

# **IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN USA-SWIMMING AND NCAA RULES**

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This document provides USA-Swimming officials with important rule differences between USA-Swimming rules and NCAA rules. In addition, it highlights some other rules that pertain to NCAA swimming.

It is assumed that the reader is an experienced USA-Swimming official with a sound understanding of USA-Swimming rules. This document only pertains to the swimming portion nonchampionship competition. It is outlined in the order of the NCAA rule book, with sections cut and pasted directly from the rule book.

Key parts of the rule are underlined with required (**shall, must**) and permissive (**may, should**) bolded. Commentary by the author is indicated by *italics*.

# RULE 1: Pool Dimensions and Equipment

## SECTION 4: EQUIPMENT

### Counters

ARTICLE 5. Visual counters shall be provided by the host institution. Each digit must be 12 inches [30.48 cm] high and must be black on a white background. Each set of counters should be equipped with one indicator of fluorescent orange color, with or without a numeral, to indicate the final length of each distance event.

Failure to provide visual counters **shall** result in the disqualification of the host competitors in the events in which counters are required.

# RULE 2: Description of Events and Procedures

## SECTION 1: STARTS

Sufficient time shall be allowed to enable each swimmer to assume a stationary starting position; however, all swimmers are expected to take their starting positions at approximately the same time, and unnecessary noise, movement or delays shall not be permitted.

Any swimmer responsible for an unnecessary delay after the referee's preliminary command or signal **shall** be charged with a false start.

After the command "Take your mark," all swimmers entering the water or otherwise leaving their marks, before the starting sound or before being released from the starting position, **shall** be charged with a false start. All other swimmers should be released immediately from the starting position by the starter.

Swimmers entering the water or otherwise leaving their marks in reaction to the command "Stand up," subject to the discretion of the referee and/or starter, shall not be charged with a false start.

When the starting sound has been given and an unfair advantage has been obtained by one or more swimmers, all swimmers shall be recalled at once with a pistol shot and/or electronic-sound device by the starter, recall starter or referee. The starter, recall starter and/or referee then shall indicate the swimmer(s), if any, to be charged with a false start. Swimmers not obtaining an unfair advantage, even though they have entered the water, shall not be charged with a false start.

A swimmer who unnecessarily delays in assuming and holding a stationary starting position after the command "Take your mark" **shall** be charged with a false start.

In non-NCAA championships and NCAA championships meets, dual confirmation is required to confirm a false start. A swimmer may be charged with a false start only if the violation is observed and confirmed by at least two of the following officials: starter, recall starter and referee. Dual confirmation of false starts is **recommended** for nonchampionships meets whenever there is an adequate number of officials.

## **SECTION 2: SWIMMING EVENTS**

### **Backstroke**

Some part of the swimmer's person must break the surface of the water throughout the race. It is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, during the last stroke, and for a distance of not more than 15 meters [49 ft. 2.55 in.] after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.

Some part of the swimmer's person must touch the end of the racing course during each turn. After any part of the swimmer's head has passed the backstroke flags (20-yard mark), the swimmer's upper shoulder is allowed (but not required) to rotate past the vertical toward the prone position before the touch is completed provided such rotation is accompanied by an immediate initiation of the turning action. The immediate initiation of the turning action shall be accomplished by a single-arm or double-arm pull, or in the absence of such pulls, by a downward, underwater movement of the head. After the initiation of the turning action, no additional arm pulls may be started (sculling is not permitted); however, kicking and gliding actions are permitted.

If the swimmer's upper shoulder does not rotate past the vertical toward the prone position before the touch is completed, the swimmer may then turn in any manner desired.

The body may be submerged during the last stroke at the finish.

*The "non-continuous turn" rule is very similar to USA-Swimming. The only real difference is that the swimmer cannot turn towards the prone until the head has reached the backstroke flags. I suspect this rule (as well as the 15 meter rule) was put in place to assure that a swimmer actually does a stroke or two of backstroke on each 25. With no judge at the flags, though, that part of the rule is difficult to judge.*

*The "submerged prior to the finish" rule in USA-Swimming does not apply in the NCAA as "The body may be submerged during the last stroke at the finish."*

### **Breaststroke**

Breaking the water surface with the feet shall not constitute a violation unless it is caused by a dolphin kick.

*USA-Swimming speaks only of a "downward butterfly kick" and does not address upward movement.*

## **Crawlstroke**

ARTICLE 4. The crawlstroke is the most common stroke used under freestyle rules. It is a stroke that employs an alternating above-water recovery of the arms with alternating up and down kicking movements.

*The only thing interesting about this rule is that it exists.*

## **Violations**

ARTICLE 9. Violations of any of the provisions in Section 2 **must** result in disqualification. (*Section 2 contains all the technical rules for strokes and relays*)

## **SECTION 3: LAP COUNTING**

### Counting

ARTICLE 1. A visual count of the lengths completed by each swimmer **must** be given above and/or below the water every two lengths in individual races of 400 meters or 500 yards and longer, except that no count shall be given in the 400-yard [400 m] individual medley. The count **must** begin at the start of the race and **must** be given in ascending order of lengths completed (i.e., 1, 3, 5) until the end of the race. The final visual count, to be given when the swimmer has one length to complete, shall be of fluorescent orange color. The visual count may be supplemented with a verbal count. Competitors must provide their own counting personnel, not to exceed one. Length counts shall not be given in relay races.

ARTICLE 3. If an official and/or counter error occurs, the swimmer is responsible for completing the prescribed distance.

