

CHAPTER 6

STROKE & TURN RELAY TAKE-OFF JUDGE

INTRODUCTION

Well run meets and good competitive results are directly related to good officiating. Thorough knowledge of the rules, coupled with fair and consistent application of them, make a good official. To confidently work on deck, a Stroke & Turn Judge must study the rules, attending training sessions and working regularly at meets.

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 judgement. 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.

The authority of Stroke/Turn/Relay Take-off Judges (like that of the Referee and Starter) to disqualify a swimmer makes these positions particularly important. To function properly, one dominant principle must prevail:

***"Fairness to all competitors, giving the benefit of the doubt,
in every instance, to the swimmer."***

The rules of swimming define the acceptable form for each stroke. Many variations of form are possible and may still comply to the letter of the rules. Decisions regarding the form of strokes and turns must, therefore, be subject to flexible judgment and common sense. "Ugly isn't necessarily illegal."

I. BASIC CONCEPTS

a.). Take officiating seriously and work hard at it. Competitors have a right to expect officials to know the rules and interpret them correctly, fairly and courteously.

1. Study USA Swimming's official rulebook.
2. Uniformly interpret and apply rules.
3. Call violations as seen; don't guess or anticipate.
4. Be fair and consistent; always give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt.
5. Disregard club affiliation.
6. Exercise good judgment.

b) Work regularly at the job.

1. Officials need practice, just as competitors do.
2. Working regularly builds confidence.
3. Attend training sessions regularly to keep up with rule changes and new interpretations.

- interpretations.
4. There is no substitute for experience.

c) Be professional in manner.

1. Fairness to all competitors must dictate actions.
2. Dress properly.
3. Make decisions quickly and decisively.
4. Don't smoke or eat on deck.
5. Avoid coaching swimmers.
6. Refrain from cheering--control your emotions.
7. Don't fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators during competition.
8. Admit a mistake if wrong; competitor's welfare is more important than your own ego.

d) Uniform. (Varies in LSCs)

1. Men: navy blue slacks (no jeans) or shorts, white shirt and rubber soled white shoes.
2. Women: navy blue skirt, slacks (no jeans) or shorts with white blouse and rubber soled white shoes.
(Officials look much more "official" if dressed properly.)

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

STROKE JUDGE -- ensures that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed.

TURN JUDGE -- ensures that, when turning or finishing, the swimmer complies with the turning and finishing rules applicable to the stroke used.

RELAY TAKE-OFF JUDGE -- ensures that a relay swimmer does not leave the starting platform before the preceding swimmer has touched the end of the pool.

The Referee (or, at the Referee's discretion, the Chief Judge) assigns and instructs Stroke and Turn Judges and Relay Take-off Judges. Before the competition begins, the Referee determines the respective areas of stroke and turn responsibility as well as jurisdiction.

Position:

Stroke Judge -- At the start, the Stroke Judge is responsible for observing the swimmers at the 15 meter mark for all strokes except the breaststroke.

After the start, the Stroke Judge walks the sides of the pool, preferably abreast of swimmers during all strokes except freestyle. The breaststroke and butterfly are best judged by walking abreast or slightly behind the swimmers. Judges should walk at a pace that is sufficient to stay with the swimmers. If the field spreads out, the stroke judge should maintain a position slightly ahead of the trailing swimmers while maintaining contact with the lead swimmer(s). If there are two (2) stroke judges working one side of the pool (usually in long course meets), a "lead-lag"

observation pattern could be utilized as the field spreads out; i. e., the leading stroke judge takes jurisdiction over the faster swimmer(s) while the following stroke judge takes jurisdiction over the slower swimmer(s). After each turn, the stroke judges switch jurisdictions as they begin to walk in the opposite direction. Teamwork and coordination are important between the two (2) stroke judges to ensure that all of the swimmers are observed on a fair and equitable basis.

The stroke judge must clearly be in position to watch swimmers in the backstroke, butterfly, and freestyle events who are submerged after the start or any turn to ensure that their heads surface before the 15-meter mark.

Turn Judge -- The Turn Judges are positioned at either end of the pool.

Turns and finishes are best judged from the ends of the pool, slightly ahead of, but not directly over, the swimmer. The one exception to this technique occurs when judging backstroke turns and finishes, when the judge should stand directly over the lane, if possible. If a judge must observe more than one lane (the norm for most meets at the LSC level), the official will have to adjust his position to best observe all assigned lanes.

