requiring further focus. Thanks in advance for answering these TWO questions.

[December Survey Questions](#)

Rules and Regulations Update

From Derek Paul

We're excited to say the 2024 USA Swimming Rulebook is complete and has been posted on the Rules and Regulations page on the USA Swimming website: [2024 Rulebook](#). The hard copy of the 2024 Rulebook will be shipped to those who ordered before the deadline by early February. In the meantime, please refer to this online resource.

I'd like to say a huge thank you Herb Schwab for leading the effort and to everyone who helped update the Rulebook for 2024. Please remember the 2024 rulebook will become effective on January 1, 2024.

Backstroke Finishes

From Derek Paul

We've also heard from a number of officials about what they're seeing on deck regarding the new backstroke finish language of Rule 101.4.2 (page 24 USA Swimming 2024 Rulebook). Thanks for letting us know what you are seeing. If you have any questions or concerns about this change, please do not hesitate to reach out to your LSC Officials' Chair, who will coordinate education efforts through the NOC and R&R Committees.

A few things to remember about the new language of 101.4.2:

1. USA Swimming made changes to its rule 101.4.2 in response to AQUA changing its Swimming Rule 6.3.
2. All changes to 101.4.2 are contained within its final sentence. "Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch."
3. In order to be completely submerged at the end of the race, a swimmer must be at or past the point in the race in which 1) "some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards)" AND 2) the swimmer is "immediately prior to [the act of] reaching for the finish".
 - o The language requires both parts 1) and 2) to be satisfied.
 - o The language is permissive ("the swimmer may be completely submerged"), not mandatory.
 - o The timing component ("immediately prior to") in part 2) is determined in relation to when the swimmer starts "reaching for the finish", not when the athlete touches the finishing wall.
 - o A swimmer may kick while completely submerged.

OTS Update

From Patrick Murphy, USA Swimming Senior Director of Member Data & Product

The team is working through the Official Certification Request process and Evaluations. Thanks to the work between the NOC and CAC, the team is building OTS towards the new standardized certification structure, pending Board Approval. Unlike the previous OTS, Evaluations will be stored online in a dynamic form, and LSC Certification requests will be possible in OTS due to the standardization.

We are hoping to launch the new OTS features in January. We understand the need for drastically improved reporting and hope to launch reports before year-end.

Deck Referee and Starter Protocol for Resolution and Re-setting the Heat after a Fall-In

From Robert Scandary with edits from Clark Hammond

We have all read the False Start Scenarios that have been posted on the USA Swimming website ([False Start Scenarios](#)). Even though these were developed a while ago, they are still valid guidelines and continue to be used in Starter Clinics offered across the country.

Each scenario presents a situation to demonstrate Rule 101.1.3. The common thread in most of these scenarios is related to when one or more swimmers fall into the pool prior to the starting signal, either with or without the Starter issuing a "Stand" command, and whether the swimmer(s) is/is not the

initial offending swimmer.

Upon further scrutiny and reflection, a critical practice and/or protocol in False Start Scenario 2, 3, 4, and 5 has not been addressed. The missing information in each of these four scenarios is the specific protocol to resolve the situation and re-set the heat, all the while attending to the existing rule and our current practice.

Refer to false start rule 101.1.3.A as several of the scenarios do:

101.1.3.A - False Starts

Any swimmer initiating a start before the signal may be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "stand up" command and may step off the blocks.

In each Scenario 2 through 5, while continuing to conform to the 101.1.3 rules and our current practice, I offer the following protocol & rationale (underlined) for your consideration for resolution and resetting of the heat after a fall-in:

