

Pacific Swimming

STARTER

PHILOSOPHY, RULES, AND PROTOCOL

Adapted for Pacific Swimming
based on the USA Swimming Officials Manual

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December 21, 1999

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RESPONSIBILITIES

- The starter has the responsibility to ensure that all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start.
- It is important that each competitor be given the opportunity to achieve the best start possible within the confines of the rules.
- The starter must know the USA Swimming rules governing starting procedures. (102.14)

PREPARATION

- Personal Preparation
 - Review the rules and schedule of events and establish protocol procedures with the meet referee.
 - Be familiar with the guidelines for officiating swimmers with a disability
- Uniform (National)
 - Preliminaries - White shirt, navy blue pants, shorts, or skirt, white socks and shoes
 - Finals - Navy blue jacket, white shirt, red or blue tie/scarf, white long pants or skirt, white socks and shoes
- Uniform (Local)
 - Same as “Preliminary” above unless specified by the Meet Referee

PREPARATION

- Competition Course
 - Become familiar with the competition course and determine the location where the starter and recall starter will be positioned
 - This position shall be within 10 feet of the starting end of the pool and should be free from any obstruction that might block or restrict the view of the athletes on the blocks
 - This position should also be coordinated with the referee.
 - Each block should be examined for proper position and ability to support the starting action of an athlete
 - The location and operation of the recall rope should be reviewed and tested

PREPARATION

- Equipment - Pistol start/recall system
 - If a pistol is to be used for either starting or recall starting, be certain it is in working order, that there are enough shells to finish the meet, and that a backup starting pistol is available.
 - Check that the pistol is loaded prior to each heat and double check that there are enough shells in the pistol to recall the heat if required

NOTE

Pacific Swimming has adopted the “Whistle Start” procedure and the “No Recall” rule for all competitions as of January 1, 2000

PREPARATION

- Equipment - Horn start system
 - Check the system at least one-half hour before the first race so that any needed repairs or modifications can be made
 - Retested the system with the timers in place just before the start of the meet (See Timing Test on next page)
 - Know how to prevent common malfunctions and how to repair the simple problems that may occur
 - Test the functioning of the recall system verifying that the microphone works properly
 - Verify that the speakers are operating properly and there are adequate number of speakers positioned so that the proper volume is clearly audible to all starting positions
 - Verify that the strobe light for the starting signal is located such that it is clearly visible to all swimmers and timers (including backstroke events)

PREPARATION

- Equipment - Timing Systems Test
 - Perform a simulated start to check the timing systems as well as the backup timing system (stop watches) just prior to the start of the first heat of the day
 - Provide instructions to the timers
 - Only operate one button or one button and a stop watch
 - Start the stop watch on the strobe light only (not the sound)
 - Introduce the Head Timer and instruct the timers to get the attention of the Head Timer in the event the stop watch malfunction or missing the start
 - Let the time run for 45-60 seconds and ask the timers to come forward to simulate a finish using a countdown sequence 3-2-1.
 - Check the time from the Head Timer and inform the timers to verify if their watches are within 0.3 second. If not, exchange the watch
 - If everything checks out, inform the timing operator to reset the system to get ready to start the meet

STARTING PROCEDURE

General Philosophy

- Starters are charged with a great amount of responsibility in seeing that one swimmer does not gain an advantage over the others during the start
 - This requires concentration, quick reactions and fair decisions
- Starters should speak in a conversational tone, avoiding rapid instructions and sharp commands
 - The voice of a good starter will lead the swimmers into their starting positions, not break their concentration with unexpected orders or remarks
 - At the same time, the starter must protect all of the competitors by not allowing any one swimmer to gain an unfair advantage

STARTING PROCEDURE

- The Starter shall stand within 10 feet of the starting end of the pool (102.14.1B)
- When the referee is satisfied that the officials are ready, the referee shall signal to the swimmers by a series of short whistles to remove all clothing (except for swimwear) and approach the starting blocks (102.14.2C)
 - In between heats, the series of short whistles should be given as soon as the previous heat is finished (touching the wall)
 - In Finals where finalists' names are to be announced, the series of short whistles will be the cue for the announcer to start announcing

STARTING PROCEDURE

- At the start of each event, the starter shall announce the event number, distance and stroke (102.14.1E)
 - e.g. “Event 3, Girls 100 yard freestyle, heat one.”
 - If available, a designated announcer located next to the starting area should perform this announcement
- Thereafter, the starter (or announcer) shall announce the heat number (only) one time after the previous heat has been completed and after the series of short whistles
 - e.g. “Heat 2.”
- Whether or not the starter is to call missing swimmers should be established by the referee prior to the beginning of the meet and the coaches should be informed accordingly

