

## Report On Olympic Trials

This article was written by Sheila Lencoe, a Level 5 official with B.C.S.O.A. and outlines the experiences of the British Columbia Swim Officials at the Olympic trials that were fit to print! It appeared in the July 2000 Newsletter "Off the Blocks".

---

On May 27 th, Barbara and Lawrie Johns, Martin Cattermole and myself flew to Montreal to join a large team of Canadian officials at the Olympic Trials. As I spent the 2 weeks prior to leaving with preparations such as buying new white shoes, white pants, extra white socks, getting my hair cut, planning my clothes (I don't know why because all we wore were our whites or our pajamas), I never gave much thought to the preparations being undertaken by the club hosting the Trials. After all, I've organized many meets and I know the routine. I quickly gained an appreciation as to how much planning and hard work must have gone into this event prior to the actual swimming. Upon arriving in Montreal, we went to the pool to pick up our ID passes. This trip also enabled us to master the underground metro system (we have to admit to getting on the subway the first time and travelling in the opposite direction from the pool). One of our group found the subway a little user unfriendly - no name will be used but let's just say that it is not recommended that any Johns, Dick or Harry go **Rapidly** through subway turnstiles. We arrived at the pool each day 2 hours prior to the start time and often took up a position of safety marshall. 4 safety marshalls are used at all times (1 on each corner) and you have a one hour shift and 4 new officials take the second hour. As there are heats and finals, that means there are 16 safety marshalls each day. Each morning we were greeted with breakfast and then we went into the briefing which lasted at least 1 hour. The briefing is basically the same each day but is necessary as there are always new officials. They are given in both English and French. At the end of the session there is a debriefing, so these total at least 4 hours per day. We usually arrived home about 10pm and quickly washed our whites and hoped they would dry by the morning. The only exercise I got was the 10 floor dash up and down the stairwell with laundry. After each session we were given a meal and when we arrived back at the pool, there was more food. We certainly didn't go hungry and I can't imagine what their budget was to feed the officials and coaches. Don't forget that this meet ran for 7 days (that means 28 hours of briefing and debriefing, 112 safety marshalls, 224 turn judges, 336 timers, 14 sets of heat sheets and 28 meals prepared - no wonder we had chicken and chips so many times). Are you getting the idea as to how many people gave of their time to make this event happen? In the entire week, I never heard one person complain about being asked to undertake a job. Everyone was very friendly, very helpful, very enthusiastic and very calm. At the end of each day, one person received the 'wet towel award'. This 'honour' was bestowed upon you if you slipped up on your job. The recipient was asked to stand up in front of the group, the reason was given as to why they were the 'winner,' and then a towel was taken out of a bucket of water and put on top of their head. It was all done in good fun and we can proudly say that none of us received the award. That's one thing that was very noticeable at Trials; although there must have been a lot of stress in organizing a 7 day meet, there was always time for humour. Because of the television coverage, there were many extra bodies assigned to keep the deck area clear. 4 people sat at the false start ropes and quickly removed them after each backstroke event so the cameras had a clear view. Others had the job of making sure no one was standing in front of the sponsors' banners. Still others ensured that the media people didn't get in the way of the starter and referee while interviewing the athletes. I couldn't even begin to estimate the number of volunteers needed for all these extra duties. So what did we learn at the Trials? 1. Humour plays an important role in bringing people together and cutting down on stress. 2. A deep appreciation of the importance of all positions both on deck and behind the scenes. 3. A feeling of self-confidence in my own meet management and officiating now that I've seen

behind the scenes of a meet at this level. 4. A huge desire to attend Trials again and what could become a very expensive interest in officiating at other such high level meets. 5. A realization that because officials are well trained and professional in B.C., and the standard is equal across the country, officials can come from all over the country yet the officiating and rule interpretation is completely consistent.

I hope that the funding the 4 of us received for attending Trials will be available for other officials in years to come so they too will benefit. This benefits the entire swimming community both at age group meets and at senior level meets. (But remember, you have to put your subway ticket in the right way or the turnstile doesn't open it is especially important if you are a Johns, Dick or Harry).

Submitted by Sheila Lencoe