

Stroke and Turn Official Points of Emphasis

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.

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. “Know the rules: Study the NFHS Swimming and Diving rule 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.

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.

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 Judge's role is critical to a fair and successful meet. To function properly in this role, keep one dominant principle in mind:

Be professional in your manner

1. Make decisions quickly and decisively.
2. Don't coach the swimmers.
3. Refrain from cheering—control your emotions.
4. Don't fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators during competition.
5. 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

MSOA dress code is:

Navy blue shorts or slacks (but no jeans), white shirt and displaying your MSOA badge/patch (this is usually over the left chest or attached to a lanyard.) 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. The Referee's must ensure that all swimmers are judged fairly, equitably, and uniformly.

Stroke and Turn Judge—This is a combined role of two roles lists in the rules book. The ST Judge ensures that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed and, when turning or finishing, the swimmer complies with the turn and finish rules applicable to the stroke used.

Position:

Stroke and Turn Judge— Find the best vantage point from either the sides of the pool or at the ends of the pool. If on the sides preferably at an angle to clearly see all responsible lanes and touches of the end wall.

Since MSOA 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.

During backstroke, butterfly and freestyle, be in position to observe the 15-meter mark where the swimmer are required to surface.

The Stroke and Turn Judge's 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.

If required to walk the side of the pool, the Breaststroke and butterfly are best judged by walking 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.

Freestyle is judged mainly from the side of the pool, near the end wall. Provided clear line of sight can be maintained to observe the touch at the turn. This position will also allow for observation of the 15-meter mark if the situation arises. The Stroke and Turn Judge 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, but this not as a clear indicator. Usually the lane line is not perfectly lined up. Judge for all lanes based on the marker that is the farthest out. Attempt to maintain a line between the on deck marking required on the side walls indicating 15 meters.

The key to good performance is movement. The judge cannot properly evaluate turns from the backstroke flags nor strokes from the center of the turning end of the pool.

Turns are best judged from the ends of the pool, slightly to the side of, not directly over, the swimmer.

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

Reporting violations:

1. Only the Referee declares the disqualification. The Stroke and Turn Judge reports the violation.
2. Upon observing a violation in their jurisdiction, Stroke and Turn Judges shall immediately raise one hand high overhead with open palm. If the official does not raise their hand immediately following a violation, the Referee should not allow the disqualification.
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 (upon preference) may ask the Stroke and Turn judge to report the disqualification to the coach and inform them of the violation. If the coach wishes to question the disqualification, immediately direct them to speak with the referee. (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.)

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.

Know your Rules:

Review the stroke rules for each of the stroke styles as required.

BACKSTROKE: *Rule 8, Sec 2, Article 1*

BREASTSTROKE: *Rule 8, Sec 2, Article 2*

BUTTERFLY: *Rule 8, Sec 2, Article 3*

FREESTYLE: *Rule 8, Sec 2, Article 4*

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY: *Rule 8, Sec 2, Article 5*

1. Order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. (Reminder: In the IM, "freestyle" means any other stroke than the butterfly, backstroke or breaststroke.)

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.