



## Officials Chair Report

### Niagara LSC Fall House of Delegates Meeting

May 2nd, 2015

#### Department of Redundancy Department

I'll keep saying these things until all of us are repeating them in our sleep....

1. If it isn't in the OTS, it didn't happen.
2. Referees, check certification cards to validate expiration date before each session of a meet. There have been several occurrences of Officials being on deck with expired certifications, background checks, or APTs. This is a problem because the Official is no longer a member of USA Swimming once either of those has expired.

Regarding the above statements... In the 4 years that I have been Officials Chair I have been fairly forgiving in backdating Officiating credentials for people who have met certification requirements and worked a meet without actually having certifications assigned to them.

I believe that 4 years is a more than sufficient time period to establish what the certification process is and the importance of having properly certified people on deck. Further, by continuing to back date certifications as I've been doing, I believe, only continues to foster an atmosphere where these matters are not being taken as seriously as they should be.

As such, I will no longer back date certifications no matter the circumstances or consequences. I will, however, continue to make myself available and will work diligently to resolve certification issues \*before\* they become a problem.

#### Out and About

The following Niagara Officials stepped, or will be stepping, outside of the home court:

Brooks Howard (FAST) will attend the Officials Chairs Meeting in Minneapolis, MN on May 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 in my stead. I have a family obligation and cannot attend.

TBD Official (Referee) to attend LSC Safety Chairs meeting in Denver, CO, June 26-27, 2015 (see below)

June Mundt (UN), Jean Lalomia (SHAQ), and Matty Matuszewski (TTSC) have been selected to officiate at the Arena Pro Swim Series at Charlotte from May 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

## Official Certification vs. USA Membership and Expiration Dates

Just a reminder that there is still some non-conformity in all of the expiration dates we have to be concerned with. As a certified Official, you need to be aware of these so that your USA Swimming membership or officiating certifications do not lapse.

First, you have to be a member of USA Swimming to be an Official and be allowed on deck. Your USA Swimming membership is indicated by the big, colorful card that says '2015' and maybe 'Official' on it. That card has nothing to do with as to whether you are actually certified as an Official. It just means that you are a member of USA Swimming and registered as an Official. Your USA Swimming membership expires on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. You can renew your membership for next year (2016) starting Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>.

To be a non-athlete member of USA Swimming, you must undergo a background check (BGC) and complete the Athlete Protection Training (APT) presentation. Here's where it goes a little awry. The APT is good for 2 years and will expire on the Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> (like your yearly USA Swimming membership) two years after you take it. Again, you can complete the APT for next year starting Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>. The background check, on the other hand, is good for 2 years, but will expire at the end of the month in which you initiated the check. So, if I did my BGC in October 2013, I would have to initiate and pass another BGC by Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 so that my USA Swimming membership would not lapse. If your membership lapses, you are no longer an Official until you again become a member of USA Swimming.

Your officiating credentials are shown on the card that gets sent out of the OTS to you as seen below.

 <b>Jim Stromski</b> NIAGARA SWIMMING				 <b>Jim Stromski</b> USA SWIMMING			
		B/C Exp: 12/31/16				B/C Exp: 12/31/16	
		Reg Exp: 12/31/15				Reg Exp: 12/31/15	
		APT Exp: 12/31/15				APT Exp: 12/31/15	
LSC	Level	Expires	Instr/Eval	National	Level	Expires	Eval
Stroke & Turn	Q	12/31/2017		Stroke & Turn	N3	06/30/2018	-
Chief Judge	Q	12/31/2017		Chief Judge	N2	06/30/2018	-
Starter	Q	12/31/2017		Starter	N2	06/30/2018	-
Referee/Deck Referee	Q	12/31/2017		Referee/Deck Referee	N3	06/30/2018	-
Meet Referee	Q	12/31/2017					
Timing Judge	Q	12/31/2017					

As you can see, the BGC, USA Swimming membership, and APT expiration dates are shown at the top of the card\*\*\* and my officiating credential expiration dates are shown in the lower portion. All of your officiating credentials expire on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> three years after you become certified or re-certify in a position EXCEPT FOR Administrative Officials who are on a 2 year certification cycle.

Remember that if any of the dates at the top expire, it doesn't matter what it says in the lower part. You are not a member of USA Swimming and therefore not an Official. To recap:

USA Swimming membership – Expires on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> and you can renew for the next year starting on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>.

Background Check – Expires at the end of the month 2 years from when you pass the check (i.e., October 2013 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015).

