

INTERNATIONAL POWERLIFTING FEDERATION

PLATFORM REFEREE'S BRIEFING

Based on the IPF Technical Rulebook

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Revised and Updated — 2026 by Nicolas Urioste

PREAMBLE

Prior to the start of each lifting session, the Technical Controller and Platform Referees shall be briefed by a Member of the Technical Committee, the President of the Jury, or a designated Jury Member.

This briefing covers the standards of judging to be applied consistently throughout the competition. Referees are reminded that:

- All decisions must be made independently and without influence from fellow referees.
- Referees shall abstain from commentary and must not receive verbal or written accounts about the competition's progress while on duty.
- Integrity is paramount. Favouring home lifters or any particular athlete will not be tolerated.
- All doubt must be resolved in favour of the lifter — but only in cases of genuine perceptual uncertainty, not as a mechanism to lower objective technical standards.

■ **The principle 'all doubt in favour of the lifter' applies to perceptual ambiguity (e.g. did the bar brush the rack?), NOT to defined technical standards such as squat depth or hand spacing.**

1. PRIOR TO LIFT-OFF — TECHNICAL CONTROLLER & EQUIPMENT CHECK

1.1 Personal Equipment Inspection

The Technical Controller shall attend the gear check and ensure all lifters are properly attired before mounting the platform. Items to verify include:

- T-shirt sleeves not pushed or rolled up onto the deltoid.
- No apparel worn inside out.
- Singlet straps worn over the shoulders at all times.
- Wraps not extending beyond prescribed widths or lengths.
- Wrist wrap securing loop removed from thumb prior to the lift.
- Supportive shirt (Equipped only) covering the whole of the deltoid area.
- Belt worn on the outside of the lifting suit, maximum width 10 cm.
- Knee sleeves (Classic): maximum 7 mm thick, 30 cm long, not in contact with suit or socks. Knee sleeves may be worn over a long-legged singlet but NOT underneath it.
- Knee wraps (Equipped only): maximum 2 m length, not to exceed 30 cm coverage. Cannot be combined with knee sleeves.
- Medical tape: only two layers around the thumbs unless jury approval granted for injury.
- Shoes or boots must be properly fastened. Sole thickness must not exceed 5 cm.
- Hats are strictly forbidden on the platform. Hijab is permitted.

- Athletes may wear necklaces; no part shall be placed in the mouth while on the platform.

If a lifter appears on the platform wearing an illegal item not previously caught at gear check, the lifter shall be immediately disqualified from the competition.

1.2 Equipment & Platform

Before the session begins, referees shall jointly verify:

- Platform dimensions: minimum 2.5 m x 2.5 m, maximum 4.0 m x 4.0 m, not exceeding 10 cm height.
- Barbell: straight, knurled, 25 kg with collars (2.5 kg each, always used). Diameter 28–29 mm. A spare bar should be ready in case of damage.
- Discs: correct color coding (15 kg yellow, 20 kg blue, 25 kg red). Loaded heaviest innermost, first disc face-in.
- Scales: electronic, calibrated within one year, capacity to 180 kg.
- Timing clocks visible from platform and warm-up area.
- Scoreboard visible and up to date.

2. SQUAT

2.1 Starting Position

The lifter faces the front of the platform. The barbell is placed horizontally across the shoulders at a height no lower than the posterior deltoid level.

- Hands, thumbs, and fingers must maintain complete contact with the bar throughout the lift. The thumbs are NOT required to wrap around the bar.
- Hands may be positioned anywhere on the bar inside or in contact with the inner collars.
- Bar placement across the shoulders is not limited to a particular position.

Side referees must keep their arm raised to signal the Chief Referee if, prior to the commencement signal:

- The lifter's knees are not locked (slight deviation allowable for balance).
- The lifter is not standing sufficiently upright.
- Hands or fingers are not in complete contact with the bar.

■ Chief Referee: If after 5 seconds the lifter has not corrected the position, give the 'REPLACE' command with a backward arm movement. Inform the lifter of the reason.

2.2 Execution

- Upon the 'SQUAT' signal, the lifter bends the knees and lowers the body.
- Only ONE descent attempt is allowed. The attempt is deemed to have commenced when the lifter's knees unlock.
- MINIMUM DEPTH: The top surface of the legs at the hip joint must be LOWER than the top of the knees.
- The lifter must recover to an upright position with knees locked. No double bouncing or downward movement during ascent.
- Upon the 'RACK' signal, the lifter returns the bar to the racks. The lifter must stay with the bar during this process.
- Foot movement after the 'RACK' signal is NOT cause for failure.

