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USA Swimming and Minnesota Swimming **Deck Referee Clinic**



The Deck Referee – Clinic Overview

- The Team
- The Procedures
- Handling the DQ
- Working with Coaches
- The Rules, etc.
- Official's Briefing
- Scenarios
- Additional Resources
- Questions?



Lead By Example

- Your behavior sets the deck culture.
- Embody respect, honesty, fairness, integrity, sense of duty and sportsmanship.
- Know the technical & administrative (parts 1 and 2) rules.
- Maintain a deck presence.
- Use effective management skills.
- Maintain positive relationships with coaches, officials, and other meet volunteers.



The Team

- The deck referee is responsible for creating a fair competition environment.
- To accomplish that, the deck is staffed with a number of volunteers with different jobs.
- Delegate tasks to others and empower them to excel!
 - Understand the task of all officials and volunteers on deck, but do not complete them for them.



Deck Officials

- Each official plays an equally important role on deck.
 - **Stroke & Turn** – Observes the swim.
 - **Chief Judges** – Ensures calls are appropriate, manages the deck.
 - **Starter** – Ensures a fair start.
 - **Admin** – Ensures times are accurate.
 - **Deck Referee** – Keeps pace of meet, accepts or overturns calls from stroke and turn officials
 - **Meet Referee** – “CEO” – Establishes guidelines regarding protocols/procedures for a meet that the deck referees, starters and judges should follow.

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Prior to the Session



Pre-Meet Preparation

- Prepare for the meet.
 - Check in with your Meet Referee prior to the meet for their expectations on protocols.
 - If also serving as Meet Referee - other details on Meet Referee expectations are covered in the Meet Referee 101 clinic.
- Read the rule book regularly.
 - Goal: you will know if there is a rule that applies to any situation that arises and you will know where to find it.
- Be ready to do your job prior to the start of the event.



Meet Protocols

- Coordinate with the Meet Referee and other Deck Referees for consistency.
 - How are heats to be run?
 - Whistle protocol
 - Fly-overs?
 - Clear pool?
 - Protocol for disqualifications?
 - Will radios and chief judges be used?
 - Who will write DQ slips?
 - How will swimmers/coaches be notified of DQs?
 - Is there a protocol for declared false starts (distance events and prelim/final meets)?
 - Protocol for closing events?
 - How will the Administrative Officials/Referees be notified that an event is 'closed' (all heats completed, all disqualifications vetted)?
 - Results and awards can be prepared once event is closed.
 - Any precedents that may have been set in prior sessions.
 - Any unusual venue characteristics that need to be managed.



Officials Briefing

- Setting the deck
 - Balancing with apprentice officials
- Stroke briefing
- Protocols
- Protocols for DQs during the meet
- Timeline including any planned breaks

