

UNITED STATES SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION

ALPINE OFFICIALS' MANUAL

CHAPTER VIII

**GATE JUDGES -
THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE**

09-10

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OVERVIEW

From the moment a competitor leaves the start gate until they cross the finish line, the most important officials on the hill are the Gate Judges!

Gate Judges are similar to officials in other sports in that each must make instantaneous decisions on a particular situation. However, while baseball officials call “ball”, “strike” or “foul” and football officials call “offside”, “pass interference” or “delay of game”, Gate Judges decide on whether or not a competitor has passed through a series of assigned gates correctly or has committed a “fault”. In each case, these decisions must be prompt, must be consistent and must be properly documented.

When a Gate Judge arrives at the site on race day the Race Organizers should provide some form of training. The 2001 USSA video, “The Most Important Person on the Hill”, is a good way of initiating this training. Supplies should be distributed at this time and the Gate Judges should be made aware of the day’s schedule and local requirements. Gate Judges should be in position well before the start of the race.

After the race, Gate Judges must report to the Chief Gate Judge. Each Gate Judge who has reported a fault or who has been witness to an incident leading to a fault or a request for a provisional rerun must be available to the Jury until after a final decision has been reached - settlement of any filed Protest or validation of the provisional rerun. If a Protest against disqualification is filed, the Gate Judge’s testimony is required to provide the Jury with pertinent details concerning the fault(s) or the request for a provisional rerun. The Jury will work as efficiently as possible in settling Protests, but Gate Judges may be delayed in leaving the race site while further inquiries are being made. The Technical Delegate will advise the Chief Gate Judge when the Gate Judges may be released.

Regardless of the level of competition, every race is important. The competitor may have trained for weeks, months or even years for this day. A Gate Judge’s time, interest and dedication in giving the competitor the best and fairest opportunity are appreciated.

RULES FOR GATE JUDGES

The Chief Gate Judge is responsible for communicating the current rules to the Gate Judges. There is no set way in which this must be done; this is left to the Chief Gate Judge’s assessment of the depth of knowledge and experience of the available Gate Judging staff.

Please refer to the current editions of the USSA ACR as well as the FIS ICR, and its current Precisions for sections that refer to the following:

- The Chief Gate Judge
- The Gate Judges
- Control of passage (Explanation)
- Marking the card
- Diagram requirement
- Outside assistance
- Correct passage
- Importance of the task of the Gate Judge

- Make your own decisions
- Communication with the competitors
- Immediate announcement of disqualifying faults
- Duties at the end of each run
- Duties at the end of the race
- Supplemental duties of the Gate Judge
- Location of the Gate Judge
- Quantity of Gate Judges
- Support of the Gate Judges

COMMON PROBLEMS

1. **Gate Judges not in position** or in position too late to properly observe and control the passage of the competitors through the gates. The Gate Judges, or at least a sufficient number for adequate control, must be at their stations well before the start of the race.
2. **Indecision!** Usually the result of failing to anticipate the possible decisions a Gate Judge may need to make. At difficult “combinations” of gates, the Chief Gate Judge should take the time to point out the types of situations that might be encountered at this position.
3. **Inadequate preparation.** Before the race starts:
 - Gate Judge should enter their name, the date, event, run number, gender and assigned gates on the front of the card.
 - Gate Judge should draw a diagram of assigned gates in each box provided on the card. A diagram of the fault committed is critical; missing or unclear diagrams make a Gate Judge card useless to the Jury.

Two sizes of Gate Judge Cards are available: “Fault/No Fault” and “Fault Only”. The full-size “Fault/No Fault” card requires that Gate Judges note the bib number for every competitor who pass their position and mark “F” for competitors who have committed a fault. This type of card is recommended for Giant Slalom and Slalom (technical events). It is strongly recommended that this type card NOT BE PRE-NUMBERED.

The smaller size “Fault Only” Gate Judge card requires that the Gate Judge only note the bib number and an “F” for competitors who have committed a fault. This type of card is recommended for Downhill and Super G (speed events).

Whichever card is used, a diagram of the fault must be included on the card. The same diagram, IF properly noted, can be used to indicate multiple competitors committing the same fault

4. **Delay in the collection of the Gate Judge Cards.** This delay is usually passed on to the Jury proceedings and the preparation of the Second Run Start List or the Official Results. The Chief Gate Judge is responsible for the rapid and efficient retrieval of the Gate Judge cards.
5. **Missing Gate Judge Cards.** In the event that the person collecting the cards after a run overlooked a Gate Judge, the Gate Judge should make every attempt to deliver the card to the Jury, preferably the Referee, as soon as possible. Gate Judges who have recorded faults are responsible for reporting to the Finish to provide needed information in regards to the fault.

6. **Inadequately trained Gate Judges.** As mentioned, “The Most Important Person on the Hill”, serves as a refresher for experienced Gate Judges and a training session for inexperienced ones.
7. **Inadequate clothing for extreme weather conditions.** Gate Judges must be prepared for all kinds of weather.

A Gate Judge’s job is not finished when the last competitor has crossed the finish line. The Gate Judge must be willing to serve as a witness, if needed, when a Protest of a disqualification or validation of a provisional rerun is under consideration by the Jury. The Chief Gate Judge should be present to introduce the Gate Judge and present the Gate Judge’s qualifications to the Jury.

If, at the end of the Protest period (15 minutes after posting the Report by the Referee), there is no Protest to the disqualification, the Technical Delegate will dismiss the Gate Judge from duty.

Each race site has a preferred method and variations in procedures for training Gate Judges. The following guidelines, however, should still be followed in order to achieve a fair race for all.

