



The Deck Referee

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The Deck Referee

- The “Team”
- The Procedures
- Handling the DQ
- Working With Coaches
- Swim-offs
- The Rules, etc.
- Additional Resources



The “Team”

The Deck Referee is responsible for a fair environment in which the swimmers will be competing. To accomplish that, the deck is staffed with a number of people with different jobs. The Deck Referee must be a facilitator in helping that staff get their jobs done correctly and at the same time allow them the freedom to do those jobs. While the Deck Referee needs to know all the jobs of the others on deck, it is not his or her job to do them all. He or she will have enough to do.



The “Team”

- Stroke & Turn Judges
 - They are your staff, the people who are working the line
- Chief Judges
 - The managers - they are your eyes, your ears - your communications link to the deck
- Starters
 - Key individual for a smooth flowing session
 - A second set of eyes and ears to help “watch your back”

The “Team”

- Announcer
 - Valuable resource for facilitating communications with coaches and swimmers (e.g. swim-offs)
 - Need to work closely with for finals procedures
 - Don’t make the mistake of assuming they know less than you
- Meet Referee
 - CEO
 - Establishes guidelines regarding protocols/procedures for a given meet that the deck referees, starters and judges need to follow
 - The next level to which coaches can go on an issue

The Procedures

- The pool is yours while you are the deck referee
- Coordinate with the Meet Referee and other Deck Referees
 - How are heats to be run – fly-overs, clear pool, “Chase” starts
 - Standard whistle protocols
 - Manage starting area
 - Any precedents that may have been set in prior sessions
 - Any unusual venue characteristics that need to be managed



The Procedures

- Work closely with the starter - be sure that each of you knows what the other is expecting
 - Relative positions on the deck
 - Who approaches who for a false start?
 - Timing of when the short and long whistles are sounded
 - Keeping order of finish
 - Checking the next heat to see if there are any open lanes/missing swimmers
 - Any accommodations for swimmers with a disability
 - Watching for issues/situations that could cause a problem
 - Keep them informed...remember, they don't have a radio

The Procedures

- What are the scratch procedures for the meet?
- What are the procedures for “no-shows” and declared false starts?
- What are the procedures for a DQ?
 - Who is writing the slip?
 - Who tells the swimmer/coach?
- Radio Protocols
 - Make sure you and the chief judges are on the same page when it comes to how calls are to be made
 - USA Swimming Radio Etiquette and Usage Guidelines



The Procedures

- The Start

- Allow the starter to pick his or her best spot and then position yourself appropriately
 - Can see all lanes clearly
 - Does not block the starter's field of vision
 - Allows the starter to see you out of his or her peripheral vision

- Whistles

- Blow series of short whistles to advise next heat that their heat is coming up shortly
- Blow long whistle to ask the swimmers to step on the block or step in the water
- For backstroke blow second long whistle to call swimmers to the end of the pool – it is recommended that this whistle be blown as soon as all swimmers are in the water and all their heads have come up above the water. *Don't wait for them all to be "ready on the wall" ...that's the starter's job.*



The Procedures

- The Start (continued)
 - Extending the Arm
 - Extending the arm turns the heat over to the starter
 - Be prompt in turning the heat over to the starter
 - We don't want to wait until the swimmers are ready to start to turn it over to the starter – the swimmers will have to wait too long
 - When all swimmers are on the blocks and getting themselves ready
 - When swimmers in the water are in front of the end of the pool and getting themselves in position



The Procedures

- The Start (continued)
 - Other considerations
 - Suppose there are some issues behind the blocks - you may delay extending your arm in case a swimmer is trying to get to the block – scan the field for similar issues
 - If you need to take back control of the heat, lower your arm but also give a verbal indication to the starter to hold up the starter process



The Procedures

- The Start (continued)
 - No Shows
 - Preliminaries – varies by LSC
 - Finals – again, varies by LSC
 - Do not apply national championship scratch rules unless you run your meet the same way that nationals are run
 - Some LSCs have created their own scratch rules that are based on the national rules



The Procedures

- The Start (continued)
 - Alternates
 - Suggest you tell athletes and coaches that the athlete should be ready to swim if a no show at finals occurs
 - Do not have the swimmers step up on the blocks and raise your arm before you declare a no show. Raising the arm does not close the heat.



The Procedures

- During the race
 - Primarily focus on the race – the chief judges are watching the officials
 - Don't "hang out" with the starter
 - By observing the race, you might see the infraction as well as the judge
 - Keep the "table" informed of DQ's, no show's, lane/heat changes, etc.
 - Remember, its your pool



The Procedures

- Avoid distractions if at all possible – when they happen, keep them short or delay them until after the race, if possible
- You have a good team of judges on deck – let them do their job, don't try to do it for them – let them help you have a great meet
- Keep track of your time line – the swimmers set their preparation based on that time line and we want to avoid any unnecessary delays

Handling the DQ

- False Starts

- After watching swimmers until they surface and you are sure the start should not be recalled, write a number on your heat sheet for each heat – the lane number(s) of those you saw move or a zero for a fair start
- The starter should approach the referee if he or she has a call and the lane should be indicated in writing.
- Confirmation is by showing each other the lanes number(s) written for the heat – record that a false start has been confirmed on your heat sheet
- Announce a confirmed false start over the radio (identify heat and lane number) so swimmer can be notified and admin will know

