

Proactive Situation Resolutions for New Referees

Protocol for the re-direction of a talkative, distracting official

If you as the Meet Referee have the ability to move around (a deck referee to maintain watch of the competition) approach the official during the interaction with others. He cannot deny his role if you approach him while interacting with others. Arrange for a relief official to step in, and ask the official to take a break with you. Off the deck, ask the official if there was a situation arising that you should know about. Explain that he is preventing others from doing their assignment by engaging his neighbor and distracting them from doing their best. Tell him you love his outgoing personality and appreciate his knowledge, humor, etc. but ask him to please help to maintain a balanced deck by doing his job and allowing others the same courtesy. At the end of the session seek him out and thank him for understanding your position and tell him you appreciate his positive contribution to the official's team.

Protocol for disallowing a call because of an erroneous rule interpretation on the part of an official

If you as the referee or deck referee have rejected a "DQ" after asking the three usual questions, It is essential that you seek out the official who made the call and talk to her before she leaves the venue at the end of the session. The chief judge has been a go between and may not have had time to make the official understand the reasons for the disallowance, nor can they take the time to correct the concept during the session. Tell her you appreciate her abilities and attitude and explain in depth why you did not accept the call. When the dialogue is over ask her if she understands, and is okay with your reasoning on the underlying concept of the rule. Be sure to tell her you look forward to working with her again soon, as you consider her a real asset to the official's team.

Protocol for addressing an official wanting to work who is improperly attired according to the LSC Standard

In meets requiring applications to officiate the dress standard is clearly stated, and failing to arrive properly dressed, the official should be told even before the official' briefing that he needs to comply if he wishes to work that session. If he cannot comply, tell him you will miss his contribution and that you hope he can find the proper attire so he can contribute to the official's team in following sessions. If an official appears wearing team colors, open toed sandals, carrying umbrella's etc., the official should be approached before the meeting and the concept of impartiality or safety etc. can be explained in private. In small local meets, you may choose to give the official a short time to comply with the standard and accept them on deck for that session. Again, make certain that he understands your reasoning and thank him for complying and serving.

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Protocol for addressing the issue of cell phone usage on deck

In today's world, every official's briefing should include a request that cell phones not be used on deck, as they are a distraction from the reason we are working the meet. Explain cell phone usage is acceptable in the break area only. Explain that if an emergency call comes in as a text message, she should ask the referee for a replacement and return the call off the deck. If an official uses the phone while doing her assignment, the referee should personally or through the chief judge, request that she give full attention to the pool. If the official has important obligations that require her attention, give her the option to be excused from service that session. Whatever the outcome of the officials decision, thank her for her service, express hope that the problem will be solved to her satisfaction and that she can return and be a valuable member of the team very soon.

Protocol for addressing the issue of an official who cannot seem to refrain from cheering and showing bias toward their team or children

Most every LSC has an official's philosophy statement that explains this is unacceptable. The official who cannot seem to understand or practice this philosophy needs to be monitored and reminded often at first. A bragging rights section of the officials briefing session sometimes helps and could be a good lead in to a short segment on maintaining composure on deck. A personal intervention, off the deck, directly after such an incident to explain how coaches and athletes from other teams will have valid, bias-based reasons to protest any call he makes, may help. The referee may also explain that his child may feel embarrassed and isolated from his teammates by such excessive behavior from his parent, and that the swimmer will always see the official as a parent first. Assure the official that you respect his skills, and want him to continue to develop his skills and progress to other assignments as well. Assure him that his enthusiasm for the sport is appreciated. Ask him that if he would prefer other assignments, in admin, or timing console operator, and tell him you will always be glad to work with him. Assure him the official's community values his continuing participation as a member of the team.

