



Referee Guide

GPSA Wiki Documentation

Greater Peninsula Swimming Association

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The **Meet Referee** is the senior official on deck and has full authority over the conduct of a GPSA dual meet. You enforce the rules, rule on disqualifications, certify the order of finish, resolve protests, and validate the final results before they become official.

You represent the GPSA — not your home team. This guide covers the practical, meet-day work of the referee. For the official rules, see [GPSA Rulebook - Officials and Conduct of Meets](#).

Quick Reference

- **Authority:** Final word on all questions of rules and conduct during the meet. On a point of *rule modification*, defer to both GPSA Representatives.
- **Certification:** Must hold a current GPSA Referee certification (USA Swimming, GPSA clinic, online course, or Rules Committee).
- **Attire:** Predominantly white shirt, dark shorts/pants; no team affiliation. Hat, sunglasses, and shoes that can get wet are fine.
- **Provided by:** The home team ([GPSA Representative Duties](#)).
- **Safety overrides everything.** You may intervene in any race at any stage and may postpone any part of the meet.
- **Key principle:** The order of finish on the **initialed Place Judge Form** is the official record — keep it accurate, especially after a DQ.

Before the Meet

On Arrival

- **Dress the part** and arrive early.
- **Introduce yourself** to both GPSA Representatives and head coaches.
- **Ask about special circumstances** — swimmer disabilities, heat-structure changes, shared officials.
- **Have a copy of the [GPSA Rulebook](#)** with you.

Entry verification is the **GPSA Representative's** responsibility. If you have concerns about a specific entry, raise it with the home-team rep *before* the meet begins.

Organize Your Crew — Delegate

More hands keep your head up and your eyes on the pool. Where the volunteers exist, assign:

Role	What they take off your plate
Admin Referee (certified referee)	Primary contact for scorekeepers; processes DQ slips, the order of finish, and Place Judge Forms; handles legal substitutions
Chief Judge	Leads/assists the S&T briefing, confers with S&T judges on infractions, brings DQ slips for signature
Starter	Runs the timers' briefing and controls the start
GPSA Representative	Organizes other volunteers and dry-deck setup
Marshals	Crowd/warm-up control with specific instructions

Even when you delegate the Place Judge Form and DQ flow to an Admin Referee, you retain ultimate authority and are consulted on questionable calls.

Confirm Materials and Settings

The home team prepares the paperwork (see [Meet Preparation Guide](#)). Before warm-ups, confirm you have:

- **Place Judge Forms** — one per scoring heat (Heat 1) of events 1–56
- **Meet Referee Sheet** — your event-by-event tracking sheet for OOF and DQ notes
- **Meet Referee Verification of Scores** — your post-meet sign-off form
- **Sweep Judge Sheets** — one per sweep judge
- **DQ slips** available for the S&T judges

Confirm with the [scorekeeper](#) that **blind scoring** is on (score display off per GPSA rules).

Briefings

Lead these yourself or delegate (S&T to the Chief Judge, timers to the Starter):

- **Stroke & Turn Judges** — assign jurisdiction (which official covers which lanes/ends), review rule updates, reinforce Safe Swim, cover relay take-off observation and the DQ slip process, and clarify rotation.
- **Sweep Judges** — see the Place Judge Form walkthrough below. Stress the **no-conferring** rule.
- **Timers** (via Starter) — start/stop, reporting times, “clear watches” discipline.

During the Meet

Authority and Safety

- You may **intervene in any competition at any stage** to ensure fair racing conditions.
- **Swimmer safety is paramount** — address any risk immediately.
- **Abusive language/behavior:** warn the offender directly; if it continues, have the home-team GPSA Representative and pool manager remove them.
- **Overruling officials:** you may overrule any official on a *judgment* decision; on a *rule modification* defer to both GPSA Representatives.

The Starting Sequence

1. **4–5 short whistles** — swimmers ready behind the blocks.
2. **1 long whistle** — swimmers step up and hold.
 - *Backstroke / Medley Relay:* first long whistle → enter water; second long whistle → return to wall and assume start position.
3. **Raise your arm to 90°** — control passes to the Starter.

Recalls require mutual agreement of the Starter and Referee. No swimmer is disqualified on a recall; set an appropriate rest period before restarting based on the distance covered. (Two false starts by the same swimmer in one event is a DQ — or one if, in your and the Starter’s opinion, it was deliberate.)

