

# THE LONG WHISTLE



## Illinois Swimming Officials Association

*Since the start of the Girls' Season I have tried to compose this newsletter at least SIX times. Each time, something new changes the landscape!*

*Steve Fedota, President*

## WHAT NOW — WHAT NEXT

It's late January and it looks like we MAY get a Boy's Swimming Season in THIS school year!!! On behalf of high school coaches, swimmers (and their parents), THANK YOU for what you did during the girls' season.

Under this pandemic, like everything else, our youth sports world was turned upside down. I am so proud of what we, as officials, did to accommodate almost daily changes in venues, meet schedules, protocols, and personnel, to permit the girls' season to be conducted up to and through a sectional competition! We ADAPTED to the needs of our schools and their student athletes. While we did not have the protective "bubble" like the NBA, or the resources of D1 college programs, we PERSERVED and facilitated a competitive and rewarding swim season in the fall.

While the protocols for disinfecting may have differed (substantially) from "fogging" the entire facility multiple times during the competition, to individual "wipe downs" of the blocks between each race, to an individual's decision to dump a bucket of pool water (its chlorinated!) on the block before a particular race; we ACCOMIDATED each school's requirements. We wore our masks (and sometimes our gloves), used our new electronic whistles (even learned how to use...), and where the schools permitted us to, we moved around the pool deck to make sure were in the right position to "make the call."

Some of us heard about the team that had a student "test positive," and had to quarantine; sometimes ending that team's season since everyone on the team had to quarantine. Some of us even got the call from a trainer or AD that we were exposed - and should quarantine. In my case, a call the following day (after the school checked with the county health department) reversed the original quarantine order. *These were all new rules as health professionals learned more about the virus!*

Our Assigners had the tireless task of cancelling, rescheduling not only competitions but venue changes and individual officials as well. Because of "virtual meets," instead of just 2 officials, 2 officials for EACH venue were necessary.

### **What Now—What Next, cont.**

IHSA endured constant criticism from some parents who wanted their student “showcased” to college scouts and others who believed the benefits of participation / competition outweighed the health risks of the virus. IHAS State Championships were cancelled (a major source of the Association’s revenue – resulting in the Administrative staff being cut to half time).

We were FLEXIBLE. Our knowledge and application of the rules brought consistency to an otherwise inconsistent world. Now, don’t get too complacent! As of Sunday January 24, all but three areas in Illinois are at or above Tier 2, COVID-19 Mitigation Standards. The Kane / DuPage area has achieved two of the three metrics to mover from Tier 2 to Tier 1 perhaps, by the time you read this newsletter.

- ◆ Tier 2 standards for LOW-RISK SPORTS permit: Contests within conference and regions
- ◆ Tier 1 / Phase 4 standards for LOW-RISK SPORTS permit: Tier 2 standards AND non-conference contests, tournaments, and state series.

On January 13, at their Board Meeting, the IHSA in conjunction with the Governor indicated that LOW RISK WINTER SPORTS In Tier 2 geographic areas could begin practice immediately, with competitions to begin within their geographic area on a future date (to be determined by the IHSA Board).

This brings us up to the expected actions when the Board meets this coming WEDNESDAY (January 27). While we don’t know what WILL happen, we do know that given the COVID mitigation outcomes, we can expect direction relative to future competition for the boys’ swim season.

For the mental, physical, and emotional benefit of our student athletes I urge you to **BE FLEXIBLE AND AVAILABEL**. If we end up in a “shortened season,” schools may want to maximize their competitions by participating in multiple meets each week.

*Stay dry on the deck—Steve*

## **GET READY...**

1. Update your calendars (Arbiter / IHSA Official’s Center) so your assigner doesn’t have to go through multiple assignment iterations to provide meet coverage.
2. Brush up on / review your rules. *Do it once, do it twice!*
3. Make sure you are properly licensed by IHSA. Did you renew your license, did you compete the concussion protocol materials within the last two years (*there are 18 officials currently on probation*)?
4. Check your gear and uniform (*most electronic whistles need 9 V batteries – how long does the battery in your whistle last?*)
5. Wear your mask, wash your hands.

# ASSOCIATION BUSINESS



At the beginning of our 2020-21 school / swim season, because of the COVID-19 mitigation restrictions put in place, it was determined that no dues would be required. Members during the 2019-20 school / swim season would continue as "Regular Members." Further, due to the doubt of a competitive season, the Association would not be conferring its annual awards for the season.

In February of 2020 we Amended the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association. Many of the changes were "scrivener's" issues in clarifying the language of the documents. NOT changed were the semi-annual meeting that the Association holds to conduct its business. Traditionally at the semi-annual meeting held in conjunction with the Girls' State Championship Meet, two committees are appointed (usually from volunteers at the meeting). One committee solicits and recommend members for our annual awards while the second committee solicits nominees for Association officer vacancies.