The lifter is NOT allowed to walk out through the front of the rack after completion of the lift. This is a procedural infraction, not a disqualification cause listed in 4.1.1, and should be treated accordingly.

2.3 Causes for Disqualification — Squat

#	CAUSE FOR DISQUALIFICATION
1	Failure to observe the Chief Referee's signals at commencement or completion.
2	Double bouncing at the bottom of the lift, or any downward movement during the ascent.
3	Failure to assume an upright position with knees locked at commencement or completion.
4	Stepping backward or forward or moving the feet laterally. (Rocking between ball and heel is permitted.)
5	Failure to bend the knees and lower the body until the top surface of the legs at the hip joint is lower than the top of the knees.
6	Contact with the bar or the lifter by the spotter/loaders between the Chief Referee's signals, in order to make the lift easier.
7	Contact of the elbows or upper arms with the legs, if it provides support. Slight non-supportive contact may be ignored.
8	Any dropping or dumping of the bar after completion of the lift.
9	Failure to comply with any requirement outlined under the Rules of Performance for the Squat.

3. BENCH PRESS

3.1 Starting Position

- The lifter lies on their back with head, shoulders, and buttocks in contact with the bench surface.
- Feet must be flat on the floor (as flat as the shape of the shoe allows). Foot movement is permissible but feet must remain flat on the platform.

- Hands, thumbs, and fingers must completely grip the bar with a THUMB AROUND GRIP. This is mandatory.
- Hand spacing: not to exceed 81 cm measured between the forefingers. Both forefingers must be within or touching the 81 cm marks.
- The reverse grip is FORBIDDEN.
- The lifter is NOT allowed to enter the rack from the head side of the bench.
- Hair must not hide the back of the head when lying down. Referees may require the lifter to affix hair accordingly.
- During setup, the athlete is NOT allowed to place their feet on the bench.

Side referees must keep their arm raised if, prior to the 'START' signal:

- Arms are not straight or elbows not locked.
- Hands/fingers not gripping or thumbs not around the bar.
- Head, shoulders, or buttocks not in contact with the bench (at least 50% of buttocks must be on the bench).
- Feet not flat on the platform or blocks.
- Feet touching bench legs or supports.
- Hands exceeding the 81 cm marks.

■ **Chief Referee: If after 5 seconds the position is not corrected, give the 'REPLACE' command with a backward arm movement.**

3.2 Execution

- Signal to begin: downward arm movement with audible command 'START'.
- The lifter lowers the bar to the chest or abdominal area. The underside of BOTH elbow joints must be lowered to level with or BELOW the top surface of each respective shoulder joint.
- The bar shall NOT touch the belt.
- The bar must be held motionless on the chest/abdominal area before the 'PRESS' command is given. A count of approximately one second is recommended for consistency.
- The bar must touch the stomach: command is 'PRESS'. Bar stopping above chest after 3 seconds: command is 'RACK'.
- Upon 'PRESS', the lifter returns the bar to straight arms' length, elbows locked. Uneven extension is allowed; simultaneous lockout is NOT required.
- Upon 'RACK' signal, the bar must return to the same position as the start.

3.3 Causes for Disqualification — Bench Press

#	CAUSE FOR DISQUALIFICATION
1	Failure to observe the Chief Referee's signals at commencement, during, or completion of the lift.

2	Any change in the elected lifting position: raising of head, shoulders, or buttocks from the bench, or lateral movement of hands on the bar.
3	Heaving or sinking the bar into the chest/abdominal area after it is motionless, so as to make the lift easier.
4	Utilizing upper body thrust to initiate upward movement of the bar from the chest.
5	Any downward movement of the whole bar during the course of being pressed out.
6	Bar not lowered to chest or abdominal area, or bar touching the belt.
7	Failure to press the bar to straight arms' length, elbows locked, at completion.
8	Contact with the bar or lifter by spotter/loaders between the Chief Referee's signals, in order to make the lift easier.
9	Any contact of the lifter's feet with the bench or its supports. Lifting of the feet is not allowed.
10	Deliberate contact between the bar and the bar rest supports during the lift.
11	Failure to lower the underside of both elbow joints level with or below the top surface of each respective shoulder joint.
12	Failure to comply with any requirement outlined under the Rules of Performance for the Bench Press.

