

We need to train some more officials

Why?

Most of the competitions that are run to allow swimmers the chance to achieve times to enter county, district or national level meets, are run as licenced meets and licenced meets must be run by licenced officials.

Whilst Redditch has a large number of qualified timekeepers these can only be used for fairly low level meets such as our own club championships, all of the higher level meets such as open meets and county championship require all officials to be qualified to at least J1 judge level, and our numbers of qualified judges have dropped over the past few years. In truth, the club could do with increasing its numbers of J1, J2 and J2S qualified officials. In fact, the only area where we are ahead of the rest is in the fact that Redditch has 4 qualified referees.

What are the strange terms J1, J2 and J2S?

J1

A qualified Judge level 1 (J1) can carry out the roles of timekeeper, chief timekeeper and turn judge. The role of a turn judge is not just limited to knowing the rules for turning on each stroke as they also need to know how each stroke starts and finishes.

J2

A qualified Judge level 2 (J2) can do all of the duties of a J1 and in addition can judge the swimmers stroke between the turns and also do placing at the finish of the race.

J2S

Can do all the duties of a J2 and can also act as starter for the race/gala.

What is involved in getting qualified?

All of the qualifications follow a similar pattern. Once you have registered for the course the first thing you will do is a short theory session where one of the referees will run through the laws relating to the duties of the role. Once this is completed you will then need to do approximately a dozen 1 hour practical sessions shadowing a qualified official who will explain what you are looking for and will also explain how you report what you have seen to the referee. Once you have completed the shadowing session there will be a final assessment where you will be required to note what you have observed on a recording sheet and this will be reviewed by a referee who will have been assigned to watch the same events that you have been watching. (Don't worry if you don't see any problems with individual races – this will happen

because you are working on a genuine gala and not all races have disqualifications; in fact you don't get that many normally)

Dispelling the two main myths/problems that stop most people becoming judges !!

1 I am worried about disqualifying swimmers

This is a perfectly normal reaction, and the good news is that as a J1, J2 or J2S it is not you who disqualifies the swimmer. The final decision about whether, or not, a swimmer gets disqualified lies with the referee; the judges simply report what they have seen when they believe a swimmer has broken the laws of the stroke. It is up to the referee to be clear about the infringement that may, or may not, have taken place and whether the swimmer should be disqualified. This might mean that he/she asks you one or two questions to make sure he understands what has happened.

2 I am worried that I will make a wrong decision

Once again this is a perfectly normal reaction, especially when you are just starting out as a newly qualified official. The good news is we don't expect you to be perfect from the start – you will make mistakes, we all do. If what you report isn't an infringement, the vast majority of referees will explain why what you have observed does not break the laws of the sport or why they are going to give the benefit of the doubt to the swimmer in cases where what you have described may or may not be an infringement.

We all learn from making mistakes so don't be worried about getting things wrong.

What happens next?

Ideally I would like some of the existing J1's to put themselves forward for training as J2's. I would also like to start a new group of J1 trainees, ideally at least 10 as we are quite low on numbers of qualified officials. If you are interested in becoming an official please contact Paul Hartland as soon as possible as I would like to do the theory sessions before the summer holidays so that people can start arranging shadowing session when swimming competition starts in September. As I have now retired I can make it to the pool on most nights and whilst I prefer to have as many people as possible to do a theory session I am also quite happy to also with small groups or individuals who might not be able to make the main session.

Regards

Pat Smith