



PACIFIC SWIMMING COMMITTEE REPORT

To be submitted to Debbi Tucker (secretary@pacswim.org) the Sunday prior to the next BOD meeting

Open Water Coordinator

Liaison to the Board: Marcia/David Benjamin

Report on Open Water Clinic and Open Water Nationals

Thanks to Mike Davis, who nominated me, and to Pacific and USA Swimming who paid for my trip, I attended the USA Swimming open water officials clinic in Ft. Myers on April 7, and then worked the Open Water 10K and 5K National Championships on April 8-10. It was a great experience, and I am grateful to Pacific for sending me.

USA Swimming officials at open water events have safety as their first priority. At the same time, they are also responsible for insuring compliance with the rules. There were more officials at these national events than athletes in the water – about 40 men and 30 women swam in their own heats, and there were over 50 officials on the water and on the beach doing fingernail check, chip install, water check-in and check-out, administrative judges, start judges, turn buoy judges, finish judges, timing judges, video judges, and referees in four boats patrolling the course. Many of those officials, around 30, were there because they attended the clinic, like me. Still, the point remains: officiating an open water event to USA Swimming standards takes a lot of manpower and a lot of resources, and that is for a field far smaller than a typical open water swim in Northern California.

The clinic and the officiating experience were first-rate. I came away with a good idea of how national events are officiated and I am happy to share that with our officials. I also have the clinic materials and curriculum available to share. I had hoped that the clinic would address the sanctioning process for open water swims; unfortunately, it did not.

The question now is how this knowledge should be applied, and part of that answer depends on Pacific Swimming's approach toward officiating open water events in our LSC. Sanctioned open water swimming in Northern California is led by Pacific Masters Swimming – age groupers piggyback on the Masters' swims. Every summer, there are 10 or 12 open water swims hosted by Masters teams, not by Pacific Swimming teams, and they are all sanctioned by United States Masters Swimming. Only a couple of these swims have invited age group swimmers to enter (Del Valle Open Water Festival, Santa Cruz Roughwater). These two swims have, I believe, been sanctioned by USA Swimming in the past. It is my understanding, though, that sanction requests for age group open water swims bypass the LSC completely and go straight to USA Swimming. The Rule Book calls for a very robust officiating crew: a referee, assistant referee, administrative referee, safety officer, course officer, starter, chief finish judge and two finish judges, race judge, turn judge (one at each turn buoy), announcer, medical officer, clerk of course, chief timer and three timers, and recorder (some of these functions can be performed by the same person). (701.9) Masters swims in Northern California are never officiated to this standard and, except for Nationals, I've never seen any open water event staffed with officials at all these positions.

None of these considerations apply to non-sanctioned open water events, and there are many of them every year in Northern California: every triathlon, all of the "Escape from Alcatraz" swims, and the Tiburon Mile, to name just a few. USA Swimming recommends that anyone asked to officiate at any unsanctioned event should be sure he/she is a named insured on the event's liability policy.