



Chief Judge's Manual

Chief Judges are an essential ingredient of Potomac Valley swim meets. The Chief Judge is an assistant to the Referee. He/she is one of the keys to the smooth running of a swim meet. The Chief Judge is responsible to the Meet Referee and the Deck Referee(s). He/she is the stroke and turn judges' coach and mentor

At non-championship Potomac Valley meets, the Chief Judge's role is more informal than it is at a championship meet. At any type of meet, the Chief Judge should discuss his/her responsibilities with the referee prior to the start of warm-up. This manual describes the general procedures and functions of the Chief Judge, focusing on typical PVS meets

It is assumed that the Chief Judge has a solid knowledge and understanding of the current technical rules of USA Swimming and the procedures used in Potomac Valley Swimming. The Chief Judge should also be familiar with the information contained in the meet announcement.

Pre-Meet

The Chief Judge arrives early and consults with the Meet Referee to coordinate all duties the Chief Judge will be expected to perform. He/she takes this opportunity to verify the terminology the Meet Referee expects during the meet; verify the jurisdiction and protocol the referees expect from the officials, how declared false starts and no shows will be handled, as well as the radio protocol expected.

Typically, the Chief Judge is responsible for the officials' sign-in-sheets, introductions, assignments of stroke and turn officials, relief schedule, and communication. He/she also communicates and implements the jurisdiction and deck protocol that has been established by the Referee. Under the supervision of the Referees, the Chief Judge will often conduct the stroke briefing and answer officials' concerns before each session. If the session includes relays, the briefing must include instructions for relay take-off judges. Instruct line officials on how to stand while judging. A judge should stand erect, hands at the side or behind the back, one foot slightly in front of the other. Not only does this look more uniform, but it helps maintain balance while the official is at the edge of the pool.

It's not necessary to brief the strokes from memory, but it's best to avoid reading them verbatim—no adult likes to be read-to. Try to make eye contact with the judges; their faces will tell you if they understand you or if they have questions. Be complete, but don't embellish. Answer questions, but don't get bogged down in trivia or in scenarios that are highly unlikely.



It's called a 'Briefing,' so keep it brief! Avoid repetition. Do not entertain lengthy discussions of the rules and interpretations. Keep the focus on the main thing: if the protocol section takes longer than the stroke review, you're doing it wrong! Remember that our judges are volunteers and intelligent people. Remember too that they may need to get something to eat or drink, and they may need to use the rest room prior to the session.

Deck assignments should be made using the available personnel as effectively as possible. Care must be taken to ensure balanced and fair judging. Assignments should take into consideration the available officials' levels of experience, peculiarities of the pool, and other factors to ensure fair, equitable, and safe competition. Keep in mind that stroke judges (officials who walk the sides of the pool and judge swimmers' strokes and kicks) are a necessity for long course sessions; stroke judges should likewise be used for short course sessions if the design of the pool allows. The Chief Judge should also determine an appropriate schedule for relief.

If there are apprentice judges on deck for the session, pair each with an experienced official who is willing and able to serve as an active deck mentor. It's best to arrange these pairings privately prior to the officials' meeting if possible, to avoid putting people "on the spot."

At a championship meet, the Chief Judge prepares a deck assignment sheet, detailing the placement of the line judges on the deck. The sheet is photocopied and distributed to all Referees, the Meet Director, evaluators (if any), and other Chief Judges. **This is typically not done at PVS non-championship meets.**

The Chief Judge also makes sure all officials' equipment is in working order, and that the equipment and supplies needed for the session have been placed in the correct locations. This may include:

Heat sheets	Two-way Radios w/Headsets
DQ slips	Lap Counters
Clipboards	Bells
Relay Take-Off Slips	Chairs
	Any other equipment deemed necessary

If there is any additional equipment being used for the session (for instance, track-style starting blocks with adjustable back plates, backstroke ledges, etc.), the Chief Judge should familiarize himself/herself with its operation prior to the session.

During the Competition

Unless they are also serving as stroke & turn judges, the chief judges stand inconspicuously at the pool corners. During the freestyle events they may be seated as long as they can still view their officials watching the turns. If two chief judges are used, one should be stationed on the turn end of the starter's side and one opposite the Start Area at the start end. If three chief judges are used, the third should be near the Start Area.

The chief judge's focus is on the officials in his/her quadrant. The chief judge should observe that the stroke & turn judges are following the specified protocol when observing the swimmers; if there is a violation of protocol, the chief judge should remind the judge of the proper procedures in a positive and constructive manner.



The area of the pool where the Deck Referee and Starter are positioned is referred to as the **Start Area**. This area often includes the Administrative Official, the Timing Operator, the Computer Operator, and other “table workers.” The Chief Judge assigned to this busy area must be especially attentive and prepared to assist any of these officials without being a distraction or getting in the way of their activities.