A Turn Judge at the starting end of the pool must position himself so he can step forward quickly to observe the first stroke and kick in the breaststroke, butterfly or individual medley events as soon as the starting signal is given and the swimmers leave the blocks. (NOTE: A judge in this situation must not block the Timers' view of the Starter, the starting device, or the Starter's view of the swimmers.)

(NOTE: Since most local swim committees (LSCs) mainly use combined "Stroke and Turn Judges," these individuals must be prepared to walk the sides of the deck and to "wrap around" on the turns, positioning themselves over the ends before the first swimmer in their jurisdiction turns, to ensure they cover all aspects of the competition.)

The Referee will assign each Stroke and Turn Judge an area of responsibility before the competition begins. This will include the manner and sequence in which he wants the judges to move to different areas.

The Stroke and Turn Judge's responsibilities begin after the start. Any action prior to the start is the Starter's responsibility or, in the case of relay take-offs, it may be the Relay Take-off Judge's responsibility. Each Stroke and Turn Judge should observe the start; however, his duties commence immediately after the start.

There are two positions for **Relay Take-off Judge**: one stands immediately beside the starting block (the LANE judge) while the other looks across the lanes from the side of the pool (the SIDE judge). Depending on the number of people available and the lanes to watch a side judge could be assigned 2 but not more than 4 lanes and lane judges (depending on availability) could be assigned to watch from 1 to 4 lanes. It is preferable to have the lane judges watch fewer lanes than the side judges if a choice on assignment must be made. For example one side judge watching lanes 1-4 and a lane judge watching lanes 1&2 and a lane judge watching 3&4, instead of the other way around.

Finally, where limited personnel or the pool's configuration does not permit the ideal arrangement of officials, common sense and equity in judgement must prevail.

III. REPORTING VIOLATIONS

1. Only the Referee or a Stroke and Turn Judge can disqualify for stroke, turn or finish violations. A Relay Take-off Judge is the only official, other than the Referee, who can disqualify for an infraction of the relay take-off rule.
2. Upon observing an infraction in their jurisdiction, the Stroke/Turn Judge or Referee shall immediately raise one hand overhead with open palm. (This requirement is intended to encourage officials to act decisively and to preclude consultation with other officials or reflection on the consequences of a call.) If the official does not raise his hand immediately following an infraction, the Referee should not allow the disqualification unless the Referee personally observed it. However, since "double confirmation" on an early relay take-off is required, a Relay Take-off Judge does NOT indicate an observed early take-off with a raised hand.
3. Report violations, in writing, to the Referee, detailing the event, heat number, lane number and violation. Use the standard USA Swimming DQ form (if available) and be specific in describing the violation utilizing the language of the rulebook.
4. Be prepared to accurately answer the "3 Questions" from the Chief Judge or the Referee, if asked, with the language of the rulebook - "Where were you? (Jurisdiction)," "What did you see? (Description)," and "What rule was broken? (Infraction)." Take a deep breath and think carefully before answering - try to visualize the swim in your mind, remembering that when you watched the swimmer approach you that their right arm was on your left, etc. And finally, do not take it as a personal offense if your DQ call is overturned - you did your job and the Referee must do her job, too.
5. The Referee, Chief Judge or designated official must make every reasonable effort to seek out the swimmer or his coach and inform the individual of the reason for the disqualification. Never suggest to a swimmer or coach that a swimmer "came close" to being disqualified; "close" is perfectly legal!

(NOTE: Officials should never give advice or talk to swimmers or coaches except to explain a disqualification actually cited.)

Disqualifications:

1. Can be made only by the official within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed.
2. Must be based on personal observation.
3. Give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt.
4. Disregard the opinion of others.
5. Apply simple test: BE SURE VIOLATION OCCURRED, UNDERSTAND CLEARLY WHAT IT IS, AND BE PREPARED TO EXPLAIN IT.
6. Any swimmer who acts in an unsafe or unsportsmanlike manner observed by the stroke/Turn Judge may be considered for disciplinary action at the Referee's discretion.
7. Swimming across lanes does not disqualify a swimmer unless interference occurs at the Referee's discretion; however, the stroke/turn judge should report any observed interference to the Referee. The swimmer must start and finish in the same lane.
8. Standing on the pool's bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a