Athlete Protection Training – Expires on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> two years after you complete the training module.

S&T, Starter, Referee, etc. certifications – Expires on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> three years after you become certified or re-certify in a position.

Administrative Officials – Expires on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> two years after you become certified or re-certify in the position.

I bring all of this to your attention for two reasons: there seems to be some confusion out there as to the difference between your USA Swimming membership card and your officiating credentials card AND that the first round of Administrative Official renewals will be due by Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> this year. If you are an AO, please check your certification dates and plan accordingly.

\*\*\* Note that my BGC is expiring on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> like all of the others. I did that intentionally last year. My BGC was going to expire on Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015, but I chose to 'give up' 2 months of the check to initiate the next one in December so that all of my expiration dates (other than the 'National' ones) would expire on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>. Makes life easier only having to worry about one date.

## **By the Numbers**

I'm pleased to announce that, as of today (4/26/15), the number of certified Niagara Officials is 228. Of those 228 Officials, 45 are Starters and a further 45 are Referees. Further, there are 39 people certified as Administrative Official within the LSC. 13 of those are also 'wet side' Officials, but 26 are strictly 'dry side' AOs. Also, 53 Niagara Officials hold an N2 certification or better in at least one position. Nice job!

## **LSC Safety Chairs Meeting**

I have been authorized by the Niagara Board of Directors to identify a certified Referee in the Niagara LSC and have them attend the LSC Safety Chairs meeting in Denver, CO, June 26-27. During one of the BoD conference calls, the Safety Chairs meeting was being discussed and it occurred to me that Referees are responsible for the overall conduct of a meet and safety should always be our #1 priority. It then occurred to me that I really only have a basic concept of what that means and I think that we and our athletes would be greatly served by gaining some education about what USA Swimming thinks we should be concerned with during a meet and how we, as Officials, should respond or react. I truly look forward to what kind of information will be coming back from this meeting and will share it with everyone in the not too distant future.

## **Aligning LSC Officiating Position Duties with National Certification Program Expectations**

Although it says, generically, 'Officiating Positions' in the section header, what I'm really talking about is the Chief Judge position and, to a lesser extent, Administrative Referee. For the most part at our local meets, the CJ is the person who roams the deck and takes calls from the S&T Judges, relays those calls to the Referee, and makes sure a DQ slip is filled out and notifies the coach/swimmer and timing table. When wanting to advance to the N2 or N3 level as a CJ, however, you will find that those are only \*part\* of the duties of a CJ (just ask Dan Crist!). At the LSC Short Course Championship in March we (and by 'we' I mean myself, the Meet Ref, and Lead CJ) found out the hard way that we are doing a great disservice to Niagara Officials in preparing them to perform the duties of a CJ as expected at the N2 and N3 levels.

At those levels, as a CJ, you are expected to prepare all of those little things that make officiating and running a meet go smoothly from preparing and handing out radios, preparing heat sheets for Starters/Refs, placing chairs and lap counters on deck, and a myriad of other things. We need to do a better job of preparing people for this position and I will be communicating with Meet Directors, asking that they allow a CJ to be more involved with the preparation and setup of meets going forward. Also, as previously mentioned, Brooks Howard will be attending the Officials Chairs meeting in my place at the end of May. I've asked Brooks to ask a lot of questions about how other LSCs prepare and train their Officials for the CJ position and to bring back some ideas on how we can proceed. We should have a plan in place by the start of the Fall Short Course season.

## 2014 – 2015 Budget Status

The Niagara Officials Chair was allocated a budget of \$6,500 at the 2014 Fall HoD meeting for use to the betterment of officiating in the Niagara LSC. Here are expenditures of that budgeted money to date:

Starting amount on September 1st, 2014 = \$6,500			
Date	Name	Description	Amount
10/5/2014	Jim Stromski	Round trip mileage and tolls to Fall HoD meeting.	\$76.50
11/7/2014	Adam Zaczkowski	Round trip mileage and tolls to New Hartford for Girls Class B observation.	\$43.40
11/X/14	Jean Lalomia Charlotte Grand Prix	Niagara Officials Travel Reimbursement policy.	\$228.98
2/20-21/15	Fred Leff	Hotel for UNAC Qualifier meet evaluations	\$246.34
3/12-15/15	Jim Stromski	Perform N2 Evaluations at LSC Championship Meet	\$550.16
3/19-22/15	Jim Stromski	N3 Opportunities - Super 8 Ithaca, Speedo SC Sectional	\$291.33
5/28-31/15	Brooks Howard	Airfare to Officials Chair Meeting in Minneapolis. MN	\$446.92
		<b>Total Expenses:</b>	\$1,883.63
		<b>Amount Remaining:</b>	\$4,616.37

There's still a substantial portion of the budget remaining, but there are a bunch of things coming up during the summer that will deplete that fairly quickly such as LSC N2-Only meets and possible travel reimbursements to Jr/Sr nationals.

