

# Meet Report

## 2024 Central Zones Open Water

Lake Andrea – Pleasant Prairie RecPlex

Pre-race meeting: June 12, 2024

Clinic: June 13, 2024

Race Day: June 14, 2024

### Summary

2024 Central Zones Open Water (CZ OW) meet was a successful competition, involving a technical meeting on June 12, an athlete open water clinic on June 13, and the competition on June 14. The event was held at Lake Andrea, which is adjacent to the Pleasant Prairie RecPlex facility. CZ OW had 351 athletes competing on a 1.25 km course:

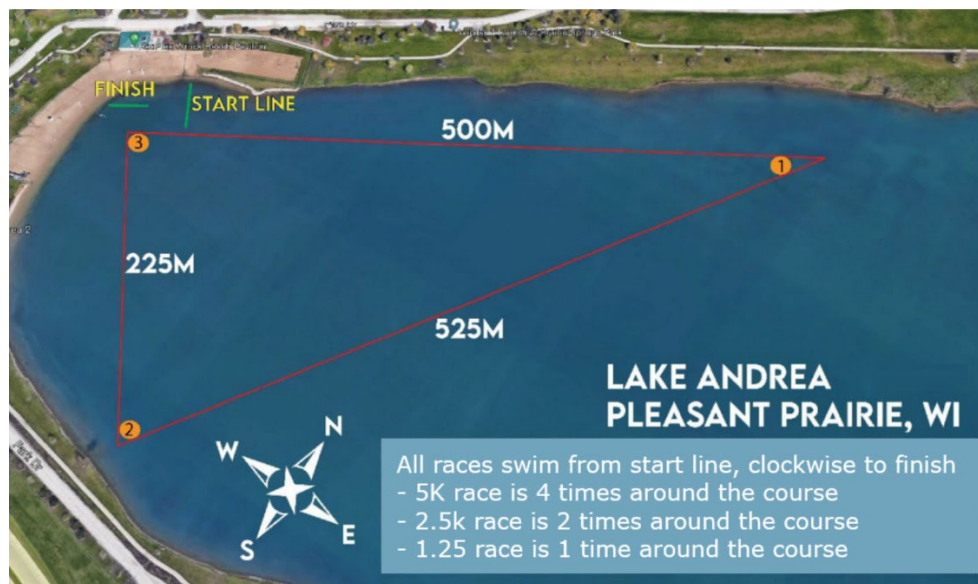


Figure.7 Central Zones Open Water Course at Lake Andrea

### Clinic

Weather for the clinic saw some rain in the area, but no thunderstorms, and temperatures of water at 73.4 degrees with air at 94.6 giving a combined temperature of 167. Athletes used clinic tickets to enter and exit the clinic, providing control for the officials present to account for all athletes. 12 lifeguards were present on kayaks, with one lifeguard operating an electric boat. Athletes moved between stations operated by Central Zones coaches to learn open water skills. After the clinic, the athletes were encouraged to go through the registration process, getting nail checks, numbering,

and their meet packet. Banners were reused from the prior year, providing guidance to athletes going through the registration process.

## Competition Day

The weather for the competition had clear skies, with water temperatures starting at 73.2 degrees and air at 72 degrees (combined 145.4 degrees). By the end of the competition, water temperatures were at 75.7 degrees and air temperatures were at 80.9 degrees (combined 156.6). Officials, coaches, boat captain, safety personnel, and athlete meetings completed as scheduled and competition began on time.

Athletes were allowed to complete the registration process, including nail checks, suit checks, and numbering. All athletes were encouraged to have numbers touched up.

Open water referees were stationed on gas powered watercraft, while turn 1 and turn 2 were stationed on electric boats provided by Pleasant Prairie. Roll call and race starts were stationed by the volleyball court, with athletes lining up by number immediately after the mandatory athlete meeting covering race day. The course was updated this year with additional guide buoys to help athletes stay on course after each turn, which seemed to help.

A team of officials was assigned to recheck numbers and suits during roll call. All athletes were required to present a race ticket to enter the water. Officials video recorded athletes once they presented their race ticket before the athletes gathered at the water's edge for a final briefing. Once the final briefing was complete, athletes entered the water for an in water, line of sight start. Races ran slightly behind the timelines, causing some delays when the officials changed positions between the two 2.5k races.

1 athlete was disqualified for an illegal suit (at the end of the race) and 4 athletes abandoned the race. No athlete injuries requiring EMS evaluation were reported; one parent tripped on the cement and had an abrasion on the right hand (treated by a lifeguard).

All athletes that entered the water exited the water.

## Issues

Shortage of officials to fully populate positions resulted in many officials having 2, 3, or 4 jobs during the competition.

No PA system was available; the on-beach meetings used a handheld megaphone to amplify communication, which was not heard by all in attendance.

