

2023 Single Age State Meet

Meet Referee's Report

My thank you to the Committee for entrusting me as Meet Referee to continue the tradition of this meet for the LSC. My goals were to provide leadership and support towards a great experience for our young athletes and to provide learning and growth opportunities for the Officials, who were all encouraged to seek knowledge and share knowledge with one another. I am pleased to report that I believe these goals were met.

Facility

MnSI offers a most sincere appreciation to the MTKA Swim Club for providing their facility, which housed this meet very well. The Club provided knowledgeable volunteers to help with set-up of computers, video and scoreboard equipment.

MTKA accommodated our request for barriers on the Lane 8 side to allow for a safe area for the stroke walking officials. AquaJets graciously provided their rope barriers which worked so well that MTKA purchased their own following this event.

While the facility did not have backstroke starting ledges, Hasting Swim Club brought and installed their own set, for which we were all grateful for our swimmers to have use of.

One difficulty which complicated so much for the Set-up volunteers was that the elevator was out of commission. As this pool is on a 'split level,' items for the basement hospitality area and camping gym needed to be hand carried up/down.

Also, folding chairs and tables were at a premium. I would suggest that MnSI could perhaps provide another rack of chairs to ease the strain on seating.

The Officials' Meeting Area at the bottom of the stairwell was perfect for our meetings and equipment with ample space, lighting, access and electrical power.

Volunteers

As MnSI was the host of this meet, the usual volunteer positions filled by a host club were open to ad hoc accommodations of some of the most critical positions each session. Only 8 timers were available for all sessions, Meet Marshalls were sometimes anointed on a moment's notice. The Awards and Hospitality staff worked extra duty to keep those areas running smoothly.

Many kudos to Danielle who filled in wherever and whenever and kept it all moving. Almost single-handedly, she brought in all the food, serving equipment and awards and then set up the facility the night before. Danielle was the last one out Sunday, packing her own vehicle with borrowed items to return to AQJT.

I would suggest that in future if there is no 'host club' for this event that there is some way developed to guarantee that participating clubs provide volunteers ahead of the meet.

Time Lines and Conduct of the Meet

Thorough pre-planning and coordination for volunteer activities and officiating protocols made for a smooth-running meet. Timelines, set at 25 seconds, were kept to schedule within 3-5 minutes. The timeline allowed for the top seeded heats to be announced as such before the long whistles and some sessions' timelines allowed for swimmers' names behind the blocks.

Installation of back-up parts for occasional equipment malfunctions was handled efficiently without consequence on the competition.

A system of rotating Deck Referees as back up for each other kept the meet flowing on schedule as issues were dealt with by the Referees stepping off to deal with them.

The Timing Table and Admin held their own as other occasional issues required tending, again without consequence on the competition. Deck seeded events heat sheets were promptly provided to coaches and lane timers sheets were in place for the start of the events. Bit of a hiccup when the scoreboard was not set for the first deck seed but this was avoided later in the meet. Relay card submittal and positive check-in times were well-communicated and received timely.

Admin provided the High Point awards listing promptly such that the 12-under Awards could be given just prior to Sunday afternoon warm-ups. The High Point boy and girl in each age group were announced together with a photo opportunity on the blocks of lanes 1 and 2.

A Meet Jury was requested by one Club. The issue was thoroughly investigated by the Deck Referee and the Meet Referee. The Jury met, reviewed the issue and governing rules and language with the Meet Referee and arrived at a prompt, unanimous decision.

Officiating Personnel and Protocols

We had outstanding coverage for this meet, allowing for (a) Relief Officials every session and even Reserve Officials for some sessions.

The deck was set up with two turn judges each end with jurisdiction to mid pool. Start end judges responded to whistle protocols for use of chairs and approaching the pool on the starts. They also provided observation of backstroke toe placement on the ledges.

One stroke judge on each side had wall to wall jurisdiction of one half of pool. The overlapping jurisdictions worked well for heats with staggered swimmers. Stroke judges also provided observation of backstroke toes after the starts such that both the ledges and toes after the start were covered by separate judges.

Chief Judges and radio protocols were used for this meet. Terminology and process was worked through by the Meet Referee with the CJ staff and DR staff before the meet. It was clear and consistent, providing for timely notification of the swimmers upon exiting the pool. (13-over)

Senior Deck Referee Mark S-W set a collegial tone in the Start Area box and provided for a smooth flow of personnel and information while simultaneously running the events in the water. He was a pleasure to work with.

Team Lead Starter Julie Craig assisted her revolving staff in keeping consistency to the Starting and leadership for the Timers' Meetings. She was a solid asset to the meet, providing a calm and professional setting for her team.

Guest Team Lead Chief Judge, Leia Richter, from Sierra Nevada LSC, provided strong and knowledgeable leadership to her team and the entire deck staff. She worked with the Meet Referee to implement the goals for deck set up and protocols and also provided a fount of knowledge for the CJs and officials at the briefings. I hope that she will come back to Minnesota often to give us new and broader perspectives on officiating.

Lead Admin, Jack Swanson, coordinated well the many duties of the Timing Table and Admin functions and was trusted implicitly by the Meet Referee where input or decisions were needed. He was prepared with supplies, the results and seeding were provided timely and he was a pleasure to work with in this position.

Learning and Teaching Opportunities

At the start of the Officials Briefings, the Deck staff was invited to try new things, use new protocols and to enjoy modeling professionalism on deck. Deck set up, deck approach protocols and working with CJs were new experiences for many and they embraced the opportunity to try these additional layers of officiating.

TL CJ Leia explained and encouraged all deck staff to take a step up out of respect to the meet and athletes. They did it all beautifully and confidently!

Some individuals were taking on roles to which they were new and they were given encouragement and support in their initial sessions in the role. Many questions, discussions and mentoring sessions took place all weekend among and between the officials.

I could not have been more pleased, as Meet Referee, with all of the staff that joined us on deck. I believe they took away a positive experience overall and are prepared for decks with more demanding protocols in the future.

Again, thank you to the Committee for giving me the opportunity to serve our swimming community in this role.

Gail Ann Witzel