Any remaining funds, will be used towards the next round of name tags, restocking the 'Niagara' pins, and some other 'thank you for your time' type items.

## Niagara Officials Travel Policy

After making use of the 'Niagara OQM Opportunities' policy during the Speedo Sectional meet in Ithaca in March, I realized that, though I had included it in one of my first reports (2012 Fall HoD), the policy was not posted on the Niagara Officials 'Swim Guide' page. The 'Niagara OQM Opportunities' policy basically says that if you reside in area of the Niagara LSC that does not have an N3 level OQM scheduled (this year Buffalo, Rochester, and Ithaca had them) and you want to be evaluated for an N3 position other than S&T, the Officials budget will cover the cost of a hotel room for you. The caveats are:

- Be registered with Niagara Swimming as an official for at least one year prior to the meet and be registered with USA Swimming through Niagara Swimming as an official during the time of the meet.
- Have worked a minimum of 8 sessions in at least 4 meets sanctioned by Niagara Swimming plus at least 3 sessions of a Niagara Swimming LSC Championships meet in the twelve months prior to the meet.
- Work all sessions of the meet.

Say, for example, you reside in Fulton or Jamestown and want to get an N3 Starter evaluation at an OQM in Buffalo or Rochester. Simply send me an email saying so and I will take care of reserving a hotel room for you. Be aware that, depending on demand, that you may have to share the room with somebody.

Also, I will be adding the 'Futures Championships' series of meets to the Niagara Officials Travel policy document so that travel expense reimbursement to those meets can be requested.

## **On the Radar**

### **Mentoring**

I'm having some discussions about getting a mentoring program going. We've been doing LSC N2 OQMs for a couple of years and will continue to do so, but I would like to expand on that concept in a less formal manner. The thought would be to 'sponsor' Officials holding N3 certifications above S&T to attend local meets around the LSC throughout the year to 'model' (so to say) proper techniques, protocols, and procedures. For example, for whatever reason, I've heard a lot of grumbling about starting/Starters this year, so the thought would be to identify some meets and then send someone having an N3 Starter certification to work a session or two at the meet to model proper starting technique. Hopefully that will generate some discussion about the theory of starting and how best to do it. Yes, I am one of those people that believes that starting is an art if done correctly...

### **Arena Pro Series**

For those of you pursuing N3 certification in a position other than S&T, be aware that, beginning next year, attendance at an Arena Pro Series meet (formerly known as 'Grand Prix') can be used to meet the 'must work at a National Championship meet in the past 5 years' requirement for advancement to N3. This is good news as there are many more people seeking N3 certifications and a limited number of spots available on deck at Jr/Sr Nationals. If you are on track for N3 certification, keep this in mind as an alternative to Jr/Sr Nationals.

### **Summer Meets, OQM and Otherwise**

Unlike the recent past, there is only one definite Officials Qualifying Meet on the summer schedule right now and that will be the resurrected Niagara Classic at the Flickinger Pool, Buffalo, NY, on the weekend of June 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>.

I am currently working on getting an evaluator for the 2015 Long Course Senior Zone Championship at Flickinger the weekend of Aug. 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, but, frankly, I'm not very hopeful as that is right in the Jr/Sr Nationals and Futures Meet timeframe and I would imagine that many of the people who would be able to do evaluations will be otherwise committed to those meets.

Another meet on the horizon is the 2015 Speedo Long Course "Super Sectional" in Ithaca the weekend of July 16-19. I have not, as of yet, received permission from the meet host to recruit a National Evaluator for that meet.

Finally, there are 2 other meets that I have my eye on for N2-only OQM meets and they would be the Sertoma Invitational in Binghamton, July 17-19, and the Niagara LSC Long Course Championships at ECC in Buffalo on July 10-12. I'll have to see how other things play out before making a decision on these two meets.

Regardless of whether the meet is an OQM or not, these meets are great opportunities to experience a higher level meet (see the CJ section above!) and they all will, of course, need your help staffing the deck.

Respectfully,

Jim Stromski  
Officials Chair  
Niagara LSC