Disqualifications

Note that the Referee establishes the radio protocol for the session. What follows is one typical scenario.

When observing an infraction, the official shall raise a hand immediately. The Chief Judge should acknowledge the judge with eye contact or a nod of the head. As quickly as possible, the Chief Judge then alerts the deck referee of a possible disqualification in a calm, clear, concise manner. At the same time, the Chief Judge identifies the quadrant of pool, turn or start end, stroke side, where the potential disqualification occurred (e.g. “possible disqualification, stroke judge lane 1 side” or “possible disqualification, lanes 5/6, turn end”). Upon reaching the official making the call, the Chief Judge begins by verifying the lane where the potential infraction occurred, and then **immediately** relays that information to the Referee and other CJs via the radio (e.g. “the possible disqualification is in lane 2”).

At this point, the Chief Judge will engage the official in a discussion of the violation, without interfering with the judge's ability to observe other swimmers within the jurisdiction. In an effort to quickly and accurately verify that a violation has occurred and is within the judge's jurisdiction, the Chief Judge will ask questions that are pertinent to the situation and appropriate for the violation observed. The Chief Judge must be satisfied that a rule was violated, that the call was within jurisdiction, and that the Judge has given an accurate and complete description of what occurred.

After the Chief Judge gathers information from the official, the infraction is reported to the referee using correct terminology. The Chief Judge also makes a recommendation to the Referee that the DQ be accepted if all information is correct **or** that the DQ not be accepted if something was wrong with the information or the jurisdiction:

“Possible disqualification in event # ____, heat # ____, lane # ____, for (description of the violation). I recommend that the disqualification be accepted.”

OR

“Possible disqualification in event # ____, heat # ____, lane # ____, for (description of the violation). I have concerns with this disqualification and need further discussion.”

If the official withdraws the call, the Chief Judge should report, “The judge has withdrawn the call;” **do not** simply say “No call.”

The decision to accept or reject a disqualification is the responsibility of the Referee, who may have questions of his/her own. If the disqualification is accepted by the referee, the Chief Judge completes the DQ report, has the judge review it for accuracy and asks the judge to print his/her name on the line marked “Signature.” The Chief Judge puts his/her initials next to the judge's signature and either delivers the Disqualification Report to the Referee or arranges for its delivery to the Referee.

At a championship meet it is typically the responsibility of the Chief Judge at the finish end of the pool to notify the swimmer if the disqualification stands. In these cases, it is recommended that the Chief Judge call the swimmer to a position behind the seated officials to notify him/her of the disqualification. After informing the swimmer, the Chief Judge uses the radio to report to the referee: “Swimmer notified.” **Note: Notification of the swimmer is typically not done at non-championship meets in PVS.**

In the event that an official's call is overturned or not accepted, the chief judge should inform the official and explain the reason(s) for the decision.

Notifying the Swimmer of a Disqualification

When notifying swimmers, respectfully state, “You were disqualified for ...” The Chief Judge should never coach, give a personal opinion, argue, or add extraneous information.



A Note on Radio Protocol:

Extended conversations concerning the details of a disqualification should not take place over the radio. If additional information is needed beyond that which can be briefly communicated, the Deck Referee should have another Referee step in, and should then go confer with the stroke/turn official, or the stroke/turn official or Chief Judge should come to the Deck Referee.

False Starts

In the event of a confirmed false start, the Start Area Chief Judge will usually complete the disqualification report and present it to the Deck Referee and Starter for approval and signature. At a championship meet, the Chief Judge will notify the swimmer of the disqualification after the conclusion of the heat. After informing the swimmer, the Chief Judge uses the radio to report to the referee: “Swimmer notified.”

Other Paperwork

In an effort to minimize the amount of paper used, many of our meets have stopped using slips to record Declared False Starts and No Shows. The Chief Judge should verify the procedures prior to the start of the session.

Declared False Starts

If Declared False Starts are being recorded on paper slips, the Chief Judge assigned at the starting area corner will complete the disqualification report. After the heat has been started, the Chief Judge will give the DQ report to the deck referee for his/her review and signature. The Chief Judge then gives the DQ report to Administrative Official.

No Shows

- When “No Show” slips are used, the Chief Judge assigned at the starting area corner will complete the “No Show” slip when a swimmer fails to appear for an assigned heat. The Chief Judge will give the slip to the Deck Referee for his/her review and signature. The Chief Judge then gives the “No Show” slip to the Admin Official.
- If paper slips are not being used, the Chief Judge typically plays no role in recording no shows.



