

## Rochester MN Zones Meet Referee Report

September 3, 2025

4 pages plus appendices

David Johnson

### 2025 Central Zone 14&U LSC Assignments

**Rochester, MN - July 31st-August 3rd** - Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, Midwestern, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Ozark, South Dakota

**Holland, MI - August 7th-10th** - Illinois, Lake Erie, Michigan, Missouri Valley, Ohio, Wisconsin

### General notes:

The facility was well set to accommodate the meet. The air quality was excellent inside the venue and of comfortable temperature. Markings on bathrooms to identify athlete and athlete prohibited bathrooms was readily identifiable. There was a limitation on parking as city vehicles parked on some facility lots to stage materials and vehicles for nearby construction. The meet host communicated this challenge and provided additional parking options nearby with a 10 min walk. The Officials room was large enough but lacked sufficient chairs for all volunteers to sit pre-meet. The host team prohibited the use of coaches bringing in their own chairs on deck to avoid deck congestion. Another seating nice touch was that the first row of seating for spectators was reserved for "one heat only seating" this was managed by marshals and allowed for spectators to come in and watch one race and then depart outside. It run very smoothly. Officials and coaches' hospitality was of superior quality with food and drinks being brought around the pool deck as well. A special shout out for the volunteers who made a brown sugar French toast one morning. This should be a required staple at all Zone meets going forward! It is my strong recommendation that this team be awarded a future meet at this or other venue. They pulled out all of the stops.

The meet was planned for 630 swimmers but swelled to 799 as entries were received. We needed to adjust timelines to accommodate the increased swimmer volume. We were only able to enter the facility after 6:30 am and had to exit the facility by 9:00 pm or the city would fine the host club \$100 for every 10 mins that people remained onsite.

Day	Session	Warm-up	Competition
Thursday	1	12:00 – 1:20 pm	1:30 pm
Friday	2	6:45 – 8:15 am	8:20 am
	3	12:50 – 1:40 pm	1:45 pm
	4	3:35 – 4:40 pm	4:50 pm
Saturday	5	6:45 – 8:15 am	8:20 am
	6	1:15 – 2:00 pm	2:05 pm
	7	4:00 – 5:05pm	5:15 pm
Sunday	8	6:45 – 8:15 am	8:20 am
	9	11:50 – 12:20 pm	12:30 pm
	10	4:00 – 5:05 pm	5:15 pm

**Timeline considerations:** In the future we must highlight in the meet packet going forward the referee has the right to combine heats to save time. We addressed via a mid-meet coaches/LSC meeting and combined the 1500, 1000, 400. We had an opportunity to combine the 200IM but didn't have permission and would have needed an additional coaches meeting to do so.

There were 9 entries for the 11/12 200 Fly boys and 14 girls. This is a timed final event using USA Swimming rules there would be 3 boys in the first heat, and 6 in the final. The Zone rules state we swim 8 in finals which would leave a single boy in the prelims. Again, we had a coaches meeting then combined the single boy entry with the first girls heat. I would recommend that clear guidance be given as to whether to fill the evening finals heat, following the USA Swimming seeding rules (3 per heat planned) or the Zone preference of having the finals heat full.

**Protests:**

4 potential eligibility protests: 1 filed for adding an event essentially a deck entry, submitted 4 hours past the Tuesday at 1 pm deadline. A jury was convened which included a coach, athlete, and official. The jury found in favor the meet information. The same LSC wanted to file another protest on the same issue involving a different swimmer but was advised not to file due to the issue already being resolved. 2 other protests by the same LSC were not filed as those swimmers were already in the meet/event but wanted better times. The LSC coaches elected to pass on filing.

**Awards Considerations:**

The first awards break went 12 mins instead of the intended 6. The awards people were waiting for all 8 athletes to show prior to sending the athletes out. I addressed the future breaks by personally overseeing each break to ensure that they went on time with the athletes we had when ready. The exception was when we had 9 athletes to award due to two ties and only had 8 medals. We elected to wait to ensure all athletes had a medal for the picture. The meet host needs to provide a "dedicated" knowledgeable person to administer the awards breaks who is conscience that athletes "may" not show as they may elect to swim down for another upcoming race.

An insufficient number of awards were available at the end of the meet. Team awards were correctly ordered as were D1 High Point. Guidance should be given to meet hosts to order D2 High Point awards in the events that D2 athletes participate.

**Meet file set up issues:**

I would suggest that a meet database set up checklist be created as we saw a number of issues that should be addressed easily in the future.

1. The database didn't have any Central Zone records.
2. The time standards for the US Open, Summer Junior Nationals cuts need to be included to be able to address exceptions for swimmers deemed "too fast" for the 50s and the 200 Medley Relay events.
3. Sunday prelim/finals events were sets to 2 finals, without the A/B score flag set

4. 11-12 and 13-14 400 free events were incorrectly; issues with event type (TF vs PF), heats swam in finals and swimming order (fast to slow/slow to fast). 11-12 400s were also not set to swim alternating genders; 11-12 boys not setup in finals, etc.
5. Seed exhibition swimmers last flag was not set; so invited swimmers were incorrectly listed on pre meet psych sheet.
6. Friday night relay events were set to be seeded fast to slow.

An alternative measure would be to give a copy of the meet shell to the Administrative Referee in the weeks prior to seeding to check on seeding of the meet and setup issues. That would address a number of the issues above but not the 15 minute intervals. This copy should be named something akin to “Zones East Meet Setup Review Only.” As a visible reminder that this is not the “active” database with athletes in it.

