

Training Referees

Some General Hints

- Always remember that refereeing is an art more than a science. You learned what you know, and probably not from the training clinic. They may have worked with referees who did things differently. Be patient and always explain the “why” when asking them to do something new.
- Help the trainee become comfortable in his/her new role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced.
- Ask your trainee about clinic and other on-deck training experiences. Review what training session this is. What were the positive takeaways from the last session? What were the development needs? What would they like to focus on? What do you as the trainer want to achieve?
- Review procedures and protocols given at the officials meeting, privately by the meet ref or in discussions with other members of the starter/ref team.
- Emphasize fairness and equality of treatment. Stress the importance of consistency and respect for the athletes and coaches. Remind your trainee to ***apply common sense and to keep a sense of humor.***
- Be patient! We learn by doing. Have a goal or two for each session and focus on that.

First Session

- The focus of this session should be deck refereeing events and working with the table.
- Have a pre-meet discussion of deck referee protocol. Review whistle starts, and how to pace them; how to handle false starts. Talk about the importance of having “pool sense,” with knowledge of everything going on in the pool, including officials in position, timers, activity behind the blocks, etc.
- Help them develop a routine surrounding each start: from the whistles to heads up, making sure they are focused at each step on the most important points and not distracted by things going on around them.
- Work with the table to determine the paper flow of DQ and no-show slips, timer lane sheets/cards, etc. Talk about the importance of having “pool sense,” with knowledge of everything going on in the pool, including officials in position, timers, activity behind the blocks, etc.

Second Session

- If possible, involve the trainee in pre-meet routines. Have them participate in the meeting, work with admin and have pre-session meetings with starters. Help them through this by asking questions and getting their thoughts.
- Further emphasis on the deck referee’s job and responsibility to each event.
- Add the element of timeline management. Discuss why the whistles are where they are, what we are effectuating with those choices. Talk about alternatives and situations where you would want a meet to run faster or slower, and the duty to stay near the timeline for the benefit of the swimmers.
- Discuss backup and support for referee team and how the referees, admin, starters and officials are one unit mutually supporting each other.

Third Session

- Add more pre-session responsibility. Have the trainee do assignments or the stroke briefing. Have them direct the starter/ref meeting to determine protocols, teams and event responsibility.
- Talk to them about being a good referee for your starter – letting your starter start, not trying to control the starts with the whistles or the hands-up, discussing starts only between sets and then only if needed.
- They should have a good grasp of the basics of deck refereeing by this session. Now is a good time to talk to them about the rules for sessions (4 hrs., etc). Try to get a feel for where they are going – does their club need a meet referee in 6 weeks or are they going to have good support to learn after the training is over? This can allow you to teach more to their needs – meet referee versus deck referee and the differences between.
- Have them sit with admin for a few events and have them assessed or do so yourself.

Fourth Session

- Work with the meet referee to have the trainee do more of the pre-session work such as assignments or the meeting or both.

- The trainee should be more comfortable working on the SR/DR team now and should be able to handle all the pre-session discussion with you only as a shadow.
- If there are challenges or protests, have the trainee shadow or participate with a shadow even if it is not their event. Discuss the importance of working with coaches and other officials and talk about types of challenges to calls and what can be done – when do you accept and when do you overturn?
- This is a good session to have a talk about the philosophies of refereeing – you are the ultimate enforcer of benefit of the doubt, and the types of things you can do to support the athletes. When are re-swims a good idea, etc.

Fifth Session

- With two more sessions, this is a good time to have the trainee shadow the meet referee and discuss the different responsibilities of that position. If your trainee intends to be a meet referee talk to them about the importance of being mentored in that job specifically. A meet referee's job starts weeks in advance of the meet.
- Discuss disabled swimming and the different types of accommodations for different disabilities. They should know the rules for starts and how to judge these swims but talk about the different things you have seen.
- Discuss working with the table and the MR on late adds and scratches and explain how penalty swims work.

Sixth Session

- The focus of this session should be to assess what your trainee needs practice with and emphasize those points.
- Observe them as a deck ref and make sure their mechanics are good (consistent length of whistles, crisp short whistles, consistent placement). Observe and correct any problems with working with the starter.
- Have them do as much of the pre-session work on their own as possible while you shadow.
- Discuss the rules as best you can during the session. Point out resources such as the interpretations from USA Swimming and the importance of keeping up with the rules.
- Offer to mentor or help mentor them through becoming effective meet referees.
- They are going to flying solo after this, be comfortable with passing them. Extra sessions are OK if you identify areas of need.
- Remind them refereeing is a process, and that they still must keep learning and growing in the position. None of us are finished products.

Completing a Training Card:

Please use the main portion of the card to give constructive advice for improvement. Praise what was done well and offer advice on what to try to focus on in future trainings. There is no expectation that newer trainees are completely proficient. At the bottom, circle **Y** or **N** for advancement. **N** means the training session will not be counted; **Y** means they are proficient enough for their relative level of training. **Only use N when a trainee does not show proper learning for their training status.**

After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. **BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!**