

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

The “Professional” Deck Referee should:

- **Know the Rules** and the official interpretations published by the USA Swimming Rules Committee
- **Be on time for each session and officials’ briefing, dressed appropriately in a professional manner.** Be aware that you may be asked to answer questions about rules.
- **Be flexible and adaptable to all procedures made by the Meet Referee or Head Starter that may differ from the suggested guidelines offered in this document**
- **Confirm assignments, rotations, and invigilating schedule with the Head Starter**
- **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 and racing start lanes at the designated time in accordance with posted warm up procedures (open additional racing start/sprint lanes if demand warrants). Coordinate with the Announcer and Marshalls
 - Assist the Starter in checking starting equipment and starting platforms
 - Review deck set-up in general – quietly notify Meet Referee of deficiencies or safety issues
- **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 –
 - With ledges – when last swimmer has returned to the wall
 - Without ledges – when last swimmer surfaces
 - 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 for 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 current heat swimmer in front of timers, etc.
- **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
- **Work with the Chief Judges:**
 - To establish procedures for DQ, DFS and “No Show”
 - To establish swimmer notification procedures for all disqualifications
 - To be sure they understand the radio protocol
- **Read and understand the information in the Meet Announcement,** including warm-up requirements
- **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

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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.

- **Keep the meet flowing**, but do not pressure starters to “pick up the pace”
- **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
- **Record the start time of each event**
- **At the end of each event, reconcile DQs, “no shows” and any adjustments with Admin or Admin Official** according to the methods defined by the MR - either in person with nearby AR, or by radio if AR is in a remote location.
- **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:
 - Championship seeding when the meet is in Preliminary-Final format
 - Transitions from slowest to fastest and fastest to slowest heats, including alternating gender
 - Breaks between events
 - Check sequence of deck seeded vs pre-seeded events in the session
 - Deck seeded events; verify that the seeding has been distributed
 - 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
 - **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 DQs 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 that all DQs have been finalized (including swimmer or coach notifications)

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- 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 current Deck Referee
- **Important things to consider:**
 - Be neatly uniformed and project confidence
 - 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
 - Try to take all discussions and emotional issues off-deck and away from front and center
 - If issues need to be resolved or discussed, 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
- **Remember, the Professional Deck Referee:**
 - can adapt to meet conditions and needs
 - is willing to learn
 - doesn’t read more into the rules than is written, and generously applies common sense
 - makes sure the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer
 - finds ways (within the rules) to let swimmers compete, and doesn’t over interpret procedural rules
 - appreciates swimmers, coaches, officials and volunteers of all levels and interacts with them respectfully on all occasions
 - is neatly uniformed, looks confident, is competent
 - advises the Meet Referee and Deck Referees of any non-routine decisions made. If possible, involves them in those decisions
 - does the Deck Referee job well and doesn’t overstep those responsibilities unless asked by the Meet Referee
 - self-evaluates after all shifts, sessions, and meets

Please refer to the Certification Requirements for Deck Referee for information on N2 and N3 evaluations, certification, and recertification.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/national-certification-evaluation>