As there was no Girls' State Championship Meet earlier in this season, no meeting was held. At a subsequent Executive Committee Meeting, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, I have appointed A.C Buehler, Patt Chase and Chuck Ytzen to the Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee is charged with identifying candidates for various office based on the odd / even calendar year sequence. As this is an odd numbered year, the ISOA Constitution provides: "The **President, Treasurer, and Member at Large** shall be elected in odd number years (at the Regular Meeting held on the Saturday of the Illinois High School Association, Boy's State Swimming and Diving Championship)." **Should you wish to nominate an individual (or self-nominate) please contact any of the committee members.** If you are nominating anyone – please secure her/ his agreement to serve if elected, prior to forwarding their information to a Committee Member.

While there remains an original State Championship date on the IHSA calendar – given the unpredictable nature of COVID mitigation **we will be voting electronically during the week that the Boys State Championship was originally scheduled (February 22 to 27).** The Executive Committee has researched various platforms and determined that a viable electronic platform exists to ensure that members may only vote one time in this election. An informational meeting will be held via Zoom on **SUNDAY February 21 at 7:00 PM** for anyone interested in the mechanics of the voting platform and other business that may need to take place. A Zoom Link will be sent via email closer to the date of the meeting.

You can reach each of the Nominating Committee Members at

- \* A C Buehler [acb@buehler-net.com](mailto:acb@buehler-net.com)
- \* Patt Chase [pattchase@aol.com](mailto:pattchase@aol.com)
- \* Chuck Ytzen [cmytzen@gmail.com](mailto:cmytzen@gmail.com)

# Rules and Consistency

*In each issue we attempt to reinforce consistency in application of a rule.*

***Our last Edition posed the following situation:***

Pleasant Valley (PV) and Strong School (SS) are in a dual meet (non-championship format) in a six-lane pool. At the beginning of the 200-yard medley relay, the Referee calls the competitors to the blocks with a series of short whistles. Swimmers assemble behind lanes 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. As the swimmers assemble, a 6th swimmer (from SS) approaches the PV swimmer behind lane 2, and the PV swimmer behind lane 2 steps back from the immediate area; with the SS swimmer taking the original PV swimmer's place. (There is a diving board mounted between lanes 2 and 3.) The Referee sounds a long whistle and the swimmer's mount blocks 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. After the swimmers mount their respective blocks and are situated, the Referee turns the start over to the Starter.

Using the microphone to issue the "Take your mark" command, the Starter experiences problems with the audio quality (feedback, broken connections, etc.) so as not to keep the swimmers on the blocks while the issue is corrected the swimmers are ordered to "Step down." All swimmers step down without incident.

The audio problem is corrected in less than a minute and the Referee issues a long whistle to have the swimmers mount the blocks. At this time swimmers mount the blocks; including the PV swimmer who had originally lined up behind lane 2 and stepped back for the original long whistle This swimmer mounts the starting block in lane 3. What should the Referee / Starter do in this situation?

Editorial Note: PV was assigned to the odd-numbered lanes (1, 3 and 5) and SS was assigned to the even-numbered lanes (2, 4 and 6).

## What was your call?

There is no violation here and all relay teams shall be allowed to compete.

## More Importantly—WHY?

Here's Why – Originally, the SS lead-off swimmer had taken the block in lane 2, which was the correct lane and the PV swimmer (who stepped back just before the long whistle) did not take the block in any lane, although they should have been in lane 3. A case could be made to disqualify the PV team in lane 3 for unnecessarily delaying the start of the race (**Rule 8-1-3(a)**) but since there was a subsequent equipment problem, necessitating the stepping-down of the entire heat, you have extenuating circumstances which allow setting aside the rule.

Once a step-down occurs, the officials have essentially "re-set" the race, and since all competitors were present and in the correct lanes for the 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt to start the race (call to the blocks,) there should be no violation charged to either team.

Some preventive officiating tips follow:

Some preventive officiating tips here:

1 – Alleviate confusion by having the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> members of relay teams assemble BEHIND the timers and not between the timers and the starting blocks.

2 – Recall that **Rule 8-1-5** was modified in 2014 to specify that the swimmers shall not step off of the starting platform upon the command to “stand up.” This is for risk minimization purposes; however, officials reserve the right to ask swimmers to “step down” if resolving whatever issue is going to take more than a few moments. 5-10 seconds is a good benchmark – if resolving the issue will take longer than that, stepping swimmers down is always appropriate, as was done here.

3 – Some might argue that the PV team from lane 3 got a break from being disqualified for delaying the start because of the equipment problem. Perhaps... but it happens sometimes.

**Recheck your rules...**

Q: You know that if the third swimmer in the 400 Freestyle relay enters the water when the 2nd swimmer is making their 50 yard turn the team is disqualified ... but EXACTLY why? What rules govern this situation?



Watch for THIS answer. It will be included with the link to the ISOA informational meeting!