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- When all the swimmers are at the blocks, the referee shall sound a long whistle (a long steady blast without any undulation in the tune) indicating that the swimmers are to take their position on the blocks and remain there (102.14.2C)
- In backstroke and medley relay events, the swimmers shall immediately step into the water at the referee's first long whistle and shall return to the wall and place their hands and feet at the referee's second long whistle
- When the referee is ready to turn over control to the starter, the referee shall signal with an outstretched hand to the starter. The outstretched hand shall remain at that position until a fair start has occurred (102.14.2C)
 - The sequence of referee's long whistle followed by the hand signal is equivalent to the "old" starter's "step up" command followed by the referee's whistle. Therefore, the referee should use the same time interval as before (typically very short)
 - Swimmers arriving at the blocks after the referee has turned over control to the starter (with an outstretched hand) shall be charged with "No Show". A "No Show" slip shall be filled out immediately and any protest or appeal shall be referred to the Meet Referee.

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- For backstroke starts, the swimmers' feet, including the toes, must be entirely under the surface of the water until the starting signal is given. The swimmer may not stand in or on the gutter nor curl the toes over the lip of the gutter prior to the start. It is the duty of the starter to ensure that these requirements are met prior to giving the starting signal
 - the Starter will speak directly to the lane who is in violation by saying "Lane___, toes, please.", " Lane___, toes under for the start, please.", or "Lane___, your toes must be completely under the surface."
- When a Stroke and Turn Official is positioned on the far end of the starting platforms, the Stroke and Turn Official shall call to the attention of the starter by signaling the lane where the swimmers feet are not under the surface of the water.

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- When the starter is satisfied that the swimmers are ready to start, the starter only says “TAKE YOUR MARK” at which point the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position with at least one foot at the front of the block, or in the backstroke and medley relay events, assume the backstroke starting position (102.14.2C)
- If, in the judgment of the starter that because of uneven motion or delay of the swimmers in assuming their positions, that a fair start will be difficult to achieve, the swimmers may be instructed to “STAND PLEASE” (or “STAND DOWN” in the case of a backstroke start.) The swimmers should remain on the platform (backstrokers relax) and no additional whistle should be given by the referee unless a swimmer step down from the block

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- If the starter is still unable to achieve a fair start after “standing up” the swimmers, the starter shall issue the command “STEP DOWN” to ask the swimmers to step down from the blocks. The referee should, when the swimmers are ready, sound another long whistle indicating the swimmers are to step onto the block as before, again signaling the starter with an outstretched arm when the start shall commence
- When all the swimmers are motionless, the starter shall give the starting signal (102.14.2C)
- If you must stand the swimmers up a third time, and it is the second time for a specific swimmer, warn the swimmer by saying, "Lane____, please assume your starting position without delay". (Or whatever the problem may be.) Then give the command "Take your mark"
- If you would have to stand the heat up again for the same swimmer, step them down and recommend to the Referee that the swimmer be disqualified for delay of meet

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- After the start, keep the mic in the normal speaking position. Simply rotate your head and/or your body and watch the swimmers into the water and until they surface and you are sure that the race has begun fairly
- Why should you do this?
 - An echo may have caused half of the field stopped because they thought the race had been recalled?
 - Something unusual happened that may cause you to recall or stop the heat
 - Lane lines or backstroke flag sometimes break
 - A swimmer may have hit the bottom of the pool
 - The deck referee may ask you to stop the race

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- Any swimmer who enters the water or backstroker who leaves the starting area shall be charged with a false start, unless the false start was, in the opinion of the referee, caused by the swimmer's reaction to the "STAND" command or due to the action or movement of another competitor (102.14.4B)
 - This, however, does not relieve any swimmer from disqualification for deliberate delay if he intentionally enters the water. In this case, the referee shall disqualify the swimmer for "delay of meet".
- In the event a false start occurred prior to the starting signal, issue the "STEP DOWN" command prior to conferring with the referee regarding the potential violation

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- There will be no recall after a false start once a starting signal has sounded
 - EXCEPTIONS:
 - A starter may issue a recall for unusual circumstances that affect the racing course (e.g. lane line breaks, etc.)
 - An inappropriate (bad) start (e.g. swimmers were not set, etc.)
- A swimmer charged with a false start will be notified of his/her disqualification at the conclusion of the race
 - In 25 yard or 50 meter race, notification of a false start must be relayed to a judge at the finish end of the course so that he/she can notify the swimmer(s) of the disqualification
- If a heat is “instinctively” recalled, the heat shall be restart and no false start can be assessed no matter how obvious it was
- There is no “recall starter” used for this procedure

