

Deck Referee

A Deck Referee's responsibilities are many and varied, but they are best summarized as:

The goal of the Deck Referee is to provide the best possible environment for maximum swimmer performance.

To accomplish this, Referees shall, to the best of their ability, accept the following responsibilities:

- Physical set-up of the meet – The Referee shall ensure pool conditions to be correct, safe, and beneficial to fast swimming.
- Officials – The Referee shall assign, instruct, assist, and support the available officials.
- Rules and decisions – The Referee shall ensure that the rules, programs and procedures are followed without unexpected or unusual changes or delays and with fairness and consistency.
- Meet flow – The Referee shall anticipate and prevent problems from occurring, but settle those that do occur as fairly as possible, in accordance with the rules. To accomplish this, the Referee must be knowledgeable, organized and prepared.
- Human relations – The Referee shall ensure that swimmers, coaches, and officials are treated with consideration and respect, and with as much freedom as is consistent with a fair competitive environment.

The Referee must be a leader whose natural inclination is to serve. To serve others means to understand and be aware of the athletes, officials, coaches, parents and others in the sport. The Referee leads by example in showing respect, honesty, fairness, integrity and responsible behavior that characterize authentic sportsmanship.

The Referee provides the example to the swimming community through his/her commitment to the sport of swimming. The Referee is committed to: 1) ensuring the integrity of the sport and the profession of officiating; 2) conducting him/herself with dignity and good humor, while ensuring fair and equitable conditions for the competition; 3) remaining impartial, while sustaining positive relationships and building trust in the swim community; 4) maintaining a current understanding of the rules and their application; and 5) fostering the growth in expertise of all officials through teaching and mentoring officials, and working with officials on the deck. The Referee is the primary leader and educator for both new and experienced officials.

The Referee must learn, acquire and possess sound swimming leadership, a positive swimming attitude and effective administrative skills. Sound swimming leadership is based on a thorough knowledge of the rules and the reasons for the rules – to ensure fair and equitable conditions of competition and uniformity in the sport. Swimming leadership is a skill that can only be developed through participation. The Referee's confidence in understanding the swimming rules, his/her respect for the other officials, and his/her understanding for those who are still gaining knowledge of the sport contribute to a positive swimming attitude. The attitude is manifest in the Referee's efforts to ensure that all other officials, swimmers and coaches are able to perform their respective tasks to their greatest potentials.

The Deck Referee must see that the swimming rules are enforced during the meet and to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that all swimmers have fair and equitable conditions of competition. Therefore the Referee must know the current rules and their interpretation. He/she must have a copy of the current rulebook, study it, and bring it to the meet. He/she must also attend clinics when available, consult with other knowledgeable officials, and learn all the nuances that prompted the rules. In addition, the Referee must know and understand the rules that are specific for a particular meet as defined in the meet announcement.

The best way to stay out of trouble is to stick to the rules. Deviating from the rules, no matter how well

intentioned, invites requests for more deviations and, most likely, protests and challenges to the Referee's decisions.

Since the Deck Referee is ultimately responsible for the conduct of the session, he/she should feel free to reassign officials if they do not perform their duties properly. However, the Referee must avoid overruling another official, unless confident that the other official's judgment or explanation cannot be supported. The Referee is the supreme arbiter of all problems or protests that involve judgmental matters concerning a swimmer's compliance with the technical rules. Thus, his/her decisions must be correct and impartial. There is no substitute for knowing the rules, applying them correctly and using common sense in their application.

Many people take pride in demonstrating common sense when it comes to business or family matters, yet fail to exercise common sense in the conduct of a sport. Sometimes the official's knowledge is inadequate; other times the official has become emotionally involved. Officials who cannot control their emotions when their children are involved or when their team is in a close competition should be calmly advised to proceed to the cheering section, where they can cheer and "do their thing." Officials should never display, or act on, their emotions while officiating. Some officials, usually timers, will ask to switch lanes or areas of responsibility to avoid the possibility of being thought to show preference to their favorites. Don't allow this. Doing so is a tacit admission that the person's judgment could be prejudiced or influenced. A person who isn't perceived to be honest should not be an official.

