



CHIEF TIMER

INTRODUCTION

The Chief Timer: (1) assigns official lane timers to their respective lanes; and, (2) is responsible for delivery, to the Time Recorder, of all official times as recorded by the Head Lane Timers, including the times of disqualified swimmers. The Chief Timer is responsible for instructing the timers properly before the meet starts about how to time a race, how to determine the official time, and when to reset their watches. The Chief Timer also designates a Head Lane Timer for each lane. It is suggested that timers with the least experience be assigned to outside lanes and always with at least one experienced timer. In the NVSL, you will have an Assistant Chief Timer to assist you. You and/or your assistant should be prepared to serve as an alternate timer for any lane.

The Chief Timer is the one, single individual who has direct control over the primary purpose for the swimmers' participation in the meet -- TIMES! Consequently, the Chief Timer is one official whose non-performance can irretrievably ruin an otherwise perfect swim. Chief Timers who are not on top of everything that happens on the lanes, constantly, do the swimmers a major disservice.

QUALIFICATIONS

Successful Chief Timers have adopted many different personal styles; however, all have the following qualifications:

- Experienced and knowledgeable in all timing and recording responsibilities.
- Familiar with all applicable rules.
- "People" oriented. He will be coordinating the efforts of, at least, 18 people.
- Understand the concept of being "in charge."
- Able to take responsibility seriously.

In addition, a good Chief Timer will be flexible. No two meets will be exactly alike, and the Chief Timer must adjust to the situation as well as the people.

DUTIES

Prior to Meet:

One of the keys to a successful meet is to be prepared ahead of time. A few minutes spent ahead of meet day will go a long way towards a more efficiently run meet.

- Line up timers in advance. (In the NVSL, each participating team is required to furnish a designated number of timers for each meet.) Several days before the meet, recruit sufficient Lane Timers to cover all lanes. For dual meets, your club will have to provide half [9] of the total timers [18] and the visiting team will have to provide the other half. If possible, try to get one or two extra timers (for reserve, to let folks have breaks?).
- Check watches and ensure all, including backups, are in operating condition prior to the meet. (All watches must be digital, reading to the hundredths.)
- Prepare Lane Timer materials and supplies, such as: clipboards, programs (when available), pencils (#2), and spare pencils.

Prior to First Event:

- Arrive well ahead of the scheduled meet time. Some timers want to check in early, and it is very helpful if the Chief Timer is already available. That also allows the Chief Timer time to check on the details that will make the meet go more smoothly. All timers, including Chief Timers, should wear official whites; it is an important recognition factor.

- About 30 minutes prior to the start of the meet, assign timers to specific lanes. Pair inexperienced timers with at least one experienced person. (For dual meets, you normally assign one timer from the home team and two visiting timers to the home team lanes, one visiting timer and two home team timers to the visitors lanes, if possible.)
- Appoint Head Lane Timers and (if Referee so indicates) Relay Take-off Judges for each lane. Experience is particularly helpful for the take-off judge duties. If someone is uncomfortable serving in either of these jobs, do not force them. If necessary, rotate someone else in from a different lane to do the job that has to be filled. Do emphasize to the Head Lane Timers that they have a "team" on the lane and you want folks to strive for consistent times.
- Meet with the Referee to determine when he will instruct the Relay Take-off Judges. When the Referee gives the instructions, be sure to attend, since timers will usually ask the Chief Timer any subsequent questions on procedures.
- Work out the "all clear" signal with the Referee (to be used after you have examined the time cards after a heat/ event). One procedure is to wave to the Referee with the cards in your hand to separate your wave from that of other people on the deck.
- Arrange for a "time check" with the Starter to eliminate any defective watches (or timers). (When using automatic timing equipment during All Star meets, the time check should include the buttons, to ensure system is set up properly and every lane is operational.)
- Try to have all Lane Timers in position, ready to go, 15 minutes before the scheduled start time.

