

## Speedo Winter Juniors West 2023

I had the privilege of working as a stroke and turn official at the Speedo Winter Juniors West meet December 6-10 in Westmont, IL. This was the first national meet that I have worked at. Here are a few thoughts from leading up to the meet. Firstly, having other MN officials who have worked national meets was a huge help to me. I asked both Marcus and Tracy many questions ahead of time and received very helpful advice from them (like to bring 2 pairs of shoes and lots of socks). Secondly, when I got the protocols and jurisdictions ahead of time, I admit that I did feel overwhelmed about the possibility of messing up. Thirdly, I appreciated that there was an opportunity to be put on a list of people who wanted a roommate, and I was able to find someone who wanted to room with me.

Upon arriving at the meet, there was a “newcomers” meeting for people for whom this was their first national meet. I really appreciated that as they went over some basic things that I was not fully aware of. Did you know that when you use a button and a stopwatch, the button should be in your dominant hand and the watch in your non-dominant hand? Or that when pushing a button or a watch, one should use their index finger as the reaction time is better than when using one’s thumb? We were instructed in both of those things as well as in basic etiquette such as not to speak to coaches or athletes on deck unless they spoke to us first. They also went over the 3 chairs used at national meets as well as other basic procedures that the other officials would already know.

I was very appreciative that the first night on deck they gave us newcomers the easiest job so that we could observe everything. Most of us newcomers were given the “center chair” job which means that all we had to do was check in the relays (make sure the names were correct) and record the stop watch time that the left chair person obtained.

Throughout the meet, I was struck by the fact that the ways we run our championship meets in MN are truly the ways the national meets are run. Yes, the national meet was more particular about protocol and about being in unison and every person had their shirt tucked in, was wearing pants, and had all black shoes on, but the basic build blocks of CJ’s, protocols, head starter, etc. were all the same. At national meets, every official has been chosen to be there and has committed to every session of the meet including time trials. There was no “requesting” of being put in a particular spot on deck or of leaving early. There was a clear chain of command (as also mentioned in the newcomers meeting) and we followed that chain of command. In addition, there were both relief and reserve officials for each session. The relief was very specific and well organized, and it was also not optional. The reserve officials often had little to do (if there were not dq’s), but everyone did their assigned jobs without complaining, and we were given the chance to do almost every different job available to a stroke and turn.

I had one disqualification for the entire meet (these are elite athletes). The same CJ protocol that we use at our state meets happened at this meet. A reserve official stepped in for

me and I told the CJ my call. I was surprised that the CJ didn't ask me a bunch of follow-up questions, but unless they have a reason to not trust you, they trust you are a qualified official.

A surprise for me was that officials counted for the swimmers for the distance events. The swimmers were asked which side of the lane they wanted their counter on. There was no shaking of the numbers and we had to pull them out before the athlete started his/her turn. For all events other than freestyle, each turn judge was observing just one lane of the pool.

On Sunday, long course time trials were offered since the Olympic Trials are coming up in 2024. We saw one athlete get his trials cut in the 200 IM which was very exciting. I was disappointed that out of many swims that day, only one trials cut was made. But it was after a long few days of a short course meet so the athletes were probably tired as well as used to training in short course.

I truly enjoyed watching some very fast swimming as well as meeting officials from all over the country. I was happy to be there with a few other MN officials as well as to interact with some officials from Iowa who I knew from MN meets. I made many new friends that I hope to see at future meets. I would highly recommend to any MN official to attend a national meet if given the opportunity. Thank you MN Swim for supporting this opportunity.

Kerra Mayor