8. Standing on the pool's bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer unless he leaves the pool or walks or springs from the bottom. (NOTE: standing on the bottom after the start and before the finish of any other stroke shall constitute a disqualification.)
9. A swimmer not entered in a race who enters the pool or course in the area in which a race is being conducted before all swimmers therein have completed the race shall be barred from the next individual event in which he is entered on that day or the next meet day, whichever is first (Referee decision). A competitor who dips his goggles in the water or splashes water on the face or body prior to his next event shall not be considered "entering the pool" unless the Referee concludes such an action interferes with the competition.
10. No swimmer is permitted to wear or use any device or substance to help his speed or buoyancy during race. Goggles may be worn and rubdown oil applied if not considered excessive by the Referee.
11. Relay disqualifications (NOTE: all these calls are Referee's or, in some cases, Relay Take-off Judge's decisions):
 1. No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event.
 2. A swimmer other than the first swimmer shall not start until his teammate has concluded his leg.
 3. Any relay team member and his relay team shall be disqualified if a team member, other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg, shall jump into or enter the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.

IV. RULES FOR SWIMMING COMPETITION

FREESTYLE:

1. **Start** -- Forward start shall be used.
2. **Stroke** -- Use of any swimming style except in I.M. or Medley Relay, where "freestyle" means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of no more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the water surface.
3. **Turns** -- Upon completion of each length, the swimmer must touch the solid wall or pad at the end of the course with some part of his body. (NOTE: a "hand touch" is NOT required!)
4. **Finish** -- when any part of the swimmer touches the solid wall or electronic pad at the end of the pool.
5. **Examples of violations:**
 - a. Failure to touch at the turn. (NOTE: if touch missed, official should not turn away immediately, since swimmer may reach back and make a legal touch or may come back if he missed the wall.)
 - b. Finishing in the wrong lane.

- c. Walking or springing from the bottom of the pool.
- d. Getting artificial assistance (e.g., grasping and pulling on the lane lines; pushing off side walls.)

To assist judges in evaluating the submerging portion of the rule, each of the lane lines **must** be marked at the 15-meter (16.4 yard) distances from each end. Stroke judges should be positioned to ensure that the swimmer's head breaks the water surface prior to the 15-meter marks and some part of the body remains surfaced until the swimmer executes the next turn.

BACKSTROKE:

1. **Start** -- Back start shall be used.
2. **Stroke:**
 - a. Standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter immediately after the start is not permitted.
 - b. Swimmer must push off on back and continue swimming on back throughout the race.
 - c. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of no more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the water surface.
3. **Turns:**
 - a. Upon the completion of each length, some part of the swimmer's body must touch the wall.
 - b. During the turn, the shoulders may turn past vertical toward the breast.
 - c. If the swimmer turns past vertical, a continuous single arm pull or a simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn.
 - d. There shall be no kick or arm pull that is independent of the **continuous turning action**.
 - e. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.
4. **Finish** -- when any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall at the end of the

course.

5. Examples of violations:

- a. Sliding toes up after the starting signal and standing in or on the gutter.
- b. Swimmer submerged after start or turn and head surfacing beyond 15 meters (16.4 yards).
- c. Getting artificial assistance (e.g., grasping and pulling on the lane lines to assist forward motion; pulling or pushing off side walls.)
- d. Turning shoulders past vertical on the turn and, after completion of the arm pull, either gliding some more or taking additional kicks/pulls to bring swimmer closer to the wall before initiating the somersaulting action. (Note: this constitutes a pause in the turning action!)
- e. When shoulders have turned past vertical on the turn, swimmer misses touch on the wall and sculls back to touch.
- f. Failure to return to or past vertical toward the back before the swimmer leaves the wall on the turn.
- g. Turning shoulders past vertical at the finish.

The USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee is emphasizing that "The key to a proper interpretation of the backstroke rule is the phrase 'continuous turning action,' i.e., a uniform, unbroken motion with no pauses. After the upper shoulder rotates beyond the vertical toward the breast, a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. There shall be no kick, arm pull, or flotation that is independent of the turn. The position of the head is not relevant."

To assist judges in evaluating the submerging portion of the rule, each of the lane lines **must** be marked at the 15-meter (16.4 yard) distances from each end. Stroke judges should be positioned to ensure that the swimmer's head breaks the water surface prior to the 15-meter marks and some part of the body remains surfaced until the swimmer executes the next turn.