STARTING PROCEDURE - Cont'd

- If the starter observes a false start, the race shall continue without recall
- The starter shall record the lane(s) in violation and report it to the referee who should also independently record the lane(s) in violation. For recording purposes, using any of the following methods
 - Write down the lane number(s) on the heat sheet
 - Fill out a False Start slip
- If there is confirmation, the referee or designee shall fill out a DQ slip and notify the swimmer(s) of the disqualification at the end of the heat
 - It is recommended that an off-duty deck official or the Chief Judge assists in delivering the DQ slip to the swimmer charged with a False Start in order to keep the meet flowing smoothly without interruption
- If a swimmer enters the water before the starting signal and the starter has time to “stand” the heat, no starting signal shall be given and the offending swimmer(s) will be notified of the disqualification by the referee or designee after confirmation with the starter
- All other swimmers entering the water upon reacting to the “stand” command shall be released. The heat is then restarted

STARTING PROCEDURE

Distance Events

- For distance events (500 yard and above except for relays), the starter shall sound a warning signal over the water at the finish end of the lane of the leading swimmer when that swimmer has 2 lengths plus 5 yards (meters) to swim (102.14.3)
 - As an alternative, a bell warning signal may be given over each swimmer by a lane judge or timer in that lane
- Both the starter and the deck referee shall keep track of the number of laps for ALL swimmers in the heat and the starter should be prepared
 - to alert the timers if they appeared unaware that the swimmer in their lane is finishing
 - to keep swimmers of the next heat from interfering (splashing, etc.) with swimmers who have not finished
- If the timers pushed the finish buttons prematurely and the swimmer is still swimming another lap, inform the timing machine operator to restore the race for the lane (by pushing FINISH ARM in most Colorado Timing Systems)

STARTING PROCEDURE

Starting Swimmers with Disabilities

- The referee is responsible for instructing the Starter as to the accommodations to be made for swimmers with disabilities (105.1.2B.2)
- Use hand signal when there are deaf and hard of hearing swimmers in the heat (105.3.1)
 - The hand signal equivalent to the “long whistle blast” from the referee (or “Step up” command) is raising one arm overhead with palm facing out
 - When giving the command “take your mark”, bring the raised hand toward a horizontal position (shoulder level) with palm down
 - If it is necessary to “stand” up the heat, bring the horizontal arm back to the up position
 - When giving the start signal, bring the horizontal arm down simultaneously to the side of the hip
- Starting swimmers with physical disabilities (105.5.1)
 - May start from a sitting position on the block or on the deck (105.5.1B)
 - May assume a starting position in the water, with or without assistance (105.5.1C)
- Blind and visually impaired swimmers (105.2.1)
 - May start in the water if they feel insecure starting from the block or deck

STARTING PROCEDURE

Other Situations

- Deliberate delay or misconduct (102.16.5A)
 - Any swimmer, who delays the start by entering water or by willfully or deliberately disobeying a Starter's command to step on the block or to take a starting position, or by any other misconduct taking place at the start, can be disqualified from the event by the Starter with concurrence of the Referee
- Swimmers declining to swim their event shall be instructed to sit on the block when his or her heat is called
 - The Starter shall dismiss the swimmer by the command "Lane __, you are excused." A Delay-of-meet disqualification shall be issued.
- Swimmers going for intermediate split time (102.14.1E)
 - Before issuing the "Take your mark" command, inform the swimmers about a split time attempt
 - e.g. "Please be informed that lane 3 is going for a 100 split"
- There are significant differences between High School and College starting rules and USA Swimming starting rules
 - Always refer to the proper rulebooks when preparing to officiate a non-USA Swimming competition

STARTING PROCEDURE

Miscellaneous

- All doubts and questions go in favor of the swimmer
- Be Very patient. Do not "speed up" to get a heat off
- Maintain good deck perspective - you are the referee's 2nd set of eyes and ears. Many questions will come to you because you are visible and always in the same spot - near the starting equipment. Answer courteously those questions within your jurisdiction and direct all other questions to the Referee
- Do not discuss false starts, recalls, or DQ's with coaches, parents, or swimmers. Direct all questions, complaints, and problems to your on-duty Referee

