

Officiating Masters Swimming

USMS Officials Committee

Updated April 2011

“All competitive swimming events held under corporate sanction shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules which are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition.”

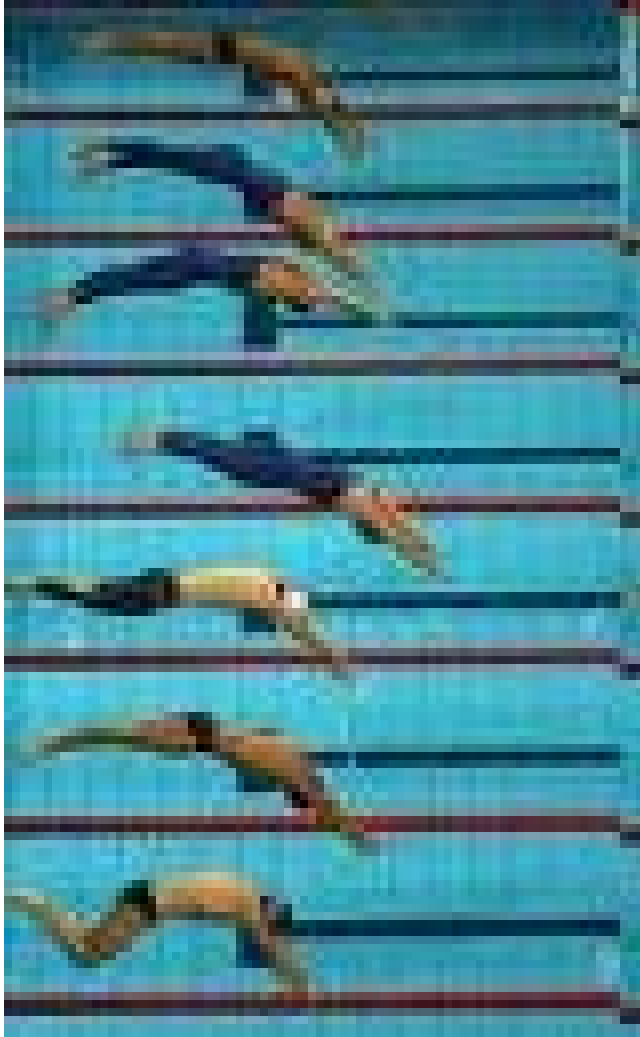
Part 1 of the U.S. Masters Swimming Rules and Regulations

What does that mean?

Fair and Equitable

- Judging should be consistent amongst all of the officials at a meet.
- Judging should be consistent from meet to meet.
- All of the rules are enforced; we don't individually choose to enforce some rules and ignore others.
- The rules are enforced the same across all age groups and levels of ability.
- Officials should be neutral in their enforcement of the rules. Don't favor one team over another and don't favor one swimmer over another.
 - All officials at USMS sanctioned meets are representatives of USMS; not a specific team, club, workout group, or LMSC.

USMS Officials



What are “USMS Officials”?

Come to think of it, why do we need to worry about officiating at all?

Don't we just use USA-Swimming Officials?

- Who is a USMS Official?
 - Anyone who officiates at a USMS sanctioned meet, regardless of how they earned their certification.
- What are the primary goals of the USMS Officials Program?
 - To educate our officials on our rules so we can achieve the “fair and equitable” standard of officiating.
 - To increase the pool of qualified officials so we can offer more opportunities to compete for our membership.

More Officials = More Meets Well Trained Officials = Well Run Meets

Mental Traps



True or False?

- Everything you need to know is in the rule book.
- A swimmer should not be disqualified if the action does not create an advantage.
- A swimmer should not be disqualified if they only do something once.
- We do not disqualify 75-and-overs.
- Officials are mean and are judged on how many DQ slips they produce in each meet.

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ALL FALSE!

Mental Traps



- The rule book is the anchor, but officials will have to use their judgment in many situations not explicitly covered.
- Creating an advantage for the swimmer is not a criteria for disqualification.
- There are no “do overs” in swimming.
- The rules apply to swimmers of all ages and ability levels.
- A good official knows the difference between a “call” and a “no call”.

A Good Story.....



I was stationed as the turn judge between lanes 3 and 4. At the first turn, the swimmer in lane 4 touched with his right hand. The left hand never touched the wall. After the turn, the swimmer turned and pushed off the wall. The swimmer should be disqualified for failing to touch with two hands simultaneously.

A Good Story....

Where were you?