BREASTSTROKE:

1. **Start** -- Forward start shall be used.
2. **Stroke:**

- a. From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body must be kept on the breast.
- b. The arms must move simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane without any alternating movement.
- c. The hands must be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water and must be brought back on or under the water surface.
- d. The elbows shall be under the water except for the last stroke at the finish of the prescribed distance.
- e. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hipline except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.
- f. Some part of the swimmer's head shall break the water surface at least once during each complete cycle of one arm stroke and one leg kick, in that order, except during the first cycle after the start and each turn.
- g. The swimmer's head must break the water surface before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.
- h. During the first cycle after the start and each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs and one leg kick while wholly submerged.

(NOTE: Either a complete or incomplete movement of the arms or legs from the starting position is considered as one complete stroke or kick.)

3. Kick:

- a. All vertical and lateral movements of the legs shall be simultaneous.
- b. The feet must be turned out-ward during the propulsive part of the kick movement.
- c. A scissors, flutter, or down-ward butterfly kick is not permitted.
- d. Breaking the surface with the feet shall not merit disqualification unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

4. Turns and Finish:

- a. The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface (but the two hands need not be on the same level).
- b. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the water surface at some point during any part of the last complete or incomplete stroke cycle preceding the touch.

- c. (Turns only) Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired.
- d. (Turns only) The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.
- e. (Turns only) The prescribed form must then be attained from the beginning of the first arm stroke.
- f. In the IM, the completion of the breaststroke leg is judged as a finish, NOT a turn!

5. Examples of violations:

- a. At the start or after any turn, head still below the water surface *when the hands begin to turn inward at the widest part of the second arm stroke*.
- b. Over-the-water recovery with elbows not touching the water.
- c. Touch not simultaneous or 1-hand touch on turns or finish. (Need not be on the same level.) On the turns, be alert for a legal, "quick" touch, which can be mistakenly interpreted as a 1-hand touch.
- e. Sidestroke or scissors kick (any alternating movement).
- f. Butterfly or flutter kicks underwater after the start or after push off at the turn. (A natural relaxation of the legs when coming off the wall at the turn, or a slight leg action induced by the piking of the body when taking arm strokes at the start or turn, is not considered a voluntary movement and, therefore, shall not be identified as a kick.)
- g. Body not on breast when beginning first arm pull following start or turn.
- h. Body not at or past the vertical towards the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall after a turn.
- i. Getting artificial assistance.

BUTTERFLY:

1. Start:

- a. Forward start shall be used.
- b. After the start and each turn, the swimmer must remain on the breast.
- c. One or more leg kicks are permitted but only one arm pull

underwater, which must bring the swimmer to the surface.

2. Stroke:

- a. Both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously.
- b. The shoulders must be in line with the water surface from the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn.
- c. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of no more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the water surface.

3. Kick:

- a. All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous.
- b. The position of the legs and feet need not be on the same level but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. (The feet may move vertically, provided they move together. They may actually be crossed, or one may be higher than the other, provided no alternating action is introduced. As long as any change is caused by a "drifting" of the legs rather than by a propulsive action, no infraction should be called. Therefore, the important criterion warranting disqualification is a propulsive action of an alternating nature).
- c. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.

4. Turns and Finish:

- a. The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously (need not be on the same level).
- b. A legal touch may be made at, above or below the water surface.
- c. (Turns only:) Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired, but the prescribed form must be attained from the beginning of the first arm stroke.
- d. These criteria also apply to the butterfly leg of an IM or the medley relay.

5. Examples of violations:

- a. Hand touch not simultaneous or 1-hand touch. (NOTE: Hands need not be at the same level on either turns or the finish.) Be alert for a legal, "quick" touch, which can mistakenly be interpreted for a 1-hand touch.

- b. Arm recovery not over the water after pull on the turn or finish (usually characterized by short pull and an underwater, stabbing touch).
- c. Alternating kicking movement, such as flutter kicks.
- d. Scissors or breaststroke kicking movement.
- e. Getting artificial assistance.

To assist judges in evaluating the submerging portion of the rule, each of the lane lines **must** be marked at the 15-meter (16.4 yard) distances from each end. Stroke judges should be positioned to ensure that the swimmer's head breaks the water surface prior to the 15-meter marks and some part of the body remains surfaced until the swimmer executes the next turn.