Protocol for handling the official who habitually arrives late, misses the briefing and leaves early to miss the distance events

Occasionally an official will make arrangements with a referee to arrive late due to valid circumstances, or traffic etc. This may prevent an official from reporting to the briefing, but the person who just comes late over and over, shows very little respect for the meet. The referee may want to explain that since she did not give any advance notice, the assignments have been made for this session, and that you hope she will be on time to the next briefing and receive an assignment. Give the time of the briefing for the next session and assure her that she will be welcome. Tell her you value her knowledge and hope she understands the need to be on time to get instructions on the different nuances of each meet. As a referee, you may look at the time line and if the session is long you may want to make some telephone calls in advance of the session and set up two teams of officials, thus assuring that you are not expecting too much of too few officials.

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Protocol for asserting your right to run the meet as the assigned referee when other experienced officials want to direct the meet their way

One referee will rarely interfere with another referee about running a meet. If a smart referee needs help they will ask another referee they respect for advice, and that is when the experienced referee will give an opinion. However, we do have officials who find fault with how different referees choose to do things and will often take valuable briefing time to argue for their way of doing things. These officials will often talk to other officials trying to prove their point and become disruptive to the smooth functioning of a meet. This is not something that can be ignored very long. Take this official off the deck away from others, tell them you have heard their comments and explain your reasoning for your actions concerning the meet. Explain there is more than one way to do things efficiently and there are many ways to come to the right result. Tell him you value his knowledge and opinion, but it is your right to do things as you see fit within the rules of USA Swimming. Ask him to support your decisions without controversial comments to others. Tell him he is welcome to remain on deck in his assignment if he can work within the parameters that have been set up. Tell him again you appreciate his dedication to the swimmers and hope he will decide to stay and help you with the meet. Give him 10 minutes to take a break and to please let you know his decision.

Protocol for assuaging the unhappy official whose child has been disqualified by another official.

This is a time when knowledge of the official's previous actions and attitudes about her swimmer is helpful. If you see the hand raised on a lane where the official's child is swimming, it is desirable for you to unobtrusively get behind the official and put a comforting hand on her shoulder. Whisper in her ear, "This is a time to let the system work and progress through the steps." Ask the official to let the child go to the coach and let the child, coach, and officials work things out to the right conclusion. Tell the official you will keep her informed as to the outcome and what the call was. Tell her you will see that the rules are followed and everything is correct and fair. Smile at her and tell her you appreciate her calm attitude. If you cannot get down to the official in a timely manner, ask someone on the headset to tell the official that you will be coming to talk to her as soon as you can, and you will explain what is going on. After the session, be sure to thank the official for her good demeanor in a tough situation. Thank her for her valuable help and maintaining her position. Tell her you are so grateful that you could depend on her to do the right thing in a hurtful situation, and you hope to see her at the next session.

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Protocol for addressing the problem of one official depriving others of getting breaks by being tardy returning to duty

Timing and assigning of break intervals along with the concern for others should always be talked about in the pre-session briefing. This situation can often be corrected by assigning the offending official as a relief official. This assignment often gives him the added insight needed to be back to duty in a very timely manner. Be sure to thank her for keeping all of the other officials happy by assuring that they each had a break when they needed one. Inquire of her if there were any problem officials who were late to report back when their break was over. Ask her what she thinks might help bring them back on time.

Protocol for assigning the official with physical, chronic afflictions

There are officials who occasionally have an injury that limits their movements on the deck. If these officials truly feel they can overcome the pain and work a position effectively they should be allowed the opportunity to do so. If he can stand and sit, but not walk much, assign him to be turn judges until he can return to full capacity. If he has a long-term injury, he may be unable to work on the deck, but he may want to work a position in admin area and he may be very competent in the admin office. There are many jobs that need to be filled to run a swim meet.

Please remember that there are officials who have given their whole leisure life to swimming. If they are no longer able to walk a pool deck through age or infirmity, please be gracious and help them to become an effective clerk of course or other position. The LSC may need a librarian or other position. If he/she can be helped to be effective in a position, and they wish to do it, please help them to stay active. If a person can no longer be effective and he or she doesn't really realize it that is the time to bring in members of the family to help to ease their retirement. Go to great lengths to be kind and accommodating. Remember we will all reach retirement some day.