1. The DR and SR should always independently indicate on their Heat Sheet if they believe any fall-in swimmer(s) committed a false start. This can be done using a circle or mark on the applicable lane. The rationale for this is based upon our current practice where written observation is shared prior to any conversation.
2. If the Starter has a potential false start due to a fall-in, they should approach the DR and show their written observation to the DR. If, "...the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation..." then the swimmer(s) is disqualified for a false start. Rule 101.1.3.A clearly states that the SR is to present their (written) observation to the DR for a confirmation. Additionally, a coach wanting to advocate for their swimmer should be afforded the opportunity to see the DR and SR sheets with the swimmer/lane noting a false start, if confirmed.
3. Once the DR and SR have compared their written observations, conversation may be held to determine if there were any issues surrounding the fall-in that might relieve the swimmer from the disqualification. Consideration is given to the order of incidence, who was the offending swimmer(s), were they set, did another swimmer react to the offending swimmer, did the swimmer(s) react to a sound, etc. If it's mutually determined that there is a violation, then a disqualification is warranted. The heat is told, "Step down"; the DR informs the violating swimmer(s) of their DQ, and the swimmer(s) is not permitted to swim this event. The DR blows another long whistle to initiate the starting sequence again.
4. If the DR and SR do not confirm that a swimmer(s) false started, (i.e., not being set, different offending swimmer, was there a sound, etc.) then no violation has occurred, and the swimmer(s) is relieved of the potential false start, and the DR blows another long whistle to initiate the starting sequence again.

2024 Open Water School | May 2 in Sarasota, FL

An Open Water School is planned in conjunction with [Open Water National Championships](#) in May

2024. This is an opportunity to learn more about officiating open water in advance of working Open Water Nationals and Junior Nationals. There are limited spots available, if you are interested in attending, please speak to your Officials Chair.



2023 Pan American Open Water

From Tom Lombardo

I was extremely honored to be selected as a member of the International Technical (ITO) Open Water Officiating Crew for the 2023 Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile. In my wildest dreams, I never would have thought that I would be named the Chief Referee for my first International assignment.

I arrived in Santiago on the morning of Friday, October 27, just before the open water competition on Sunday, October 29. The first stop was to pick up my uniform. For a one-day event, I was given two shirts, two pairs of pants, a jacket and a backpack. I then met up with the Open Water International Delegate, Rick Walker, and the Open Water Swimming Sport Manager, Alvaro Del Pozo Jacobs, to check out the venue. The open water events were held in beautiful Laguna Los Morros, a waterskiing lake (with views of the mountains as our backdrop) about 30 minutes south of downtown Santiago.

The next morning, we had our officials briefing with the entire team of 18 ITOs and 6 NTOs. During this briefing, we went over assignments for both races and the timeline. Next, we all headed to the venue for the technical meeting that evening. During the technical meeting, we went over the course, timeline, check-in procedures, safety and media expectations with all the delegate coaches and athletes. The biggest question during the meeting was the water temperature. Santiago was having an unusual cold spell that week, with the air temps in the low to mid 50s. I informed everyone that the official water temperature would be taken two hours prior to the start of both races (7 a.m. for the women and 12:30 p.m. for the men). We selected a coach volunteer from each race to go with the Safety Official and a Race Referee to take the temperature.

Race Day arrived on October 29. As no surprise to any open water official, we arrived at the venue well before sunrise. As the athletes started to arrive, they went through check-in procedures, body marking, suit and wetsuit checks. The official water temperature came in at 7:01 a.m. with the water at 17 degrees celsius, which meant we would be having a mandatory wetsuit race for the women. Later

that day, the water hadn't changed, and the men's race was also a mandatory wetsuit race. World Aquatics rules state that if the "Water Temp is below 18 C wetsuits will be compulsory." Both races were highly contested with Ashley Twitchell (USA) winning the gold in the women's 10K and Brennen Gravely (USA) winning the gold in the men's 10K race. The Biggest excitement for the officiating crew was that there were absolutely no protests for either race!

As I said earlier, it was a huge honor to be selected to officiate the Pan American Games. A huge thank you to my mentors over the years, especially Mark McCaw, Matt and Pam Wilson, Sandy Drake, Sid Cassidy, and Rick Walker.



Congratulations and Thanks to the Following USA Swimming Officials Who Represented USA Swimming in International Competition:

2023 Pan American Games - Santiago, Chile

- Edgar Caraballo
- Ellen Colket (starter)
- Trish Martin
- Tom Lombardo (Chief Open Water Referee)

Each Official received a Pan American Games commemorative medal for participating. The pool medals were presented by Husain Al-Musallam (WA President), Dale Neuberger (WA Treasurer), Maureen Croes (PAQ President) and Jay Thomas (PAQ Swimming Committee Chair), while the open water medal was presented by Maureen Croes (PAQ President).

