

The “Professional” Deck Referee - or - It’s more than blowing a whistle!

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The “Professional” Deck Referee should:

1. **Read** the “GUIDE TO OFFICIATING SWIMMING” on the USA Swimming website (the Referee chapter in particular!)
2. **Know the Rules** and the official interpretations published by the USA Swimming Rules Committee
3. **Coordinate with the Meet Referee and other Deck Referees to:**
 - establish how heats will be run – fly-overs, cleared pool, “chase starts”, etc.
 - establish “standard” whistle protocol for the meet and where the “on deck” referee will be located. Suggested protocol:
 - Short whistles - based on the meet pace established by the Meet Referee
 - Long “step up or in” whistle – when the swimmers are ready. (If possible, resolve any issues before the first long whistle.)
 - Second long whistle for backstroke – when the last head is up
 - Turn the heat over to the starter when all swimmers are accounted for; either on the blocks or in the lanes and there are no apparent issues behind the blocks. (This should be immediately after the last whistle in most heats). Ask the Starter to say “Relax please” or step the swimmers down if any issues can’t be promptly resolved. Remember the outstretched arm does not necessarily “close” the heat! USA Swimming rules do not specify when a heat is “closed”
 - Let the Starter decide when the swimmers are ready to start
 - manage the starting area – timers seated for starts, only starting swimmer in front of timers at the start, etc.
4. **Work with the Starters:**
 - on their preferred starting location, where you will stand and how you will turn the heat over to them
 - to decide how you will resolve common issues like “untidy” starting block areas (reduce the chaos to a minimum to set the tone for the meet)
 - on accommodation for disabled swimmers
 - on how you would like to be advised of swimmers with problems in the starting area, equipment issues, etc.
 - to verify “possible false start” procedure and protocol
5. **Work with the Chief Judges:**
 - to establish procedures to receive DQ, DFS and “No Show” slips for review and sign off
 - to establish swimmer notification procedures for all disqualifications
 - to be sure they (*and you*) understand the radio protocol
6. **Read and understand the information in the Meet Announcement**, including warm-up requirements
7. **Check with the Admin Ref** after your shift to see if any ties need to be resolved. Start working on them immediately (before scratch deadline). Consider ties for the last places in finals heats, for alternates and any others that could move into contention if there are one or more scratches from, or “no shows” in, finals. Take into account any restrictions on who can swim in finals. Find (page) the coaches involved and mediate the resolution. If a swim-off is needed, insist it be within the time required by the rules. If another method is suggested by the coaches (one defers to another, a coin toss or other method), record the result and convey it to the Administrative Referee. If scratches absolutely remove the need for resolution, inform the coaches.
8. **Keep the meet flowing**, but do not pressure starters to “pick up the pace”
9. **Try not to turn away from the pool** while a heat is in progress - avoid *any* “paperwork” until all heads are up after the start
10. **Record the start time of each event**
11. **At the end of each event, reconcile DQs, “no shows” and any adjustments with the Admin Referee or Admin Official** either with a quick discussion if the Administrator is nearby or, if the Meet Referee agrees, by radio if in a remote location. If anything “unusual” has occurred, follow up with the details to ensure accuracy
12. **Develop your own “mental check list”** of things to do before, during, and after your duty session. For example:
 - **Before the session:**
 - Check the Meet Announcement and heat sheet for any “red light” situations
 - ★ Have events been championship seeded when the meet is in Preliminary-Final format
 - ★ Transitions from slowest to fastest and fastest to slowest heats
 - ★ Breaks between events
 - ★ Deck seeded events; verify that the seeding has been distributed to the announcer, coaches, officials and timers
 - ★ Are deck seeded events followed by pre-seeded events! Do coaches, officials, and timers know?
 - ★ Any others you, or others, have experienced
 - **Before each event:**
 - Check for re-seeds. If any, are they on **colored paper**? Do the announcer, coaches, officials and timers have them? Have copies been posted conspicuously for swimmers?
 - Ensure the timing console is set to the correct distance whenever change is occurring
 - Is your Starter (and are you) ready and are CJs and Judges in place?

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- **Before each race:** (All of this should only take a second; two at most!)
 - scan the deck for officials in position and equipment problems (pads hanging, cables in lanes, people leaning on backstroke flag poles, etc.),
 - glance at the starter to see if issues have been observed
 - if finals, count the swimmers while parading or being announced
 - check if timing has been reset (ability to do this will depend on the system used and location of cues, if any)
- **After the start:**
 - glance to see if the timing system started (consider a recall if it didn’t)
 - watch for all heads up
 - move a few meters down the pool (never more than 1 or 2 meters past the backstroke flags!)
 - glance back at start end judges
 - note start time (if it is the first heat), empty lanes and false starts
 - watch swimmers and stroke judges
 - in distance races – check scoreboard (if visible) for missed touches and incorrect counters (use CJ to convey corrections)
 - check turn end judges
 - acknowledge and note any DQ’s and process them expeditiously
 - move back to start with incoming swimmers at the end of the heat
 - glance at Starter to see if there may be issues with the next heat
 - blow short whistles, etc.
- **After each event:**
 - check all DQs have been finalized (including swimmer or coach notifications)
 - reconcile DQs, DFSS, No Shows and adjustments with admin so the event can be “closed”
 - check with admin for potential “swim offs” and resolve positions for finals
 - take a well-earned break
 - return for “next up” duties, which may include assisting the duty Deck Referee
- **Add or insert any other items you can think of!**

13. If assigned to invigilate controlled warm-up:

- Coordinate with the assigned Starter to observe the pool and enforce compliance with warm-up rules
- Open pace lanes at the designated time and racing start lanes as requested (open additional racing start/sprint lanes if demand warrants). Coordinate with the Announcer and Marshalls
- With the Starter, check starting equipment and starting platforms
- Review deck set-up in general – Quietly notify Meet Referee of deficiencies or safety issues

Other Very Important Stuff:

- Considers “body language” when “on duty” and at all other times when accessible - always assume video coverage!
- Try to face the pool when standing anywhere near it, even when not on duty
- Be alert, attentive, focused, calm, professional, and approachable
- Always be “friendly” and helpful to coaches, swimmers, and other officials; even if they are not
- Try to take all discussions and emotional issues off-deck and away from front and center
- If issues need to be resolved or discussed with coaches, CJs or STs, consider turning the heats over to the “next up” Referee
- Similarly, be ready to step in when “next up”. Watch and listen so that you don’t need to be summoned!
- Maintain your sense of humor

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg!

Remember: Professional Deck Referees:

- can adapt to meet conditions and needs
- are willing to learn
- don’t read more into the rules than is written
- find ways (within the rules) to let swimmers compete, and don’t over interpret procedural rules
- appreciate swimmers, coaches, officials and volunteers of all levels and interact with them respectfully on all occasions
- are neatly uniformed, look confident, are competent, and are never imperious
- advise the Meet Referee and Deck Referees of any non-routine decisions made. If possible, involve them in those decisions
- do the Deck Referee job well and don’t overstep those responsibilities unless asked by the Meet Referee (this doesn’t mean that you can’t help out here and there)
- self evaluate after all shifts, sessions, and meets, and
- look forward to their next meet
- have, and generously apply, **COMMON SENSE**
- make sure the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer
- are willing to, and frequently, work as a **Stroke and Turn Judge**