I was stationed as the turn judge between lanes 3 and 4. At the first turn, the swimmer in lane 4 touched with his right hand. The left hand never touched the wall. After the turn, the swimmer turned and pushed off the wall. The swimmer should be disqualified for failing to touch with two hands simultaneously.

The Meet Referee should clearly establish jurisdictions at the start of the meet. The Referee needs to determine whether the official had the appropriate vantage point to make the observation.

A Good Story....

What did you see?



I was stationed as the turn judge between lanes 3 and 4. **At the first turn, the swimmer in lane 4 touched with his right hand. The left hand never touched the wall. After the turn, the swimmer turned and pushed off the wall. The swimmer should be disqualified for failing to touch with two hands simultaneously.**

The Officials Observation and how it is communicated to the Referee is just as important as the rule citation. Officials are there to observe and record. Swimmers always receive the benefit of the doubt.

A Good Story....

What rule was violated?



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Disqualifications must be clearly anchored to rules.

A Not-So-Good Story....



I was over at the corner of the deep end. I didn't make it back in time to my position after getting some coffee. I waved to a friend up in the stands and when I looked back at the pool, I thought I saw the swimmer over in lane 4 with only one hand on the wall. So, it must have been a one-hand touch. I'm pretty sure it was the last heat, but I forgot to write it down.

Meet Officials



Beth is a new Meet Director for a masters meet in Timbuktu. She has no idea how to get started in finding officials. How many does she need? Who is qualified to be the Referee? Where does she look?

Minimum Number of Officials

- One Referee and One Starter.
 - The Referee and Starter may not be the same person.
 - The Referee and Starter should preferably be stationed on the same side of the pool unless also serving as stroke and turn officials.
- A minimum of two Stroke and Turn Officials are required.
 - Referee and Starter may double if it is feasible.
 - USMS Rules should be interpreted as a minimum requirement.
 - Jurisdictions should be clearly defined.

The right number of officials is not necessarily the minimum number. It depends on the size of the meet, the venue, the format, the experience level of officials, and other factors.



Two Examples of Requirements for Officials

Your meet may be somewhere in between!

	“Big” Meet: National, Zone, Large LMSC Championship	“Small” Meet: Local LMSC Meet
Meet Referee	Dedicated meet referee with advanced certification to oversee all functions.	An experienced official may be able to handle all of referee duties at a small meet.
Administrative Referee	Dedicated admin. Referee with advanced certification to oversee all administrative functions.	
Deck Referee	At least one per course at all times. Multiple deck referees for long or multi-session meets.	
Starters	At least one per course at all times. Multiple starters for long or multi-session meets. May designate a Head Starter.	One starter may be sufficient, but make sure to plan for adequate relief.
Chief Judges	One or two per course desired.	Enough to ensure fair and equitable judging and plan for adequate rotation and relief.
Stroke and Turn Judges	As many as you can get! Plan for adequate relief at long meets.	
Administrative Officials	As needed for check-in, seeding, timing system operation, preparation of results under the direction of the Admin Referee.	One timing system operator and one recorder may be sufficient.

- Referees, Starters, and Stroke and Turn Judges must be certified in these capacities.
 - Certified starters and stroke and turn judges may serve as referees if the LMSC provides training on the specific duties of the referee.
 - Uncertified officials may perform the duties of starters and stroke and turn judges if they receive training on the specific duties of these positions and are under the supervision of a certified official.
- USMS recognizes the following certifications for officials:
 - United States Masters Swimming, Inc.
 - USA-Swimming.
 - NCAA (College Swimming Officials Association)
 - YMCA
 - High School Federations

Role of the Meet Referee

The primary role of the Meet Referee is to:

- A. Blow the whistle.
- B. Check the chlorine level in the pool.
- C. Make sure nobody has any fun.
- D. Oversee all officials, assigning and instructing them, enforce all applicable rules, deciding all questions relating to the conduct of the meet, over-ruling officials on points of rule interpretations, or on judgment decisions pertaining to actions to which the referee has personally observed.***
- E. Get the doughnuts.
- F. Both D and E.

There is more to being a referee than just knowing the rules!

Role of the Meet Referee

The job of the Meet Referee begins:

- A. At the start of the first heat.
- B. The first time someone observes a potential infraction.
- C. *Well before the start of the meet, even in the early planning phase, and especially with the assignment of officials.***
- D. When the doughnuts arrive.