Starter Levels

- Level 1 (Trainee)
 - Has just started the starter training process
 - Should not work on deck without a trainer (usually the assigned deck referee who is also a level 3 or higher starter)
- Level 2 (Independent)
 - Successfully complete the Starter certification process
 - Can work independently on “A” level meets with minimum supervision
- Level 3 (Experienced)
 - Can work independently and comfortably as Starter or Head Starter on “AA” level meets
- Level 4 (Zone Leadership)
 - Highly experienced Starter and can work comfortably as Starter or Head Starter on “Q” level meets
- Level 5 (Pacific Leadership)
 - Show leadership at LSC or National championship level meet

Starter Certification

- Must complete formal starter classroom training and complete at least 6 on-deck starter training sessions within two year
 - Have the clinic instructor and meet referee signs the officials record card
- Must be a certified level 3 or above Stroke & Turn judge
- Upon meeting the minimum requirements, a trainee may initiate the certification process by informing the Meet Referee that he or she wish to be evaluated for certification on a particular meet by filling out a “Request for Evaluation” form
- The Meet Referee will verify the officials record card
- The Meet Referee may choose to do the evaluation personally or delegate to the Head Starter or a senior official (level 4 and above)
- The Meet Referee will provide evaluation results to the applicant at the end of the session
 - If satisfactory, the referee will sign the request form recommending certification and forward to the zone officials chairperson
 - If not, inform the applicant as to areas that need improvement
 - Head Referee will Include certification results as part of officials report to Zone officials chair & Pacific Swimming officials chair

Starter Recertification

- Must complete formal classroom starter recertification training once every two years
- Must work a minimum of 4 sessions as starter per year
- Must maintain Stroke & Turn certification
 - do not need to attend S&T recertification clinic (starter recertification clinic will cover S&T portion) but must work a minimum of 4 sessions as S&T or S&T trainers per year
- Mail Officials Record Card as evidence of meeting the above requirements to your Zone Officials Chair prior to the indicated certification expiration date on the card
- A new officials record card will be mailed to the officials to extend the certification period to December 31 of the following year
 - If certification/recertification request is submitted on or after October, the expiration date will be December 31 of two years later

Starter Advancement Policy

- Level 1 (Trainee)
 - An individual is designated as level 1 upon completing the first clinic session or on-deck training session for the position
- Level 2 (Independent)
 - An individual is advanced to level 2 as soon as he or she is certified for that position
- Level 3 (Experienced)
 - Must held a level 2 position for a minimum of 1 year and worked a minimum of 6 sessions of sanctioned meets per year
 - Must receive recommendation for advancement from two different Head Referees on their officials performance evaluation report
- Level 4 (Zone Leadership)
 - Must held a level 3 position for a minimum of 1 year and worked a minimum of 6 sessions per year (with at least one Head position)
 - Must receive recommendation for advancement from three different Head Referees and approved by Zone Officials Chair
- Level 5 (Pacific Leadership)
 - Recommended by Zone Officials Chairs and approved by Pacific Officials Committee

Advancement Process

- To be initiated by the individual seeking advancement
- Upon meeting the minimum requirements for consideration for advancement, the individual can fill out a Request for Evaluation form and submit to the Meet Referee on the meet that he or she will be working on the particular position to be evaluated for advancement
- The referee may choose to designate an individual (usually the Head Starter) to assist in the evaluation throughout the course of the meet
- Upon completion of evaluation, the Head Referee will complete the advancement request form and send to Zone Officials Chair along with the other officials evaluation forms
- Other than the normal performance feedback (see section under Performance Feedback), the referee should not discuss the advancement recommendation with anyone at or after the meet (other than the Zone Officials Chair)
- Upon receiving the required number of recommendations, the Zone Officials Chair will provide written notice to the official seeking advancement - specific reasons and area to improve must be included in the event of “not approved”
- A six-month period and/or working on a minimum of 4 swim meet sessions as starter must have transpired before the individual is eligible to reapply for consideration for advancement. The Zone Officials Chair has the option to modify the waiting period as well as the number of evaluation meets required for an official to reapply for advancement based on the individual’s situation.

Experience and Attitude

- With experience, the starter will be able to accurately judge when the field is ready to race. This will help to prevent the false starts caused by the swimmers being jumpy or in a hurry because they aren't ready
- Improper attitude can lead to inconsistency
 - “have you ever seen a starter misjudge when all the swimmers are ready to start? You know, the swimmer who is still moving into position when the signal goes off? A starter with an "ego" problem will probably charge the swimmer with a false start, thinking "he should have been ready when I started the race." On the other hand, the starter with the swimmers' benefit uppermost will reason, "I started them too soon, that swimmer wasn't ready yet." He will take the responsibility for the bad start and put all the swimmers back up again...”

Anneliese Eggert, Pacific Swimming Officials Clinic, 1998