

Continuing Education

This newsletter will be the first of several that will attempt to answer some questions I get asked on a regular basis. Hopefully, it will clear up some confusion about various processes, procedures and rules.

- **What is N2/N3?**
- **What does it mean and how does it work?**
- **Do I need to get my N2/N3 to be a good official?**
- **What are the steps in the process?**

In the “OLD DAYS” USA Swimming had three classifications of officials; LSC, National, and National Championship.

In order to achieve a “National” or National Championship” level; one had to work “X” number of sessions at a particular meet that was designated as a National or National Championship. You would then be awarded the status of a National or National Championship official. You would receive a patch, a pin – silver or gold (depending on National or National Championship) and it would be noted on your membership card. While the process was simple; it did not provide any mentoring, advance training, skill enhancement, or evaluations.

Several years ago, USA Swimming introduced a new National Officials Certification Program. It is administered by the USA Swimming Officials Committee. Its primary goal is to expand the education of officials through mentoring, participation and evaluation as well as recognizing those officials who have demonstrated their knowledge of swim officiating at each level and position.

Certification at any level requires a combination of several things including evaluations, local participation at meets, continuing education, and the training and mentoring of other officials.

National Certification Program Mission:

"To develop officials who are competent, current and consistent from the LSC level meet to the highest level in our sport through a progressive training program based on an accumulation of experience acquired by specific meet attendance, mentoring and constructive evaluation."

NATIONAL CERTIFICATION LEVELS

There are two levels of National Certification – N2 and N3 – for each of 5 positions:

- Stroke and Turn Judge
- Chief Judge
- Starter
- Deck Referee
- Administrative Referee

- N2 for Administrative Official

The National Officials Certification Program is totally optional

It is your choice as to how much time you want to invest in the sport. How much you want to give back.

If you choose to pursue opportunities at higher level meets; then you will require an N2 or N3 level certification.

But if you are happy working your swimmers local meets and do not wish to commit the extra time required to advance; that is also fine. We need and value officials at all level meets.

What are higher level meets?

What is required to work one?

Expectations for Officiating at a National Championship Level Meet

(National Championships, US Open, World Cup, Olympic Trials)

and a

National Level Meet

(Sectionals, Zones, Grand Prix and other approved “Qualifying” meets)

An Official shall have:

- 1) For National Championship meets - current N3 certification in the position and current LSC certification.
- 2) For National meets – current N3, N2, or eligible for N2 evaluation, and current LSC certification.
- 3) Knowledge of current USA Swimming Rules.
- 4) Knowledge of Championship Meet Protocol or a willingness to learn Championship Meet Protocol.

An Official is expected to:

- 1) Dress in appropriate swimming official’s attire.
- 2) Be punctual.
- 3) Attend pre-meet briefings.
- 4) Work any position assigned.
- 5) Work all sessions he/she has committed to.
- 6) Execute proper deck protocol.
- 7) Describe any rule infraction clearly and concisely.
- 8) Maintain a positive attitude.
- 9) Be a “team” player.

How do I get started?

Once you decide to start down this path:

- You must continue to work local meets
 - Continue to mentor new officials and seek mentoring from more experienced officials
 - Build your **online resume** in OTS – this is important for getting selected to work a higher level meet and for your advancement to N2/N3
1. Go to the USA web page: <https://www.usaswimming.org/>
 2. In the upper right hand corner you will see a sign in prompt
 3. Sign in using your USA Username and Password
 4. Once signed in you will get a blue header across the top of the page – click on “**FOR YOU**”
 5. You will get a drop down menu – click on “**OFFICIALS**”
 6. Scroll down past the group picture of all the smiling officials – if you can identify everyone in the picture – congratulations; you’ve passed your test for N4
 7. You will come to the “**RESOURCES FOR OFFICIALS**” section.
 8. Click on the “Officials Tracking System” picture (OTS)
 9. Scroll down to OTS Section 1
 10. Click on: [Use this View My History link if you want to manually add any meets or activities that are not system-tracked.](#)
 11. This will take you to your personal OTS Tracking page; where you will see the following tabs across the top:
 1. Application for National Certification
 2. Meets/ Evaluation History
 3. Activity History
 4. Test History
 5. LSC Certification History

Let’s look at the “**Activity History**” tab.

You will see two sections:

System Tracked Activities –

These are activities entered by a meet referee or chief judge for an entire group who participated in this activity.

Other Activities -

These are activities you can enter yourself. This is a key section. Every time you work with an apprentice – log that activity in this section as a mentoring activity. If you attended or presented a stroke briefing before a meet or session; log that activity as a briefing. If you attend a meeting; an online clinic; or a seminar; make sure you go into OTS and log those activities. If you apply to work a higher level meet, or be evaluated; they will look at this section to see how you have given back or contributed to the sport. When you apply for advancement to an N2 or N3, following your evaluation, they will look at this section. This is your **online Resume** – keep it current.

The other tabs in your OTS Tracking Page are also interesting and should be reviewed from time to time to make sure you are receiving credit for the sessions you are working.

Let's Start the Journey

You have been officiating for some time and would like to explore the possibilities of advancing to a higher level – N2.

You have reviewed the requirements for an N2 Evaluation and Certification:

N2 EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS **REQUIREMENTS FOR N2 EVALUATIONS**

- **Must be certified by LSC in the position requested**
- **Must have worked 16 sessions in that position once certified by LSC prior to requesting evaluation.**
- Request evaluation at an **Official's Qualifying Meet (OQM)**
- **Must work minimum of 4 sessions at that meet**
- **Must be evaluated over 3 sessions in that position at that meet**
- Must have worked at least 8 sessions as recorded in OTS in the same position before requesting a re-evaluation.