Timer Instructions

No matter how experienced your timers are, it is always important to provide some short

instructions and to conduct a time check. Doing so will: focus the timers' mind on the swim meet, acquaint each timer with the workings of the specific watch he will use, and identify any bad watches. Some basic items to include in the instructions are:

- Start the watch with the strobe light (if electronic starting is used) or the flash/smoke of the starting pistol. (Obviously, if the strobe doesn't work, the timers will have to use the horn; however, this is undesirable and the Starter should be advised immediately when it happens.)
- Stop the watch when any part of the swimmer's body touches the end of the pool at the end of the race. Don't worry about whether the touch is legal or illegal! Timers need to be over the edge of the pool to see the entire surface of the wall before the touch.
- Raise a hand (with the watch in it, to distinguish between others who might raise their hand) if a watch fails or some other malfunction occurs (e.g., you missed the start). The Chief Timer will try to have someone fill in (or will give you a watch someone else started).
- Start watches for every event, even if there is no swimmer in your lane. This provides extra watches if someone in another lane misses the start.
- Step back from the edge of the pool before recording times. This allows timers in the adjoining lanes more space, and it allows swimmers in the next heat/event to get into position.
- Record the times for the lane in the same order each time as a means of identifying watches (or timers) that are not performing well.
- List the middle time of three as the "official" time. If two times are identical, however, **that** is the official time. If only two times are available, average the two. When doing so,

simply drop the thousandths; do **not** round up or down.

- Clear your watch for the next event when you receive that instruction from the Chief Timer OR when the Referee blows the whistle to indicate the course is clear for the next heat/event. *If there is a problem and you are not ready for the next start, get the Referee's attention to ensure the next race does not proceed. (Shout if you have to.)*
- Focus on **timing** only! Timers are NOT to be cheerleaders for any team or competitor.
- During relays, be sure that four different swimmers participate for each relay team. Often, this responsibility is assigned to the lane timer who is not either the Head Lane Timer or the Relay Take-off Judge.

During the Meet

Observe whether the timers are watching the strobe light or gun at the start, looking over the edge at the finish, reading the watches correctly, not clearing them prematurely, etc. Be sure that the Head Lane Timers are recording the times properly, listing the official times as instructed, and writing numbers clearly. If any are not performing efficiently, reinstruct them or replace them. It is difficult to replace volunteers, but mistakes will be unfair to the competitors as well as reflect on you.

Besides identifying timers who may not be doing a good job, note those lanes where the timers are working well together and the times are matching well. Then, let them know that they are doing a good job. A little praise and encouragement pay great benefits. An experienced Chief Timer should know after a short period (3 or 5 heats/events), the capabilities of each group of timers.

- Constantly check every lane for accuracy and the spread of times. You can use the split hand on your watch to check for accuracy by depressing it when the winner finishes and then stopping the main watch when the last swimmer in the heat finishes. All times recorded should be between your two times,

and the fastest and slowest should be almost identical with yours.

- After each race, collect the time cards for all lanes. Be sure that the Head Lane Timers are recording times correctly and properly determining official times. Remember that the thousandths are dropped with no rounding when two watch times are averaged.
- Signal the Referee that all time cards have been completed properly and that he can go on to the next heat/event.
- Instruct the Timers when to reset their watches.
- You may **not** substitute your time or an alternate's time for one of the Official Lane Timers unless there is a failure of a timer or a malfunction of his/her watch.
- Deliver all the official times, including those of disqualified swimmers, to the Time Recorder.

After the Meet:

Collect all watches and clipboards, and account for them. Note any damaged conditions and inform the Meet Manager or other responsible official of any inoperable watches.

CONCLUSION

The single, most important factor in functioning as a Chief Timer is to recognize that you are in charge of total lane timing and recording; you are not just a watch custodian/alternate timer. The swimmers are depending on you to ensure the Timers provide an accurate record of their performance.

To help you, the NVSL has prepared a briefing card with things that must be covered in the timers' briefing.