#### **Meet and Meet Packet Considerations:**

1. 10-Under Sessions not setup to give 15-minute break between swims. As an example, the 50 free and the 50 fly in 10-Under session shouldn't be swam back-to-back as it doesn't provide for enough time between events for rest. Perhaps Saturday 10&U should be modeled after Friday's 10&U where Saturday is 50/100/100/50 as the free and fly are a frequent double for athletes. 100/50/100/50 instead of 100/100/50/50.
2. Reference Central Zones Policies and Procedures in the meet packet.  
[https://www.gomotionapp.com/cenzone/UserFiles/Image/QuickUpload/9-28-2024-central-zone-policy-manual\\_086072.pdf](https://www.gomotionapp.com/cenzone/UserFiles/Image/QuickUpload/9-28-2024-central-zone-policy-manual_086072.pdf) A link (URL) should be provided.
3. Require the hiring of a meet photographer to coordinate photos. No coaches' photos.
4. High speed copier, a minimum of 3 Meet Manager (Holland had only 1) networked computers and two printers dedicated to admin work. Ideally, another printer or two would be in awards to push results and labels without a runner.

#### **D2 Considerations:**

There was confusion surrounding the procedures for the D2 athletes. The Zones meet set up should consider including D2 events in the meet set up. The downside of this would be to cause additional “bloat” to the meet and affect the printed timeline if no athletes were in events. An alternative would be to give guidance that if an athlete desires to swim in finals that the final will occur after the A final of the same D1 event. There is “too” much flexibility in the meet packet.

There was surprise by some LSCs that D2 athletes score in the meet. Perhaps a sentence added in the D2 sections that reads “D2 events shall score the same as D1 events”. This should not only provide clarity but also put coaches on notice that a way to score more points would be more inclusive.

Finally, an LSC was unhappy that their D2 had to swim alone in finals. They wanted swimmers to swim alongside their D2 athlete. They stated that this was done in the Iowa 2024 Zone meet.

After investigation it was determined that the alternates from the D1 events were given an exhibition swim with the D2 athlete at the Iowa meet.

That presents a problem as the time would still go to SWIMS for an “unearned” swim for those alternates. The affected LSC wanted instead to allow 2 of their own D1 athletes to swim with their D2 swimmer. I polled all coaches on the matter and they were for it provided that the D1 swimmer’s times were not recorded, e.g. lanes turned off in the timing system.

This was not acceptable to the D2 LSC as they stated that none of their swimmers would swim where they do not receive a time. I explained that the rules do not permit me to award an extra swim in that manner, akin to a time trial, though this could easily be addressed in the meet packet. This issue should be addressed in committee as it would certainly make the D2 athletes feel less self-conscience and perhaps promote more D2 inclusion.

#### **Open/Juniors cut issue:**

There was considerable confusion in regards to the “too fast for Zones rule”. There is certainly as vocal group in eliminating this rule and allowing any athlete to swim any event that they qualify for at Zones. If the decision is to keep this rule, then the time standards must be added to meet database to allow the AR to easily run exception reports.

#### **MN sit and slide rule:**

Minnesota has a sit and slide entry rule to drive safety for the athletes entering the pool. The rule is supposed to be enforced by officials. The penalty for not adhering to the rule is that the offending athlete is penalized from their next swim. As the Meet Referee I found it had to enforce as we didn’t observe all entries from all warm ups as officials were only on deck during the invigilation period. I declined to accept potential disqualifications from this situation and used the time to counsel the athletes on proper entry procedures during meets with their coach. It is my recommendation that this rule be suspended during future Zones in the MN LSC.


#### **It’s a wrap:**

I want to thank the Zones committee for selecting me for this meet. I treated this honor with great respect and recruited heavily to ensure that the meet was a success. We were blessed to have N2/N3s in all leadership positions. The meet ran very smoothly and proceeded without any major issues or disruptions.

My advice to those following in my footsteps would be recruit leadership positions a minimum of 6 months in advance of the meet. Next, the MR should be conducting leadership meetings monthly and actively reaching out to in LSC officials to get those officials who are close by to attend. The other leads should peruse the LSCs officials lists of those LSCs attending for any N2/N3 officials and personally invite those officials as they tend to travel well. Work with the meet host to see if additional hotel rooms can be given to all leaders and those willing to work all sessions. Communicating early and often with the meet host is imperative. Do not be a bottle neck and allow your leads to directly speak to the meet hosts in regards to their specific position needs (pcs, printers, bells, lap counters, and 100 other items). Finally, the future MR

should reach out to the past MRs and ARs to see what else they would fix or who to avoid other issues.

## Appendix 1: Meet Director Summation of Zone Meet

**Tom Walsh**  
Zones Recap

August 5, 2025 at 2:23 PM

To: David Johnson, Cc: Ashleigh Kramer, Bob Staab, Jack Swanson

[Details](#)

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David,

I want to express my most sincere gratitude to you and your team. Your professionalism and skill set to be an elite meet ref were beyond compare. I have coached in Rochester for 15 years and we have never had a meet run as well as this one did, and it was a direct result of your composure and leadership. You took care of everything in a timely manner, communications were top notch and worked personally with so many people to help them grow and supported them during the stress that the meet caused. I admire the way you spent time with so many individuals helping them, and guiding them to success. I feel so much personal growth from the way you worked with me as a meet director and cannot begin to say thank you enough. My hope is to give back to others the way you did this weekend and make as many more meets held in Rochester live up to the example you set here. It was also great to connect with you as a person; you care so much about this sport and the experience the children are having. It's refreshing in today's world to have someone who cares and is as passionate as you are. I truly hope our paths cross again, and sooner rather than later, because our sport needs more members of your caliber and compassion!

Cheers,  
Tom

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**Tom Walsh**  
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## Appendix 2: Rochester Zone Officials Photo

