



The Chief Judge

@ LSC level

August 13, 2025

Hot August Nights

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ROLES OF A CHIEF JUDGE

- A PERSON OF MANY ROLES
 - THE GLUE THAT KEEPS THE DECK TOGETHER
 - EYES AND EARS FOR THE DECK REFEREE
 - PROVIDE A VETTING PROCESS AS A SWIMMERS FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE
 - A PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
 - A GOOD COMMUNICATOR
- THE ROLES CHANGE AND CAN SCALE AT EACH MEET

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USAS definition of a chief judge

102.13 JUDGES — Shall have jurisdiction over the swimmers immediately after the race has begun.

- .1 **Chief** — An overall "Chief Judge" may assign and supervise the activities of all stroke, turn, place and take-off judges and may report their decisions. If desired, any judging category may have a designated "Chief." Any "Chief" may act as liaison for the judges and may serve simultaneously in one of the judging positions and shall assign those judges within the "Chief's" category.

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Who
can/should
be a Chief
Judge

Any current stroke & turn official in good standing

Should be comfortable with the rules, positioning of officials, and flow of a swim meet at the current level

Should be reasonably experienced (e.g., been an official for a year)

Should have good rapport with the officials and starter/deck ref teams

Should be willing to jump in and assist the Referee with whatever needs to be done

Most importantly - MULTI-TASK

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Why should a “local” meet use Chief Judges

- Learning opportunity to become a good S&T and Deck Referee, observation and communication skills that have direct impact on many positions
- Places someone on deck and available to S&T judges to answer questions
- Takes pressure off S&T judges who are observing swims and writing DQ slips at the same time
- Offers an additional “line of defense” for the swimmer in making certain the call is correct
- Provides a temporary relief person

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Why should a “local” meet use Chief Judges (cont’d)

- Offers the Referee a “right hand person” – someone to whom the Referee can delegate responsibilities
 - Such as giving a stroke briefing, and protocol briefing while the Ref does assignments
- Might facilitate notification of swimmers of a disqualification
- Keeps paperwork flowing smoothly
- Can communicate to officials during the session
- Offers a great experience for an official looking to grow, especially if considering becoming a Referee

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The rewards of being a CJ

- You will learn every aspect of how a meet is conducted both the dry and wet side
- You have opportunity to learn more about the mechanics of running a meet
- You get to talk with and mentor other officials
- You don't stand in one spot for the entire session
- You get to keep your shoes dry!!
- You will feel rewarded by supporting athletes and officials.

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Review of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
ST	Stroke & Turn
SEJ	Start End Judge
TEJ	Turn End Judge
SJ	Stroke Judge
TLCJ	Team Lead Chief Judge
CJ	Chief Judge
DR	Deck Referee
SR	Starter
MR	Meet Referee
T-F	Timed Finals
P-F	Prelims and Finals
RTO	Relay Take Off
World Aquatics	
TO	Technical Officials
CIT	Chief Inspector of Turns

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Multi-layered building blocks

- Novice – CJ generally not used, but could be helpful for developmental meets
- B-Level time standard meets
 - No pre-planned use of CJs
- A-Level time standard meets
 - MR may appoint a TLCJ but may not have a dedicated team
- LSC Championships & OQM
 - Pre-planned use of CJs
 - Dedicated team
 - More elaborate responsibility and protocol

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Commonly Accepted Protocol vs LSC protocol

- Why do we push the Commonly Accepted Protocol?
 - National decks allow us the opportunity to see what works and what doesn't
 - Provides consistency throughout USAS
 - Provides the officials to beginning training at local meets
- Being consistent in our movements allows us to blend into the scenery, not become the star of the show
- Providing consistency for the swimmers

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The scalable roles/responsibilities of a chief judge

Pre -
meet/sessions

During the
sessions

Post
meet/sessions

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Before the meet/sessions

Meet Referee discussion

- Dr/Sr assignments
- Balanced deck
- Stroke and turn briefing
- protocols
- jurisdiction
- Discuss dq protocol
- Be familiar with the pool layout

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The roles/responsibilities of a chief judge

During the session

- positioning
- Observing officials
- relays
- Dq procedures
- Notifying coaches/swimmers
- Communication

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Positioning

- Position yourself near the starting area to be available for assisting the deck referee

Observing

- At the start, watch the start end officials
- After heads up, watch the stroke officials
- As the swimmers approach the turn end, watch both stroke and turn end officials
- Continue the process until the end of the race

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Relays

- Have RTO slips ready to hand out
- Stand with the outside judge. If their slip is good, then communicate your jurisdiction is “Lane X to X clear”
- If your side judge has an “X” then proceed to the lane judge for confirmation
- If confirmed, communicate to the DR. Submit RTO slips with DQ slip

