

Swimming Mid North Coast Inc

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REPORT ON THE TECHNICAL OFFICIALS FORUM HELD AT DOOLEY'S LIDCOMBE SUNDAY 14TH JUNE 2009 (and some of my thoughts)

1. Opening Message –Peter Lozan
Simply “housekeeping” comments about signing in etc
2. Officials Protocols---Ken Jones with assistance from Cherry Smith
This was the best presented item I have ever seen at one of these conferences. I went with no real positive expectations having been to one with a similar title a few years ago. My expectations were so low that I had a couple of weeks previously asked Janelle to help me come to terms with the same topic. This presentation was well prepared with clear and easy to follow computer graphics (featuring little pacman icons) showing the movement and positioning of the various technical officials as they performed their duties. The most impressive thing was the quality and professionalism of the presenter, Ken Jones. He was able to speak fluently to the topic without reading what was on the screen in front of him. He had an engaging manner and competently kept the audience involved and engaged. Video clips of officials at state meets and officials from USA were also shown which clearly showed the positioning and movement of Technical officials as well as displaying some minor variations in protocols between USA and Australia. If this presenter is to be part of the team delivering the Regional Technical Forums I would thoroughly recommend it to any official wanting to learn the protocols of a State Meet. What a difference a really competent presenter makes!
3. Assessment Process-----John Skene
After the high standard of the previous speaker all others were clearly going to struggle. Here John had clearly drawn the “short straw” with the topic, and knew it. However, in his usual quiet and somewhat apologetic manner, he covered the ever changing rules of the assessment procedure for maintaining and upgrading accreditations. The notable changes include recognition that it is clearly ridiculous to assess every referee and starter at a state meet on every State Meet as had been the procedure for the past year, which had resulted in some people being assessed up to three or four times in a ten day period! The number of assessments to be completed to make progress from one level to the next was also under consideration. The compulsory six month time frame between first and second assessments had also been removed. Currently there is no requirement for referees progressing from level 1 to level 2 to do an examination provided they gained their original referees qualification through the examination system. Those who have qualified without doing the examination have to complete it as part of their level 2 assessment. However, with the ever changing guidelines, who knows how long this will be the rule. The other stand out change of importance to the older officials was that the age limit has been raised from 60 to 65 years. The constantly moving goal posts of the assessment and accreditation system would seem to me to do little to enhance its credibility. I must admit there certainly has been a change for the better in the manner of

the assessors and emphasis on building on the positives rather than inventing negatives in more recent weeks. As the presenter said, "the assessors were also learning in the early stages".

4. Effective Officials ----Sue Bergeson introduced Lynne Dalton from the School of Volunteer Management

Ms Dalton was a professional speaker who presented a generic speech about "Retaining, motivating and rewarding Volunteers" Her speech emphasised that volunteers need to feel valued by thanking them and may be giving rewards. They are more likely to remain motivated if they receive some training, possibly in skills that may be transferable to careers and jobs. Statistics about volunteers were presented together with comparisons between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y and their differing skills and reasons for volunteering. The content of this item has been fairly fully detailed in "Swimmer on line". While none of the ideals were anything really new I admit that it made me think enough to realise that I appreciated the award Janelle gave to me last year, so I hope something similar can be an on going process. I also thought that probably at the level that we are all at as referees, we probably do get some intrinsic feeling of value and self worth, but I wonder if those that sit week in and week out as timekeepers get that feeling. I think most of us have said that pushing buttons without knowing what time you record is a pretty mind numbing experience. May be the occasional print out to show timekeepers their relative accuracy-----a system that was always promised when automatic timekeeping came in, could enhance the experience of this most necessary duty. Also, we might get a better response to gaining qualifications now that examinations are no longer a part of the system.

5. Open Water Presentation----Graham Towle

This was again quite well presented with some graphic vision and a fluent speaker who was clearly passionate about this aspect of swimming. I found it interesting as I had absolutely no idea what went on in this area. Graham did a good PR job for this branch and others chimed in with anecdotes and observations. I still don't think that bobbing around on a pontoon is my idea of fun but then I am even uneasy on the turn end of 25m at Sopac!

6. Lunch and Awards Presentation.

Again the recipients have been advertised in the "Swimmer" so I will just list them.

Open Water Technical Official of the Year----Brian Hosford

Outstanding Contribution to Open Water Swimming -----Karen Ford

Services to Officiating -----David Holloway

Berry Rickards Award-----Karen Walsh

Alec Convenor of the Year-----John Hart

Male Technical Official of the Year-----Chris Hayes

Female Technical Official of the Year-----Trish Roberts

7. Rules Presentation

Actually I can't remember much about this (and I didn't have anything to drink at lunch) but the gist of it was again centred around the DVD that was given out last year and that I think we have used here to show various rule infractions. The DVDs were again available for people to take.

8. Swimming NSW Swimwear Ruling ----Jann Fathers

Jann in her usual laid back style covered the rules as they stood on that day, but pre-empted that there were further changes to come. This was indeed the case with an update coming out on the 22nd June. It has been an ongoing saga for 6 months now with more changes due in January. The situation has made this an important part of the

duties of marshals and check starters, as well as ITs at State meets. In general most swimmers especially age group swimmers at State level have accepted it well, after the initial uncertainty.

9. Evaluation and closing remarks---Peter Lozan

Sorry I had to leave to catch my flight home----but while the first speaker was outstanding I would say that most presentations were well prepared and more professionally presented than those I have previously seen.

Sorry this isn't more detailed but I didn't know until this week, 3 months after the event, that I had to present a report. My own notes tend to cover the bits that interested me, rather than a detailed summary of each presentation

Ann Pilkie

