

# **OFFICIALS' QUALIFICATIONS FOR SECTION CHAMPIONSHIPS**



## **SELECTION PROCESS**

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEET OFFICIALS**  
**CIF-SOUTHERN SECTION CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
(Revised 3-28-11)

**STARTERS**

This position, for the CIF championships, is not defined solely in terms of Rule 4 and the official's ability to do what is described therein. In addition to fulfilling the rule expectations of the position, the official must be a problem-solver, and be able to work with (and occasionally cover) a crew of other officials. Perhaps most important, however, is the official's attitude and temperament.

Attitude: Perhaps the most important dimension for this position in this meet, this component begins with the recognition by the official that this meet is NOT about the starter but about the athletes and their ability to perform to the best of their abilities. If the official feels the need to be the "star of the show" then s/he is ill-suited to serve in this position.

Willingness to learn and recognition that s/he may have much to learn is also significant. Even at this level, and despite many years of experience and service, the official MUST be teachable. An attitude that one knows all there is to know is not compatible with what must be accomplished at this meet. Officials must be able to recognize their need to learn, be receptive to suggestions/corrections, and immediately implement alternative approaches to the task under the direction of meet management and officials' crew leaders.

Temperament:

- Ability to remain consistent through 4-5 hours of concentrated work in a chaotic and noisy environment
- Ability to concentrate and maintain focus on the essentials of achieving a fair start, while also being fully aware of her/his surroundings
- Ability to maintain calmness both for her/himself and for the athletes – voice/inflection that relaxes the swimmers by lowering her/his tone rather than using a sharp or harsh tone – quiet, not excited
- Ability to apply an appropriate starting style to the context of this specific meet: championship/heats and finals, rather than dual meet context; ability to interface with, and communicate effectively with, a crew of officials including an announcer, and to permit them to fulfill their duties without interference; ability to work with and effectively utilize other crew members (*e.g.*, foot position on backstroke starts)
- Ability to assure a proper meet pace: swimmers should not be rushed but should be allowed to become properly prepared for their race; swimmers who arrive at the blocks late should be appropriately handled and accommodated; meet pace should move quickly in prelims but more deliberately in finals, with announcer setting the pace in the finals based upon the exiting of the previous heat and the next heat becoming prepared to swim and be introduced
- Recognition that her/his role is not one of running the meet but one of fulfilling the starter's duties; ability to remain in that role throughout the meet, as defined by meet management

- Ability to communicate effectively and interface appropriately with entire crew of officials – the recall official, the stroke/turn/relay takeoff judges, the announcer, the CTS operator, the results staff, and meet management

Objective Experience: While it is not necessary that the official have the same level of meet experience as SCAF requires for advancement to the SCAF College Swimming/Diving Officials list, those expectations should be part of the consideration. Certainly an official must have had considerable experience overseeing high school dual meet as well as invitational/championship meet competition. Exposure to a wide array of officiating situations is the more critical element here, rather than fulfillment of a formula-driven expectation for number of meets or number of years of service.

Especially critical is that the official has served as starter/meet referee, on multiple occasions, for high school meets conducted in the heats/finals format – whether league championships or invitationals. The demands of a heats/finals meet (as reflected by the special clinic developed by SCAF to prepare officials for league championship competition at the end of the season) are certainly different from the demands of a dual meet.

Knowledge of the Rules: This, of course, is critical for all officials, but it is especially critical at the end of the season when the usual rules issues are more likely to involve less-common nuances than the typical dual meet would generate during the season. The official MUST be thoroughly versed, and almost instinctive in ability to apply, the rules that regulate championship meet competition. While the stroke/turn rules are the same for all types of competition, the championship meet format evokes many situations that are dissimilar and demand acute awareness. Some specific areas of the rules that must be known:

Correct starting protocol/whistle commands/interface with announcer

Stroke/turn judging: knowing what to look for and how

Relay takeoff judging: signaling of violations, notification of swimmers and officials

Managing the timers including relays; assuring correct swimmers in lanes

Handling no-shows in preliminaries v. finals

Calling for & placement of alternates in both prelims & finals (different procedures depending upon which session)

Equipment: Two aspects of this are the official's own equipment for the meet and her/his knowledge of the equipment that is to be used at the meet.

Personal equipment includes proper uniform as stipulated by the rules and CIF practices; whistle; headset compatible with those used by other officials on the crew; green pen. A clipboard may be useful. Forms, such as relay takeoff violation records, will be provided by meet management.

While the official is definitely not expected to be a timing system or computer expert, s/he must be aware of the workings of the electronics used at a championship meet in order to contribute to the diagnosis of issues, but not interfere with the trouble-shooting and correction of problems. This includes awareness of the display board for results, and correction/adjustment thereof; knowledge and proper use of the starting unit and under-block/starting unit speakers; and observation of swimmers' finishes/touches and interaction with/notification of the CTS operator

## **STROKE/TURN/RELAY TAKEOFF JUDGES**

Rules knowledge is essential – officials must know fully the rules that apply to championship meets and be able to implement those throughout the competition; they must know what to look for in all areas involving strokes/turns/relay exchanges AND position themselves properly to observe possible violations; they must be cognizant of where violations are likely to occur at every stage of the heat (start, turns, finish)

Some experience with large meets (invitationals, league championships) is helpful though not mandatory

Willingness to learn and to take directions is essential; instructions from the crew chief must be followed and officials must perform their assigned tasks while adapting quickly and properly when circumstances require a change of focus.