

A Rules Primer / What is a DQ

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules. If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules that is observed by an official, a disqualification (DQ) will result. This means that the swimmer will not receive an official time and will not be eligible for an award in that event. A disqualification may result from actions such as not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, or unsportsmanlike conduct.

DQs are also a result of technical rules violations. They include but are not limited to:

Freestyle: Walking on the bottom, pulling on the lane rope, not touching the wall on a turn, or not completing the distance.

Backstroke: Pulling or kicking into the wall once a swimmer has turned passed the vertical onto the breast; turning onto the breast before touching the wall with the hand at the finish of the race.

Breaststroke: An illegal kick such as flutter (freestyle), dolphin (butterfly), or scissors (side stroke); not swimming on the breast; alternating movements of the arms; taking two arm strokes or two leg kicks while the head is under water; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

Butterfly: Alternating movements of the arms or legs; pushing the arms forward under instead of over the water surface (underwater recovery); a breaststroke style of kick; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

Pacific Swimming (and thus our team) complies with United States Swimming (USA-S) rules - the very same rules used at the Olympic Time Trials and the Olympics. To ensure fair competition for all swimmers, these rules are equally applied to **all** swimmers, *regardless of age or experience*. During competition, if a swimmer fails to comply with the technical rules, a Stroke & Turn Judge (dressed in white) will raise his/her hand, write up a disqualification (DQ) slip, and present it to the referee for approval. A swimmer is not disqualified until the referee accepts the report. Judges try to reach the swimmer to explain the reason he/she disqualified the swimmer, but this is not always possible.

Being disqualified is not the end of the world. Almost all swimmers have been DQ'd at some time. If your child is disqualified in an event, be supportive rather than critical. For beginning swimmers, a disqualification should be treated as a learning experience, not as a punishment or a failure. A disqualification alerts the swimmer and coach to what portions of the swimmer's stroke need to be corrected. They should be considered in the same light as an incorrect answer in schoolwork - they point out areas that need further practice.

Disqualifications are necessary to keep the competition fair and equitable for all competitors. A supportive attitude on the part of the official, coach, and parent can make a positive situation out of the disqualification.

What do all those officials do?

The USA Swimming Officials' Golden Rule: "***Fairness to all competitors, giving the benefit of the doubt, in every instance, to the swimmer.***"

An Official is a volunteer who has been trained and certified by Pacific Swimming and USA Swimming to work at a swim meet. Officials perform several different functions at a meet: Officials should always keep in mind that the swimmers have worked hard to achieve their successes and deserve a fair and equitable competition. Officials must apply the rules intelligently at all times, using common sense and good judgment. The rules of swimming are intended to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition. Officials must work hard to fully understand the rules and their responsibilities in applying them. **Stroke and Turn Judges** are the Officials who stand at the turn ends of the pool. As their name suggests, these Officials are responsible for making sure that the swimmers execute their turns, strokes and kicks according to USA Swimming rules. The Stroke Judge ensures that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed.

The **Stroke Judge** must clearly be in position to watch swimmers in the events who are submerged after the start or any turn to ensure that their heads surface before the 15-meter mark whereas the **Turn Judge** ensures that, when turning or finishing, the swimmer complies with the turning and finishing rules applicable to the stroke used.

Starters are responsible for making sure that each heat gets off to a fair start. This means that the Starter must try to make sure that all the swimmers in the heat have taken their marks and are motionless at the time of the starting signal. The Starter's most important responsibility is to judge whether a start has been fair to all competitors, i.e. whether all competitors have taken up a starting position and are stationary. If a start is not fair, the Starter must declare a false start.

The Starter is the person who says; "Take your mark."

Deck Referees are responsible for all of the Officials, for enforcing the rules, for making sure that the right heats are announced, and for maintaining the smooth operation of the meet while they are on duty.

The Deck Referee is the person with the clipboard who blows the whistle for the heats.

Each meet has a **Head Referee** who is responsible for the overall operation of the meet.

The Head Referee must be a leader whose natural inclination is to serve; an inclination that may lead one to accept this leadership role in the sport of swimming. The Referee's primary responsibility is ensuring the integrity of the sport and the profession of officiating. A referee must attend to many responsibilities during a swimming competition. The Referee's knowledge, honesty and fairness will create a climate for an equitable and rewarding competition. The Meet Referee is the ultimate authority in deciding conflicts and judging disputes.

There will also be a **Head Starter** who is responsible for the Starters, and a **Chief Judge** who is responsible for making sure that Stroke and Turn Judges are in their positions at the right time, checks all the DQ slips and investigates the circumstances of a disqualification call if a DQ is challenged by a coach.

There are also a host of officials that most people do not see, and probably do not know that they also there to make the meet run efficiently. The **Administrative Referee** works behind the scenes supervising the logistics of the meet, handling problems with time discrepancies, seeding difficulties and all the meet paperwork. The Admin ref is responsible for the Colorado timing equipment operator and the computer (HyTek or SAMMS) operators. The Admin Ref works very closely with the Clerk of Course, who is responsible for closing events and creating the scratch lists. At many larger meets there are also several Assistant Admin Refs or Coordinators. Again, at larger meets, there may be Time Verification officials who ensure qualifying times and proof of times for championship meets

It takes many volunteer officials to run a meet. Although a 8 lane CBA meet could be run with as few as 4 officials (Starter, Ref and 2 Stroke and Turn judges), in order to have a fair and efficient meet it really takes at least 10 and preferably 12 officials to work the deck. At meets like Junior Olympics and Far Westerns there may be as many as 40~50 officials working in all the different capacities.