

Protocol on When to Sit and When to Stand at a National Meet

This article was prepared by Paul Jenkins for the "Off the Blocks" Newsletter in January of 1999.

With the upcoming Maritime Life Nationals in Victoria Mar 17-23, I thought that this is a good time to talk about Deck Protocol as it is seen at a National Meet. Many often wonder why the constant standing, sitting, standing, sitting and yet more standing and sitting... well here goes

The Canadian National Swimming Championship, be it either Spring or Summer Nationals, is the yearly showcase of our swimming program. It features the best of the best athletes we have to offer, and is a featured event of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's televised sports schedule. Swimming as we all know, is not the spectator sport we'd like it to be; however television brings in good revenue to the sport and publicizes our sport to the rest of Canada. Without television and the media, we most certainly would be paying more for things like registration, sanction fees etc. Media is mostly transparent to us, yet they play, an important role in our swimming program.

As officials at a National meet, we must be seen to be critical yet highly professional. Our focus must be on the athletes and we must have a thorough knowledge of the rules and above all must have an extraordinary level of experience. There is no opportunity to be wrong or mistaken We must demonstrate this all the time when working the pool deck. Just think, what impression will it give to the viewing public to see one lounging in ones chair with your legs crossed picking or scratching parts of your anatomy. To this end, our deck protocol must be seen to be above reproach.

Briefings commence one and one half-hour prior to the start. The Referees, Starters and Meet Commission along with the Meet Coordinator and Meet Management and others deemed necessary, attend. There, potential problems and local procedures are discussed. About thirty minutes later, all of the officials are briefed. This might include walk-on procedures, use of equipment, introductions etc. Shortly thereafter the Judges of Stroke and Turn are briefed. This is done to ensure all are thoroughly conversant with their duties and to prevent mistakes from taking place. It was once said to me; if it wasn't briefed, then one could expect mistakes to happen. I have found this to be true. Honestly, the briefings are boring and many feel they are unnecessary, but other than the swimming, they can be the most important thing to happen at a meet. All it takes is for one person who was otherwise unclear to have a complete understanding, and the briefing was worthwhile.

Officials are discouraged to be on the deck until about ten minutes before the start. At this time we all walk on the pool deck together lined up in the correct positions so that when we stop we are all in the right spot. We remain standing until the Referee blows his/her whistle which is the signal for everyone to sit.

When the Referee blows the whistle for the swimmers to mount the blocks everyone stands and remains standing until the race has started. Immediately after the start, the Chief Turn Inspector will step forward. This is the signal for all the Head Lane Timers to step forward (watch the first arm pull and leg kicks of the swimmer in their respective lanes). When the Chief Inspector of Turns steps back, the Head lane Timers step back and when the Chief Inspector of Turns sits down everybody sits. Confused yet?

Down at the turn end, the Turn Judges are doing a similar thing during the start along with their Chief Inspector of Turns. When the swimmers get to approximately ten metres to go into the turn, the Chief Inspector of Turns at the turn end stands and all the Turn Judges at that end stand with his/her. When the CIT steps forward the Turn Judges step forward to judge the turn and remain there until the CIT steps back, pauses and then sits. The Turn Judges follow appropriately.

Turns at the start end are very similar. When the swimmers get to approximately ten metres to go into the start end, the Chief Inspector of Turns at the start end stands and all the Head Lane Timers and Timers taking the splits, stand with him/her. When the CIT steps forward the HLT and split Timer step forward to

judge and time the turn and remain there until the CIT steps back pauses and then sits. The HLT and split Timers again follow appropriately.

A similar procedure follows when the swimmers are coming in to the final touch. The CTI stands, all the Timers stand, the CTI steps forward and all the Timers step forward and take the final time of the swimmer. When the CTI at the start end steps back, pauses and then sits, all the Timers again follow.

The only time a Judge (HLT, Stoke or Turn Judge) remains standing, is when there is a potential disqualification. This gives both the Referee and the CTI indication that a possible infraction has taken place. The Referee, waits and does not declare the results board official until the CTI questions the Judge on the nature of the infraction. If the CTI is satisfied the infraction actually has taken place he/she gets the HLT or Turn Judge to complete the Disqualification Form and presents it to the Referee who questions the CTI. If the infraction is declared as a disqualification, the referee informs the Announcer and the electronic booth. The Announcer will report the DQ verbally or the Results Board will indicate DQ or the time will be removed. Neither the swimmer nor coach is verbally informed. They have to listen to the announcer or watch the board.

As it is expected the results to be declared as official by the Referee almost instantaneously, you can see the importance of sitting after each event. Not to do so, gives the Referee the false impression that a DQ has taken place and all results will be held.

Once the session is over, everyone remains in their seats until the Referee blows her/his whistle which signals all to walk off. This is done in an orderly manner and will be briefed before hand. Following each session a debrief is held with the Ref, Starter, CTI'S, Meet Coordinator, Meet Commission, Meet Management etc. This allows any problems to be identified and thereby improving the following sessions. The Ref has to stay back and initial the electronic slips and prove the next days heat sheets. By the way, all heat sheets are proofed by the Ref. and initialled prior to each session as are the electronic slips after.

One other thing, as mentioned, the media is advertising for us, so please assist them in any way you can by stepping aside a little. They have a job to do also, but under no circumstances let them interfere in the performance of your duties. If they do, bring it to the attention of you leader, the Chief Timer, CTI or Referee.

This is just a general overview. Understanding why we do this and being clear on your duties will go a Long way in making the meet go well. If you are unclear about anything, always ask, there is no such thing as a dumb question. Good TEAMWORK will always ensure a successful meet.