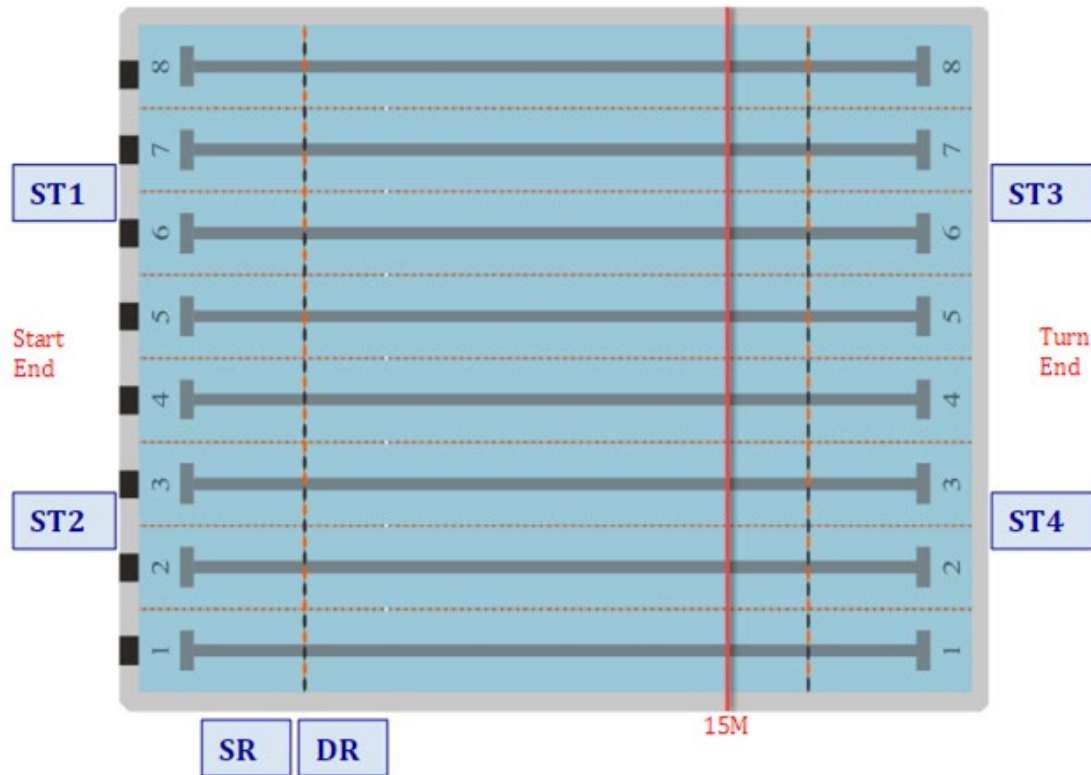


Setting the Deck

- Strive for consistency between venues and meets!
- Consistent expectations are appreciated by stroke and turn officials and by coaches and athletes.
- Deck layouts may vary based on facility restrictions or available personnel.
- Per USA Swimming rules, at meets larger than dual meets, *“Officials other than the Referee and Administrative Official may act in more than one officiating capacity only when sufficient qualified officials are not available.”*
 - This means the Deck Referee may not simultaneously serve as a stroke and turn official.
 - The Referee is the final decision maker on calls and can not overturn their own call - avoid serving as a stroke and turn judge as a Deck Referee