Education/Observation sessions count towards the minimum 8 sessions.

STROKE and TURN JUDGE

- See above

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIAL

- All 16 sessions must be at meets with some "check-in" events and at least 8 of those sessions must at preliminary/final meets with scratching from finals procedures

CHIEF JUDGE

- Must be an N2 Stroke & Turn Judge
- Must have worked a combined 16 sessions as Chief Judge or Stroke & Turn prior to requesting evaluation with at least 8 of those sessions as a Chief Judge at meets with a dedicated CJ team with pre-meet, meeting, session, and post session responsibilities.

STARTER and DECK REFEREE

- Must be an N2 Stroke & Turn Judge

ADMINISTRATIVE REFEREE

- Must be an N2 Deck Referee
- All 16 sessions must be at meets with some "check-in" events and at least 8 of those sessions must at preliminary/final meets with scratching from finals procedures

REQUIREMENTS FOR N2 CERTIFICATION

- **Must have received a satisfactory N2 evaluation in that position**
- **For Stroke & Turn or Administrative Official must have (1) one Learning Activity recorded in OTS. – *The Online Resume we talked about***
- **For all other positions, must have one Teaching Activity and one Learning activity, both recorded in OTS. – *The Online Resume we talked about***
- **Must apply online for National Certification approval. – *Key Point (see below-“Final Steps”)***
 - o LSC participation is required, verified by your LSC Official's Chair

After reviewing the above, you decide that you meet the requirements and want to continue.

How do I get an Evaluation?

1. You need to find a “Official Qualifying Meet” (OQM)

An OQM meet is one that meets certain criteria (i.e. number of sessions, prelim & final sessions, certain level of swimmers; will be attended by an EVALUATOR who is qualified to evaluate at the level and position you are seeking and the meet has been designated as an OQM meet by USA Swimming).

You can find a list of these meets here: <https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/officialdocuments/national-certification-and-evaluation/oqm/oqm-approved-meets-7-18-18.pdf>

HINT – The Georgia Swimming AG State Championship (SCY & LCM) are usually N2 OQM meets. The Georgia Swimming Senior Championships (SCY & LCM) are usually N3 OQM meets. If we apply for and get approved to offer N2 or N3 evaluations – it will be stated in the meet information and advertised on the Georgia Swimming Officials web site

<http://www.GAOfficials.org>

How do I get invited to work an OQM meet?

You usually have to apply to work an OQM meet.

The link above for OQM meets will give you the date, location, level of evaluation being offered and the email address for the contact for Officials. Reach out to them and ask for an application to work their meet. There will also be a link to the application in the published meet information. Some meets will also list the names of the evaluators – this is important if you have been previously evaluated. The same evaluator can't evaluate you again for the same position.

Now you are on your way to an OQM meet

Make sure you prepare:

- Review the **Expectations for Officiating at a National and National Championship Level Meet** printed above
- Read your rule book & take it with you to the meet
- Familiarize yourself with the position you will be working, duties, etc.
- Pay close attention to the pre-session briefing, protocols, jurisdiction, etc.
- Be a sponge:
 - Soak up everything they teach you
 - Take advantage of all mentoring
 - Ask questions
 - Bring back “best practices” you learn at the meet and apply them at your home meets and share them with others.
 - Start mentoring other officials

Your Evaluation

You will be observed while you are on deck performing your duties. Depending on your evaluator and the number of evaluations they are performing; you may get feedback during the session to correct minor issues or changes in behavior they have observed. Hopefully there will be ongoing dialogue to help you modify or improve your performance.

At the end of the meet/evaluation; you will sit down with your evaluator and receive formal feedback on your performance. You will also receive a written copy of your evaluation. This evaluation will be entered into OTS by the evaluator with their recommendation on whether or not you are ready for advancement.

You will receive an email once it gets posted.

- Use the evaluation as a learning opportunity – no matter the outcome.
- Take any comments or suggestions as being constructive.
- Do not be offended or become angry if you do not agree with their assessment of your performance.
- Do not present yourself as knowing everything and therefore, are not open to suggestion or criticism.

You've gotten a recommendation for advancement (Final Steps)

This is where many people drop the ball.

Your advancement will not happen automatically.

You must take the next step.

- Go into OTS – sign in using your ID and Password.
- Access your Activity History tab.
- Make sure you have sufficient “activities” to meet the N2 requirements
- Go to the “Application for National Certification” tab.
- Check the “Certify me in the position(s) selected below” section.
- In the “Summary of Participation” section make sure you have all **green** “OK” indicators for each requirement line. If you have something in red, you should not submit your application until that it resolved.
- If you're all green and good to go – click on the “**Submit for Certification**” button at the bottom of the page.
- Congratulations :->) you've made it – almost. It will take a few days to process your application. Once processed, you will receive an email notifying you of your approval and indicating that you can print out your new membership card that has your new classification on it.

If there is something wrong with your application, you will get an email explaining why it was rejected.

At this point – you need to continue practicing and improving your skills.

You also need to share this new knowledge with others – ***Mentor someone at every meet.....***

**Special Note – N3 requires two evaluations at the position you are seeking advancement at.
N3i (initial) and N3f (final)**

**These are performed at two different OQM meets and by different evaluators.
Do not apply for an N3 advancement until you have completed your N3f and meet all of the
N3 requirements listed on the USA web site.**

<https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/officialsdocuments/national-certification-and-evaluation/mentor-and-evaluator-resources/n3-eval---certification-requirements-2018-may.pdf>