The athlete disqualified by illegal suit stated that the suit had been approved by an official during the roll call to enter the water (unconfirmed).

Boat captains left to attend to other duties, resulting in one start via line of sight from land.

One boat ran out of fuel during the race, with no equipment to refuel. A 5<sup>th</sup> boat was kept on shore, which allowed the officials to rejoin the race in progress.

The Turn 1 electric boat could not navigate to Turn 1 because of the wind. The turn judge was able to get into position and observe (count) from a kayak.

The final buoys designating the finish chute were not visible (under water) to athletes as they approached the finish chute. Many athletes swam under the lane line designating the chute. Officials during early races did not disqualify athletes swimming under the lane line, while officials in the later races did disqualify athletes swimming under the lane. After understanding the situation, the meet referee decided to allow athletes who swam under the lane line to keep their finish position / time.

Officials with radios were mixed in with parents, coaches and athletes, where unvetted calls came in that were overheard. These unvetted calls resulted in many protests and a challenging environment for continued meet operation.

Cameras located on the finish dock were not pointed in / zoomed into the direction of the finish, resulting in unusable footage from 2 of the 3 cameras.

Admin was unable to print labels for the clinic tickets, where the athlete's name had to be handwritten on each ticket. This situation resulted in confusion, as some officials wrote both name and race number on the clinic ticket.

Admin did not test out the equipment for downloading watches prior to the race competition, resulting in missing drivers for the RS-232 adapter needed to automatically pull watch times.

Meet Manager was not set up correctly to import the NK watches.

The meet file for Meet Manager was not set up correctly for the open water module.

Admin did not have the supplies necessary to operate the meet; prior admin officials provided additional supplies to meet the need.

The Girls 11-12 race time was significantly faster than the Girls 13-14 race (unclear of root cause).

Admin attempted to hand enter race results, resulting in a long delay to get results out.

Admin were untrained in the process / procedures for finalizing an Open Water race, resulting in unconfirmed / incorrect results.

Admin attempted to physically post and announce results before confirmation; the Meet Referee stopped this process to review results, resulting in discovery of numerous mistakes that required resolution.

Admin responsible for providing race results left to work the pool meet starting after the CZOW meet completed; other officials had to step in to help get results finalized.

Provided computers were unable to zoom into or accurately pause video for monitoring of finish, resulting in a lot of time spent monitoring and replaying video results (even resorting to a magnifying glass to view the screen).

The main Admin computer with Meet Manager did not have the correct power adapter to continue operations from AC power (when batteries got low).

Admin published results to Meet Mobile before being confirmed.

Meet results missed one athlete's finish (top 10) for the Girls 13-14 age group.

## Lessons Learned

The Meet invite needs additional revision to capture non-conforming times not contained in SWIMS.

Assign an admin official to take attendance at mandatory briefings.

Race preparation should have check lists for pre-race, clinic, and post-race with multiple check lists for race day (safety, boats, venue, officials, coaches, athletes).

Clinic tickets were confusing to the athletes, where some athletes tried to use the clinic ticket as the race day ticket; consider using something different than a bag-tag.

All athletes should be given the option to complete at least one lap during the clinic.

Race numbering should not be given to athletes before the clinic is completed. Some athletes / coaches attempted to number athletes (incorrectly).

Race numbers need to be very large when written with Sharpies; consider not allowing coaches / athletes to do their own marking and provide training to officials in how to properly number.

Officials manning the suit check station need 1) training in legal suits and 2) a method to mark a suit (athlete) as legal.

Officials with radios need to have a way to keep communication about potential disqualifications quiet until the disqualification is accepted.

Finish chute buoys need to be larger and of a different color (and shape) to provide a clear path to the finish chute.

Station multiple officials (or volunteers) at the finish line to record order of finish via video (on both sides of the slap board).

People working with the camera system should also call out the number of an athlete as the athlete hits the slap board.

Consider placing a stationary (or manned) video recording system as the athletes exit the water.

The electric boats at Pleasant Prairie are not strong enough to maintain position (or get in place) against the conditions at the turns; shore stations, kayaks or stationary docks would be a better option.

Ensure all boats have enough fuel to operate during the race; ensure all boats have a method to refuel (funnel and portable tank).

Referees need additional training / briefing in how the final approach to the finish is accomplished.

Consider using other USA Swimming approved (background check / MAP, etc.) volunteers or coaches for positions not requiring open water training.

Admin officials should understand that they have duties extending past the timeline of the race.

Admin needs additional written guidance and standard training in the process for preparing for the meet and finalizing results.

Prepare for the worst, hope for the best.

## Summary

CZ OW provided the athletes of the Central Zone a great opportunity to compete in an open water race. Despite a small officiating crew and numerous challenges, the event was conducted where all athletes safely competed. We had many parents, coaches and athletes commenting they were pleased with the results and operation of the meet.