Finally, the Referee should make his/her decisions accurately as well as quickly and decisively if possible, being confident that he/she is knowledgeable and is being completely fair to the individuals involved. The binding principle in rendering judgments is:

Violations that clearly occurred should be called, but the benefit of any doubt must go to the competitor

A tip in making the tough decisions is to adopt a helpful rather than a punitive attitude towards rules enforcement. Officials are not on the deck to see how many competitors they can disqualify. They are simply there to ensure that the competition is completely fair and equitable.

TEAMWORK

Although the Meet Referee is in charge of all competition and administration of the meet, he or she will frequently delegate certain areas of responsibility to the Deck Referee, who supervises the actual competition, and to the Administrative Referee/Official, who supervises the logistical (administrative) part of the meet. To ensure consistency between sessions, the Deck Referee should meet with the Meet Referee prior to the session for guidance on positioning of officials to ensure equitable deck coverage, jurisdiction and protocol, pace and rhythm, handling of "no shows" and other unusual situations, problems from previous sessions and possible solutions, handling of disqualifications and use of announcer. If there are multiple Deck Referees at a session, they should meet beforehand and establish their individual roles.

The Administrative Official oversees the administrative aspects of the meet and is responsible to the Meet Referee for the administrative personnel, the accurate processing of entries and scratches, accurate seeding, the determination and recording of official time, the determination of the official results, and publication and posting of results and scores.

The Deck Referee works closely with the Starter. He/she should meet with the Starter prior to the session to review how potential false starts will be handled and where the Starter will stand. The Deck Referee should

position him/herself after the Starter has selected his position.

Prior to the officials' briefing, the Deck Referee should also meet with the Chief Judge (if there are Chief Judges assigned to the session) to coordinate all the duties the Chief Judge will be expected to perform. The Chief Judge may be assigned responsibility for the officials' sign-in-sheets, introductions, assignments of officials for deck coverage, deck protocol, jurisdiction, rotation schedule, communication and radio etiquette, equipment and forms (e.g. lap counters, relay take-off slips). During the session, Chief Judges communicate with the Deck Referees using appropriate radio protocol (reference: *Using Radios at PVS Meets*, found on the PVS Officials website).

The Deck Referee is also responsible for mentoring, guiding and evaluating apprentice officials. The Deck Referee should ensure that apprentice officials are paired with experienced officials and receive appropriate guidance and mentoring. At the end of the session, the Deck Referee should meet with apprentice officials, answer questions, and evaluate their performance. If the apprentice official has successfully completed a training session, the Referee should document that by signing the training card.

The Deck Referee is the "general manager" of the session that he/she is working. He/she is the final on-deck authority of all actions that take place during the session. His/her leadership and ability to work well with others is key to the successful running of the competition by the team of officials. Through his/her guidance, fair, consistent and accurate officiating can be achieved.

SAFE SPORT

USA Swimming is committed to safeguard the well-being of all of its members, with the welfare of its athlete members as the top priority. USA Swimming believes the following: that every member should have a safe, healthy, fun sport environment; every young person should be protected from abuse and safe from harm; all non-athlete members share a collective responsibility to protect our membership. USA Swimming provides mandatory training and background checks for all officials to increase awareness and understanding of athlete protection policies and best practices. USA Swimming also provides resources, information and guidance on Safe Sport related issues to all members, including officials, coaches, parents and athletes. USA Swimming will provide a process for members to recognize and respond to any Safe Sport issues that arise and will treat all allegations of abuse or concerns regarding athlete safety seriously and will respond appropriately and as prescribed by the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations. All officials, including Deck Referees, have an obligation to observe interactions and react appropriately by responding and reporting. It is critical for all officials to report suspicions or allegations of child sexual abuse to the proper officials and appropriate law enforcement authorities. By working together, we can create safe conditions for our sport and protect athletes.

Please note that "deck changing" is banned at all meets sanctioned by PVS or sponsored by PVS or one of its clubs. Swimmers found to be in violation of this policy could be found in violation of USA Swimming Sportsmanship Rules and subject to removal from the remainder of the competition. If deck changing is observed, the Deck Referee should discuss the incident as soon possible with the Meet Referee and appropriate consequences should be determined and discussed with the swimmer and coach.

For more information, please visit www.usaswimming.org/protect.