Congratulations to These Officials Who Served at Their First National Meet Recently:

Note - We apologize for any omissions or errors.

Toyota US Open (Greensboro)

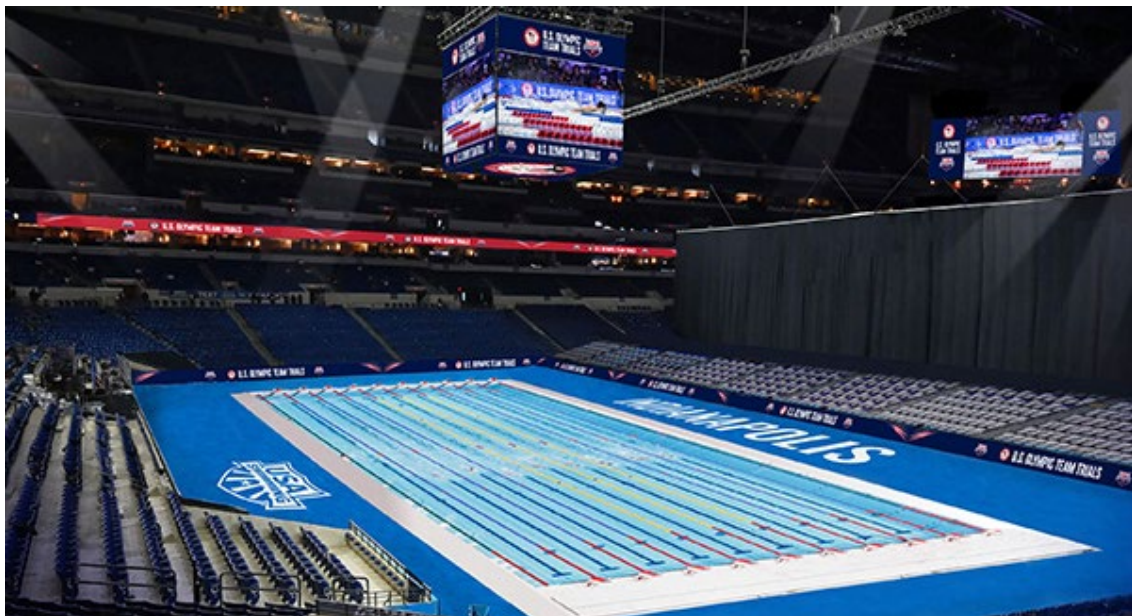
Matthew Clayton - Maryland Swimming
Erica LaFalce-Devito - Virginia Swimming

Speedo Junior Nationals East, Columbus, OH

Walter Benzija- New Jersey Swimming
Carl Chan- Indiana Swimming
Tiffany Epoca- Middle Atlantic Swimming
Ivan Herrerra - Sierra Nevada Swimming
Curtis Onofri - Ohio Swimming
Mike Sunman - Florida Swimming
Crystal Loudermilk - Indiana Swimming
Brent Runkle - Kentucky Swimming
Karl Stumpf - Potomac Valley Swimming
Eliot VanVelzen - Indiana Swimming
Adam Yee - New Jersey Swimming

Speedo Junior Nationals West, Westmont, IL

Carl Baber - PN
Joseph Farthing - MV
Charles Franckowiak - IL
Deb Hayashi - IL
Kelly Jowers - GA
Erika Livingston - PV
Kerra Mayor - MN
John Schulz - WI
Jack Swanson - MN
Brian Toay - ND



