

An Open Letter to prospective officials – From Bonnie Finnigan

Why would you want to make kids cry?!? This was the first question I was asked when I told a friend I was training to be an official. The answer is I don't, but I do want to support a sport that I love. Officials are often seen as the bad guys, but the reality is that officials serve two very important roles.

Our first role is education. As officials we are tasked with the role of helping young swimmers learn at the local level what is required for each stroke so that when they begin to compete at higher levels they aren't disqualified for an infraction that was previously overlooked just so they could enjoy their meet. While coaches may have told a swimmer over and over that they need to change something in their technique or race for it to be correct, it only takes one disqualification to really get their attention.

The second important role is to provide fair competition. No swimmer wants to lose to an opponent who left early or who adjusted a stroke illegally to gain an advantage. So while a swimmer may be upset when they are disqualified for an unintentional mistake, most would appreciate an opponent's disqualification for an attempt at an unfair advantage.

Considering the importance of both of these responsibilities, officials are often very committed individuals who want the sport of swimming to be the best it can be. I encourage every parent looking for a way to demonstrate a committed interest in the sport to which their kids and family dedicate so much time, to consider becoming an official. For questions or information about what is involved contact Bonnie Finnigan at bfin0858@gmail.com.