Role of the Meet Referee

The job of the Meet Referee ends:

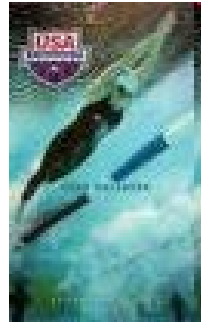
- A. At the conclusion of the final heat.
- B. When all record applications have been signed and protests resolved.
- C. *Well after the meet, including evaluating how the meet was conducted and how the officials performed, and ensuring that this information is provided to LMSC leadership.***
- D. When all of the doughnuts have been eaten.

Take a proactive approach in recruiting a qualified Referee early, involve the Referee in planning for the meet, and ask for a post-meet report that will help improve future meets.

Which Rule Book Should We Use?



A



B



C



D



E

F. Who needs a rule book?

Which Rule Book?



All meet participants need to be clear on what rules are being used.

Ask officials to only carry/display the USMS rule book at USMS sanctioned competitions.

USMS Rules and Regulations



- USMS rules are based on Articles 101, 102, and 105 of the USA Swimming Rule Book.
 - Appendix B of the USMS rule book provides a summary of rules differences between USMS and other NGBs.
 - But...Appendix B is NOT a substitute for the rule book.
- There are differences affecting Starts, Strokes, Turns, and Relays.
 - Butterfly Kick
 - Forward Start
 - Relays
- There are differences in Administrative Rules and Facility Standards.

True or False:

- National and World Records can be set just about anywhere.
- A typical masters meet will include swimmers of all ages and ability levels.
- There will typically be some “first timers” who will not be familiar with how meets are run and what they should do.
- Not all swimmers are affiliated with a club and many will not have a coach with them at meets.
- Medical emergencies can and do occur at masters meets.

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ALL TRUE!

Masters Competition

- Establish a process for checking and verifying records.
- Check compliance with pool length certification requirements.
- Be on the lookout for situations that can be dealt with before they become issues.
- Establish a practical means to notify swimmers of infractions.
- Consider the possibility of medical emergencies and how you will deal with them.

Preventive officiating can help create a positive experience for both the experienced swimmers and the “first timers”.

Standards for Success

- Keep a roster of Officials as a resource for Meet Directors.
 - Utilize other NGB contacts at the local level.
- Proactively select or assign Meet Referees and ensure that they are educated on USMS Rules.
 - LMSC should take ownership of this process.
 - Use Meet Referees to educate other officials.
- Require mandatory pre-meet briefings for all officials.
 - Do not assume officials from other NGBs are familiar with unique masters rules and aspects of our competition.
- Use Meet Referee reports to assess “lessons learned’ after each meet.
 - Communication in both directions is key!

Situations and Frequently Asked Questions

- USMS Rules and Regulations
- www.usms.org/rules
- USMS LMSC Guide to Operations
- <http://www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/>
- USA-Swimming Education and Training Resources
- <http://www.usaswimming.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=1509&Alias=Rainbow&Lang=en>

Situation



Mary is swimming the 200-meter butterfly. After the start, she takes a breaststroke kick while she is submerged, then starts to pull. Her first pull brings her to the surface.

She continues to swim and alternates breaststroke kick with butterfly kick throughout the race, but takes only one breaststroke kick each time she pulls.

Before the first turn, she takes one last breaststroke kick, but then touches the wall with two hands before taking another pull. She turns, and then takes two breaststroke kicks before the first pull and starts swimming again.

At the second turn, she takes multiple butterfly kicks off of the wall without a breaststroke kick. On the final length, she stops doing the breaststroke kick and takes 3-4 butterfly kicks with each pull.

Butterfly Kick Rule

- The use of breaststroke kick is permitted in Butterfly.
- Dolphin kick and breaststroke kick may be used interchangeably throughout the race.
- The arms must recover over the water with each breaststroke kick if used.
 - USMS interpretation: A second breaststroke kick may not be initiated without an over-the-water recovery.
- After the start and after each turn, swimmers may take only one breaststroke kick prior to the first arm pull. Multiple butterfly kicks are permitted.
- The last breaststroke kick prior to the touch at the turn or finish need not be followed by an arm pull.

Situation



Jeff is swimming the 200-yard breaststroke and decides to start from in the water due to recent knee surgery. Prior to the start, the starter instructs Jeff that he must face the course when starting since breaststroke requires a forward start.

During the same heat, another swimmer steps onto the starting platform with both feet towards the back surface of the block. The swimmer steps forward after the “Take Your Mark” command is given, so the starter proceeds to give the starting signal.

Is the starter correct?