GUIDELINES FOR PLACING OFFICIALS

The Referee (working with the Chief Judge, if one is assigned to the session) is responsible for assigning and instructing all officials. The Referee must establish fair and equitable conditions for the competition by the consistent placement of Stroke and Turn Judges. If the judges cannot walk the full length of the pool due to either pool design or insufficient personnel, the Referee should assign them so as to ensure that all swimmers are observed as equally as possible. For example, if one stroke judge can only walk 2/3 of the length of the pool, the stroke judge on the opposite side of the pool should mirror his/her walking.

The requirement that swimmers surface by 15 meters in freestyle, backstroke and butterfly makes it important that officials be in a position to observe possible violations. When there are sufficient officials to be assigned as stroke judges, observing the 15-meter mark becomes their responsibility. That duty could also be assigned to a Chief Judge. The level of competition and number of officials may dictate how important it is to cover this position versus having more officials watch the turns. The 15-meter mark is unlikely to be violated at a mini meet or a younger age B-C meet.

If a recall rope is used, the Referee should assure it is staffed, usually by the official watching the 15-meter mark.

Deck Referee Checklist

Prior to the Meet

- Know the rules! Attend clinics and know the responsibilities of all officials' roles
- Bring a current copy of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations (you may also bring copies of checklists and notes from clinics, etc.) and any recent USA Swimming changes or interpretations
- Wear appropriate uniform – look official (usually white tops, navy blue bottoms and white shoes for PVS non-championship meets)
- Bring whistles and your USA Swimming registration card
- Review and understand the meet announcement for specific provisions for the meet including warm-up procedures, positive check-in events, any fastest-to-slowest events, any breaks in between events, etc.
- Display confidence – officiating regularly builds confidence

Upon arrival at the meet site

- Arrive at least 30 minutes before session warm-ups
- Check in at the Officials' Table and with the Meet Director and Meet Referee
- Check the list of officials to ensure all key positions are filled and, if not, work with the Meet Referee to get them filled
- Check with Meet Director and Meet Referee about any problems from prior sessions
- Check the physical set-up: starting blocks secure, check lane numbering (right to left as the swimmers face the course) on starting blocks, lane lines, height and distance of backstroke flags, deck and lane line markings needed to judge the 15 meters mark, water depth, water temperature, moveable bulkheads in proper place and secure, recall rope if used, ensure

interfering diving boards and ladders are removed and deck is clear of obstructions, inspect swimmer and spectator areas

- Review Referees Safety Checklist

Prior to the session

- Coordinate with the announcer (if one is assigned) – discuss protocol
- Coordinate and/or confirm with Meet Referee
 - How meet will be run, e.g. dive over starts, clear pool, etc.
 - Marshals' role during warm-ups, including monitoring safety, etc.
 - How coaches/swimmers will be notified of DQs, etc.
 - If a swimmer misses his/her event, will reseeds be allowed (even for positive check-in events)? Under what circumstances will reseed be allowed? If reseeds will be allowed, who will determine (e.g., Meet Referee or Deck Referee) who can or cannot be reseeded?
- Coordinate and/or confirm with the Administrative Official/Referee
 - If positive check-in, review procedures including closing times, making heat and lane assignments known to athletes, coaches and officials
 - Procedures to close out events
 - Procedures if there are possible swim-off
- Coordinate and/or confirm with the Starters
 - Their preferred starting location, where you will stand and how you will turn the heat over to them
 - Decide how you will resolve common issues like “untidy” starting block areas (reduce the chaos to a minimum to set the tone for the meet)
 - Accommodation for disabled swimmers, if necessary
 - How you would like to be advised of swimmers with problems in the starting area, equipment issues, etc.
 - Verify “possible false start” procedure and protocol
 - Ensure starting and timing system are available and tested
 - Ensure meet management has provided appropriate timing systems/timers
- Coordinate and/or confirm with the Chief Judges
 - Establish procedures to receive DQ, DFS, and “No Show” slips for review/sign off
 - Establish swimmer or coach notification procedures for DQs
 - Ensure they (and you) understand the radio protocol
- If assigned to invigilate controlled warm-up
 - Coordinate with the assigned Starter to observe the pool and enforce compliance with warm-up rules
 - Open racing start and pace lanes at the designated time (open additional racing start/pace lanes if demand warrants). Coordinate with the announcer and marshals
 - With the Starter, check starting equipment and starting platforms
 - Review the deck set-up in general – Notify Meet Referee of deficiencies or safety issues
- Officials' Briefing
 - Start the meeting early enough so that meeting will be over at least 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the session
 - Welcome officials, explain expectations (no emotions, undivided attention to responsibilities, no discussion of DQs with swimmers or coaches, etc.), ensure key officials properly instruct and assign other officials
- Start the session on time