Approaching the Referee

When approaching the Deck Referee with paperwork, a question, or other information, try to approach the Referee in a manner that allows him/her to keep watching the pool and the swimmers. Don't make the Referee turn his/her back to the pool in order to see you or the paperwork.

Relays

During relays, the Chief Judges are assigned to look for dual confirmation of an early take-off from the side and lane judges by comparing the relay take-off slips from each lane and those of the side official covering the same lane. If an official on the side has marked his/her slip with an early take-off, the Chief Judge uses the radio to state “Possible disqualification, lane X” and immediately goes to the furthest part of the quadrant and gathers all the ballots. As soon as he/she sees there is a confirmation, the Chief Judge confirms the early take-off to the Referee (“Confirmed early take-off, lane X”). If there is no confirmation, the Chief Judge states “All clear lanes 1-4 or 5-8,” so the referee knows there is or is not a disqualification. In the event of a confirmation, the relay take-off slips must be turned over to the referee as well as the completed DQ slip. At a championship meet, the Chief Judge informs the team that has been disqualified and tells them which swimmer left early. After informing the team, the Chief Judge uses the radio to report to the referee: “Swimmers notified.”



Smile!

At a championship meet, clap and smile when the swimmers are introduced before a race, or when they are being honored on the awards stand.

Post Meet

Equipment and supplies should be collected, prepared for the next session's use, and stored in the appropriate location. Collect "Order of Finish" heat sheets and any "master" heat sheets from Deck Referees and Starters; return these sheets to the Admin Official. It is very important that the Chief Judges thank every official for the generous contribution of their time.

And thank the other members of the CJ team for a job well done. You've completed an assignment that had a tremendous influence on the success of the meet!

Use of Radios

Two-way radios are commonly used to conduct meet business including disqualifications, safety incidents, injuries, equipment failures, and other information critical to the operation of the meet. Used properly, they can improve the efficiency with which communication takes place among deck officials.

1. Radios are to be used strictly for the efficient administration of a meet. Extraneous chatter is **not** appropriate.
2. Always assume that an athlete, coach, or parent with another radio is listening to your conversation, and conduct your communication in a professional and responsible manner.
3. Radios should never be used to call attention to a swimmer (i.e. one official should not use the radio to ask other officials to observe a swimmer's stroke, turn, or finish).
4. Radios should never be used to tell jokes or off color stories of any kind.
5. Abusive language or swearing of any kind, in any language, should never be used.
6. Radios should never be used to talk about any coach, swimmer, parent, or volunteer.
7. Radios should never be used to transmit any information that could be misconstrued as being unprofessional in nature.
8. Key the microphone briefly before speaking; firmly hold the microphone key down during speaking, then stop speaking before releasing the microphone key.
9. Strive to speak in a calm, clear, natural voice.



Before using the radio, be aware of the starting area. Avoid speaking while a start is taking place – this can be **very** distracting to the deck referee.

Completing the Disqualification Report

The Disqualification (DQ) Report, “DQ Slip” is our primary and official means of articulating disqualifications to the Coach/Swimmer. To ensure that the report is clear and accurate, and to prevent misunderstanding, confusion, and frustration, please observe the following standards for completing it in a consistent fashion.

1. Enter the Event, Heat, and Lane Number. This critical information identifies the swim in which the infraction occurred. There should be no corrections to this information on the DQ Slip (scratch outs introduce doubt with regards to the identification of the correct swim).
2. For regular stroke events, mark with an X, or checkmark, when in the swim the infraction was observed (Start, Swim, Turn, or Finish). This is a very important component in the articulation of the infraction – we need to be able to match the violation with the part of the swim during which it occurred. Generally, we define these parts of the race as:
 - **Start** – From the start of the race until the head breaks the surface.
 - **Swim** – From the head breaking the surface until the beginning of the last full stroke into the turn/finish.
 - **Turn** – From the beginning of the last full stroke into the wall until the head breaks the surface.
 - **Finish** – From the beginning of the last full stroke into the wall until the touch at the end of the prescribed distance.
3. If the event is longer than two lengths and the infraction occurred on a turn, write the number of turn above your X, or checkmark. ***Remember, it's the Swimmer's turn, not yours. Odd-numbered turns are on the turn end; even-numbered turns are on the start end.***
4. Mark the infraction with an X, or checkmark. If the infraction is not listed, write it in next to “Other” for that stroke. Use the correct terminology from the rulebook.
5. When the report is complete, the official making the call reviews the slip for accuracy and prints his/her name where it says “JUDGE.” Add first name or initial if needed for clarification (when two or more judges with the same last name are working in that session). Please make sure the name is legible.
6. The deck referee reviews the slip and prints his/her name where it says “Referee,” and marks an X or checkmark next to Swimmer or Coach, as appropriate.
7. Refrain from making other marks or writing extra information on the report.