Setting the Deck - SCY

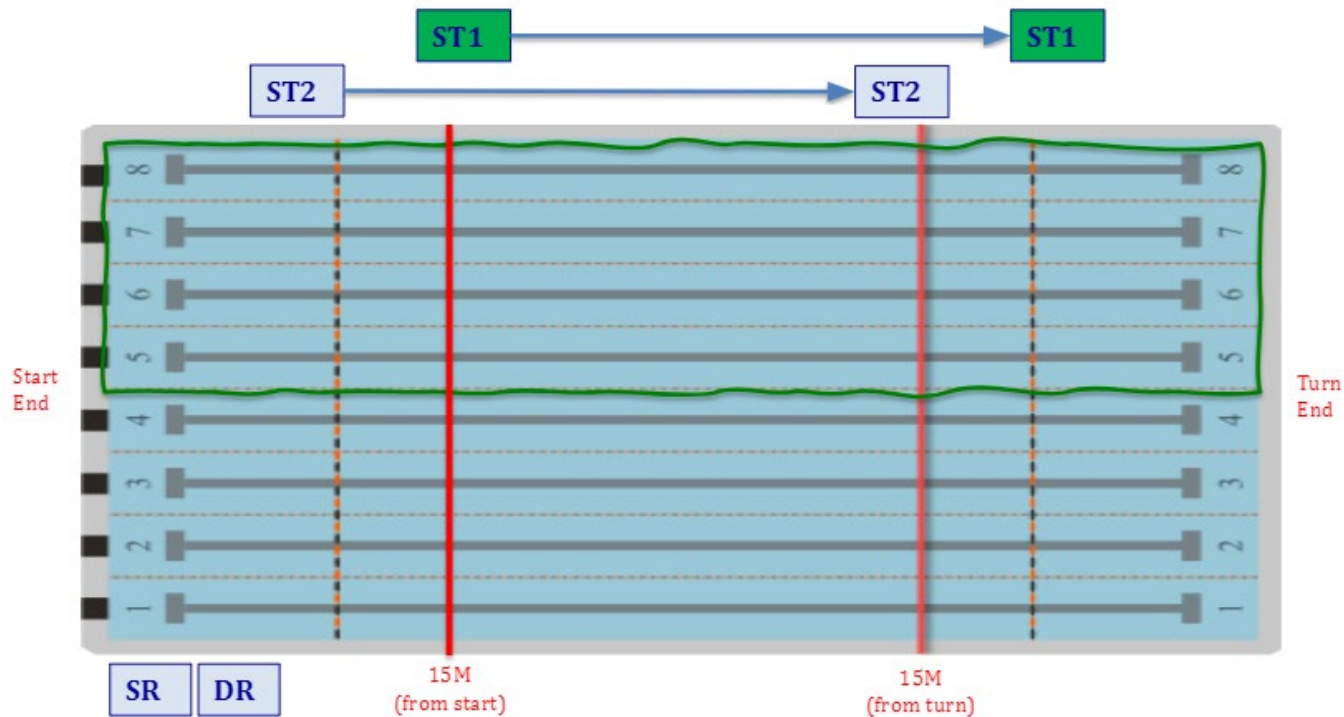


- **Short Course:**

- First priority is two stroke and turn judges on each end, each observing a quarter of the pool.
- Additional stroke and turn judges may be added or stroke judges may be added depending on the facility.
- If stroke judges are available, turn judges are responsible only for observing turns.



Setting the Deck - LCM



- **Long Course:**
 - First priority is two stroke and turn judges walking 'lead-lag' on each side of the pool with wall to wall jurisdiction.
 - Turn judges may be added.
 - If turn judges are available, stroke judges should continue with wall-to-wall jurisdiction.



Stroke Briefing & Protocols

- Stroke Briefing
 - Meant to be brief refresher of the rules of each stroke in that meet/session
 - [USA Swimming Stroke Briefing](#)
 - Other briefings
- Protocol
 - Jurisdiction
 - Relief and deck ref/starter rotations



Meet Referee vs. Deck Referee

Meet Referee	Deck Referee
Last level of protest for coaches	Conducts pre-session briefing
Approves meet timeline	Setting/balancing deck and shadows
Conducts coaches meeting	Blows whistle/advances the meet
Enters sessions worked for all officials into Officials Tracking System (OTS)	First person coaches talk to about DQ
	Processes disqualifications during the session – asking questions if needed.

- At many meets in Minnesota, the meet referee is also the deck referee.
- Meet referees must have ample experience as a Deck Referee and Admin Official and experience on a variety of decks before being approved as a meet referee.



Certification Requirements Referee

- **Referee** – currently one certification per USA Swimming certification standards.
- Must be certified Stroke and Turn Official, Starter, Admin Official before beginning Referee certification.
- A minimum of 4 apprentice sessions (demonstrate proficiency in all skills) and certification course.



Procedure for Volunteering as Meet Referee



Recommendations for Minnesota Swimming Meet Referees

Updated February 2024

The Meet Referee position is not a certified position under USA Swimming's standards for certifications of officials. However, Minnesota Swimming sanctions a variety of levels of meets, which require different levels of knowledge and experience in the Meet Referee role, who is the leader of the officiating team and the individual responsible for ensuring USA Swimming rules are followed at the meet. The following document is intended as a guide for clubs and officials to help determine readiness to serve as Meet Referee at a specific level of meet and to ensure that Meet Referees are successful in fulfilling their duties. Meet Referees for all levels of meets should have a demonstrated ability to remain calm and to apply the rules fairly without favor to individuals and teams.

Intrasquad Meets, Dual Meets, Development Meets (as defined under 205.11)

Certification as a Referee is sufficient to volunteer as the Meet Referee for intrasquad meets, dual meets, and development meets.

Timed Final Meets of More Than Two Teams

Certification as a Referee, and experience as a Referee after certification, to include:

- 2 complete meets (of 2 or more sessions, with more than two teams) after Referee certification in which the official is mentored in the Meet Referee role (could be concurrently serving in another assigned position, for example, Deck Referee). Should be with two different Meet Referees at meets hosted by two different teams.
- At least 4 sessions at LSC championship meets (MAC, MRC, State Meet) or prelim/final meets as a Deck Referee.

Experience as an Administrative Official at timed final meets with more than two teams.

Prelim/Final Meets and LSC Championships Meets (MAC, MRC, State Meets)

Certification as a Referee, and experience as a Referee after certification, to include:

- Prior completion of recommendations for Meet Referees for timed final meets of more than two teams.
- Substantial experience as a Deck Referee (> 25 sessions) at many levels of meets.
- Substantial experience as a Meet Referee (> 4 Timed Final meets with two or more teams).
- 1 complete prelim/final and 1 complete LSC championship meet as an assigned official (Deck Referee, Administrative Official, Chief Judge, or Starter) OR 2 complete prelim/final meets as an assigned official.
- Substantial participation in prelim/final or LSC championship meets hosted by multiple different teams.

