The Meet Referee

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The Meet Referee

- The Team
- Before the Meet
- At the Meet
- After the Meet
- The Calendar

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The Team

The Meet Referee is part of the “meet management” partnership sharing responsibility for the whole meet with the Meet Director/Host.

The Meet Referee is focused on the rules, staffing of officials, and the actual conduct of the competition (102.11).

The Meet Director is responsible for planning, sanctioning, facilities, equipment, entries, hospitality, communication, and personnel other than officials (102.9).

Once the meet begins, the Meet Referee has full authority over the conduct of the meet, but the Meet Director typically still represents the interests of the host, the event, and the facility.

Both should always be working as a team.

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The Team

The Meet Referee works closely with other key players through both cooperation and delegation:

- Administrative Official/Referee
- Deck Officials
- Evaluator
- Coaches
- Meet Jury
- Announcer

Build rapport with the team, and work with everyone to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Keep your Admin ‘in the loop’ on all meet planning, any pre-meet instruction to officials, and communication with coaches. Your Admin will provide valuable input and support, and is often a logical choice to delegate Meet Referee tasks to if you are juggling multiple issues.

Before the Meet

Support the Meet Director in securing the sanction

- Review the Meet Information
  - Check for any obvious errors
  - Confirm your understanding of any competition specific timelines or policies (check-in, cut times, scratch rules, event limits)
  - Suggest any missing ‘flexibility clauses’ to allow discretion for combining events/heats, running time trials, using extra lanes, adding breaks
  - Check the ‘Officials’ section for your expected language on briefing times, contact info and attire
- Be prepared to help recruit the other officials for the sanction
  - The Admin (confirm compatibility with meet director/host/staff)
  - Two other deck officials: at least one must be certified as a Starter, but best practice is to use the sanction to get early confirmation of a couple key DR/SR positions.

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Before the Meet

Recruit and Inform Officials

- Recruiting communication varies by meet, but generally
  - Send out a "Call for Officials." Include any officials in the area who may be interested.
  - If necessary, send out a "Second Call for Officials." This one can be targeted at teams you know are entered.
  - If you didn't provide complete info in your "Calls", be sure to provide complete info to those who volunteered at least a couple days before the meet:
    - Specific times/locations for briefings
    - Rough timelines for sessions
    - Attire
    - Parking
    - Your contact info for late or no-show
- Develop a system for organizing your roster. It could be 4 people, or 50…

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Before the Meet

Be Informed

Know the rules.

Know the meet information.

Be in-sync with the Meet Director and Admin on how common protocols and situations will be handled (scratches, work-ins, no-shows, fines, deck access, weather, first aid, etc.).

Review the information that gets posted (timelines, psych sheets, heat sheets, warm-up guidelines, coaches packets, etc.).

At the Meet

Pre-Session Briefings

Tailor them to meet. For a simple closed meet where everyone knows the drill, 5 minutes might be too long. For a big event, you may have a lot of material to cover. Topics may include…

- Thank you!
- Introductions (the Admin? Trainees?)
- Logistics like parking, bathrooms, clerk location, pool names, specific event notes for certain distance or genders, switching ends for 50s, etc.
- Protocol choices: CJ roles, radio expectations, stand/sit, relief/breaks, handling no-shows or DFS
- Protocol reminders: step up, raise you hand, breaks off deck
- Jurisdiction
- Deck Ref instructions: flyover/chase, work-in?, closeout
- Assignments including relief/breaks, key rotation points, expectations for trainee participation (watch vs. help vs. take the lead)
- Closing reminders: Timer briefing assignments, “be on deck by…”

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At the Meet

Pre-Session Briefings

Time permitting, also a good time for…

- LSC/USA news
- Words from an 'honored guest'
- Reminder of upcoming meets
- Reminder of any new rule changes

Avoid lengthy discussion of any particular rule to avoid creating a "Call of the Day" on deck. Take those talks offline.

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At the Meet

Assignments

For longer sessions, look for ways to give deck officials some 'change of scenery'.

- Assigned relief – best practice at championship meets
- Rotating positions…but don't overdo it. Suggest only one change of position for stroke/turn per session, and ideally during a lull, like a relay break or a freestyle event.

Look to assign extra staff where your pressure points are.

