

There are countless uncomfortable personnel-related situations that can arise for a Meet Referee at a swim meet. The National Officials Committee has created a set of sample, best-practice resolutions to aid in the proactive management of these situations.

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

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

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 disqualification after asking the three usual questions, it is essential that you seek out the official who made the call and talk to him or her before he or she leaves the venue at the end of the session. The chief judge has been an intermediary and may not have had time to help the official understand the reasons for the disallowance and/or correct the concept during the session. Tell the official that you appreciate his or her abilities and attitude and explain in depth why you did not accept the call. When the dialogue is over, ask him or her if he or she understands, and is okay with your reasoning on the underlying concept of the rule. Be sure to tell the official you look forward to working with him or her again soon, as you consider him or her a real asset to the officiating team.

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

In meets requiring applications to officiate with the dress standard clearly stated, the official should be told, even before the officials' briefing, that he or she needs to comply if he or she wishes to work that session. If he or she cannot comply, tell the official that you will miss his or her contribution and that you hope he or she can find the proper attire so he or she can contribute to the officiating team in future sessions. If an official appears to be wearing team colors, open toed sandals, carrying an umbrella 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 some time to comply with the standard and accept him or her on deck for that session. Again, make certain that the official understands your reasoning and thank him or her complying and serving.

Protocol for addressing the issue of cell phone usage on deck

In today's world, every officials 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 that cell phone usage is acceptable in the break area only. Explain that if an emergency call or text message comes in, the official should ask the referee for a replacement and handle the matter off-deck. If an official uses the phone while doing his or her assignment, the referee should personally, or through the chief judge, request that he or she give full attention to the pool. If the official has important obligations that require his or her attention, give him or her the option to be excused from service that session. Whatever the outcome of the official's decision, thank him or her for his or her service and express hope that the problem will be solved to his or her satisfaction so that he or 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 towards his or her team or children

Most every LSC has an officiating philosophy statement that explains that 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 or she makes, may help. The referee may also explain that his or her child may feel embarrassed and isolated from his or her teammates by such excessive behavior and that the swimmer will always see the official as a parent first. Assure the official that you respect his or her skills, and want him or her to continue to develop his or her skills and progress to other assignments as well. Assure him or her that his or her enthusiasm for the sport is appreciated. Ask that if he or she would prefer other assignments, in admin, or as a timing console operator, to let you know. Let the official know that you will always be glad to work with him or her. Assure him or her that the officiating community values his or her 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, traffic, etc. This may prevent an official from reporting to the briefing, but is different than the official who repeatedly arrives late and shows very little respect for the meet. As a referee, you may want to explain that since the official did not give any advance notice, the assignments have been made for the session, and that you hope that the official will be on time to the next briefing and receive an assignment. Let him or her know time of the briefing for the next session and assure him or her that he or she will be welcome. Tell the official that you value his or her knowledge and hope

that he or she understands the need to be on time to receive instructions on the different nuances of each meet.

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, he or she will ask another referee he or she respects for advice, and that is when the experienced referee will give an opinion. However, there are officials who find fault with how different referees choose to do things and will attempt to argue for their way of doing things. These officials will often become disruptive to the smooth functioning of a meet. This is not something that can be ignored for very long. Take this official off-deck away from others, tell him or her you have heard his or her comments and explain your reasoning for your actions concerning the meet. Explain that there is more than one way to do things efficiently and that there are many ways to come to the right result. Tell him or her you value his or her knowledge and opinion, but it is your right to do things as you see fit within the rules of USA Swimming. Ask the referee to support your decisions without controversial comments to others. Tell the referee that he or she is welcome to remain on deck in his assignment if he or she can work within the parameters that have been set up. Tell the referee again that you appreciate his or her dedication to the swimmers and hope he or she will decide to stay and help you with the meet.

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 his or her swimmer can be helpful. If you see the hand raised on a lane where the official's child is swimming, it may be desirable for you to comfort the official and let him or her know that 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 him or her informed as to the outcome and what the call was. Tell the official that you will see that the rules are followed and that everything is correct and fair. Smile at him or her and tell him or her you that appreciate his or 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 him or her as soon as you can and that you will explain what is going on. After the session, be sure to thank the official for his or her good demeanor in a tough situation. Thank the official for his or her valuable help and maintaining his or her position.

Protocol for addressing the problem of one official depriving others of getting breaks by being late 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 or her the added insight needed to be back to duty in a very timely manner. Be sure to thank him or her for keeping all of the other officials happy by assuring that they each had a break when they needed one. Inquire if there were any problematic officials who were late to report back when their break was over. Ask the official what he or 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 that they can overcome the pain and work a position effectively, they should be allowed the opportunity to do so. If an official can stand and sit, but not walk much, assign him or her as a turn judge until he or she can return to full capacity. If the official has a long-term injury, he or she may be unable to work on the deck, but may want to work a position in admin area and may be very competent in such role. 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 or she can be helped to be effective in a position, and they wish to do it, please help him or her so that he or she to stay active. If a person can no longer be effective and he or she or she doesn't really realize it, it may be helpful to bring in members of his or her family family to help suggest retirement. Go to great lengths to be kind and accommodating. Remember we will all reach retirement some day.