



POOLSIDE OFFICIALS

Being a poolside official can be an enjoyable and rewarding task. Once a trainee has qualified they become a licensed official which means they can volunteer for any open gala in Britain.

SWIMMING MEETS: THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICIALS

At any swimming gala 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 event they swim. At any gala there are a range of different officials including referee(s), starter, judges (stroke, finish and turns) and timekeepers. There is need for at least 20 officials across the different levels of qualification to run a licensed meet. **YOU CANNOT RUN A LICENSED GALA WITHOUT QUALIFIED OFFICIALS.**

WHY SHOULD I BECOME AN OFFICIAL?

As a 'swimming parent' a lot of time is spent attending swimming galas. Becoming an official gives an insight into how these galas work. It also provides an understanding of rules and why swimmers are sometimes disqualified. You do not have to officiate at other clubs meets if you do not want to. Just your own club if preferred. However, most hosting clubs, if accepting six or more swimmers from a visiting club, can reject entries if that club do not provide any officials for their gala.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BECOMING AN OFFICIAL?

Host clubs usually provide lunch and/or breakfast depending on session times. Free entry and programme to the gala. No queuing to gain entry. A friendly, welcoming environment. Remember, officials are normally parent of swimmers past and present. Reasonable expenses are reimbursed if required and refreshment is provided poolside. A bottle of wine is normally given by the host club as a 'thank you' for your time.

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 poolside sessions recorded in a workbook. Focusing upon the duties associated with the qualification being worked toward. There is no time limit in which to obtain this. Upon satisfactory competency sign-off you then have a practical poolside assessment conducted by a nominated referee. Apart from the Referee course there are no written exams. There are four grades of officials which are as follows: Judge Level 1, Judge Level 2, Starter and 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 the sport of swimming.

JUDGE LEVEL 1

This is the first level of British qualification for which the minimum age is fifteen. 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 a heat sheet. If the gala is working with Automatic Officiating Equipment (AOE) ie, electronics, then there will be a secondary 'back-up' button that you need to press when the swimmers

completes the race. If the meet is using manual times the Chief Timekeeper will collect the time sheets for each event.

Chief Timekeeper- It is the responsibility of this role to ensure the Timekeepers perform their job. 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 race finish in agreement with the referee.

Inspector of Turns- As a Judge 1 you are also expected to be responsible for looking at the swimmer's turns and finishes. Do not worry - you personally cannot disqualify a swimmer. All you do is report any 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 Judge 1 requires knowledge of the rules relating to the turn and finish for each particular stroke. This is where the mentoring will help since you will be attending galas and placed with more experienced officials who will ask questions and explain just what you should be looking for.

Chief Inspector of Turns- This role is the link between the Inspector of Turns (Judge 1) and the Referee. Takes the report from the Timekeeper to the Referee.

Relay Take-Off Judge- This is another role that a Judge 1 is expected to undertake. You have to watch the take-over when the incoming swimmer touches and the swimmer on the blocks dives in. If you see an infringement you need to 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. This is based around a workshop session followed by practical sessions with an experienced official and a final practical poolside assessment session.

Judges of Stroke- Judge 2 officials are responsible for ensuring that all stroke rules are complied with. As with Judge 1, Judges of Stroke do not disqualify swimmers. Rather they report observed infringements to the Referee who will disqualify the swimmer.

Finish Judge- will write the lane order of swimmers as they finish and passes this to the Referee. An important role even in the meets with electronic timing as sometimes these systems can fail!

JUDGE LEVEL 2 STARTER

The Starter's role is critical to the successful running of a gala. The Starter must function with the Referee to ensure that the start of a race is fair for all swimmers. As with Judge 2 this is based around a workshop session followed by practical sessions with an experienced official and a final practical poolside assessment 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 gala and additionally the health and safety as well as ensuring that the competition is fair. It is the Referee that judges reported observed infringements and he who decides whether these will be accepted.