Handling the DQ

- The “call”
 - The three questions
 - What was the judge’s position/jurisdiction?
 - What did he or she see?
 - What rule was broken?
 - The deck referee should be able to “see” the infraction from the description without having actually observed it.
 - If the description is not clear, ask the CJ or judge to repeat the call – do not lead the CJ or judge

Handling the DQ

- Recording the information
 - When the initial call comes in, make note of it on your heat sheet - when full call comes in, also record in your heat sheet
 - If you accept the call, **repeat the call back to the CJ or judge including event**, heat and lane information
 - After accepting a call, make sure the admin table gets the information
 - Check the DQ slip against what you have recorded
 - Reject incorrect slips – have them rewritten
 - If OK, sign the slip and get to admin table
 - Is there enough information to define the infraction
 - Who tells the swimmer or coach?

Handling the DQ

• Relays

- Make sure that your judges know how to complete the relay take-off form
- Chief judges can confirm whether there is a DQ or if the heat/lanes are “all clear” – since no hands are raised on relays, you want to have positive confirmation either way.
- If there is a call, accept or don't accept. Check the DQ slip and take-off slips before you sign the DQ slip.
- If there is no call, confirm “all clear, lanes 1-8”

Handling the DQ

- Referee making a call alone
 - Rule 102.13.2 - “The Referee has the authority to disqualify a swimmer for any violation of the rules that the Referee personally observes”
 - In order to keep balanced officiating, the violation must be observable from anywhere on the pool deck – otherwise, the lanes closer to the referee are receiving more observation than others
 - This should be an extremely rare occurrence

Swim-Offs

- What is the goal? Determine which swimmer(s) should qualify for what place in the finals or as alternates
- Check the results of your event for ties for 8th, 16th, 24th, 25th and 26th. Also check for other ties in the top 30 as scratches may create a tie for the last place in a heat
- Get the coaches together to identify the best time to hold the swim-off as provided by the rules – the announcer can be very helpful with this

Swim-Offs

- Include those “possibles” – you’d rather run a swim-off for something you don’t need than not run one when it is needed
- Again, coaches are smart and are thinking of their swimmers so they usually work very well together to identify the best time
- Know the rule regarding when to schedule the swim-off so that you can help the coaches agree on a time
- There have been some unusual resolutions to swim-offs



Working with Coaches

- Coaches are not the enemy – they are looking out for the best interests of their swimmers
- Coaches are smart when it comes to their swimmers and swimming – take advantage of that – they can help solve problems or resolve issues
- Keep the communication lines open
- We are here to support the efforts of the swimmers to excel in a fair and impartial environment

Working with Coaches

- If a coach comes to you with an issue, listen – don't try to provide an answer prematurely – *even if you think you already know the answer*
- Be calm – do not become defensive
- Understand what the issue is about and then investigate
- Use your team - ask for advice from other officials or even other coaches as needed
- Make your decision based on the best information you can get
- Be firm but fair
- If the coach is not happy, he or she can go see the meet referee - that is why he/she gets the big bucks

The Rules, etc.

- Prepare for the meet
 - Read the rule book regularly so that you can keep those aspects of the rules that don't come up very often fresh in your mind. You may not know every detail but you will know if there is a rule that applies to any situation that arises and you will know where to find it
 - Read the meet announcement to understand the procedures being used for this meet
 - Know which events are yours and be ready to do your job prior to the start of the event
 - If there is more than one deck referee, if you are "off", be nearby in case the "on" deck referee needs assistance with a protest or other situation



The Rules, etc.

- Always remain calm and, remember, the benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer



Additional Resources

- The Referee and the Rules by Anneliese Eggert
- The “Professional” Deck Referee
- Situations & Resolutions
- Training Resources
- Articles & Presentations



Your Whistle

First, you can use ANY whistle you are comfortable with and that people can hear....don't let anyone tell you any different....just be considerate of your starter's ears. Now, for recommendations...

Almost everyone thinks that a whistle with a 'pea' inside is a better choice. The Fox40 style whistles with no 'pea' are harder to make distinctive short and long whistles with...and make you sound like a lifeguard.

For whistle brand, the Acme whistles are generally highly regarded.

For officiating, the Acme Thunderer whistles are very common.

The Acme Thunderer 60.5 is small and super easy to blow, but it is VERY LOUD and pretty shrill. (This one hurts some folks ears.)

The Acme Thunderer 59.5 is medium size, a little harder to blow, not quite as loud, and has more pleasing note. (This is a favorite.)

The Acme Thunderer 58.5 and 58 sound pretty cool (nice low note), but are getting pretty big around your neck, and can be a little 'tiring' to blow after a few hours on deck.

If you get a metal whistle like the ones above, it's usually more comfortable if you get a rubber whistle tip, like [this](#).

Mostly, any tip will fit any whistle, because it's rubber and stretches...plus, they're cheap.

You can also buy one of the Acme plastic whistles (e.g. Thunderer 560). They work/sound just fine, and you won't need the rubber tip...but they just don't look as 'fancy'.

Just about all of that is available on Amazon. Some is available at sporting goods or discount stores.