

Chapter 6.3

Supporting officials

Benefits of this chapter

Being an aquatics official is more than a job, it is a responsibility to the integrity for the future of our sport.

These responsibilities include teaching others about the rules and regulations of the many disciplines which make up aquatics, it teaches young athletes about the ethical behaviour they should display both in and out of the pool and it teaches the fundamentals about following the rules and regulations.

This chapter explains the importance of officials and how your federation can contribute to their success as they contribute to the success of aquatics.

Introduction

Any successful national aquatics federation needs to have in place a structure to support officials. Along with athletes and coaches, they are essential to aquatics. Implementing a structure which supports their development, would include policies, procedures and programmes, important in promoting the sport of aquatics.

Taking a look at the role of aquatics officials and the motivation which drives them to keep involved in aquatics can ensure that your federation can recruit, develop and keep officials and ensure that the sport keeps a solid structure for the future.

Role of an official

What are the different roles of aquatics officials?

Officiating in a capacity must be based on sound understanding of the rules of the sport. Since aquatics has five disciplines, the official within each discipline must understand the basic rules of that sport. For example, turn judges at a swim meet must know the basic rules of stroke technique in swimming to be able to do their job in an official capacity.

As a general rule, an official should be:

- 1/ Independent & neutral
- 2/ A good communicator
- 3/ Have an excellent Rule knowledge but know how to interpret and adjust the rules
- 4/ Honest
- 5/ Courageous, fair and tolerant
- 6/ Professional
- 7/ A good listener, polite and cool
- 8/ Understand the sport and be able to manage it
- 9/ Make judgments that people understand

Why are officials important?

The essential role, responsibility and privilege of any official are to apply the rules of the aquatics discipline they find themselves officiating in order to create the right conditions for a competition to be well executed. Proper application of the aquatics rules creates these conditions. The contributions from officials in ensuring that the proper rules are enforced can allow spectators and athletes alike to value the outstanding performances within the competition.

How can your federation retain officials?

The most common reasons why officials tend to stop officiating can be because of other commitments, family reasons, or in some cases poor treatment.

However, your aquatics federation can overcome some of these obstacles:

- 1/ Code of behaviour
Implementing a code of behaviour within your national aquatics federation for players, coaches, administrators, official and spectators

can be a useful tool. The main purpose of the code will be to set adequate standards and guidelines of behaviour so that the interest of each official is respected.

2/ Education

Educating your members on the importance of officials in aquatics can help alleviate any potential obstacles. By providing outlines on the roles of officials during competition, spectators and members of your federation can be informed and understand decisions of officials.

3/ Promote quality training

Implementing an officiating system similar to that of your coaches can improve the structure of training your officials. By investing in their knowledge and experience, this can encourage them to become better at their position and more committed to the sport of aquatics.

Helpful hints on ways to retain officials:

- Apply the codes of behaviour for players, coaches, administrators, officials and spectators.
- Educate and inform spectators of the importance of officiating in aquatics.
- Provide quantity and quality evaluating/coaching at all levels of officiating.
- Promote and utilise role models already in the system.
- Provide stronger support and backup for inexperienced officials by being available to mentor, discuss and advise.

Motivators for keeping officials involved:

- 1/ Fun
- 2/ Love of aquatics
- 3/ Being involved with aquatics
- 4/ Social aspect
- 5/ Being recognised
- 6/ Taking a leadership role
- 7/ Enjoy handling and organising competitions
- 8/ Teaching life lessons