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DQ procedures – no radios

- Approach the official and ask them to lower their hand
- First ask for the lane number
- Ask what part of the race did the observation take place (start, swim, turn, finish)
- Then ask what did they observe. Be sure there is no hand gestures during the discussion
- What is the infraction
- Restate what they described to you to confirm your understanding

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DQ procedures – no radios

- When restating, use the proper language per the dq slip
- Clarify with additional questions but do not “lead the witness”, what does the rule state?
- Make sure the call is within their jurisdiction
- Make sure the official is confident in their call and so are you.
Could the judge articulate clearly what was the infraction?
- Take notes on your heat sheet to provide additional information to the deck/meet referee in case of further discussions (develop your own shorthand)

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DQ procedures – no radios

- Approach the deck ref with your information and recommendation
- Upon approval, write up the DQ slip. Be 100% accurate when filling out the slip. Print the judge’s name and your initials and hand to the deck ref for signature. Make sure name/event/heat/lane are correctly stated.
- Provide the white copy to admin and if time permits, hand the yellow copy to the coach.
- If not accepted, and when possible, discuss with the official about the call

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DQ procedures – with radios

- When a hand goes up in your area of responsibility, announce *“possible disqualification”* (state the area of jurisdiction) such as *“stroke 1-4 or turn end 5-8”*
- When you approach the official, again ask which lane. Respond to the deck ref *“lane 3”*
- Continue with the same process previously stated.

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Dq procedures – with radios

- When you have completed your investigation, then provide the deck ref a complete statement:
- *“event 4, heat 3, lane 3. during the turn, one hand touch. Recommend acceptance”*
- If you are unsure of the call, then instead of saying *“recommend acceptance”*, announce *“I would like further discussion”*
- If you feel there is not a dq, then announce *“I advise you not to accept the disqualification.”*

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Dq procedures – with radios

- When there is a dq during the individual medley or medley relay, announce the stroke in which the infraction occurred:
“event 3, heat 3, lane 4. during the breaststroke turn, one hand touch. Recommend acceptance.”
- During a relay, if you have a possible early take off, announce to the deck referee *“potential early take off lanes 1-4”*. Proceed to the other official for their slip
- If confirmed, then announce *“event 6, heat 2, lane 3, confirmed early take off swimmer number 4”*

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Notifying coaches/swimmers

- When notifying coaches, hand the slip to the coach and state the disqualification
- If the coach starts to ask questions, inform them any questions should be directed to the deck referee for further clarification
- If you are informing a swimmer, use their first name, you should say *“please inform your coach that you were disqualified for a one hand touch at the # turn, thank you”*
- If the swimmer asks a question, you can repeat your statement or tell them to talk with their coach. Do not attempt to explain!!

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Communication

- Keep radio exchanges to a minimum
- When communicating other than a call, state the name of the person you want to talk to, then announce your name. Then proceed with your statement/request
- Under no circumstances do you initiate radio talk after you hear the short whistles. Wait until heads up to either start or finish your communication
- If there is an object in the water, notify the deck ref. They will decide the course of action

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The roles/responsibilities of a chief judge

Post session

- paperwork
- equipment
- debrief
- Next session planning

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Post meet, session

Paperwork

- collect the heat sheets from the deck ref, starter and all cj's. Hand to the AR/AO for filing
- Ensure all timers sheets have been submitted to the AR/AO
- Attempt to distribute any undelivered yellow copy of DQ slips
- Offer assistance to the ar/ao to complete the session

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Post meet, session

Equipment

- collect any clipboards used by the deck ref and/or starter as well as from other cj's
- Collect any radios. Ensure they are turned off and put back on the charging station
- Move any counters or bells to the appropriate place
- If needed, turn off the starting system. Allow the meet director or staff to remove the system

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Post meet, session

Debrief

- Review the session with the meet Referee
- If more than one cj, talk with one another for suggestions on what went right, and what to do differently next time

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Post meet, session

Next session

- If you are working the next session, begin your pre meet planning
- Be sure to ask your deck officials if they are planning to attend as well
- Are there any changes you discussed that you want to implement next time

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Next steps: How to Best Prepare for this Surprise Role

- Knows the rules, always review the blue pages before the meet
- Read the meet announcement/information, review schedule of events ahead of arrival
- Carry a folder or binder of forms used at meets, current stroke briefing, radio etiquette, deck configurations
- Multiple pens/pencils and headset to fit the most common radios
- Offer to be CJ at the next session
- Read documents on the website about Professional Chief Judge.