Walkthrough: Handling the Place Judge Form

GPSA dual meets are scored **by place (sweeps), not by time**. The order of finish — not the clock — determines points and ribbons, so the Place Judge Form is the single most important document you certify.

How the order of finish flows

Two separate document flows feed the scorekeeper — don't confuse them:

- **Lane slips** record *times only*. The swimmer hands a lane slip to their timer at the blocks; the timer records the time; a runner delivers it to the scorekeeper. Sweep judges never touch lane slips.
- **The Place Judge Form** records the *order of finish*. This is what you review and initial.

Step by step

1. **Sweep judges observe independently.** One sweep judge from each team watches the finish of each scoring heat and records the order on their **own Sweep Judge Ranking Sheet**. They do **not** confer with each other.
2. **You keep your own independent record.** Throughout the meet, independently record the order of finish of every non-exhibition swimmer on your Meet Referee Sheet — for *every* scoring heat, not just disputed ones. This is your tie-breaker.
3. **If both sweep judges agree:** they transcribe the order onto the **Place Judge Form** — writing the **lane number** of each finisher under the corresponding place, and “Exhibition” for any exhibition lane — and deliver it to you (directly or via runner).
4. **You review the form:**
 - Check it against your own independent record.
 - **Adjust for any DQs** (re-rank — see below).
 - **Initial the form** to certify it.
 - Send it to the scorekeeper.
5. **The scorekeeper enters the order of finish** into Meet Maestro for Heat 1 of each scored event. See [Scorekeeper - Entering Order of Finish](#).

When the sweep judges disagree

They must **notify you immediately and not confer**. Compare their observations against your independent record:

- If your record **confirms one judge's** order → document that order on the Place Judge Form and initial it.
- If you **cannot confirm either** judge → declare a **tie** for the disputed positions. (In a tie, the points for the tied and next position(s) are added and split equally — Meet Maestro handles this automatically.)

! The initialed Place Judge Form is the official record of the order of finish

Your initialed form is the authoritative record the scorekeeper enters into Meet Maestro. From there, the team score and the printed **award labels** (which the ribbon writers use) all flow from the order of finish you certified. If the form does not reflect the true order of finish, everything downstream is wrong — most visibly the ribbons. Keep it current at all times, especially after a DQ.

Walkthrough: Disqualifications

Only the referee — or an Admin Referee acting for you — can finalize a DQ. An S&T Judge, Starter, or other official *reports* an infraction; **you decide**, and the slip must be **signed**.

How a DQ is made

1. **The infraction is signaled and written up.** The S&T Judge raises an open hand for 3–5 seconds at the moment of the infraction (required for a valid DQ), then writes a slip with the **event, heat, lane, and infraction**.
2. **The slip is reviewed.** Confirm it is filled out completely and correctly. Discuss with the reporting official if anything is unclear.
3. **The slip is signed** to finalize the DQ.
4. **The slip goes to the scorekeeper**, who enters the DQ in Meet Maestro and separates the white (paperwork) and yellow (coach) copies. See [Scorekeeper - Processing DQs](#).

With an Admin Referee: the Admin Referee receives, reviews, signs, and delivers DQ slips, consulting you only on questionable or unusual infractions. Keep your attention on the pool.

Without an Admin Referee: you handle the above yourself.

Your own observations: you may disqualify a swimmer for any violation you personally observe.

Entry-limit violations: a swimmer who exceeds the event limits is disqualified from *all* events entered, and scores are adjusted. Coordinate with the GPSA Representatives.


Re-Ranking the Place Judge Form After a DQ

This is the step most often missed — and the reason this guide exists.

When a swimmer who was already recorded in the order of finish is disqualified, entering the DQ in Meet Maestro corrects the **team score** automatically — Meet Maestro moves the following places up and reassigns points. It does **not** correct the order of finish on the Place Judge Form, and it does **not** fix the ribbons.

You must update the form yourself:

1. **Cross out the DQ'd swimmer** on the Place Judge Form.
2. **Move every swimmer below them up one position.** A DQ on the 2nd-place finisher makes the old 3rd the new 2nd, old 4th the new 3rd, and so on — pulling in the next eligible finisher who didn't previously place.
3. **Initial the change** so the scorekeeper knows it is authoritative.
4. **Return the corrected form** to the scorekeeper so the **Heat Place** values get updated in Meet Maestro. The ribbon writers work from the **award labels** printed out of Meet Maestro — not the form — so the corrected order only reaches the ribbons once the scorekeeper updates the places and re-prints the labels for that event.

