

CHAPTER 4 CHIEF JUDGE

The Chief Judge is the Stroke and Turn officials' **team leader**. This person is one of the keys to the smooth running of a swim meet. The chief judge position may be combined with another stroke and turn assignment if necessary. The chief judge is responsible to the Meet Referee and the assistant referees.

At national meets there is one Lead Chief Judge with four assistant chief judges. At local meets, two chief judges, one at each end of the pool are recommended for any large invitational meet and at 50 meter pools.

Duties

Pre-meet: Meet with the referee to coordinate all duties the chief judge will be expected to perform. Solidify the terminology the meet referee expects during disqualifications and referees jurisdiction preferences. Discuss any evaluations that you as chief judge will be expected to perform, and what evaluation form the referee wants you to use. Locate first aid facilities and equipment.

Conduct a pre-meet meeting with your assistant chief judges to make "officials' meeting" session assignments and outline any instructions from the meet referee.

Pre-meet sessions: Conducting the Officials' meetings (briefings)

The chief judge is responsible for officials' sign-in sheets, introductions, assignments of officials for deck coverage, deck demeanor instruction, jurisdiction assignments, communication and procedure protocol, establish rotation system and arrange relief shifts if possible. They conduct stroke mini-clinics and answer officials' concerns. They also make sure all officials equipment and supplies are working and in the right places. Include in the Appendix to the Swimming Officials Manual is a "Recommended Stroke Briefing" outline.

Deck Equipment

	Split Sheets for Distance Events	Lap Counters
Bells	Timers Recording Sheets	Towels
Pencils	Relay Take-off Ballots	Chairs
Clipboards	Disqualification Slips	Stroke and Turn Judge Schedule
Heat Sheets	Two-way Radios with Headsets	Refreshments
Watches	Spare Batteries for Headsets	First Aid Items

During Competition: The chief judges are placed inconspicuously at the pool corners. The chief judges focus is on the officials in their area, not the swimmers. When an official raises a hand signifying a disqualification, the chief judge alerts the deck referee (usually by two-way radio), of a possible disqualification and at what position the infraction occurred, (example: possible disqualification stroke judge recall starter side of the pool.) The team lead shall insure continued deck coverage during the discussion of the disqualification. The chief judge then will approach that official asking; 1.) What did you see? 2.) What rule applies? 3.) Was this within your jurisdiction? This gives the official the chance to recall his own mistake before the referee has to disallow the call because it was out of the jurisdiction or an incorrect disqualification. After the chief judge hears the answers from the official, the infraction is reported to the referee using correct terminology. The Radio Protocol Guidelines as published by USA Swimming is included in the Appendix for the Swimming Officials Manual. They recommend acceptance, or ask for a conference with the referee if there is a problem concerning one of the answers received from

the official. The decision to accept or reject a disqualification is the responsibility of the referee. The chief judge simply reports to the referee. When the decision to accept the disqualification is made by the referee, the chief judge fills out the disqualification form, instructs the official to verify all the information (swimmers name, event, heat, infraction and notification), and has that official sign the disqualification form. The chief judge delivers the form to the referee for a signature. If the call is not accepted, the chief judge tactfully explains the reason for non-acceptance to the official who made the call. The referee should ask a chief judge at the finish end of the pool to hold the swimmer until the decision is made and then have the chief judge explain the disqualification to the swimmer. The swimmer or their coach should be notified. Specific jurisdiction may vary from meet to meet.

If an official needs to be excused for any reason, the chief judge has the responsibility to maintain equal coverage on the deck at all times and may assign relief officials to the vacant position, or may assume the vacant position themselves if necessary. Sometimes other officials (i.e., the off duty starters or deck referees) are asked to fill these positions, when we are short of officials and need the proper coverage on deck.

During relays, chief judges are assigned to look for dual confirmation of side and lane judges for early take-offs, by comparing both ballot slips for each lane and report any confirmation, OR "all clear" for their assigned lanes. Disqualifications are again written only after acceptance by the referee.

Post-session duties: The chief judge is responsible for gathering all reusable equipment and supplies from the deck officials and returning them to a designated location for the next session. Many meet referees have post-session meetings to evaluate procedures from the preceding session and adjust them as necessary. Chief judges should write down any problems they saw during the meet, within their sphere of responsibility, and address them in the most appropriate manner. This can be a private, helpful teaching conversation, or a topic during the next officials briefing if the area of concern is general in nature.

Always thank the officials for their contribution to the meet. Smile and be friendly. You are their liaison

Post meet duties: It is very important that the chief judges thank every official appropriately for the generous contribution of their time and effort to the meet. Let them know that they were a valuable part of the team, for a successful meet.

Chief judges are often asked to evaluate the performance of the stroke and turn judges. Their observations include the protocol established for the meet, as well as the technical aspects of judging. This is meant to be educational! It is meant to point out where improvement in certain areas will help the stroke and turn judge become more knowledgeable and continue to improve, as everyone on the officials' crew should always be trying to do their best for the athletes. There is a national evaluation form available and a national performance rating scale. The chief judge should use evaluations as outlined by the meet referee in the pre-meet conference.

Summary: There are many meets where there is not an adequate number of officials, and chief judges are not practical. If a chief judge can be assigned, it will help keep a meet running smoothly, especially when the referee has other duties that demand attention. The idea that a chief judge is only for Championship meets is simply not true. An advantage of using this position whenever possible is that it becomes a teaching tool for anyone that fills this position and can assist the other deck officials.