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY:

1. Order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. (Reminder: In the IM, "freestyle" means any other stroke than the butterfly, backstroke or breaststroke.)
2. Rules pertaining to individual strokes govern disqualifications. (NOTE: when turning from the butterfly to the backstroke, after a legal touch, the swimmer's "shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.")
3. The turns from one stroke to another are considered *finishes*, NOT turns, and are to be judged accordingly. The significant part here is that, when going from backstroke to breaststroke, the swimmer's shoulders in the backstroke may NOT turn past vertical prior to the touch of the wall! Moreover, the swimmer must be at or past the vertical towards the breast when leaving the wall in the breaststroke.

RELAYS:

1. **Freestyle** -- any desired stroke or combination of strokes; swimmers usually do the "Crawl."
2. **Medley** -- order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. (In the Medley Relay, "freestyle" means any stroke other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.)
3. Rules pertaining to individual strokes govern disqualifications.
4. No competitor may swim more than one leg.
5. As in the IM, finish rules, rather than turn rules, apply at the end of each stroke.

6. Except for the last swimmer, relay swimmers must leave the water immediately upon finishing their leg.

7. Examples of Relay Disqualifications:

- a. Stroke violation.
- b. Failure to swim proper order of strokes.
- c. Failure to swim required distance.
- d. Take-off violation (decision only by Referee/Relay Take-off Judge).
- e. Entering the water (Referee decision): whole team is disqualified if any member, other than the swimmer designated to swim, enters the pool before all other competitors have finished!

For a relay team to be disqualified both judges must independently assess that an early take-off by a particular swimmer has occurred. Because a confirmation from another point of view is required, a Relay Take-off Judge does NOT indicate an observed early take-off with a raised hand. Relay Take-off Slips are used to ensure that two judges, observing independently and from different vantage points, have observed the same infraction. Here is an [example of a relay take-off slip](#).

USA SWIMMING

Relay Take-off Judging Slip
Event # _____ Heat # _____
Relay Leg _____

Lane 1	2	3	4
Lane 2	2	3	4
Lane 3	2	3	4
Lane 4	2	3	4
Lane 5	2	3	4
Lane 6	2	3	4
Lane 7	2	3	4
Lane 8	2	3	4

Signature _____

For a disqualification to be confirmed, both judges just properly fill out this form. It is a five step process:

1. Enter the event number
2. Enter the heat number
3. Mark the box appropriate for the assigned position.
4. After each swimmer leaves the block mark the swimmer number with a "O" (circle) if the swimmer's take-off was OK (not early) or with an "X" if the swimmer left early. Take care to conceal these marks from the swimmers in the lane or lanes

being judged because the swimmers might believe their team has been disqualified and not put forth their best effort.

5. Sign the form. (The form can be signed at any time, but it's not valid without a signature.)

Both judges who observed the early take-off must sign that Disqualification Report which, together with the Relay Take-off Slips that indicated the dual confirmation of the early relay take-off, is submitted to the Referee for disposition.

V. A Philosophy of Stroke/Turn/Relay Take-off Officiating: Mental Traps

It is not very difficult to acquire the technical knowledge required to judge the strokes and turns or finishes. A judge will gain that knowledge and become proficient with practice. The challenge, however, is to apply that knowledge **professionally**. Whether we recognize it or not, all of us, as human beings, are influenced by a wide variety of factors when we try to make judgments. We have this marvelous thing called a brain, which allows us to apply "reason" whenever we make judgments. Yet, when using this capacity, we have to be careful not to apply human reason in such a way that it causes us to make poor or "sloppy" judgments. Over the years, various examples of this, often stemming from well intentioned but misguided rationale, have surfaced. Some examples of the "mental traps" that have surfaced in stroke and turn officiating over the years are:

1. Advantage vs. disadvantage (as a basis for making a judgment)?

The question of whether swimmer advantage / disadvantage should influence the official judgment of stroke, turn and finish violations has been the subject of much debate. Some authorities have used the term, "unfair advantage," in decisions relating to specific situations. Unfortunately, this has also caused considerable apprehension and/or misinterpretation about the intent of this phrase. There is no intent that this concept be applied broadly to all situations, thus justifying inaction by officials in not calling violations such as missed turns, touches, etc., because "no advantage was gained." This type of negative interpretation only leads to "sloppy" officiating and, unfortunately, gives an official an excuse for inadequate performance. Obviously, "unfair advantage" may be used to explain one reason why an action is an infraction. Still, a violation of the rules should be noted and the competitor disqualified whether an advantage is gained or not. Therefore, caution should be exercised in any application of this rationale, to preclude its use as a "crutch" for poor officiating.

