

Referee Safety Standards & Expectations of Service

The safety of referees, as well as the safety of players is important to USOA. These guidelines are recommended for keeping referees safe. Tournament directors should use these guidelines for planning their games and referee selection.

Safety Guidelines for Referee Scheduling

Dedicated referees should be scheduled when the games are scheduled. Their schedules should be issued either before or at the same as the game schedule. This gives your dedicated referees an opportunity to mentally prepare for their games.

For referees to do their jobs safely and accurately, follow these maximum limits for water referees based on games with 10 to 12-minute halves:

1. Referees should not water ref more than 2 games in a row at a time, and no more than 10 games in a day.
2. A maximum of one 3-game-in-a-row water referee scheduling is tolerable by most referees and is dependent on water temperature.
3. Limit to six pool entries per day. Increased in-out cycles add to fatigue.
4. Water break ratio 1:1. If 2 games are refereed in the water, there should be 2 games of doing other duties (ie chief refereeing, fresh air break, referee evaluating).

Adequate rests and fresh-air breaks must be provided:

- Dedicated Refs recommended schedule – WR, WR, CR, Break.
- Player Referees & Mercenary Referees – Play, WR, Break. Referees who are playing and refereeing should have at least one out-of-water break after a game/ref sequence.

Referee Level Expectations

As outlined in the Referee Training Plan, referees should be scheduled where their level and experience can be put to best use¹:

1. Dedicated referees must be level 1 or higher.
2. For all games, there should be 1 dedicated referee scheduled as a chief referee and at least 1 dedicated referee scheduled as a water referee.
3. For championship games, it is best to schedule 4 experienced dedicated referees.
4. Player Referees are only qualified to water referee. They must also have 1 experienced referee in the water and one level 1 or higher referee as chief.
5. Chief Refs should be level 1 or higher. Player Level Refs may not take this position.
6. Level One referees should not ref in championship games. Cannot be tournament referee.
7. Level 2 and 3 referees can be used for any referee position in any degree of game, including Tournament Referee. However, all referees should only serve in the level of competency they feel ready for.

¹ Items are documented in the Referee Training Plan, and are subject to change.