 A late DQ still requires a re-rank

A swimmer can be disqualified well after the heat finishes — for example, on a coach's question raised before the protest deadline. By then the original placings feel “final,” and it is easy to enter the DQ for the score but forget the form. **Re-rank and re-initial the Place Judge Form every time a DQ changes the placings**, and confirm the scorekeeper updates Heat Places and reprints labels for that event.

Substitutions

Coaches may substitute swimmers during the meet, subject to the **three-event rule**: no substitution is allowed for the next three events after an event is in the water (e.g., if Event 1 is in the water, no changes to Events 2, 3, or 4).

- Only the **coach or their designee** may bring a written note (event number, lane number, swimmer name) to the scoring table.
- The **Admin Referee** (or you) approves legal substitutions and ensures the scorekeeper is informed.
- **Injury/illness exception**: you may allow a substitution outside the three-event window; the event then counts as swum for both swimmers.

See [GPSA Rulebook - Substitutions](#).

Protests

- Only **GPSA Representatives** (or their appointed alternates) and **coaches** may raise an official protest.
- Protests must be filed **within 30 minutes** of the alleged infraction.
- **Resolve it immediately** — you may stop the meet to do so.
- Either rep may appeal your decision to the Rules Committee within 3 days if it determined the winning team or warrants further review.

See [GPSA Rulebook - Protests](#) and [GPSA Representative - Protests](#).

Event 0 — 8 & Under Mixed Freestyle Relay

Unscored and does not count toward swim limits. It needs no formal officiating — just help the young swimmers execute it safely. Flag obvious safety issues; let minor things go.

Walkthrough: Post-Meet Check

Before the scorekeeper locks results and the [GPSA Representative](#) transfers them, you validate the meet at the scorekeeper station. See [Scorekeeper - Referee Post-Meet Validation](#).

Work through every scored event (Heat 1, events 1–56) and confirm:

- Order of finish entered for every Heat 1.** If any scoring heat has no OOF, locate its Place Judge Form and have the scorekeeper enter it before results lock.
- Heat Place entries match the initialed Place Judge Forms** — including every DQ re-rank.
- No DQ'd swimmer still has a place entered.** A swimmer marked DQ must **not** also carry a Heat Place. If they do, the re-rank was missed: the swimmer needs to be removed from the order of finish and everyone below them moved up. *This is the most common scoring error — check it on every event with a DQ.*
- Every tie is real.** If you see a tie, pull that event's Place Judge Form and confirm both sweep judges

actually observed a tie — not a missing or failed entry standing in for one.

- All DQ slips are signed and entered**, white copies with the paperwork.
- Times look reasonable** — no obvious entry errors.
- Final team scores are accurate.**

i Walk the DQ events first

The fastest way to catch a missed re-rank is to go straight to every event where a DQ was issued (your Meet Referee Sheet lists them) and confirm two things: the DQ'd swimmer has **no** place, and the swimmers who finished behind them moved up. A swimmer who is *both* DQ'd *and* placed is the signature of a skipped re-rank — and it means the printed ribbons for that event are wrong.

When everything checks out:

1. **Complete the Meet Referee Verification of Scores** form.
2. **Deliver your heat sheet and/or Meet Referee Sheet** to the scorekeeper.
3. **Approve the results.** The score may now be announced, and the meet is closed for changes.

See [GPSA Rulebook - Post-Meet Procedures](#).

Related Resources

- [Scorekeeper Guide](#) - Meet Maestro operations, DQ entry, Place Judge Forms
- [Meet Preparation Guide](#) - Pre-meet checklist and the forms you'll use
- [GPSA Representative Duties](#) - Meet operations, officials, protests
- [Time Drops Timing System](#) - Digital timing used by many GPSA teams

Rulebook References

- [Officials - Meet Referee](#) - Role and authority
 - [Conduct of Meets - Place Recording](#) - Order-of-finish procedure
 - [Conduct of Meets - Post-Meet Procedures](#) - Validation and handoff
 - [Scoring](#) - Points, ties, and DQ place adjustments
 - [Awards](#) - Ribbon and award procedures
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Questions?

Contact the GPSA Rules Committee for guidance on officiating, certification, or rules interpretations.