2. The "Twice Theory."

Some judges feel they should wait until an infraction happens more than once before they call it. They rationalize this position in all sorts of ways (e.g., "That clears up any doubt." "That confirms that it wasn't a simple mistake by the swimmer." etc.) Frankly, all of these, again, are crutches and excuses for uncertain and poor officiating. There is no basis for waiting to see an infraction happen twice and, in fact, it often won't. The official must simply be certain of what he saw and make the call as soon as it is observed. If there is any doubt about the violation, then don't make the call! (Remember, the swimmer gets the benefit of any doubt.) But, by the same token, don't then concentrate

on that one swimmer to see if he commits the suspected infraction again. Continue to give all the competitors uniform coverage in observing their performance.

3. **"We don't disqualify 8 & Unders" (the age group may change to 10 & Unders).**

People who take this position often rationalize it by saying they don't want to cause "mental trauma" to a youngster. They usually go on to say they have no problems "socking it to a 13 & Older." While this may sound good, it is grounded in some clearly erroneous and extraneous beliefs. First, it views the judge's role as punitive. That's completely wrong. Rather, a disqualification should be viewed as a) "protecting the other athletes" in the competition, and b) "educating" the athlete who commits the infraction so he/she won't do it again. Secondly, it assumes that everyone in the identified age group is a "beginner" while those in the older age groups are "experienced" and, therefore, should be held to a stricter standard. Yet, this is also often erroneous. Athletes enter the sport at various ages and some 8 & Unders (having competed for a year or more) are far more "experienced" than some teenagers who are just entering the sport. In any event, experience is irrelevant. Finally, the idea that disqualifying an 8 & Under will "traumatize the child's psyche" is ludicrous. It clearly ignores the fact that youngsters are constantly being corrected during their early, formative years; that's how they learn.

4. **"Don't ask me to judge my child."**

Advocates of this usually fall into one of two categories. First, "I don't want anyone to think my child got by with some infraction because I was judging." Second, "I don't want to have to explain to my child why he/she was disqualified." Yet, this goes to the central element of being a "professional" judge. The Referee must know that the judge treats everyone in the field the same - "fairly and equitably." - all the time. The Referee must be confident that a judge will identify an infraction regardless of the effect upon his child, his team (club), his LSC. This is probably the ultimate test of the judge's impartiality, and referees should not let judges "off the hook" on this basis. To the judge, this is the time when he must separate himself from his parental role and accept the responsibility of being a USA Swimming judge.

5. **Don't Infer (Extrapolate)**

Succinctly put, this simply means: you can only call what you see, NOT what you deduct. You must actually see the swimmer miss the wall with his right hand on the turn, not assume he missed it because, by the time you looked, he was touching the wall with his left hand and was already turning. You must actually see the breaststroker take the second arm pull and be past the widest part of that second stroke before his head surfaces, not assume that it took two pulls to get that far out in the pool when you saw his head surface. Another way of putting this: don't look for reasons to disqualify. If you see the infraction and it is clear, report it, but if you are uncertain, remember that the benefit of any doubt must go to the athlete.

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Conduct:

1. No outward manifestations during a race regarding illegality of competitor except raised hand.
2. Do not cheer, coach or swap disqualifications; control your emotions.
3. Do not fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators; disregard club affiliation and personal relationships.
4. Do not concentrate on frequent violators to the exclusion of others.
5. Give undivided attention -- start to finish.
6. If uncertain of role, consult with the Referee.

VI. JUDGING SWIMMERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

1. Judge, in accordance with USA Swimming rules, any part of the body that is used.
2. Do not judge a part of the body that cannot be used.
3. Base your judgment on actual rule, not the swimmer's technique.

VII. CONCLUSION

Officiating can be an enjoyable experience. It is not designed to win popularity contests; however, the self satisfaction of having participated and having done a good job is very rewarding. Unfortunately, "sloppy" and uninformed officials rarely recognize their inadequacies, but fellow officials, coaches and swimmers do. Consequently, all officials must continually reassess their own performances. This can best be done by regularly reviewing the rules and training material and by attending retraining sessions.

The new or inexperienced official often asks, "How long will it take me to become a good Stroke and Turn Judge?" Obviously, it depends upon the individual but, rest assured, it won't happen overnight or without effort. Knowing the rules and attending training sessions are very important, but experience gained by working at meets is the only real teacher. Only experience can build the confidence the Stroke and Turn Judge requires before his or her performance becomes "automatic." Even then, it is essential that the judge continuously review the rules and regularly attend retraining sessions.