



## **TYR Pro Swim Series Westmont, IL ~ March 6-9, 2024 Tracy Meece**

I had the opportunity to attend the TYR Pro Series in Westmont, IL. serving on the Chief Judge crew for the meet. This meet had 1 session of Timed Finals and 3 days of prelim/final sessions. Time trials were held after each preliminary session.

Prior to the meet, several Zoom meetings were held with the chief judge crew. Originally there were to be 6 CJs for the meet, but one had to back out of the meet a few days prior to the meet. These pre-meet meetings included discussions on protocol and plans for briefings, CJ responsibilities for each session and general meet planning.

While session 1 of the meet didn't start until 5PM, several meetings were held prior to the session start time. These included a CJ team meeting at 11AM, an assigned team meeting at 1PM, new-timers meeting at 3PM and officials briefing at 4PM. In-between those meetings, chief judges worked to ensure that all set-up was completed. (Chairs set up properly on deck for everyone with towels, clipboards/watches/pencils/bells for timers, radios charged and labeled for all DRs/SRs/Admins/CJs/MR, shirts in labeled bags for all officials, etc.)

Meetings on subsequent days of the meet included CJs meeting both prior and after each session with official briefings held 1 hour prior to session start time (1 ½ hours prior to Session 2 as this included a full stroke briefing as Session 1 only had freestyle events).

The meet was held at FMC Natatorium using Omega Timing. Officials served as timers for the timed finals session and all finals. Omega backstroke wedges were used. This pool is unique in that there are 3 diving boards (2 – 1 Meter and 1 – 3 Meter) along the lane 9 side of the pool which make walking stroke on that side of the pool a challenge. To allow for walking of stroke while ensuring that we had coverage for the full-length of the pool, there were 4 officials instead of 2 on that side while only 2 officials on the opposite side of the pool. (This was a new protocol for all at the meet.) Stroke officials 1, 2 and 3 were an extension of each other and worked in-between the barriers of the diving stanchions. Stroke judge locations for 2 and 3 became known as "the cage" and "the hobbit hole." Thursday and Friday evening finals were shown live on NBC which brought on the challenge of TV cameras.

As some may have seen on the livestream of the session or in subsequent social media postings, Friday evening had a couple incidents with National Team swimmers. During the 50 Free "A" final, which included Caleb Dressel swimming in Lane 8 and was started from the "turn" end of the pool, the Omega Timing System failed to start. At the conclusion of the race, Caleb indicated that his starting block had something wrong with it. The lane timers became SUPER important as the admins immediately gathered watch times and Order of Finish (which had been taken by 2 of the Starters) to finalize official results for that heat following the rules set by the USA Swimming rule book. The Meet Referee (Dana Covington) and facility staff investigated the starting block. The block was not found to be faulty. After results were final, all swimmers were given the opportunity to swim for an "electronic" time (rather than the watch times which had to be used for the actual "A" Final. Their place would NOT change after the re-swim and they would swim in the same lane that they originally swam in but their time would be official. 5 of the 8 swimmers chose to swim again.

Official hospitality/meeting room was upstairs. Additional hospitality areas for coaches/officials were available in a room just off the main competition pool as well as a room off the warm-up pool. Snacks/beverages were always available, and meals were served after Time Trials and prior to finals each day.

Working as a chief judge is a position that can be both mentally and physically exhausting. Not only are you always watching the officials in your quadrant of the deck but also supporting your team of CJs and watching for anything that would affect the swimmer's races. Mentoring of the officials working in their positions to move as a cohesive unit throughout the session. At this level of a meet, it's no longer an official here and an official there...but one team of officials moving as one.

Seeing friends from past meets and meeting new officials from around the country is always the best part of every meet. This meet added the excitement of several Olympians and all the excitement that they bring to a meet. I recommend all officials attend a higher-level meet outside of the LSC. The friends you'll make and the knowledge gained from doing something a new way is worth the time. You never know when you'll need "that we did this once" item that you learned at the meet.