Experience as an Administrative Official and Chief Judge at prelim/final and/or LSC championship meets.

Definitions of Meet Levels

- **Intrasquad meets** are meets in which one team is competing.
- **Dual meets** are meet in which two teams are competing.
- **Development meets** are defined in 205.11 of the USA Swimming rulebook.
- **Timed final meets** of more than two teams are in-season meets of more than 2 sessions with two or more teams.
- **Prelim/final meets** are meets which preliminaries are conducted, with swimmers qualifying for finals in a separate session.
- **LSC championship meets** include the Minnesota Regional Championships, Minnesota Achievement Championships, and State Meets (Age Group State, Senior State, Single Age State, etc.).

Please note: The following are recommendations. Minnesota Swimming clubs are encouraged to assign Meet Referees who met the following characteristics. If a club assigns a Referee not meeting these recommendations, the Officials Chair or designee reserves the right to establish an action plan with the host club/Referee to ensure the Referee and the meet are successful.

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During the Session



Timeline Management

- It is the role of the Deck Referee to keep the session running according to the published timeline.
- Try not to start an event prior to the published start time.
 - Athletes are planning arrival and warm-ups around the published start times.
- Meet Referee may implement additional timeline management protocols - if in doubt, check their preferences.
- Any heat interval less than 30 seconds requires approval of the MNSI General Chair, Administrative Vice Chair, or Officials' Chair (permission should be obtained by the host club or Meet Referee).



Working With Your Starter

- Work as a team with your starter!
 - Relative positions on the deck
 - Protocol for false starts
 - 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



Whistle Protocol

- **Short whistles** – Advise next heat that their heat is coming up shortly.
- **Long whistle** – Signal to swimmers to step on the block or step into the water.
- **Backstroke only** – Blow the second long whistle to call the swimmers to the end of the pool.
 - Once all swimmers are in the water and all of their heads have come up above the water.

NOTE: It is recommended that Deck Referees wear a physical whistle on deck (even if using an electronic whistle) - this helps to easily identify to coaches who the Deck Referee is. Conversely, do not wear a whistle when not serving as the Deck Referee.



The Start

- Allow the starter to pick his or her best spot and then position yourself appropriately.
 - Can they see all lanes clearly?
 - Do not block the starter's field of vision.
 - Make sure the starter can see your outstretched arm in their peripheral vision.



Extending Your Arm

- Extending your arm turns the heat over to the starter.
 - Extend your arm inconspicuously, and not pompously.
 - Do not hold clipboard or electronic whistle in outstretched arm. This is distracting to the starter.
- Be prompt in turning the heat over to the starter.
 - **Forward starts:** Extend arm when all swimmers are safely on the blocks and getting themselves ready.
 - **Backstroke starts:** Extend arm when swimmers in the water are in front of the end of the pool and getting themselves in position.



False Start Protocol

- Be sure to watch the swimmers come to the surface.
- Write and circle lane number on your heat sheet next to the heat.
 - The lane number(s) of those you saw have a starting motion prior to the start of the race.
- The starter should approach the referee if he or she has a possible false start.
 - “I have an observation.”
 - If both programs have the same circled number, the false start is confirmed and the swimmer should be disqualified.
 - The starter should complete the DQ slip.



During the Race

- Your primary focus should be on the race!
- Position yourself just outside the flags.
- Scan the pool for potential infractions and raised hands.
 - Only make a DQ call as the referee if a missed call is obvious or if a stroke and turn official is out of position.
- Avoid conversations with the meet personnel that take your focus away from the pool.
- Keep your clipboard at your side when not writing - this helps you to keep your focus on the pool
- Keep administrative personnel informed of DQs, no shows, lane/heat changes, etc.

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Handling Disqualifications



General Reminders

- Referees are bound by the rules
- Always remain calm and, remember, the benefit of the doubt ALWAYS goes to the swimmer.
- No good deed goes unpunished!



Vetting a Call

- The “call”
 - The three questions:
 - What was the stroke and turn 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.
 - Call should be described verbally without hand motions.
 - If the description is not clear, ask the CJ or stroke and turn judge to repeat the call
 - Do not lead the CJ or stroke and turn judge.



