

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

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The “Professional” Deck Referee should:

1. **Know the Rules** and the official interpretations published by the USA Swimming Rules Committee
2. **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.
3. **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
4. **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
5. **Read and understand the information in the Meet Announcement**, including warm-up requirements
6. **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.
7. **Keep the meet flowing**, but do not pressure starters to “pick up the pace”
8. **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
9. **Record the start time of each event**
10. **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
11. **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?
 - **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.),

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- 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!**

12. 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**

Checklist for Deck Referee Advancement Evaluation

(Refer to the N2 and N3 National Evaluation & Certification Requirements¹) Attachment A

N2 Deck Referee – Prerequisites² for requesting an Evaluation:

- LSC-certified Deck Referee for at least 16 sessions
- certified as N2 Stroke & Turn Judge
- Can work at least 4 sessions at the OQM, with at least 3 evaluation sessions as a Deck Referee

N2 Deck Referee - Performance Requirements for an Advancing Evaluation

- Has read the Meet Announcement, absorbed Instructions from the Meet Referee and applies them
- Know the stroke, turn, starting and relay exchange rules and their interpretations
- Understands basic protocols and procedures for running events in meets; keeps to the “timeline” and meet rhythm and tempo required by the Meet Referee
- Works with other Deck Referees, Starters, Chief Judges and Stroke and Turn Judges as a “team player” during warm-up (invigilating), pre- meet and session meetings and during the meet. Arrives at all meetings on time
- Uses recommended radio protocol when conversing with CJs, ARs and the Meet Referee
- Handles DQs and the related “paperwork” promptly and appropriately
- Recognizes and records “false starts”
- Promptly closes out each event and resolves any ties for positions in finals in accordance with the rules
- Remains ready to assist other Deck Referees when necessary
- Understands the meet is for the swimmers
- Is neatly and correctly uniformed and has a calm, confident, polite and professional demeanor

N3 initial Deck Referee Evaluation (this is not a certification level) – Prerequisites² for requesting an evaluation:

- N2 Deck Referee certification and N3 Stroke & Turn certification
- Active as an official in the LSC at all levels of meets
- At least 8 sessions as a Deck Referee, recorded in OTS, since N2 certification

N3 initial Deck Referee Evaluation - Performance Requirements for a recommendation to proceed to an N3 final Evaluation

- Applies the requirements expected of the N2 Referee without reminders
- Knows and understands the Deck positions, functions and protocols used at National Championship meets
- Works very comfortably with the rest of the deck team and doesn't unnecessarily interfere in their duties
- Understands the needs of swimmers before, during and after the swim, and accommodates them within the rules and requirements established by the Meet Referee
- Understands the role and needs of the Administrative Referee, the timing system operator and the Announcer
- Controls the tempo and rhythm of the event in accordance with the Meet Referee's instructions
- Understands the different protocols used at high level meets – Replay Referee, FINA protocols, etc.
- Appropriately applies safety related procedures – invigilating, attention to the pool and general vigilance
- Comfortably uses the recommended radio protocol
- Looks and acts like a very experienced Deck Referee

N3 final Deck Referee Evaluation – Prerequisites² for requesting an evaluation:

- Worked at least 8 sessions as a Deck Referee, recorded in OTS, after receiving a “recommendation” N3 initial Deck Referee evaluation

N3 final Deck Referee Evaluation - Performance Requirements for Certification

- Very comfortably applies all of the requirements expected for N2 and N3 initial evaluations
- Fully understands and demonstrates the role of the Deck Referee at National Championships
- Regularly works lower level and LSC meets in all deck roles and helps develop and mentor officials at all levels

¹ There are other requirements that need to be met before an application for National Certification can be submitted and approved.

² Do not ask to be evaluated before the prerequisites have been satisfied.