

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REFEREE

The 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. To serve others, means to understand and be aware of the athletes, officials, coaches, parents and others in the sport. The referee leads by example in showing respect, honesty, fairness, integrity and responsible behavior that characterize authentic sportsmanship.

The Referee provides the example to the swimming community through his/her commitments to the sport of swimming. The Referee is committed to:

- ensuring the integrity of the sport and the profession of officiating;
- conducting him/herself with dignity and good humor, while ensuring fair and equitable conditions for the competition;
- remaining impartial, while sustaining positive relationships and building trust in the swim community;
- maintaining a current understanding of the rules and their application; and
- fostering the growth in expertise of all officials through teaching, providing workshops and working with officials on the deck. The referee is the primary leader and educator for both new and experienced officials.

The magnitude of the referee's responsibilities is quickly realized by a review of Article 102.13 in *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations*. **The referee:**

- Shall have full authority over all officials and shall assign and instruct them;
- Shall enforce all applicable rules and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meet
- Can overrule any meet official on a point of rule interpretation, or on a judgment decision pertaining to an action which the Referee has personally observed
- Shall also disqualify a swimmer(s) for any violations of the rules that the Referee personally observes and shall at the same time raise one hand overhead with open palm. If the Referee does not make such a signal there shall be no penalty.
- Shall signal the starter that all officials are in position, that the course is clear, and that the competition can begin, before each race; shall assign marshals with specific instructions.

- Shall give a decision on any point where the opinions of the judges differ; shall have authority to intercede in a competition at any stage, to ensure that the racing conditions are observed.
- When automatic or semiautomatic officiating equipment is used and an apparent malfunction occurs it shall be his/her responsibility to make an immediate investigation to determine whether the swimmer finished in accordance with the rules and/or if there was an actual equipment malfunction.
- He may at his/her discretion prohibit the use of any bell, siren, horn or other artificial noisemaker during the meet.
- The Referee may modify any rule for a competitive swimmer who has a disability. Such modification shall be in accordance with Article 105 of the current edition of *United States Swimming Rules and Regulations*.
- Refer to 102.11 concerning protests. Specifically, rule 102.11.1 stipulates:

"Protests against judgment decisions of starters, stroke, turn, place and relay takeoff judges can only be considered by the Referee of the meet and the Referee's decision shall be final."

The referee must be knowledgeable of:

1. Timing procedures, equipment and the specific rules that apply to each type of equipment used.
2. Across-the-board judging procedures.
3. Check in and seeding procedures.
4. Starting procedures, rules and application.
5. Recording and balloting procedures.
6. Stroke and Turn Judging, stroke rules, jurisdiction, application and enforcement.

The referee must have mastered the application and use of the starting and of stroke and turn rules, their fair enforcement and appropriate judging. S/he is responsible for the effective functioning of the meet and will monitor, and assist as necessary, all officials in performing their functions to ensure the participants are provided with a quality competitive swimming environment.

The referee must have learned, acquired and possess: a sound swimming leadership, a positive swimming attitude and active administrative skills.

## **1. Sound Swimming Leadership**

Sound swimming leadership is based on a thorough knowledge of the rules and the reason for the rules - to ensure fair and equitable conditions of competition and uniformity in the sport. Swimming leadership is a skill that can only be developed through participation. Substituting opinion for rules, no matter how well intentioned, invites protests and challenges.

## **2. Positive Swimming Attitude**

The referee's confidence in understanding the swimming rules, his respect for the other officials and his/her understanding for those who are still gaining knowledge of the sport contribute to a positive swimming attitude. The attitude is manifest in the referee's efforts to ensure that all other officials, swimmers and coaches are able to perform their respective tasks to their highest potentials within the meet and the sport of swimming.

## **3. Active Administrative Skills**

The referee has responsibilities before, during and after the competition.

**Before the meet** - The referee should contact the meet director and coordinate any special requirements for the meet before the day of competition. On the day of competition the referee should arrive in time (at least one hour) to adequately perform pre-meet responsibilities. S/He should confer with the meet director; obtain a list of meet officials; inspect the facilities, with specific attention to any safety issues in the meet venue; review seeding and administrative procedures; conduct a coaches' briefing (if needed), and assign and instruct the other officials. The referee's attitude during the pre-meet briefing can establish a tone for the meet. S/He should assume complete control, but do so in a pleasant, confident manner. A sample referee's check list is included at the end of this chapter.

**During the meet** - The referee's (or a designated deck or assistant referee's) full attention must be given to every start. The rules require that the referee both observe and concur with the starter's false start disqualifications. Between the starts, the referee oversees the competition and evaluates the performance of the other meet officials. If a rule is misunderstood, the referee must correct the misunderstanding. If the referee personally observes an infraction, he/she must disqualify the swimmer and then determine why the assigned official(s) did not. The referee clarifies rules and jurisdictions, suggests appropriate judging techniques, assigns and may reassign officials. He/She also answers questions, protests and appeals, maintaining his/her sense of humor and keeping a positive attitude. All questions should be politely answered to the best of his/her ability. Protests and appeals are sometimes difficult because they tend to be emotionally charged. The referee must always display a moderate temperament. It is inexcusable for the referee to become visibly angry at a distraught swimmer, coach or parent.

The following communication guidelines for dealing with a concern arising during the competition, are recommended:

1. The referee listens to the person who has a complaint or concern. The referee must avoid becoming defensive.
2. The referee indicates that he/she understands the person's perspective, and that he/she wants to resolve the conflict. He/She repeats his/her understanding of the protest or appeal to the person who has the complaint.
3. The referee then confers with all parties involved to ensure proper interpretation and understanding.
4. The referee then communicates his/her understanding of the problem and his/her decision to all affected parties.

**After the meet** - The referee must remain at the pool long enough after the last race to ensure that final results have been announced in case there is a problem or a protest. This time can be used to evaluate the meet with meet director and to sign any referee forms pertinent to the meet. As soon as possible after the meet, the referee should write an evaluation of the meet officials. This will be filed with the Official's chairman or with the meet according to the regulations of the local swimming committee sanctioning the competition. A sample form follows at the end of this chapter.

In summary, 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 referee's service is a source of building the entire swim community for the betterment of all those who participate in United States Swimming. It is a challenge worth accepting, and doing well.