

# MN Swimming: National Meet Report

2024 US Olympic Team Trials

Indianapolis, IN

June 15<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

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The 2024 US Olympic Team Trials in Indianapolis, IN was by far one of the most incredible swimming events I've had the pleasure of being a part of. The meet had just under 1000 of the top US swimmers, 3000+ volunteers, 285,000+ total spectators, and 72 officials. Heading into the meet I wasn't really expecting many great swims with where I thought the US team was leading into the meet. Thankfully I was overwhelmingly surprised by a number of very exciting swims including 2 World Records, a couple of American Records and Course Records, and numerous energy packed swim-offs including a tie in a swim-off which led to a swim-off for a swim-off.

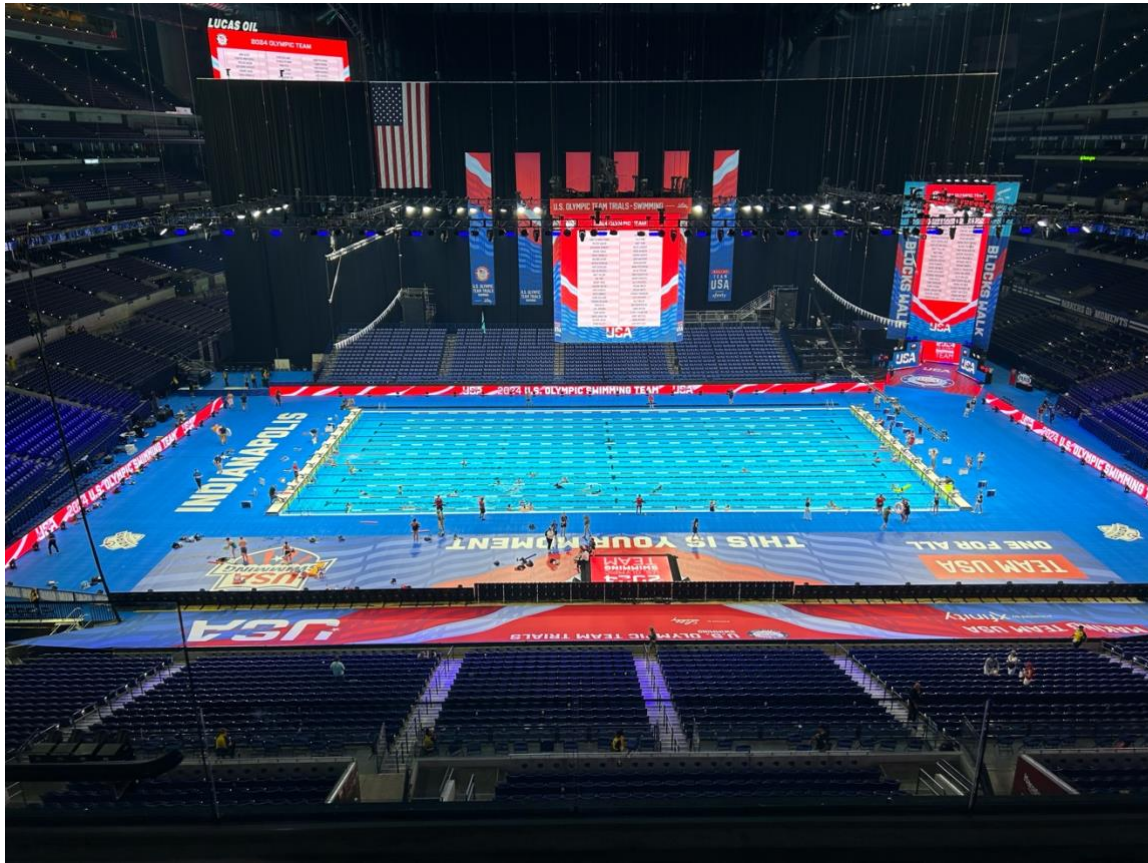
At the end October 2023, I had the incredible honor of being invited to be a stroke and turn judge at the meet. It was extremely exciting to receive that email. For a number of years, I've dreamt about this opportunity but it's not really something you can make happen. Beyond getting certified as an N3 Deck Referee, which is required to even be considered as a candidate for selection, all you can do to be considered is do the very best you can at every National Meet deck you step foot on. I've made an effort to apply for at least 2-3 National Meets a year for the past 5-6 years and recently had the privilege of serving in a number of assigned roles. Thankfully those opportunities brought me to this point in my officiating career.

