

STROKE JUDGE — TURN JUDGE

INTRODUCTION

Well run meets and good competitive results are directly related to good officiating. This requires a thorough knowledge of the rules and the ability to apply them fairly and consistently. It can only be attained by studying the rules, attending training sessions, and working regularly at meets.

The rules are standards of perfection. However, swimmers should not be expected to compete to absolute perfection. Flexible judgment and common sense is necessary.

Officials must never overlook one important fact — the swimmers have worked hard to become competitive. They all deserve an equal chance. Officials must ensure that they do not, either by inaction or an irresponsible or inappropriate decision, disrupt the equity and fairness of the competition

The Stroke and Turn Judges authority to disqualify a competitor makes this position particularly important. To function properly in this role, keep one dominant principle in mind:

be fair to all competitors, call what you clearly see, and, in every instance, give the benefit of the doubt to the swimmer.

BASIC CONCEPTS

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

1. Study USA Swimming Official Rules book.
2. Uniformly interpret and apply rules.
3. Call violations when you see them; but don't guess or anticipate.
4. Be fair and consistent; always give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt.
5. Disregard club affiliation.

Work regularly at the job.

1. Officials need practice, just as competitors do.
2. Working regularly builds confidence.
3. Attend training sessions—keep up with rule changes and new interpretations.
4. There is no substitute for experience.

Be professional in your manner

1. Make decisions quickly and decisively.
2. Don't smoke or eat on deck.
3. Don't coach the swimmers.
4. Refrain from cheering—control your emotions.
5. Don't fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators during competition.
6. Admit your mistake; if you made a wrong call the competitor's welfare is more important than your own ego.

Dress Properly.

Officials look much more "official" if they are dressed both properly and neatly and are well groomed. The current PVS dress code is:

Navy blue slacks (but no jeans) or shorts, white shirt and white, rubber soled shoes. Women may wear navy blue skirts.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Referee or, at the Referee's discretion, the Chief Judge assigns and instructs Stroke and Turn Judges. Before the competition begins, the Referee determines the respective areas of Stroke and Turn responsibility and jurisdiction. These may include joint, concurrent, or coordinated responsibility and jurisdiction. The Referee's must ensure that all swimmers are judged fairly, equitably, and uniformly.

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 turn and finish rules applicable to the stroke used.

Position:

Stroke Judge—sides of the pool, preferably walking abreast of swimmers during breaststroke and butterfly. During backstroke, butterfly and freestyle, be at the 15-meter mark to observe where the swimmer surfaces. You may also be responsible for the recall rope.

Turn Judge—ends of pool.

(NOTE: Since PV mainly uses combined "Stroke and Turn Judges," these individuals need to 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 initial area of responsibility. He will specify (if it is being done) the manner and sequence in which the judges are to move (rotate)

to a new position. The Stroke and Turn Judges responsibilities begin immediately after the start. Any action prior to the start is the responsibility of the Starter. Each Stroke and Turn Judge should observe the start; since their duties commence immediately after the start.

Breaststroke and butterfly are best judged by walking abreast or slightly behind the swimmers. If the field starts to spread out, the judge should maintain a position that is slightly ahead of the trailing swimmers. Should sufficient officials be available to allow two strokes per side, one should just trail the lead swimmer and other stay just forward of the slowest swimmer on that side of the pool. In butterfly, the Stroke Judge also needs to be close enough to the 15-meter mark so he can get to it if there is uncertainty whether a swimmer will surface before or after this mark.

Freestyle is judged mainly from the turning and starting ends of the pool. However, the requirement to surface by the 15-meter mark following the start and each turn requires a Stroke Judge observe this mark. Similarly, the Stroke Judges must, also, clearly be in position to watch backstrokers who are submerged after the start or any turn to ensure that their head surfaces before the 15-meter mark. They must also observe whether backstrokers remain on their back.

For all strokes for which the 15-meter mark has to be observed, look straight across the pool at the 15-meter mark, using the markers on the lane lines as a point of reference. If they are not perfectly lined up, judge for all lanes based on the marker that is the farthest out.

Whenver staffing levels permit, the duties of Stroke and Turn Judges should be separated so each can cover their respective portion of the pool. This is particularly useful wherever diving

boards or lifeguard stands are barriers to the judge's movement.

