

2008 USMS Short Course Nationals

Meet Referee's Report

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It was a pleasure to be able to serve as the Meet Referee at the 2008 USMS Short Course Nationals in Austin, Texas. I hope that every athlete was given the best opportunity to achieve their best possible swim ever. I hope that everyone feels that the Officiating was the highest quality as possible. And, I also hope that everyone had an enjoyable meet.

As expected, we struggled with having a small number of Officials covering two pools. For the majority of the meet, we were able to cover the pool with a Deck Referee, Starter, Chief Judge, and two Stroke & Turn Officials at each end of each pool. At times (particularly lunch!) we cut back to one Stroke & Turn Judge at each end of the pool. The Officials did a remarkable job, while never complaining about being overworked.

We did not have too many Officials from the local area. It was tough recruiting Officials in Austin. Just for reference, we had a total of 18 Officials: 11 Officials from Gulf Swimming, two from South Texas Swimming, one from North Texas Swimming, one from Arizona Swimming, one from Illinois Swimming, one from Lake Erie Swimming, and one from Connecticut Swimming. I want to thank all of the Officials for their excellent work and dedication.

And, thank you to Charlie Cockrell and the Officials Liaison, Ted Haartz, for their guidance before and during the meet. Their help was invaluable!

We did have a couple of swimmers/Officials that offered their services at the meet. In both cases, the Officials were not certified by USA Swimming or any acceptable organization. I declined their offer of help.

We held the required Officials Briefings each day at 7:30 a.m. (the competition started at 8:35 a.m.) The USMS Briefing Notes were a tremendous asset for those meetings. I distributed the notes to all of the Officials prior to the meet, and we went over and discussed all of the topics in those Briefing notes.

This meet was also approved for N2 Evaluations for USA Swimming Officials. We had two Evaluators (Pat Baker and Fred Pigott) and five Officials took advantage of this approval to be evaluated for Stroke & Turn positions, and for Starter & Deck Referee positions. Fred and Pat also worked the entire meet in deck positions, while also evaluating the Officials.

One of the problems with running two separate pools in the same building is the interference with the starts on each pool. We were careful to train the swimmers that they should be ready for their event when they hear the series of short whistles and only step up on the blocks at the sound of the long whistle. With the two pools running concurrently, we were asking the swimmers to only step up at the sound of the long whistle — and if they stepped up early, we asked them to step down. (Now, if the swimmer had a medical condition or age that required them to step up early, we were cognizant of that and did NOT ask them to step down!) This consistent approach worked well, and the swimmers got the message quickly. Also, by not allowing the swimmers to step up before the long whistle, we lessened the chances of a false start occurring due to the horn from the "other" pool starting a race.

The timelines for the meet were set with a 45 second interval (plus a 15 second additional interval for backstroke events). We started each day on time. And, we were able to stay consistently on schedule or slightly ahead. We did finish on the order of 15-20 minutes ahead of the timeline each day. For reference, the lengths of each session were:

| | | Start | Finish |
|----------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Thursday | May 1 | 8:35 a.m. | 4:53 p.m. |
| Friday | May 2 | 8:35 a.m. | 4:25 p.m. |
| Saturday | May 3 | 8:35 a.m. | 7:35 p.m. |
| Sunday | May 4 | 8:35 a.m. | 5:41 p.m. |

With two pools, we ran odd heats in one pool, and even heats in the other pool. We made every effort to keep the two pools on the same pace, with the heats starting in ascending order as much as possible. If necessary, we slowed down the starting pace of one pool or the other to keep them together. On the deck-seeded longer distance events each day, the Administrative Referee (Tom O'Brien) switched the first and second heats (the two slowest heats), so that the slowest heat and the fourth slowest heat swam in one pool, and the second and third slowest heats swam in the second pool. This kept the heats in order by the time that we started the fifth and subsequent heats.

We had probably the typical number of DQ's called during the meet. And, I believe that all of the swimmers' questions about any of the DQ's were handled promptly. There were no written protests of any calls.

We had very little problems with the swimmers staying in the water during the relays. The Starters and Deck Referees were able to stay on top of the situation and kept reminding the relay swimmers to stay away from the touch-pads and hold on to the lane lines. The Daktronics Operators were able to keep on top of this, too, to keep stray touches from affecting the splits and results.

Also, the meet was observed in its entirety for splits on all Freestyle, Breaststroke, and Butterfly events. We did not require a split notification form for any event except for the backstroke splits, **and the leadoff split for the medley relays.** This also made the process simpler for the Officials, since we did not have to worry about additional paperwork for splits, or the chance of missing a split because of some delay or failure to notify a Stroke & Turn Judge in time for the swim.

Since all of the Officials were certified as USA Swimming Officials, **this made ovations for OVC's to be a simple task.** The meet was approved for observations for OVC's, and we just had the Officials watch for anything that would be a violation of USA Swimming rules, while still legal according to USMS rules. If an Official observed any USA Swimming infractions, we had those violations marked on that Official's heat sheet and turned in to me at the end of the day. We observed the entire meet, instead of worrying specifically about an individual swimmer. This made the process simpler for the Officials, the swimmers, and everyone involved.

We had only one minor equipment malfunction with one touch-pad. That pad was quickly swapped out, with no delay in the meet. When we had any equipment issues (e.g., re-positioning the starting system strobe light to conform to USMS Rules) the pool staff were readily available to correct any problems or make *any* changes.

The crew at The University of Texas did a great job. From the Meet Director, to the Clerk of Course at the Relay Table, to the Computer Operators, and the Timing System Operators - everyone did a great job! They made the meet run smoothly, and they made my job easy. They were on top of every detail. They were a pleasure to work with!

Thank you to all of the Officials!

Future USMS Nationals: I encourage all of the future meets to automatically record and submit all of the legal splits for Freestyle, Breaststroke, and Butterfly events, and only require the Split Notification Form for the initial distance for backstroke events and medley relays. This is an easier on the **Officials** (and especially the Administrative Referee). Likewise, observing **all** of the swims for USA Swimming OVC's is much easier than selectively observing individual races.