



USMS Deck Officials Roles and Responsibilities - Starter STARTER HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Equipment and Facilities:

- Meet management should attempt to have a backup starting system available, particularly for championship level meets.
- Some means of voice amplification should be provided. The ETS comes with at least one external speaker and can accommodate more. Usually, because of crowd noise, it is advisable to use, at least two external speakers—one attached to the main system and the other at the opposite side of the pool.
- Copy of events to be swum (program) and a pencil. If you have a program or heat sheet, mark off the heats as they are swum and note the empty lanes.
- Disqualification slips (for false starts).

Things to Think About Before the Meet Starts:

- Does the Referee need your assistance before the meet. Is it your responsibility to appoint the Head Timer, to see that a sufficient number of timers are available, and that they are properly briefed. Do you need to assist with marshaling while the Referee is briefing the officials or dealing with other matters.
- If an Electronic Timing System is being used, make sure the equipment, including the pads and buttons, is operating properly. The equipment should be checked again when the warm-ups are over.
- What is the likely traffic flow on the deck. Take steps to make sure swimmers and others cannot walk in front of you and the Referee during a start.
- What additional instructions should you give?
- Do the starting blocks need support? If so, how will you handle this problem?
- What recall procedures will be used? Discuss with the Referee and make sure you know what the procedure will be. It will usually be the Referee's whistle.
- How will you and the Referee confirm a false start? Where will Referee stand during the starts? Will it be different for backstroke starts? Will he assist you in making sure the feet are in a legal position prior to backstroke starts? How will he signal you if there are problems?
- Are there relays in this meet? If so, will dual confirmation be used for judging the relay take-offs? Does the Referee expect you to participate in this? If so, how?
- Does the Referee expect you to handle any extra duties (e.g., act as a Stroke and Turn Judge)?

Starting:

- Keep track of the event and heat number. Mark each heat off on your heat sheet as it is swum.
- Obtain a projected "time line" before a session begins. Periodically check to see how the meet's progress compares with the time line and adjust, if necessary. However do **not** rush the starting commands even if the meet is running late. This is not fair to the swimmers and will likely lead to false starts, with an associated delay.
- Before the meet starts, *if some or all of the events are not pre-seeded*, coordinate with the Computer Operator and/or Administrative Referee and ask to be advised of how many "actual"

heats there will be. Then, prior to each event advise the judges over the loudspeaker the number of actual heats.

- It is the swimmer's job to report to the Clerk of Course (Positive Check-in) area—when used—in time for the proper lane assignment. If there is no Positive Check-in area or lane assignments have been posted following a check-in, the swimmers are responsible for ensuring that they are at their lane, ready to swim, when it is time for their heat.
- Get the attention of the swimmers. If swimmers get on the blocks or in the water before the referee's whistle, do what the referee directs. (We do not want swimmers commanded off the blocks only to be put back up in quick order.)
- Be prepared to give hand signals with your voice commands for hearing impaired swimmers.
- A calm conversational tone and voice inflection is *critical*. Speak *clearly, distinctly and slowly*. Do NOT shout or "bark" commands. That only tends to *cause* false starts.
- Do NOT preface the "Take your mark" command with any other words or phrases, such as "Swimmers" "Swimmers ready" "Ladies" "Gentlemen" or "Shake it out now"!
- If one or more swimmers enter the pool before the starting device sounds or before the command to "Stand," all such swimmers should normally be charged with a false start.
- The Starter has authority to relieve a swimmer of the responsibility for a false start if the action might have been caused by a reaction to the Starter's instruction to "Stand." This authority, however, should be used with discretion, to preclude abuse of the main intent of the false start rule.
- Do NOT attempt to compete with excessive spectator noise during the start. Insist on **reasonable** quiet. (The Referee must enforce this!)
- Avoid using a fixed timing pattern to your starting routine.
- Continue to watch the swimmers for 10-15 meters after each start. Observe to make sure there is no doubt it was a fair start.
- When an Electronic Timing System is being used, inform the operator about empty lanes.
- Be sure the preceding race is complete before doing anything that would cause swimmers in the next heat to either enter the water or step up on the starting blocks..
- When using a bell to signal the "bell lap" in a distance event, ring it from the time the swimmer comes under the backstroke flags, turns at the wall and returns to the flags.

Common Starting Problems:

- Swimmer not paying attention to the Starter, and who, thus, takes his position late or not at all.
- Swimmer who continues to move towards a starting position, never makes it; and eventually falls off balance.
- Swimmer who thinks he has the starter's "starting pattern" figured out and is trying to "jump the start." Lately, this is only done occasionally by less experienced swimmers.
- Swimmer who assumes a starting position very slowly, hoping to start on a recoil just as the starting device is activated and, thereby, gaining a split-second advantage. (Solution: Normally just wait, after last swimmer is still, wait just a little more, then start. If deemed toooooo slow, stand the swimmers up—stand the backstrokers down—and caution the offenders.)
- Novice swimmer who does not change his position in response to "Take Your Mark.." The rules do NOT specify what the "starting position" should be other than that at least one foot must be at the forward edge of the starting block. A swimmer does NOT have to crouch down. The swimmer is only required to be motionless immediately prior to the start.
- Starter uncomfortable because swimmer(s) are looking at him. (Swimmer are not required to look straight ahead (this would be very difficult for a hearing impaired swimmer). A swimmer may look at the Starter or anywhere else prior to the start!)
- Starter getting the laps mixed up in the distance events. If the event requires a warning signal,

count the laps yourself. Do NOT depend on the Timer or the Counter at the other end of the pool. USMS does NOT require that each swimmer have a lap counter at the opposite end of the pool. Also, USMS Lap Counters may visually signal laps to their swimmer in either *ascending* or *descending* order, and they may signal from the sides rather than the ends of the pool. It is best to track each swimmer to make sure you spot a lead change versus lapping. Stay focused. If you don't, you will lose count and run the risk of signaling the bell lap at the wrong time or over the wrong lane.