

DATE: June 3, 2009

TO: USA Swimming Officials

FROM: Jim Sheehan, Chair, Officials Committee

SUBJ: Distinguishing Approved Swimsuits vs Unapproved Swimsuits at Meets

The new rule adopted by USA Swimming (see letter from Bruce Stratton, Rules and Regulations Committee Chair, dated June 1, 2009) regarding swimsuits approved by FINA is going to present some challenges for referees and officials. There are a number of suits, especially older models, that would likely have been approved, but they were simply not submitted to FINA for approval. The practical problem is how to distinguish these suits from those that were not approved. We do not, and likely will not, have access to the list of suits that were actually disapproved. At this point, we believe any suit meeting the exception criteria provided would, in all likelihood, have been approved if submitted. It is virtually impossible for us to attempt to describe or list which suits we think might be acceptable even though not on the list. The exception criterion is intended to provide a straightforward method of identifying acceptable suits that are not on the list.

We do not want officials to become suit inspectors at meets and/or attempt to verify that any suit being worn by a competitor is on the FINA list. Officials should initially assume that any suit being worn is a legal suit. Unless a coach or swimmer complains that a suit is not legal and it is clearly obvious the suit is a new model technical suit that was not approved, the swimmer should be given the benefit of the doubt. At meets, it would be a good idea to make sure all the coaches are aware of the letter issued on Monday and to have copies of it available for either review by the coaches or distribution.

We are going to have to put some trust in our coaches and athletes and assume they will do the right thing. This is going to require a considerable amount of judgment and use of common sense on the part of the official, but that is nothing different from what we have to do in a lot of existing situations.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding the use of the new rule at meets.

Thanks.

Jim