GATE JUDGE’S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Be at your assigned location on time - ready to officiate.
2. Wear your bib or other provided identification to enable competitors and Jury members to easily identify you.
3. Always be alert to what is going on around you.
4. Be prepared to stand on the course; ski or snowboard equipment is not allowed.
5. Take a position above your gates so you can move down to make repairs or to check a competitor’s tracks.
6. Be alert to faults above and below your assigned gates; check to see that the proper Gate Judge has seen and recorded them.
7. Observe and record AND DIAGRAM faults you observe through your assigned gates.
8. Observe and record any interference in your gate area (if this occurs, the competitor must immediately leave the course in order to request a provisional rerun). *Do not include cryptic notes on your card...keep comments clear and concise!*
9. Prepare your card in advance including sample diagrams.
10. Reply promptly, properly, and clearly to a competitor’s request for assistance with either: “GO” or “BACK”. (This is the communication system most commonly used. Rule containing this exact wording has been removed from the FIS ICR, but it is the accepted response at USSA-sanctioned events and remains in the USSA ACR.)
11. Maintain your gates between each competitor.
12. Do not interfere with other officials or ski through gates (including the Finish Line) when going to and from your assigned position.

GATE JUDGE’S RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE RULE BOOKS

1. Record a fault on the card WITH a clear diagram of the competitor’s path.
2. Personally review each fault with the Chief Gate Judge.
3. Remain available for Jury meetings if you have marked any faults on your card.
4. Remain available for Jury meetings if you have any information concerning the validity of a request for a provisional rerun.

5. Make sure gate poles are promptly reset in their original vertical position whenever they are dislodged. (Gate positions are dyed at the discretion of the Jury.)
6. Properly replace broken gate poles and torn flags.
7. Maintain the competitors' track through your gates.
8. Do not discuss faults with coaches, competitors or spectators.

LEGAL PASSAGE

1. Competitors must pass through every gate. Both feet and both ski tips must cross the gate line - an imaginary line connecting the bases of the innermost poles of each gate.
2. For *single pole Slalom*, both feet and ski tips must pass the turning pole on the same side following the natural course of the Slalom. If a competitor has to climb back up to a gate, the racer must climb up to the level of the turning pole, horizontally to the fall line.
3. Gates may be entered from either direction and in any order as long as both feet and both ski tips cross the gate line.
4. Feet and ski tips may be off the snow, but in this case both feet and ski tips must pass through the plane defined by the gate line and the gate poles in their vertical position.
5. If gate poles have been deflected from the vertical before the competitor's feet have passed, then the feet and ski tips must pass where the gate pole(s) had been when they were vertical.
6. Competitors may legally enter and exit a gate from the same side, as long as both feet and ski tips cross the gate line.
7. The decision handed down by the Gate Judge must be clear and unbiased. The Gate Judge must declare a fault only when he or she is convinced that a fault has been committed.

OTHER FAULTS

Gate Judges must watch for and report faults for reasons other than gate passage:

1. Competitor must not receive outside assistance.
2. Competitor may not use the gate poles for aid or move them in any manner except when passing through the gate in ski racing action.
3. Slow or fallen competitors must yield to overtaking competitors.
4. Competitors may not obstruct or interfere with other competitors or with officials performing their duties.
5. Competitors must respect the directions of officials (e.g. "move back from the course").
6. Competitors must respect the rules for course inspection.

GATE JUDGE'S CONTROL CARD

1. Each Gate Judge must have a suitable control card.
2. Gate Judges should prepare their card(s) in advance:
 - a. Date, type of event, run number, men or women, etc.
 - b. Numbers of the assigned gates.
 - c. Name of Gate Judge, relief and/or assistant's name.
(Replacement Gate Judges should indicate the change on the Gate Judge card.)
 - d. Sample diagrams of assigned gates drawn in advance that can be used to document faults.

GATE JUDGE'S ROLE AS A CRITICAL OBSERVER

Although a Gate Judge has no immediate responsibility for any gates other than those assigned, they should observe activity above and below their gates in the normal passage of the competitor, noting any evidence that may be corroborated in later discussions with the Jury.

In Slalom and Giant Slalom, a Gate Judge's responsibility begins with the approach of the competitor to the first gate they control and ends when the competitor has passed through the last of their assigned gates.

In Downhill and Super G, the Gate Judge watches the entire stretch visible both above and below their assigned gates.

COMMUNICATIONS

Gate Judges play an integral part in an efficiently run race by being on time, by working quickly and by being fair to all competitors.

Bib numbers for competitors abandoning the course - DNF's, should be noted. If known, the status of fallen competitors should be relayed, e.g. fallen, hiking, injured and needs assistance, etc.

GIVING INFORMATION TO A COMPETITOR

1. In the case of an error or a fall, the competitor is permitted to ask the Gate Judge if a fault was committed.
2. The Gate Judge, if asked, must inform a competitor if he has committed a fault that would lead to disqualification.
3. Acceptable replies, and what is commonly used, are:
 - "Back" if the gate has been missed, OR
 - "Go" if the gate in question has been correctly passed
4. The Gate Judge should respond quickly, accurately and loudly.
5. The competitor himself is fully responsible for his action, and in this respect, he cannot hold the Gate Judge responsible.

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

The Chief Gate Judge should refer to the following list of suggested supplies and equipment:

- Gate Judge Cards (Chapter VI – Working Papers)
- Gate Judge Instruction sheets (1 per Gate Judge)
- Waterproof protection for the cards
- Clipboards for holding Gate Judge cards with waterproof protection and strings attached
- Pencils - 2 for each Gate Judge and a small pencil sharpener
- Gate Judge bibs, arm bands or other type of identifier