

Vice President of Competitive Programs

2026 Report to the Board of Governors and Board of Directors

Submitted by Rebecca Phillips

2026 Competitive Season

Change continues to be in the forefront of our sport. This season once again brought changes to help improve and clarify the new scoring system that World Aquatics adopted in 2023. Once again, several large changes were shared by AQUA. Changes included:

A new difficulty guide that was designed for more balance to routines and allow for choreography with more variation to be successful.

New Factoring for routines with the intention of aligning different types of routines with different weights on technical and artistic

The Tech controlling process had additional layers of training and practice associated with tech controlling at national meets. WhatsApp chats were maintained to allow coaches to ask questions on coding to tech controllers. A clarification document was maintained to help coaches and controllers understand what some of the wording in the AQUA document means in practice. The coach card checker software was maintained and emphasized as a way to avoid common coding errors. The warmup process for figures was enhanced with staggered lap swim and warm up time bringing more safety to this portion of the competition. Many coaches commented on this change as being beneficial to their athlete's safety.

Highlights from 2026

Coaches continue to help each other understand the system. Coaches, athletes and officials continue to get better at expecting and adapting to change.

Competitions by the numbers. Our national competitions continue to have high engagement

2025 masters had robust participation

Collegiate had 141 athletes participate

JR/SR/AWD 270 athletes participate

Youth/12U invite had 412 athletes participate

Junior Olympics had 1047 athletes participate making this the largest number of participants post-covid

Looking forward to 2027

World Aquatics will release new figures and new technical required elements for the 2027 competitive season. Judges will take update training and testing when the new material is listed. The national competitions will continue to look for ways to make the athlete, coach, official experiences positive for the artistic swimming community.

I want to thank the committee members and chairs for their tireless effort to clarify and improve how we operate at national meets. Please see officials report by Linda Loendorff and Rules committee report by Patricia Jones for additional details of the work that has occurred this year. I want to thank the USAAS staff for their tireless effort to create experiences that will last a lifetime for our athletes and families. I want to thank all the coaches, officials, volunteers, parents, spouses, friends and family who support our athletes to be their best. As I enter my last season in this role, I want to thank everyone who jumped in to help at competitions and shared their thoughts for improvements.