4. DEADLIFT

4.1 Execution

- The lifter faces the front of the platform. The bar is laid horizontally in front of the lifter's feet, gripped with an optional grip in both hands.
- The lifter raises the bar until standing erect. Any rising of the bar or deliberate attempt to do so counts as an attempt.
- On completion: knees must be locked straight. The front bundle of the deltoid muscle must be placed behind the imaginary projection of the bar (shoulders back).
- The 'DOWN' signal is given only when the bar is held motionless and the lifter is in the apparent finished position.
- If the bar settles slightly as the shoulders come back on completion, this is NOT a reason for disqualification.
- 'Maintain control': if the fingers open but the bar remains hooked or in the palms until returned to the platform, this is NOT a cause for failure.
- Supporting the bar on the thighs IS a cause for disqualification. If the bar merely edges up the thigh but is not supported, this is NOT cause for failure. The lifter should benefit in all decisions of doubt.

4.2 Causes for Disqualification — Deadlift

#	CAUSE FOR DISQUALIFICATION
1	Any downward movement of the bar before it reaches the final position.

2	Failure to stand erect with the shoulders back (front deltoid bundle behind imaginary bar projection).
3	Failure to lock the knees straight at the completion of the lift.
4	Supporting the bar on the thighs during the performance of the lift.
5	Stepping backward or forward or moving the feet laterally. (Rocking between ball and heel is permitted. Foot movement after 'DOWN' command is NOT cause for failure.)
6	Lowering the bar before receiving the Chief Referee's 'DOWN' signal.
7	Allowing the bar to return to the platform without maintaining control with both hands (releasing the bar from the palms).
8	Failure to comply with any requirement outlined under the Rules of Performance for the Deadlift.

5. REFEREE SIGNALS SUMMARY

LIFT	COMMENCEMENT	COMPLETION
SQUAT	Downward arm movement + 'SQUAT'	Backward arm movement + 'RACK'
BENCH PRESS	Downward arm + 'START' / During lift: upward arm + 'PRESS'	Backward arm movement + 'RACK'
DEADLIFT	No signal required	Downward arm movement + 'DOWN'

■ When a lifter FAILS during a squat or bench press, the command is 'RACK'. 'REPLACE' is ONLY used before the commencement signal if the lifter has not corrected their position within 5 seconds.

6. BAR LOADING & CLEANING

6.1 Bar Loading

- Do NOT rely solely on spotter/loaders. It is the JOINT responsibility of all three referees to verify the correct weight on the bar.
- Referees may be issued with loading charts for this purpose.
- The bar must be loaded progressively (rising bar principle). No weight reductions within a round except for errors.
- In IPF competitions, bar weight must always be a multiple of 2.5 kg, except for record attempts.

6.2 Cleaning the Bar

- Be inclined to grant the request. All requests must be made to the Chief Referee, NOT directly to the spotter/loaders.
- **COMPULSORY:** In the final round of the deadlift, the bar must be cleaned before every attempt.
- In any other round, the bar shall be cleaned upon request by the lifter or coach.

7. FAILURE CARDS & LIGHTS

7.1 Lights

- White light = GOOD LIFT. Red light = NO LIFT.
- Lights must be activated together, not separately.
- Keep the master switch on for a minimum of 3 seconds (up to 5 seconds if covered by TV/broadcast).
- For emergency use, referees will use small white or red flags/paddles on the Chief Referee's command 'FLAGS'.

7.2 Failure Cards (Paddles)

Failure cards are raised ONLY after the red lights have appeared, for a count of approximately 3 seconds. The color of the card indicates the reason for failure:

CARD	REASON FOR FAILURE
RED (1)	Squat: Insufficient depth. Bench: Bar not reaching chest/abdominal area or touching belt / elbow depth failure. Deadlift: Knees not locked / failure to stand erect.
BLUE (2)	Squat: Knees not locked / double bounce. Bench: Bar moved downward during press / arms not locked at completion / failure to lock arms before 'START'. Deadlift: Downward bar movement / bar supported on thighs.
YELLOW (3)	Squat: Foot movement / failure to observe signals / spotter contact / elbow contact. Bench: Heaving/sinking / upper body thrust / body position change / failure to observe signals. Deadlift: Lowering before 'DOWN' signal / releasing bar / foot movement / failure to observe signals.

