

Meet Referee Report

2024 Long Course 11-14 State Championship Meet – August 1-4, 2024

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Facility: University of Minnesota (Jean K. Freeman Aquatic center)

- All aspects of the facilities were more than sufficient for the needs of the meet (fan/athlete seating, space for officials to stand/walk, hospitality, officials' classroom, clerk of course, parade staging and the podium.
- The facilities and lifeguard teams were amazing partners. Despite having fewer people available due to illness, they responded quickly and professionally to any facility, safety or technical issue that came up.
- There were no significant issues associated with the two Gen 7 Colorado systems run throughout the meet.
- Emphasis during the general meeting on having swimmers practice with backstroke ledge if new to using them. There were no delays due to struggles with the ledges.
- Starting block wedges needed to be replaced more than once for not locking in place. There were no formal concerns raised by swimmers or coaches regarding fairness of starts.
- Parking was limited due to maintenance in the Washington Avenue ramp. Thursday provided the most parking challenges since the session started in the middle of the workday (12:00PM). Navigating around the aquatics center was impacted by road construction on surrounding streets.

Host: North Suburban Aquatics Club (NSAC)

- Rory and Andrea were great partners before and throughout the meet. Their experience hosting championship-level meets was evident throughout the weekend. As issues arose, we discussed and agreed on a path forward.
- Volunteers:
 - Timers – we had two timers per lane except for 1500s
 - Awards – medals and parading were given quickly and did not delay the timeline
 - Announcer – Tom Hodgson was as amazing as always and received the recognition he richly deserved from the coaches, officials, swimmers and fans!
 - Check-in – Rory piloted having coaches send their credentials ahead of time to make check-in quick (credentials were waiting for them when they arrived). NSAC will look to add officials to this due to how well it was received.

- NSAC set the tone for the swimmers to not only swim fast but have a great time. They loved the socks (one quote “these are almost as great as Zone swag!”).
- Hospitality:
 - Meals, snacks and beverages were well received by coaches and officials
 - On Friday, we did run out of lunch before some officials could get off deck. When NSAC learned this, they quickly ordered more food to take care of everyone.
 - Concessions we open upstairs to everyone...including a cotton candy machine!
- NSAC took care of their team of officials by providing a meet polo shirt and extra black socks!

Officiating Personnel and Protocols

- Recruiting officials, both assigned and volunteer, was a challenge. Though we ended up with healthy numbers on deck, significant time and effort was needed by the officials’ chair, meet referee and lead chief judge. Being held one week later ran into many families’ vacation plans. Also, many officials with swimmers in the meet were hesitant to commit to finals until knowing if their swimmer made it. While this led to strong walk-in numbers, it made planning difficult.
- Deck coverage ranged from lead/lag on each side of the pool to lead/lag with two turn officials on each end. Each session had at least one relief ST to allow all to get off deck for a break.
- Many were willing to help with relay starts, especially Sunday’s 200 relays.
- The meet was designated an Officials Qualifying Meet (OQM) for officials to be evaluated. Tracy Meece evaluated two admin recertifications. Marcus Stromberg evaluated an N3 stroke and turn and N3i deck referee.
- Protocols were shared prior to the meet and the Chief Judges did a great job communicating the plan and expectations throughout the meet. Minor adjustments were made as needed, and everyone responded well.
- Assigned team:
 - Admin – Rebecca Binder and Linda McKee were as strong as expected in terms of handling all the details between seeding, relay scratches, time trials and reconciling. Rebecca piloted online forms for Thursday’s scratch/positive check-in as well as down seeding requests. Many coaches provided positive feedback on this, especially those who were not always present at the pool for scratch deadlines.
 - Deck referees – Jocelyn Richardt and Gary Albrecht lead a great group who kept control of the safety and fairness of the pool. They also managed timeline issues incredibly well/

- Starters – Jack Swanson and Jason Kissinger worked with a talent crew to provide consistent and fair starts. The DR/SR rotations were shared prior to the meet and everyone handled the box protocols well.
- Chief judges – Kelly Robole and Chris Hydukovich did a great job of leading and teaching some newer CJs that did a good job. The officials meetings were well run, and duties were delegated well.
- Midland radios were used each session and swimmers were notified of disqualifications by a chief judge.

General Comments

- Two meet juries were called during the weekend. For each, I provided a summary of the issue, pertinent rules and policies. I also walked through the process I used in each case to land on my interpretation of a policy. The coach who requested the meet jury would share their concerns and requested outcome. In one case, after discussion without the coach or me present, the meet jury rendered a confirmation of my ruling which was summarized in writing and shared with the requesting coach. For the other case, after discussion, the coach withdrew the formal request for a meet jury rendering so there was no deliberation of the jury.
- One SafeSport incident did occur. Investigations of the allegations included meet director, referee and members of the facility team. After the investigations and conversations with the impacted coach, it was determined the club's policies would be followed for the next steps.
- MN Policy 250 was a topic of discussion with some coaches. It was mentioned by more than one coach that the fact MSI is one of the only LSCs with this policy, it is difficult to enforce consistently for all violators (only those seen) and there is some inconsistency across officials on enforcement (warning vs. DQ) can be confusing. Also, one of the requests for a meet jury was related to the definition of "next individual event" regarding punishment for a violation. After consultation, deemed that finals are a continuation of prelims. Thus, the next individual event would be the next prelim or timed final for the student.

Final Thoughts

I appreciate the nominating committee, officials committee and everyone else giving me the opportunity to serve the LSC. I learned a lot because I had an amazing team around me. Their collective wisdom and calming temperament helped me navigate several issues for the first time. All the people involved in this meet really went above and beyond to make this a championship experience!