PAINT A PICTURE
Four Steps for Confirming, Documenting and Reporting Rules Infractions

By Gary Matyko

You observe a rules infraction, you immediately raise your hand overhead, you see that the Referee acknowledges your potential call, now what? If you follow these four steps, you will successfully recall, record, and report the infraction.

1. **IDENTIFY THE SWIMMER AND LANE**

   First and foremost, while your hand is raised, immediately take time to confirm which swimmer and lane committed the infraction. Note one or more distinguishing characteristics like cap color, suit color, lane relative to your position on deck, etc. to ensure that you can correctly identify the swimmer committing the infraction. Immediately record the lane number, turn number, and infraction on your heat sheet. If you cannot positively identify the swimmer and lane, do not try to guess, there is no infraction as there is uncertainty in your call and the swimmer should always get the benefit of the doubt.

2. **REFLECT AND CONFIRM YOUR OBSERVATION**

   Next, continue with your responsibilities for observing the remainder of the race. As you carry out your duties, begin thinking of your next action, filling out a disqualification slip to present to the Referee. This is the time for you to reflect upon your observation, confirm your knowledge of the rules, and prepare for communicating your findings with the Referee.

3. **DOCUMENT YOUR CALL**

   Once the race is finished, document the observed infraction on a DQ slip for presentation to the Referee for approval. While you are filling out the DQ slip, again confirm your observation along with the swimmer and lane involved.

4. **PAINT A PICTURE FOR THE REFEREE TO SEE**

   Your communication with the Referee should be well thought out and concise. An experienced Referee is likely to ask you a few questions and may even challenge your observation to test your knowledge of the rules and confirm you are certain that you did in fact see the infraction. During this exchange, if you present any uncertainty or doubt, an experienced Referee is likely to side with the swimmer and not uphold your call.

   EXAMPLE

   You are the Referee, which official would you prefer report the following Breaststroke infraction to you?

   Official A: "I have a one hand touch by the swimmer in Lane 6."

   Official B: "On the second turn, the swimmer in Lane 6 touched the wall only with her left hand. The right hand never touched the wall and was about 4 inches away from the wall when the left hand touched. I was standing between Lanes 4 and 5 and clearly observed the infraction in Lane 6."

Regardless of your experience officiating swimming, you can be successful communicating your observation if you PAINT A PICTURE, WITH WORDS. With careful selection of words, you should be able to explain your call to several different people, a coach, a swimmer, or a Referee and each one will have the exact same picture painted in their minds! The picture you paint should be clear and concise, display your knowledge of the rules, and be convincing to all.

About The Author: Gary Matyko is currently Director of Operations and a charter member of CSOA. Gary has been officiating high school swimming and diving in Pennsylvania since 1983 and college swimming since 1987. Gary has served as Meet Referee for the following championship meets: Big East Conference, American Athletic Conference, East Coast Athletic Conference, and University Athletic Association. A 1974 Engineering graduate of Virginia Tech, Gary was Team Captain and school record holder in the 200 and 500 Free and 400 Medley, 400 Free, and 800 Free Relays. Before retiring in 2015, Gary spent 41 years in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program in Engineering and Management with Westinghouse and Bechtel.