During the meet

- Before each race (all this should only take a second or two at most!)
 - Scan the deck for officials in position and equipment (pads hanging, cables in lanes, people leaning on backstroke flag poles, etc.)
 - Glance at the Starter to see if any issues have been observed
 - If finals or positive check-in events, count the swimmers
 - Check if the timing system has been reset (ability to do this will depend on the system used and location of cues, if any)
 - If swimmer(s) who missed an event is waiting to be reseeded, look for empty lanes in which to place swimmer
- Suggested standard whistle protocol
 - Short whistles – based on the meet pace established by the Meet Referee
 - Long “step up or in” whistle – when the swimmers are ready (if possible, resolve any issues before the first long whistle)
 - Second long whistle for backstroke – when the last head is up
 - Turn the heat over to the Starter when all swimmers are accounted for, either on the blocks or in the lanes and there are no apparently issues behind the blocks. (This should be immediately after the last whistle in most heats.) Ask the Starter to say “Relax please” or step the swimmers down if any issues can’t be promptly resolved. Remember the outstretched arm does not necessarily “close” the heat! USA Swimming rules do not specify when a heat is “closed.”
 - Let the Starter decide when the swimmers are ready to start
- After the start
 - Watch for all heads up
 - Do not turn away from the pool while a heat is in progress – avoid any “paperwork” until all heads are up after the start
 - Move a few meters down the pool where you can see the entire pool
 - Note start time (if it is the first heat), empty lanes and false starts
 - If you observe a false start and it is confirmed by Starter, report on the radio
 - Watch swimmers and stroke judges
 - Check turn end judges
 - Acknowledge and note any DQs and process them expeditiously; avoid overruling an official unless a clear error was made or an official cannot adequately explain the call
 - Move back to the starting area with incoming swimmers at the end of the heat
 - Glance at Starter to see if there may be issues with the next heat
 - Blow short whistles, etc.
- After each event
 - Check that all DQs have been finalized (including swimmer or coach notifications)
 - Reconcile DQs, DFSs, No Shows and adjustments with administrative official/referee so that the event can be “closed”

After the session

- Remain long enough (nominally 30 minutes) to be sure no protest is being made
- Critique the meet with the Meet Referee and Meet Director (positives and negatives)
- Meet with any apprentice officials, answer questions, review their performance, and document training session if the apprentice fulfilled all requirements
- Welcome feedback and input from other officials, coaches, etc.

- Ensure all disputes or questions are fully resolved

Other very important stuff

- Be aware of swimmers, spectators and noise, and ensure that the competition, including starts, is fair
- Keep the meet flowing but don't pressure the Starters to "pick up the pace"
- Consider "body language" – assume many people are watching you
- Try to face the pool when standing anywhere near it, even when not on duty
- Be alert, attentive, focused, calm, professional, and approachable
- Always be "friendly" and helpful to coaches, swimmers, and other officials, even if they are not
- Try to take all discussions and emotional issues off-deck and away from front and center
- If issues need to be resolved or discussed with coaches, CJs or STs, consider turning the heat over to another deck referee or the meet referee
- If off-duty, be ready to step up if needed. Watch and listen so you don't need to be summoned
- Adapt to meet conditions and needs and be willing to learn
- Don't read more into the rules than is written
- Find ways (within the rules) to let swimmers compete, and don't over interpret procedural rules
- Appreciate swimmers, coaches, officials and volunteers of all levels and interact with them respectfully on all occasions
- Admit a mistake if you are wrong
- Be neatly dressed, look confident, be competent, and never be imperious
- Maintain your sense of humor
- Advise the Meet Referee of any non-routine decisions made; if possible, involve them in those decisions
- Have and generously apply common sense
- Make sure the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer
- Work regularly as a stroke and turn judge
- Self-evaluate after all shifts, sessions, and meets
- Look forward to the next meet

Additional documents:

Referees Safety Checklist
The "Professional" Deck Referee
Using Radios at PVS Meets
Officials' Briefing

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