

SWIMMING MEETS: THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICIALS

At any swimming meet there are a range of different people involved in running the competition. A key distinction is between technical and non-technical officials. Technical officials are the people in white who are responsible for ensuring that the rules of swimming are upheld and that all swimmers have the opportunity to compete fairly in whatever events they swim. At any meet there are a range of different officials including referee(s), starter, judges (stroke, finish and turns) and timekeepers. We need at least 20 officials across the different levels of qualification to run a meet!

WHY SHOULD I BECOME AN OFFICIAL?

As a 'swimming parent' you spend a lot of time attending swimming meets. Becoming an official gives you an insight into how swimming meets work, provides you with something to do when son/daughter isn't swimming and is a great source of free sweeties. From the Club's perspective we need a pool of officials inside the club so that we can run our own meets. You do not have to officiate at other club's meets if you don't want to.

HOW DO I BECOME AN OFFICIAL?

In order to become an official you need to attend an induction session and then complete a series of practical sessions, recorded in a workbook, focusing upon the duties associated with the qualification being worked towards. Apart from the Referee course there are no written exams. There are 4 grades of officials as follows:- (a) Judge level 1; Judge level 2; Judge level 2 & starter and (d) referee. No prior knowledge of swimming rules is assumed at the start of training to become an official. All you need is a clipboard, a stopwatch, a pen and an enthusiasm for swimming.

JUDGE LEVEL 1

This is the first level of British qualification for which the minimum age is 15. It encompasses the role and duties of a Timekeeper, Chief Timekeeper and Inspector of Turns.

Timekeeper - You record the time the swimmer takes to complete the race using a stopwatch and record it on the heat sheets. If the meet is working with Automatic Officiating Equipment (AOE) ie electronics then there will also be a secondary 'back-up' button that you need to push when the swimmer completes the race. If the meet is using manual times the Chief Timekeeper will collect the time sheets for each event.

Chief Timekeeper – to ensure the timekeepers perform their role. If the meet is manual (ie not electronic - AOE) they collect the time sheets from the timekeeper after each event and work out the finishing times for the swimmers based on the order of the finish in agreement with the referee.

Inspector of Turns – as a J1 you are also expected to be responsible for looking at the swimmers turns and finishes. Do not worry - you cannot disqualify a swimmer, all you do is report an infringement if you see it to the Referee or Chief Inspector of Turns. The only person who can disqualify a swimmer is the Referee. If you "think" you saw an infringement

then you must give the swimmer the benefit of doubt. This part of J1 requires knowledge of the rules relating to the turn and finish for each stroke but this is where the mentoring will help since you will be attending meets and placed with more experienced officials who will ask questions and explain what you should be looking for.

Chief Inspector of Turns – is the link between the Inspector of Turns (J1) and the Referee. Takes the report from the time keeper to the referee.

Relay take-Off Judge – another role that J1s are expected to do is to watch the take-over when the incoming swimmer touches and the swimmer on the blocks dives in. If you see an infringement you report it to the Chief Inspector of Turns/Referee. Again training is given in the rules operating for this element of the race.

JUDGE LEVEL 2

This is the second level of qualification. It encompasses the role and duties in relation to all aspects of judging and the theoretical role and duties of Starter. This is based around a workshop session followed by practical sessions with an experienced official and a final practical session.

Judges of stroke: J2 officials are responsible for ensuring that all stroke rules are complied with. As with J1 Stroke judges do not disqualify swimmers. Rather they report observed infringements to the Referee who will disqualify the swimmer.

Finish judge: writes the lane order of swimmers as they finish and passes these to the Referee. An important role even in the meets with electronics as sometimes these systems fail!

JUDGE LEVEL 2-STARTER

This role is the most visible and easiest to understand role. The starter's role is to ensure that the start is fair for all swimmers. As with J2 this is based around a workshop session followed by practical sessions with an experienced official and a final assessed practical session.

REFEREE

This role is the highest level of qualification in British Swimming and combines several theory sessions, an exam and assessed practical sessions. The Referee is in overall control of all aspects of the meet and is responsible for health and safety as well as ensuring that the competition is fair. It to the Referee that judges report observed infringements and who decides whether these will be accepted.

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Contact Nicky Matthews of Guildford City Swimming Club- email addresses on website.