Start Rules

- Forward Start: At the Referee's signal (long whistle), swimmers must take their positions on the starting platform or deck, with at least one foot at the front of the block.
 - USMS glossary does not define the forward start as facing the course.
- Swimmers are permitted to start from the deck or in the water.
 - One hand and one foot must be in contact with the wall or starting platform if starting in the water.
- A backstroke start (in the water) is permitted in freestyle events.
 - The foot placement requirements do not apply in freestyle events.
- Swimmers are permitted to exit the pool via side ladders if needed after the race.

The Meet Referee's role in National Records, World Records, Top Ten, and all other official times recorded in the officials results is:

- A. Ensuring that record applications are on hand.
- B. Ensuring that the pool measurement certification is complete.
- C. Ensuring properly documented bulkhead placement.
- D. Ensuring that timers and timing systems are in place and officials have been instructed on how to handle timing system malfunctions and corrections.
- E. Establishing a process for intermediate split requests and recording these in the results.
- F. Establishing a process for observation of swims, if applicable. (USA-Swimming official time purposes)
- G. All of the above and then some.

Duties of the Administrative Referee

Be responsible to the referee for the supervision of:

- The entry and registration process.
- The timing equipment operation.
- The accurate processing of entries and scratches.
- The accurate seeding of heats.
- The determination and recording of official time, including:
 - Reviewing times from automatic timing equipment to determine their validity.
 - Notifying the referee when a time from a primary timing system cannot be used as the official time.
- The recording of disqualifications.
- The recording and publishing the official results.

Additional officials (timing system operators, clerks of course, timing judges, recorders) may be used as needed to support the Administrative Referee in these duties.

- **Fully Automatic Timing**
 - World Records, USMS National Records, and USMS Top-10 Times.
 - Initial splits and Relay Lead-Off Splits for all purposes.
- **Semi-Automatic with Three Buttons or Manually-Timed with Three Watches**
 - World Records, USMS National Records, and USMS Top-10 Times.
 - Initial splits and Relay Leadoff Splits for World Records and USMS Top 10 Only.
- **Semi-Automatic with Two Buttons or Manually-Timed Two Watches**
 - USMS Top 10 Times (including initial splits or relay lead-off splits).
- **An official time corrected for a system malfunction may be used as official times equal to the level of the timing system to which it is being corrected.**
 - Example: Pad times corrected for a heat or lane malfunction using the backup buttons are considered as the same level as the other pad times.

Determination of Official Time

- The Referee can determine that a timing system malfunction exists and may correct the time in accordance with USMS rules.
- There is no provision in USMS rules for a “Judges Decision” that would overrule the placement according to time, even for manually timed races.

Disability Swimming

- Referee has the authority to modify the rules for a swimmer with a disability.
 - Article 108 contains guidelines and suggestions for modifications.
- The Referee acts in response to a request for specific modifications from the coach or the athlete with a disability.
 - The standard of determination for Referee decisions is common sense.
- The Referee's decision shall affect only the current meet and shall not set precedent for other competitions.
 - But, Referees are strongly encouraged to communicate for purposes of “lessons learned” and guidance.
- It shall be the responsibility of the swimmer or a representative to notify the referee of the disability prior to competition and request a modification.
 - Encourage swimmers to bring requests to Referees prior to meets.

Disability Swimming

- *Does the athlete have a permanent physical or cognitive disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities (Article 108.1.1)?*
 - The Referee is expected to apply common sense - not to evaluate detailed medical evidence or otherwise demonstrate expertise about disability.
- *Does the proposed modification facilitate participation by the swimmer with a disability?*
 - The spirit of Article 108 is to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Note the emphasis on participation - there is no guarantee of success!
- *Is the proposed modification fair to other swimmers in the event?*
 - Modifications should not provide an unfair advantage to the swimmer with a disability, nor should modifications interfere with the opportunities of other swimmers to compete.
- *Is the proposed modification feasible?*
 - Possible concerns include the meet timeline or facility limitations; however, these concerns should not squelch efforts to include the swimmer with a disability. Instead the Referee and coach should collaborate to determine an appropriate method of inclusion.

If You Were Asleep.....

- Any official at a USMS sanctioned meet is a masters swimming official. Our job is to educate our officials on our rules.
- LMSC's should take a proactive role in selecting and educating Meet Referees.
- Work with Meet Referees before, during, and after the meet. They can help educate other officials and improve how our meets are conducted.
- Use the mandatory pre-meet briefings to educate officials.
- The right number of officials depends on the meet – it is usually more than the minimum.