- Assigned OOF during 50s
- Extra CJ help during high workload events

Avoid always assigning your most experienced officials to the same senior roles. Give them the opportunity to mentor new officials at a variety of positions.

**Assignments and briefings are often conflicting duties that are happening at the same time. Don't hesitate to delegate assignments to another trusted official.

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At the Meet

Assignments - Trainees

Try to accommodate training requests where possible, as long as you aren't jeopardizing the smooth operation of the meet.

Give Stroke & Turn trainees options for different mentors and positions.

If you are worried about an inexperienced official at an assigned position, consider…

- Pairing the 'rookie' with a 'pro'
- Keeping the assignment relatively short (just an event or two)
- Easing them in…CJ rotates to DR, or OOF rotates to Starter

Make sure the trainees get feedback and get an opportunity to ask questions from the people they work with or from you. Be realistic about feedback. If trainees aren't ready to advance, let them know what areas to work on in the future.

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At the Meet

Coaches Meeting

Tailor this to the meet. There may be nothing to say, especially at a closed meet. If so, skip the meeting.

If there is a meeting, coordinate a convenient time with the Meet Director, if a time isn't already published.

Possible topics:

- Scratch/check-in/no-show policy reminders
- Events with unusual order/seeding/location (e.g. "the boys 500 will be in the diving well")
- Missed event expectations, particularly if there are no work-ins
- Any athletes requesting accommodations for disabilities ?

If you have information for the coaches, be concise. They will be understandably eager to get back to their teams.

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At the Meet

Meet Management

The Meet Referee is responsible for overseeing the competition (102.11).

At a small meet, the Meet Referee may not be much more than the Deck Referee whose name is on the sanction.

At a larger meet, delegate the officiating (Deck Ref, Starter, Judges) to your team of officials to free yourself up to work issues that arise with athletes, coaches, parents, facilities, safety, weather, etc.

If the workload on deck or in Admin warrants direct help from the Meet Referee, look for options to support the Admins, Deck Referees or CJs assigned…rather than assuming the Deck Referee position directly. That allows you to more easily transition out of 'helping' if an issue that requires the Meet Referee's attention arises.

At the Meet

Disqualifications

Unless you’re also the Deck Referee, your team will handle the DQs.

If you see/hear a call doesn’t make sense or might be likely to get attention (unusual call, call during a competitive finals event), you can be proactive about getting a summary from your Deck Referee, but only intervene when asked or when necessary to assure fair competition or smooth operations.

Let the Judges and Deck Referees do their jobs, and don’t overturn a call without justification. Be mindful of precedents you set.

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At the Meet

Take an Interest

Take time during the meet to check in with not only the deck officials and Admin, but also the Meet Director and the Coaches on deck. Communicate regularly and sincerely.

- You may learn of something that needs attention
- You will build rapport that may come in handy when issues arise later
- Never treat staff, coaches, parents, etc. like the enemy. More often than not, those people will be the solution to your problem.

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At the Meet

When Issues Arise

Be Consistent – across officials, across teams, across athletes, across sessions

Be Fair and Give Benefit of Doubt to the Swimmer – look for opportunities within the rules to allow the athletes to compete

Be Thoughtful – Don't jump to answer when problems arise. LISTEN to those raising the issue. Take the time to talk with your team. Respond after you've considered the options.

Be Professional – Stay calm. Stay approachable. Don't escalate an already emotional situation. If a conversation gets 'heated', take it off deck if possible.

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After the Meet

End of Competition

- Thank your staff.
- Save any documentation you need: rosters, assignments, timelines.
- Offer any relevant documentation of the competition you have to the Meet Director.
- Confirm that the job is done with Admin and Meet Director, and offer any help you can with ‘closing up shop’.
- Be open to feedback for next time.

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After the Meet

Meet Referee Documentation

- Add all officials' sessions and any Activities/Clinics in OTS
  - For a large meet, this can be delegated with OTS Admin feature
- Send a thank you message to the officials
- Send the required report to South Texas (Officials Chair, SWIMS User…and best practice to copy the Admin and Meet Director)

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The Calendar

…depends on the meet. A typical age group meet might look like…

Before the meet

- Meet Info, Sanction: 3 weeks to 3 months before
- Call for Officials: 1-2 weeks before
- Info to Officials: 2-5 days before

The Meet!

After the meet

- OTS, Thank You Email, and Meet Ref Report: 1-2 days after

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