Recording DQs

- When you receive a DQ slip, record the infraction in the deck referee heat sheet, and confirm that the slip is correctly filled out.
 - Have incorrectly written slips rewritten.
 - Make sure that the swimmer's name, heat, and lane on the slip matches the name in your program.
- Make sure the DQ passes the “smell test”
- Bring the slip to the admin table.
- Inform the swimmer or coach of the disqualification.



Making a Call Alone

- 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.



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Working with Coaches



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
- Consistency is KEY!
- Customer Service – Cordial and Calm!



Working With Coaches

- If a coach comes to you with an issue, listen – DON'T try to provide an answer prematurely
- Be Calm – Do NOT become defensive
- Listen – As for time to look into the situation, finish dealing with current issue – this gives you time to think and talk to other team members.
- Understand what the issue is about and then investigate



Working With Coaches

- Use your team, use your resources. – Ask for advice from other officials or even other coaches as needed. Defer to Meet Referee if appropriate.
- 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 s/he gets the “big bucks”



Additional Resources

- **USA Swimming Website:** www.usaswimming.org
 - Officials Tab – Training, Documents, Applications
 - Test & Rule Book (Deck Referee Test)
 - National Certification and Evaluation Tab
 - The “Professional” Deck Referee Document
- **MN Swimming Website:** www.mnswim.org
 - List of upcoming meets (shadow opportunities)
 - Always read your meet info before going to a meet, as some meets do not allow shadowing.



Next Steps

- **On-Deck Training**

- Link to the Deck Referee apprentice form [HERE](#) from MNSI website
- Track your 4 shadow sessions and progress to becoming an official!
- Recommend multiple meets working with multiple referees – Goal is to see and learn A LOT!

- **Online Testing**

- Once registered with USA Swimming, complete the online testing [HERE](#). When finished, send results to MNSI Officials Chair, Jack Swanson at mnswimofficialschair@gmail.com
- Test is good for 2 years – Re-certification test is required every 2 years.



Record Your Attendance

Please visit the following link to record your attendance at this clinic:

<https://forms.gle/iJKF2rMsHSnXbsJN9>

(This link is in the PDF posted on the MNSI website.)

-or-

Email: mnsitraining@gmail.com

QUESTIONS?

MNSI Officials Chair: Jack Swanson
mnswimofficialschair@gmail.com

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APPENDIX:

Moving forward – Items that you might encounter as you advance as a Deck Referee



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 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 – announcer can be very helpful with this.



SWIM-OFFS

- Include those “possible” – 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
 - 102.5.2 “This elimination may be held at any time set by the referee, but not more than 45 minutes after the last heat of any event in which any one of the swimmers is competing in that session.”
- There have been unusual resolutions to swim-offs (Let the coaches help decide – coin toss)



Meet committee/Jury

By Clark Hammond, USA Swimming Rules Chair 12/16/19

Rule 102.23 Protests

- Why appoint a jury?
 - 1) Protests made **prior to the race** contesting the eligibility of a swimmer to compete or to represent an organization.
 - 2) All other protest lodged at the meet (except judgment decisions or eligibility and representation protests occurring AFTER THE RACE). Includes protests related to facilities, the race course, results, score, points awarded, interpretation of the rules, etc.
- When should you appoint a Meet Jury
 - 1) Prior to the race
 - 2) Whenever the need arises.
- How many members on the jury?
 - 1) Either 3 or 5, but not 4. Don't want to end up with a tie.



Meet committee/Jury

- Who should be the members?
 - 1) At least 1 coach and 1 athlete. There is no requirement that you have an official and no restriction on having another athlete or coach.
 - 2) The only limitation is that members should not be from the team(s) involved in the situation
- How does a jury perform its duties? The Meet Referee should facilitate the process.
 - 1) Find a quiet spot, preferably off the deck
 - 2) Allow the protester to present their case.
 - 3) If there's an opposing view, allow them to present their side.
 - 4) If they need interpretation of the rules, ask the meet or deck referee for assistance.
 - 5) Deliberate
 - 6) Let all concerned know the Jury's decision and the effect it has on the situation.
 - 7) Ask the Jury to not discuss their deliberations publicly