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MHSAA OFFICIALS BULLETIN



As the season progresses you are likely to have the opportunity to work meets requiring multiple officials. As you do, you are likely to find a few changes in your duties. First you can anticipate that you will have a more focused set of responsibilities. If there are two of you the roles of Starter and Referee will most likely be split in some fashion. You and your partner must decide how to accomplish officiating dual confirmation starts, relay exchanges, turn-judge responsibilities and observations of the 15-meter mark. When both officials are experienced a common scenario is for each to serve as starter for half the meet. When on the side opposite the Starter you will be observing the starts, turns and relay exchanges, etc., but will not be the “Referee” necessarily. The role of Referee frequently does not depend on an official’s deck position but rather on experience level and in rare instances a notation on the meet contract. It is not uncommon for the Referee to also be starting events. Once you have decided how to split the officiating duties be sure you are clear with the meet staff, coaches and captains who is the handling the duties of the Referee.

As the number of officials at a meet rises the number of disqualifications does not necessarily rise. First and foremost, do not disqualify a competitor unless you are positive that you observed a violation. When in doubt the benefit of your decision goes to the competitor. Dual confirmation usually reduces the number of start and exchange disqualifications. Remember the vantage point of the official and the other action occurring can and often do block the view of one of the officials. Turn violations at the

non-starting end of the pool tend to increase because the officials assigned there are focused in their observations. In dual meets with one official it is often impossible to reach the non-starting end in time to see the turns. Often large meets have multiple heats. Due to the seeding process the early heats have less experienced swimmers and more violations. The later heats have fewer issues. Stroke violations tend to rise as officials are watching less lanes and are concentrating on the swimmers strokes only. In dual meets, with one official, it is possible for a coach to position a weak swimmer in a lane on the far side of the pool and not have his stroke receive the same level of attention that it does in a multi official meet with each watching fewer lanes. Whatever your exact assignment, you must know how and when to signal a violation, when dual confirmation is required, how to record and verify the dual confirmation, and what process is being used to notify the office and the coach/swimmer of the disqualification.

Whether you are a new or experienced official working with other officials allows the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn new techniques. Often discussions occur about rules and rule changes. You will get to observe other officials in action and may learn their philosophy on certain items. As you listen compare them to what you already know and ask questions. Occasionally you will hear a rule misinterpreted or something that just doesn’t sound right. Check your rulebook, clarify what you heard and if you think the comment is “off target” share that with the official in a private conversation. You will both be better officials for the exchange.

Over the last few weeks it has come to our attention that several officials are using starts as prescribed by U.S.S. Swimming Rules. THE U.S.S. START PROCEDURE IS NOT APPROVED FOR MEETS SANCTIONED BY THE MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION. IF YOU HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THIS PRACTICE CEASE IMMEDIATELY. Referee’s observing an official under their direction using anything other than approved MHSAA starts should correct the official prior to his/her next start, whether it is a heat or an event. Should the official fail to comply the referee should relieve him of his starting duties at that point and advise the MHSAA office. If you are unfamiliar with the proper starts please contact the office for the correct information.