When it is necessary to serve as a combined Stroke and Turn Judge due to limited staffing, the key to good performance is movement. The judge cannot properly evaluate turns and finishes from the backstroke flags nor strokes from the center of the starting or turning end of the pool.

Turns and finishes are best judged from the ends of the pool, slightly to the side of, not directly over, the swimmer. The one exception to this technique occurs when judging backstroke finishes, when the judge should, if possible, stand directly over the lane. Since judges in this LSC must usually observe more than one lane, the official will have to adjust his position to best observe **all** assigned lanes.

A Turn Judge at the starting end of the pool should position himself so he can step forward immediately following the start signal to observe

the first stroke and kick in breaststroke, butterfly and individual medley. **NOTE:** Do not block the Timers' view of the Starter or the starting device, or the Starter's view of the swimmers.

To officiate a meet properly, at least six Stroke and Turn judges are needed (eight if it is long course meet in a 8-lane pool.) If fewer are available, compromises will have to be made so that those areas where violations are most likely to occur are given better coverage. Generally, these are the turns. If fewer than four Stroke and Turn are available, serious consideration should be given to having the Starter and possibly the Referee also serve as a Stroke and Turn Judge.

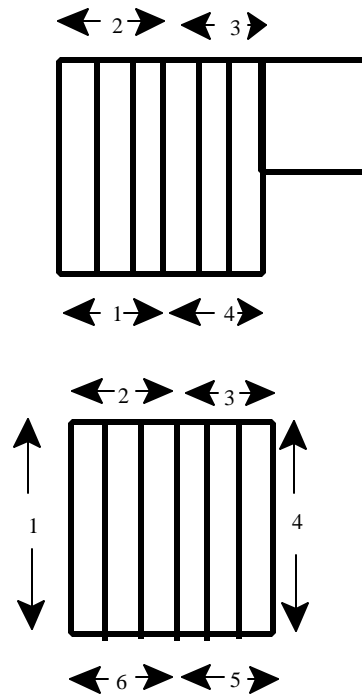
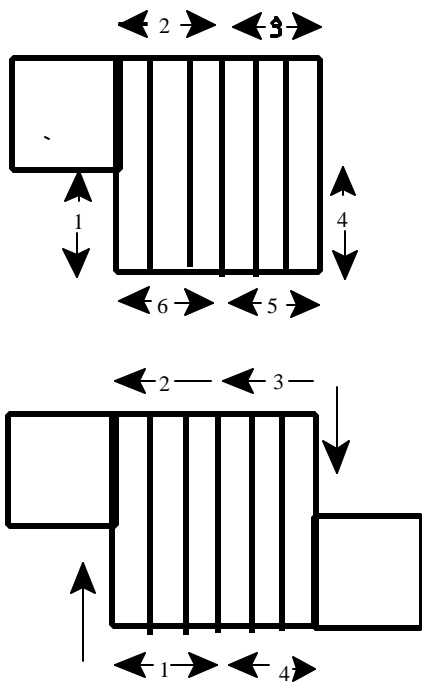
In all cases involving the arrangement of officials, common sense must prevail.

The following diagrams illustrate possible stroke and turn placements using four or more judges:

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raise one hand overhead with open palm. This is intended to require officials to act decisively and to preclude consultation with other officials or reflection on the consequences of a call. [Exception; The hand is not raised when dual confirmation is being used for relay take-offs.] 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.

3. Report violations, in writing, to the Referee, detailing the event, heat number, lane number and violation. (Be specific in describing the violation.)

4. The Referee or designated official making the disqualification must make every reasonable effort to seek out the swimmer or his coach and inform the individual of the reason for the disqualification. (NOTE: Officials should never give advice or talk to swimmers or coaches except to explain a disqualification actually cited if asked to by the referee.)

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. Must have violated a rule in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.
4. Give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt and disregard the opinion of others.
5. ***Be sure violation occurred, understand clearly what it is, and be prepared to explain it.***

Relay disqualifications

(NOTE: 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 enter the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.