As we arrived in Indianapolis, we were immediately greeted at the airport by Olympic Trials advertising and fanfare. Indianapolis spared no expense promoting the meet everywhere you looked, and it really set the tone for the week that this was going to be a special event. Once we received our credentials at the Official's Hotel on Friday morning, we were able to go to the stadium and get our uniforms. We all got three polos (red, white, and blue of course) to be worn during prelims and two white oxfords and one vest to be worn for finals. Additionally, we were gifted a personalized commemorative kickboard, a shoulder bag, an Olympic Trials insulated tumbler, and a commemorative gold medal which we all were blown away by.



On Friday evening we had a short official's briefing followed by a rehearsal on-deck for NBC to preview protocol and coordinate camera placement. While I had closely followed the setup of the stadium online it couldn't begin to prepare me for how incredible the stadium looked and felt stepping on the competition pool deck for the first time. The work that USA Swimming and the Indianapolis Sports Corp did to turn a football stadium into the most amazing natatorium was hard to believe and it seemed like the coaches and athletes practicing to race the following day really appreciated it. The deck space was

enormous, which was a bit nerve racking when you thought about officiating out in front of the 15,000+ spectators each session but it also created a special environment for the swimmers.



Saturday morning brought about the first intense official's briefing. We spent almost the full hour and a half reviewing jurisdiction, protocol, and conduct for the meet. The protocols were fairly simple and straightforward but the precision we all demanded of ourselves meant the CJs left very little to chance with their briefings. Given the scale of the meet we were also all under a complete media/social media embargo from the dress rehearsal on Friday night until the final heat of the meet was finished. It was hard to not be able to share the experience with friends and family during the meet, but it made sense. Security at the stadium was also very tight. Except for our time on deck during competition, we were required to wear our credentials and the areas we were allowed to be were pretty limited.



The stroke and turn officials were divided into two teams; the red teams that was assigned to all the women's events and the blue team that was assigned to all the men's events. Each team had 16 start and turn end officials, 4 stroke officials, and 4 reserve officials. With the weird order of events, it did lead to some longer sessions especially on the distance days. For me though I was very happy to be on the blue team which gave me the opportunity to watch most of the women's events.

The finals each night were incredible. At the start the technical officials were announced and took their place on deck. After which the National Anthem was sung or played and then an introductory video montage was played with a light show. I'll admit that most nights, and especially those I was lined up on deck for the first event, I became fairly emotional for that intro. Not sure what specifically got to me but overall, I think it was just the joy of having the opportunity to be part of such an important event for the swimming community that has become a second family for me.

Once we got to work on deck, the meet felt like most every other National level meet I've been a part of. I personally am pretty blind to who is in my lane while on deck, it's just another cap and goggles in the water, and that's what helps me to not make more of the situation than it needs to be. I had the opportunity to rotate through all the stroke and turn deck position include Start End Turn Judge, Turn End Turn Judge, Reserve Judge, and Stroke Judge walking along the side of the pool. Every day we were in a different position but stayed in that same position for prelims and finals that day. Most sessions were relatively short which helped us endure the 9 long days on deck.

This will certainly be an experience I will treasure forever. It was a privilege to represent Minnesota Swimming at the meet and can't thank everyone enough for the outpouring of support you all provided. If anyone has questions about the meet or wants to hear about any of the more specific details feel free to reach out in person or pull me aside at a meet, I'm more than willing to share my experience. Thanks again for all the support and I hope to see you all on deck soon.