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Quizzes

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Quiz #1

- During the meet, at the start of a heat before swimmers' heads are up, which judges should the CJ be observing
 - A. Turn end judges
 - B. Start end judges
 - C. Stroke judges

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Quiz 2

- If you are unsure of the call, then instead of saying *“recommend acceptance”*,
 - A. *announce “I would like further discussion”*
 - B. *Say nothing*
 - C. *Just walk away*

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Quiz 3

- If a coach starts to ask questions regarding a Disqualification of his/her swimmer, whom should they first direct the question to?
 - A. Meet Referee
 - B. Stroke & Turn judge
 - C. Deck referee on duty for that particular event

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Bonus question

- During a 400 M individual Medley, after the finish of the Breaststroke after the swimmer's feet left the wall, the swimmer was observed multiple kicking and stroke while he was on his back. Was it an infraction? if yes, What was the infraction and how would you write it on the DQ slip?

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Bonus question

DISQUALIFICATION REPORT

EVENT: _____ HEAT: _____ LANE: _____

SWIMMER: _____ TEAM: _____

BUTTERFLY START: _____ SWIM: _____ TURN: _____ FINISH: _____
 KICK: ALTERNATING (X) _____ BRGHT (X) _____ SCISSOR (X) _____
 ARMED: NON-SIMULTANEOUS (X) _____ UNDERWATER RECOVERY (X) _____
 TOUCH: ONE HANDED (X) _____ NOT SIMULTANEOUS (X) _____
 NON-SIMULTANEOUS (X) _____ NO TOUCH (X) _____
 NOT TOWARD THE BREAST OR WALL (X) _____
 HEAD DO NOT BREAK SURFACE BY 15m (X) _____ RE-SUBMERGED (X) _____
 OTHER (X) _____

BACKSTROKE START: _____ SWIM: _____ TURN: _____ FINISH: _____
 NO TOUCH AT TURN (X) _____
 PAIR VERTICAL AT TURN: _____ DELAY BEFORE TURN (X) _____
 MILDLY SHOCKED (X) _____
 THIS CHECK UP OF BUTTERFLY AFTER THE START (X) _____
 HEAD DO NOT BREAK SURFACE BY 15m (X) _____ RE-SUBMERGED (X) _____
 NOT BACK ON WALL (X) _____
 SHOULDERS FIRST VERTICAL TOWARD THE BREAST (X) _____
 OTHER (X) _____

BREASTSTROKE START: _____ SWIM: _____ TURN: _____ FINISH: _____
 KICK: ALTERNATING (X) _____ BUTTERFLY (X) _____ SCISSOR (X) _____
 ARMED: NOT PERMITTED (X) _____ NON-SIMULTANEOUS (X) _____
 ELBOWS RECOVERED OVER WATER (X) _____ NO TOUCH (X) _____
 TOUCH: ONE HANDED (X) _____ NOT SIMULTANEOUS (X) _____
 NON-SIMULTANEOUS (X) _____ NO TOUCH (X) _____
 NOT TOWARD THE BREAST OR WALL (X) _____ KICK BEFORE PAUL (X) _____
 CYCLE: DOUBLE PULL (X) _____ KICK BEFORE PAUL (X) _____
 HEAD DO NOT BREAK SURFACE BY 15m (X) _____
 OTHER (X) _____

FREESTYLE NO TOUCH AT TURN (X) _____
 HEAD DO NOT BREAK SURFACE BY 15m (X) _____ RE-SUBMERGED (X) _____

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY STROKE INFRACTIONS (X) _____ OUT OF SEQUENCE (X) _____
 FOURTH DISTANCE SWIM IN STYLE OR PREVIOUS STROKE (X) _____

ARTIST 100

RELAYS STROKE INFRACTIONS (X) _____ SWIMMER # _____
 EARLY TAKE OFF SWIMMER (X) _____ SWIMMER # _____ STROKE _____
 OTHER (X) _____

MISCELLANEOUS FALSE START (X) _____ DECLARED FALSE START (X) _____
 DO NOT FINISH (X) _____ DELAY OF START (X) _____
 OTHER (X) _____

JUDGE: _____ (print name clearly) C.J. _____ (initials)

REFEREE: _____ (print name clearly)

NOTIFIED: SWIMMER _____ COACH _____

IN (X) _____

DESK REFEREE

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Resources

- [USAS National certification program](https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/national-certification-evaluation)
<https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/national-certification-evaluation>
- [USAS Professional Chief Judge document](https://websitedevsa.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/officialsdocuments/national-certification-and-evaluation/evaluation-and-certification-requirements/certification-requirements-by-position/professional-chief-judge-n2-and-n3-1825.pdf)
<https://websitedevsa.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/officialsdocuments/national-certification-and-evaluation/evaluation-and-certification-requirements/certification-requirements-by-position/professional-chief-judge-n2-and-n3-1825.pdf>

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Questions?

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***Thank you for all
you do for our
athletes***

Thank you for attending!

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