

MHSAA OFFICIALS BULLETIN



Finding Your Place in this Pool

Two officials were talking recently. One was experienced and the other relatively new. The new official was asking how events could be better observed especially if officiating alone. First you must concede it is more likely one official, working alone, will observe less things than two or more officials working in consort. As an official's experience level grows, they learn the best positions to observe the performance of swimmers. Secondly, officials do not make a meet fair but rather they make it fairer. As an official you will not see everything, and you can only react to what you see. The idea is to be in the best possible position given the current circumstances.

For example, when observing the underwater action of a breast stroker, after departure from the blocks, is there a better place to stand than at the starting device? Can you hand the microphone to someone else to hang it back on the starting device while you move down the pool with the swimmers? With the backstroke it may be advantageous to start your commands close to the starting end where you can best see foot position and move toward the back stroke flags as you initiate the start, you will find if you use the same technique of handing off the microphone you can easily reach the 15-meter mark ahead of the swimmers to make any necessary calls.

From time to time coaches will use a little gamesmanship. For example, they may lack sufficiently skilled breast stroke swimmers to fill all of their lanes. They will place a breast stroker in a distant lane that

has a questionable kick. They are gambling that you as the official will not be able to see the stroke well enough to call an infraction. Based on your observation of the field there may be time for you to cross behind the starting blocks observe the questionable stroke, make a call if necessary. Remember you do not have to pick finishes from the normal starting position. However, you must have a clear view of the finish to observe the order of contact with the finish end and if the finishes are stroke compliant. Incidentally after you do this a few times it will amaze you how fast word gets around to the other teams you officiate that you make this type of check.

Many of us have been surprised by a back stoker in the 200 Medley Relay who surfaces in the vicinity of the 15-meter mark. From your vantage point as the official you are not in position to make a call and you allow the swimmer to continue without a violation. How do you correct this, first accept what's "done is done". Note the swimmer's name on your event sheet and see if he or she appear in the 100 Backstroke. If they do, you need to plan how you will be at the right place the next time the situation may arise to make a call. Swimmer's that challenge the 15-Meter mark in one event often repeat the action in a later event. The fact that you have prepared yourself for the call is good officiating.

Last Rules Review: In the Individual Medley is it legal for a competitor to use the Trudgen to swim the 4th quarter of the race?

Ruling: The answer is yes. Rule 8-2-5 allows the 4th segment to be swum in any stroke other than the butterfly, back and breaststroke which have previously been used. Incidentally, you will often see variations of the Trudgen and Trudgen Crawl performed by swimmers in the freestyle events. Generally, they are inexperienced, have poor breathing skills and find the distance they are racing very difficult. The Trudgen is a historical stroke which employed an abbreviated scissors kick with the arm movement similar to the crawl stroke. As the legs closed on the scissors kick the arm on the breathing side recovered allowing for rhythmic breathing.

This Week's Rules Review: Can the 100 Freestyle be swum by doing 50 yards of Butterfly and 50 yards of Breast stroke?