Mental Traps :

A judge will gain the technical knowledge required to judge the strokes and turns or finishes and become proficient with practice. The challenge, however, is to apply that knowledge **properly**. Be careful not to apply human reason in such a way that it causes poor or "sloppy" judgments.. Some examples of the "mental traps" that have surfaced in stroke and turn officiating over the years are:

L Advantage or disadvantage . There is no intent that whether swimmer gains advantage should be applied broadly to all situations, thus justifying inaction by officials in *not calling* violations such as missed turns, touches, etc. This type of negative interpretation only leads to "sloppy" officiating. 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.

L The "Twice Theory." Some judges feel they should wait until an infraction happens more than once before they call it. 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! 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.

L “We don’t disqualify 8 & Unders.”

People who take this position often rationalize it by saying they don’t want to cause “mental trauma” to a youngster. While this may sound good, it is grounded in some clearly erroneous 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. Secondly, it assumes that younger swimmers are “beginners” while older swimmers are “experienced” and should be held to a stricter standard. Yet, athletes enter the sport at various ages and some 8 & Unders are 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. Youngsters are constantly being corrected during their early, formative years; that’s how they learn.

L “Don’t ask me to judge my child.”

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 who the swimmer is. This is probably the ultimate test of the judge’s impartiality. 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.

L Don’t Infer (Extrapolate). 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 breastroker 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. 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.

Conduct:

1. No outward signs during race regarding illegality of competitor except raised hand.
2. No cheering, coaching or swapping 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.

FREESTYLE:

1. ***Start***—Forward start shall be used.
2. ***Stroke:***
 - a. Any swimming style may be used except in I.M. or Medley Relay, where "free-style" means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.
 - b. The head must surface by the 15-meter mark following the start and each turn. Totally resubmerging thereafter except when entering a turn is grounds for a disqualification. However, having the body momentarily totally covered by water is not grounds for a disqualification.

3. **Turns**— Upon completion of each length, the swimmer must touch the solid wall or pad at the end of the course with *any* 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. **Common violations:**

a. Failure to touch at the turn. NOTE: if touch missed, official should continue to watch (swimmer *may* either reach back or swim back and make a legal touch anytime prior to making the next turn).

b. Failure of the head to surface by the 15-meter mark following the start and each turn.

b. Finishing in the wrong lane.

c. Walking or springing from the bottom of the pool. Standing on the pool's bottom during freestyle 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, while not in contact with the wall, of any *other* stroke *shall* constitute a disqualification.)

d. Getting artificial assistance (grasping and pulling on lane lines; pushing off side walls.)

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. Once the body has left the back, any kick or arm pull must be part of the **continuous turning action**.

e. The swimmer must be at or past vertical toward the back upon leaving the wall.

f. If the swimmer is too close to the wall he/she does not need to somersault but may touch the wall to turn. He/she must then be at or past vertical when the feet leave the wall.

4. **Finish**— when any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall at the end of the course; shoulders must not turn past vertical toward the breast before the touch. The body may be completely submerged at the finish..

5. **Common violations:**

a. Curling toes over the gutter *after the starting signal* or 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 (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 pulling forward with arm already in motion, then either gliding some more or taking additional kicks/pulls to bring swimmer closer to the wall before initiating the somersaulting action. (Note: constitutes a pause in the turning action!)

e. When shoulders have turned past

vertical on the turn, swimmer missing touch on the wall and sculling back to touch.

f. Failure to return to or past vertical toward the back before the swimmer leaves the wall on the turn.

g. 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, the lane lines and the sides of the pool should be marked at the 15-meter (16.4 yard) distances from each end. Judges should be positioned to ensure that the swimmer's head breaks the water surface prior to the 15-meter marks and remains surfaced until the swimmer executes the next turn.

BREASTSTROKE:

1. ***Start***— Forward start shall be used.

2. ***Stroke:***

a. The body must be kept past vertical toward the breast at all times..

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 not be totally out of the water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and 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 outward during the propulsive part of the kick movement.

c. A scissors, flutter, or downward 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 arms must continue to move in the same horizontal plane..

c. 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.

d. (Turns only:) Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast *when the swimmer leaves the wall.*

e. In the IM, the completion of the breaststroke leg is judged as a finish, NOT a turn!

5. ***Common 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. [Exception permitted during turn and at the finish.]

c. Not moving the arms in the same horizontal plane throughout the race (including the turns and the finish.)

d. Nonsimultaneous 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 — 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 at or past the vertical towards the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall after a turn.

h. Getting artificial assistance.

SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF JUDGING BREASTSTROKE

The first arm pull after the start and each turn may be all the way back to the legs. Thereafter, it can be no further than the hipline. What constitutes the "hipline," however, is unclear. Therefore, judges should allow swimmers to pull to anyplace in the general area of the hips. The intent is to ensure that, throughout the race, the swimmer does not glide underwater with the hands flat or nearly flat against the side of the body, as is normal after the initial pull at the start and after each turn. The swimmer should be given the benefit of any doubt relating to the position of the "hipline."

After the first stroke and kick on the start and after each turn, the head must break the water surface before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second arm stroke.

The hands do not have to stay in the water on the recovery. They may be recovered over the water; however, they must still be pushed forward together from the breast and the elbows must, at least, touch the water surface, except when reaching for the wall at the finish.

The head does not have to stay above the water level throughout the race. After the first underwater arm stroke and kick, the head need only come above the water once during each stroke cycle, but it actually has to break the water surface rather than just coming above the calm water level with the possibility of a wave covering the top of the head. The swimmer is permitted to "dive" under the water during each cycle, as long as a butterfly kick is not used to facilitate the diving action.

On turns or at the finish, swimmers do not have to touch with both hands at the same level (this also applies to the butterfly). The hands must, however, touch simultaneously.

BUTTERFLY:

1. ***Start:***

- a. Forward start shall be used.
- b. After the start and each turn, the swimmer must remain on the breast.
- c. The swimmer's head must surface by the 15-meter mark.
- d. 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 passed vertical toward the breast from the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn.

c. The body must remain above the surface after the 15-meter mark. However, incidental submerging (resulting from the body being momentarily being totally covered by water) is not grounds for a disqualification.

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*. Any change caused by a "drifting" of the legs rather than by a propulsive action is not an infraction. Therefore,

the important criterion warranting disqualification is *apropulsive action of an alternating nature*).

c. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is *not* permitted.

4. ***Turns and Finish:***

a. The body shall be on the breast.

b. The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously (need not be on the same level).

c. A legal touch may be made at, above or below the water surface.

d. (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. The swimmer's head must surface by the 15-meter mark.

e. These criteria also apply to the butterfly leg of an IM or the medley relay.

5. ***Common 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—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. Head not surfacing by the 15-meter mark.

f. Getting artificial assistance.

means any other stroke than the butterfly, backstroke or breaststroke.) Note: Freestyle must have been swum for a sufficient distance to be recognized as swimming in the style of a prohibited stroke.

2. Rules pertaining to individual strokes govern disqualifications. (NOTE: when turning from the butterfly to the back-stroke, 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.

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY:

1. Order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. (Reminder: In the IM, "freestyle"

GENERAL:

1. **All Turns** – Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. Therefore, standing on the bottom during a turn and prior to pushing off the call, should be considered part of the turn and no DQ should be called.

RELAYS:

1. **Freestyle**—any desired stroke or combination of strokes.

2. **Medley**—order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. (In the Medley Relay, "freestyle" means any stroke other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly. Note: The stroke must have been swum for a sufficient distance to be recognized as swimming in the style of that stroke.)

3. **All Relays**

a. Rules pertaining to individual strokes govern disqualifications.

b. As in the IM, finish rules, rather than turn rules, apply at the end of each stroke.

c. No competitor may swim more than one leg.

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

e. Swimmers must swim in the order listed of the form provided (completed by the coach for that purpose.)

4. **Common 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 Judges)

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!

JUDGING SWIMMERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

1. Judge, in accordance with USA Swimming rules, any part of the body that is used.

2. Guidelines for judging swimmers with various disabilities are contained in Article 105 of US Swimming Rules and Regulations. Get familiar with them. You never know when you will need to apply them at a meet.

3. Do not judge a part of the body that cannot be used.

4. Base your judgment on actual rule, not the swimmer's technique.

CONCLUSION

Officiating can be enjoyable. It is not designed to win popularity contests; however, the self satisfaction of having done a good job is very rewarding. Unfortunately, inferior officials rarely recognize their inadequacies, but fellow officials, coaches and swimmers do. 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?" It depends upon the individual but 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, a continuing review of the rules and regular attendance at retraining sessions are essential.