

A large, light gray watermark of the USA Swimming logo is centered in the background. It features a shield with a white star in the center, surrounded by red and white stripes. The words "USA" and "SWIMMING" are written across the shield in a stylized font.

USA Swimming
and Minnesota Swimming
Deck Referee Clinic

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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.



Non-Athlete Volunteers

- Other non-athlete volunteers play key roles in ensuring a successful meet.
 - **Meet Director** – Organizes the meet, oversees all non-official volunteers at the meet.
 - **Announcer** – Communicates with coaches and swimmers
 - Adding a break, combining heats, time trials



Prior to the Session



Pre-Meet Preparation

- Prepare for the meet.
 - Check in with your meet director and official team prior to the meet.
 - Remember the 4-hour rule for 12 & Unders – Must have session “planned” to be under 4 hours.
- 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.



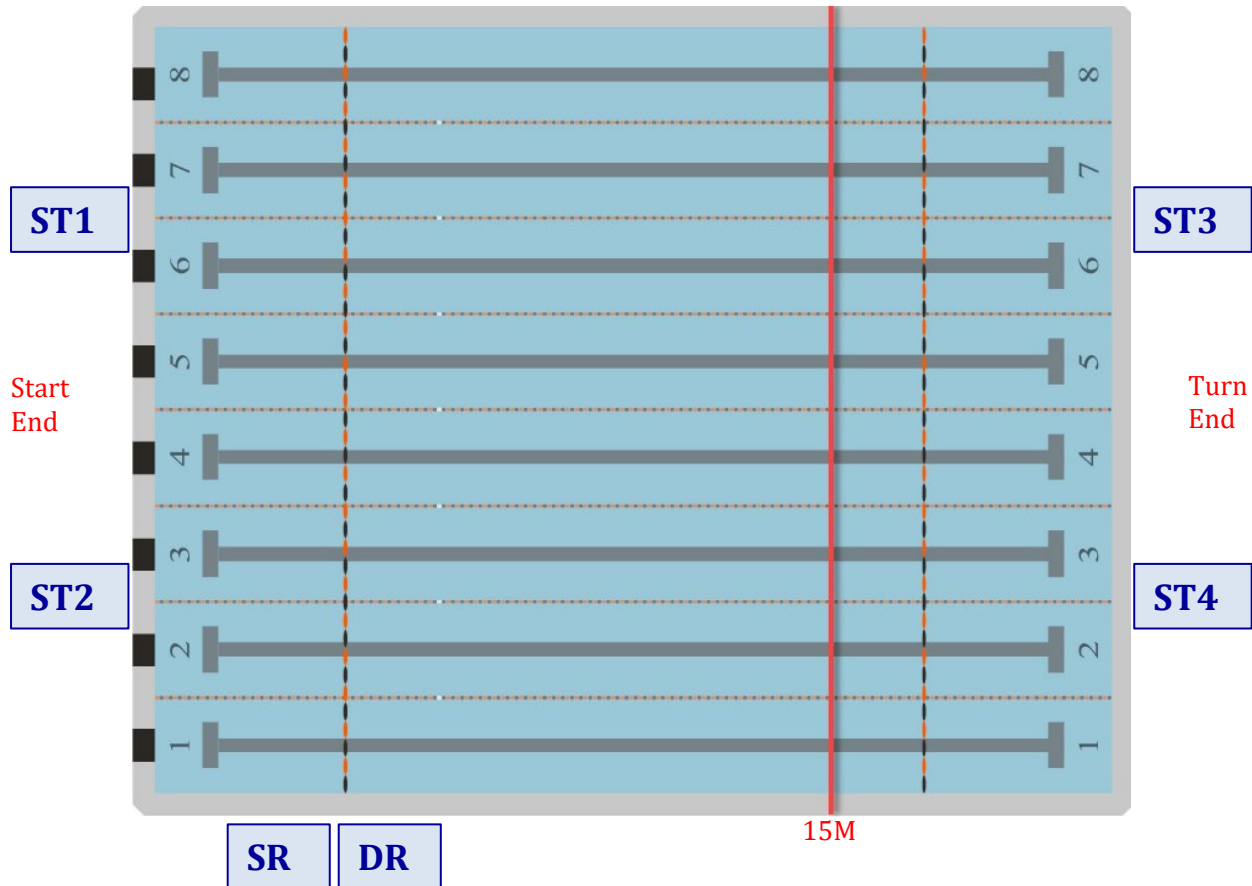
Officials Briefing

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



Setting the Deck

Assignments and Jurisdiction - Typical





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

Coaches Meeting

IS THERE ANYTHING UNIQUE TO THIS MEET?

- Introductions
 - Meet director
 - Facility staff
 - Meet referee & other assigned officials
 - Meet committee/jury
- Clerk of course (check-in locations and deadlines)
- Hospitality
- Heat staging procedures
- Awards/results
- MAAPP & COVID guidelines/procedures

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?
 - Any precedents that may have been set in prior sessions.
 - Any unusual venue characteristics that need to be managed.



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
Verify Final Meet Recon issues have been addressed.	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 (1 year) as a deck referee and experience on a variety of decks before being approved as a meet referee.



During the Session



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.



Extending Your Arm

- Extending your arm turns the heat over to the starter.
 - Extend your arm inconspicuously, and not pompously.
- 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.

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.

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 very 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 administrative personnel informed of DQs, no shows, lane/heat changes, etc.



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



Working With Other Officials

- Establish or follow no-show, declared false start, and scratch procedures for the meet with the admin official.
- Establish or follow procedures for DQs.
 - Who is writing the slip?
 - At most meets, stroke and turn judges write their own slips.
 - At some larger meets, chief judges write DQ slips.
 - Who tells the swimmer/coach?
 - At most meets, slips are distributed by runner or other meet volunteer
 - At some larger meets, the CJ may inform the swimmer immediately after their race.



Recommendations

- Avoid distractions if at all possible
 - When they happen, keep them short or delay them until after the race, if possible.
 - If feasible, ask another referee to step in for you
- Trust your team of officials
 - Let them do their job, don't try to do it for them.
- Keep track of your timeline
 - Swimmers set their preparation based on published timeline.
 - Avoid any unnecessary delays or getting too far ahead of schedule.
 - Event timeline should be followed, even if heat timeline is running ahead.

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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.

False Starts

- 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.

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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”



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Scenarios

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
 - Meet to apprentice at (Always read your meet info before going to a meet.)

Next Steps

- **On-Deck Training**
 - Link to the Deck Referee apprentice form [HERE](#) from MNSI website
 - Track your 8 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, log in to access the online testing [HERE](#) from the USA Swimming website.
 - Test is good for 2 years – Re-certification test is required every 2 years.

QUESTIONS?

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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