

MN Swimming: National Meet Report

2023 Phillip 66 National Championship
Indianapolis, IN
June 27th – July 1st, 2023

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Date: August 2nd, 2023

The 2023 Phillip 66 National Championships was the selection meet for four World Championship Teams including World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan and Junior World Championships in Netanya, Israel. Given that, we had approximately 625 of the top US swimmers at the meet. As you would expect the swims were fast and exciting.

I was fortunate enough to be selected for the CJ Team for the meet with Rich McMillian as the Team Lead Chief Judge. We had a team of 7 total CJs for the meet to accommodate relief and assist in the Video Review Room. While this was the highest level meet I've been a CJ at, I was surprised with the lack of pre-meet preparation we did as a group. We had one video call with the Team Lead and one with the entire assigned team lead by the Meet Referee and that was pretty much it. I was assigned to do deck assignments for all the sessions which ended up being quite the task trying to juggle all the different zones on deck and the challenges that live TV broadcasts create. We also assigned everyone to the same position in Prelims and Finals each day.

As mentioned above, finals were live on NBC, or at least the consolation and championship final heats were. Officiating a swim meet on live television creates a whole additional layer of choreography to the deck protocols to work with the camera crews. While we as officials love to see our "official friends" on deck, as much or more than the swimming, NBC is not as excited about it. Unfortunately, the first night of finals was a bit of a train wreck. We knew it as CJs and we definitely heard about it from the Meet Referee. With some tweaks to the finals protocol and better communication on deck between the CJs during finals the next four nights were much, much better.

This meet was also the first USA Swimming meet where video review could make live underwater calls. USA Swimming has used underwater cameras for a number of years to confirm or overturn calls made on deck. This meet however, was the first time the Underwater Review Officials could make a call as well. World Aquatics, formerly FINA, has changed their protocols to allow live underwater calls thus USA Swimming was forced to change its protocols to help prepare our athletes for World competition.

As some may be aware, the Video Review erupted with a fair amount of controversy on Day 2 where a significant number of the top swimmers were DQ'd in the breaststroke and IM with calls made underwater. The displeasure of the coaches, swimmers, and crowd was further exasperated by the length of time it took to review those calls. At the beginning of the meet, underwater calls could not start to be processed until the race was complete and took as much as 2 ½ minutes, delaying the start of the next heat. Throughout the meet, the process was continually refined and improved to the point that on the final day it was causing little if any delay to the flow of the meet.

On the final day of the meet, I had the opportunity to be the CJ to assist the Video Review Supervisor in the Video Review Room. It was quite an experience!! The feeling in the room while races were in

progress was intense. As soon as the swimmers stepped on the blocks, the room fell eerily silent and all focus was on the monitors in front of the officials. I was able to observe all the monitors and at first the information coming at me was overwhelming. It took me until the Finals sessions to train myself to focus on one set of lanes and not try to watch everything.

The Video Review process was fascinating and far too complex to try and explain in this report. However, if someone is interested in hearing more about it, I'm open to discussing it one on one or in a group setting.

It was a privilege to represent Minnesota Swimming at the meet and support a number of swimmers from Minnesota there. Excited to see you all on deck at the next meet soon.