8. RECORD ATTEMPTS

- Ensure record discs are immediately available before the session starts.
- World and International records may only be set at IPF-sanctioned competitions with IPF-approved equipment.
- A new record is only valid if it exceeds the previous record by at least 0.5 kg.
- For record attempts, the bar weight must be at least 0.5 kg in excess of the current record (need not be a multiple of 2.5 kg).
- Masters/Sub-Junior/Junior records that are NOT a multiple of 2.5 kg CANNOT be requested at an Open Championship.
- If a record attempt is successful, it will be added to both the individual lift total and the competition total.

- Before a world record attempt, the lifter will be inspected by the Technical Controller.

If a lifter making a record attempt is granted a new attempt (due to loading error, spotter error, etc.), the lifter MUST always follow themselves, regardless of the round.

9. INSTANT REPLAY (NEW — 2026 RULEBOOK)

The Jury may utilize instant replay technology as an official tool to review lifts at IPF-sanctioned competitions where the necessary equipment is available.

- The instant replay system shall be operated only by the Jury or a designated official under Jury supervision.
- The Jury may initiate a review on its own discretion or upon a protest lodged in accordance with the rules.
- The decision of the Jury after instant replay review is FINAL and binding.
- The use of instant replay shall not unduly delay the competition.

■ Instant replay may only be employed at IPF Calendar events or competitions where the necessary technical equipment and personnel are available.

10. JURY

- The Jury should only overrule very clear and obvious mistakes by the referees.
- If the Jury considers that a referee's standard (e.g. squat depth, bench press elbow depth) is not meeting requirements, it shall FIRST notify the referees of the standard required. Only if improvement does not follow may the Jury take further action, including replacing referees.
- The Jury may, by majority vote, replace any referee deemed incompetent. A warning must be given prior to any dismissal.
- Only a 2-to-1 referees' decision can be considered for reversal by the Jury. A unanimous referee decision cannot be overturned.
- Reversal requires: unanimous vote (3-member Jury) or majority vote (5-member Jury).
- The Jury may grant a lifter a further attempt if a serious officiating error contrary to technical rules occurs.
- Music: if accompanying the lifting, the Jury determines the volume. Music stops when the lifter takes the bar in squat/bench press or begins the pull in the deadlift.

11. TIMING & GENERAL CONDUCT

11.1 Time Allowances

- Lifters have ONE MINUTE from the activation of the lights to begin their next attempt.

- Lifters must leave the platform within 30 seconds of completing an attempt.
- Compensatory time for small groups: 5 lifters +1 min; 4 lifters +2 min; 3 lifters +3 min (maximum).
- Lifters following themselves are allowed 4 minutes (last but one: 3 min; last but two: 2 min).

11.2 General Rules

- Referee cards must be placed on the Jury table before referees take up their platform positions.
- All three referees must sign the official score sheets and protocol at the end of the session.
- A referee shall not attempt to influence the decisions of fellow referees.
- A lifter shall not wrap, adjust costume, or use ammonia within view of the public. Adjusting the belt is the only exception.
- Athlete's hair should be fixed (braided or tied back) so as not to interfere with the referees' ability to judge the lift.
- Lifters must enter and exit the platform in a respectful manner. Discarding the belt on the floor or conduct harmful to the integrity of the sport may result in disqualification.
- Only one coach is allowed in the coaching zone during the competition. Coaches must adhere to the dress code and are not permitted to take pictures or make videos from the coaching zone.

INTEGRITY: Favouring home lifters or any particular athlete will not be tolerated and may result in removal from officiating duties.

11.3 Athlete Hair — Bench Press

The hair must not hide the back of the head when the lifter is lying on the bench. The Jury or Referees may require the lifter to affix their hair accordingly to properly perform and judge the Bench Press.

12. KEY JUDGING PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE	APPLICATION
All doubt in favour of the lifter	Applies to PERCEPTUAL uncertainty only (e.g. bar barely touched rack). Does NOT apply to defined technical standards.
Objective standards are non-negotiable	Squat depth, hand spacing (81 cm), thumb-around grip in bench, knees locked in deadlift — these have no grey area.
Referees are independent	No referee shall attempt to influence another. Decisions are made individually.
Catch-all clause (Rulebook Sec. 2.9)	The 'failure to comply with general description' yellow card covers procedural matters not explicitly listed — not a tool to elevate minor infractions to disqualifications.

Slight contact rule

Minor contact of elbows/upper arms with legs in squat, or bar barely touching rack in bench, may be ignored if it provides no aid to the lifter.