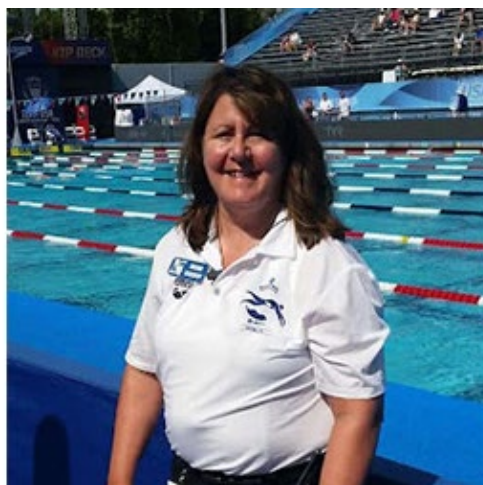
Congratulations to These Officials Who Will be Serving on the Olympic Trials deck:

Assigned Team

Meet Referee - Jamie Cahn (MD)	AR - Traci Johnson (NT)	AAR - Mickey Smythe (IN)
AAR - Jack Yetter (IL)	HDR - Dana Covington (SN)	DR - Edgar Caraballo (OH)
DR - Mike Dilli (CO)	DR - Anissa Kanzari (OH)	DR - Peter LaGow (MD)
DR - Phil Lakota - (NT)	DR - Trish Martin (NC)	DR - Scott Powell (CO)
VR - Clark Hammond (SE)	HSR - Lisa Vetterlein (SI)	SR - Ellen Colket (PV)
SR - Jason Johnson (NT)	SR - Robert Scandary (CO)	TLCJ - Rich McMillen (PV)
CJ - Kenneth Chung (NT)	CJ - John Gagliardo (PN)	CJ - Ken Galica (NE)
CJ - Anne Lawley (CO)	CJ - Lisa Olack (NC)	CJ - Marianne Walling (IN)
TTR - Phil Barnes (IA)	P&E - Kathleen Scandary (CO)	

Stroke & Turn

Tom Allison (PV)	Lorna Anaya (ST)	Kerry Barnes (IA)
Chris Barry (NJ)	Jody Betts (AZ)	Ruth-Ann Bode (KY)
Sarah Bollman (CT)	Judi Creech (OR)	Kim Crouse (SC)
Dave DiNardo (PV)	Kathy Fish (FG)	Julie Floyd (UT)
Doug Galinsky (IN)	Patrick Garrett (OK)	Tracey Garrett (OK)
Ken Graham (MR)	Sandy Graham (MR)	Nancy Harmon (GA)
Kevin Hogan (VA)	Louis Hu (NJ)	Susan Huckleby (MT)
Paul Jampole (PV)	Satoshi Katsumoto (MD)	Genny Kimbel (VA)
Wade Kojima (MS)	Keith Lambert (IE)	Fred Leff (NI)
Sheila Lovell-Otterstrom (OR)	Annette Mackrel (MR)	Jeff McCoskey (OZ)
Stephanie Minervini (NT)	Steve Mitchell (WI)	Dave Olack (NC)
Aimee Onoszko (SC)	Phil Paspalas (MR)	Scott Reynolds (GU)
Jeff Sargent (CT)	Margy Sargent (CT)	Jason Shibata (SN)
Derigan Silver (CO)	Greg Spicka (NJ)	Rob Stevens (NC)
Marcus Stromberg (MN)	Mike Trexler (NC)	Gretchen Van De Walle (NJ)
Bryan Wallin (VA)	Nancy Wargo (CT)	



Officials Excellence Award

Susan Huckeby, Montana Swimming

Susan is everything you want an official to be. Pleasant, knowledgeable and above all else, fair. Susan has years of experience that she is happy to bring to any meet, ranging from a weekend club intrasquad or dual meet to a large Invitational, Officials Qualifying Meet or LSC Championship. Susan is a great trainer and mentor to new officials. She is easy to work with and shares her knowledge in a way that new officials feel comfortable with. She is always willing to explain how to officiate in a way that other officials can easily grasp.

Susan has worked all over the LSC. She travels widely within the Western Zone for Sectionals and Zone meets, and also around the country to Junior Nationals and Nationals. Her experience is recognized and valued on those decks, and she brings that knowledge back to better officials in Montana. Susan has top-level national certifications in all positions and can evaluate several. This is a testament to her hard work and years of experience, as well as her willingness to learn and grow.

Susan is a valued official in Montana and is well qualified for this prestigious award.



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1 Olympic Plaza Colorado Springs, CO, 80909