### Violations

ARTICLE 4. Violations of any of the provisions of Section 3 may result in disqualification at the discretion of the referee.

*While the rule states that a count must be given and that it must be in ascending order, the penalty is permissive and at the discretion of the referee. In the rulebook section on the Referee, one of the recommended statements that may be made is a reminder that a lane needs a counter.*

## **SECTION 5: FOULS**

b. A swimmer who changes lanes during a heat shall be disqualified.

c. Any interference with a meet official in the performance of that person's duties will be considered for disciplinary action by the referee or meet committee.

d. If a swimmer, who is one of the first three swimmers in a relay, crosses the lane of another team, the relay of that swimmer shall be disqualified.

# RULE 3: Competitors

## **SECTION 1: GENERAL**

e. USE: The swimmer shall be limited to one swimsuit.

*There is no mention of modesty suits being allowed under a competition suit.*

c. A swimmer must swim in the lane and/or heat assigned. Failure to do so shall result in disqualification for that event.

*There is no provision for starting and ending the race in the same lane even if it was not the assigned lane.*

### HIV and HBV Precautions

ARTICLE 5. Aggressive treatment of open wounds or skin lesions shall be followed. In particular, whenever a swimmer or diver suffers a laceration or wound where oozing or bleeding occurs, the practice or competition shall be stopped at the earliest possible time, and the swimmer or diver shall leave the pool and be given appropriate medical treatment. The meet referee or meet committee shall have the authority to suspend the competition until medical personnel have had an appropriate amount of time to treat the injury. The student-athlete shall not return to the pool without approval of medical personnel.

## **SECTION 3: NUMBER OF EVENTS**

### Nonchampionships Meets

ARTICLE 1. a. A contestant is permitted to compete in a maximum of three events (in any combination of individual and/or relay events) during a men's or women's 13- or 15-event dual, double-dual, triangular or quadrangular meet. This limit also applies during a concurrent men's and women's 26- or 30-event dual, double-dual, triangular or quadrangular meet.

b. A contestant is permitted to compete in a maximum of four events including relays, of which not more than three may be individual events, during a men's or women's 16-event dual, double-dual, triangular or quadrangular meet. This limit also applies during a concurrent men's and women's 32-event dual, double-dual, triangular or quadrangular meet.

c. A contestant is permitted to compete in an unlimited number of events during a relay meet.

d. For invitational meets, the host institution shall establish and publish in advance limits on the numbers of individual, relay and/or total events in which

each contestant is allowed to compete.

#### Penalties

ARTICLE 3. a. In nonchampionships competition, a competitor who participates in more than the allowable number of individual or total events **must** be disqualified from any excess event(s) and shall be prohibited from participating in the remainder of the meet.

### **SECTION 4: TIME OF OFFICIAL ENTRY**

ARTICLE 1. The official entry or diving scoresheet (either manual or electronic) is to be handed to the referee or an official designated by the referee at a predetermined place and communicated to all coaches. For the entry to become official, the entry or diving scoresheet **must** be delivered to the referee (or his/her designee) before the competitors for that event are called to step up/in (swimming) or the first dive is called. The entry should include the first and last name and the lane assignment or diving order of each competitor.

# RULE 4: Officials and Their Duties

## **SECTION 1: NUMBER OF OFFICIALS**

For each meet, there shall be a sufficient number of officials to properly conduct the meet. More than one duty may be assigned to an individual, and two or more individuals may share a duty.

In neither a championships nor a nonchampionships meet may a swimming official be a member of the coaching staff of any of the competing institutions, unless that person is approved by all of the head coaches involved in the meet. This restriction does not apply to diving officials.

## **SECTION 6: REFEREE**

In all meets, judgment decisions of other officials may be reconsidered only by the referee, who shall have final authority to overrule any decision pertaining to an action that he or she personally has observed.

*The rule book includes a number of verbal instructions which the referee and/or starter may use. These are more detailed than verbal instructions used in USA-Swimming meets. They may be found in Article 2 and 3 of this section of this rule.*

## **SECTION 14: TAKEOFF JUDGES**

For all relay events there should be at least one judge assigned to observe the relay takeoffs in each lane.

### Single Confirmation

ARTICLE 4. To indicate an infraction of the takeoff rule when only one takeoff judge is used for each lane, a takeoff judge shall wait until the last competitor is on the last length of the race and then shall raise a hand overhead with open palm.

### Dual Human Confirmation

ARTICLE 5. In a non-NCAA championships meet, when dual human confirmation is required for a relay takeoff disqualification, an infraction of the takeoff rule that is observed by a lane takeoff judge shall be recorded immediately in writing, but no indication by hand shall be given. An infraction that is observed by a side takeoff judge also shall be recorded immediately in writing; however, the side takeoff judge shall wait until the last competitor is on the last length of the race and then shall raise a hand overhead with open palm.

In an NCAA championships meet, each human judge who observes an alleged rules violation shall record it immediately, but shall wait until the last competitor is on the last length of the race and then shall raise a hand overhead with open palm.

When both lane and side takeoff judges are used, a disqualification will result only if there is dual confirmation of an infraction of the takeoff rule by both a lane takeoff judge and a side takeoff judge.

When only side takeoff judges are used, a disqualification will result only if there is a dual confirmation of an infraction of the takeoff rule by two side takeoff judges.

*The NCAA allows a variety of ways to deploy takeoff judges, one of which is the more common USA-Swimming method.*

## **SECTION 18: TIMERS**

Number, Duties

ARTICLE 1. It is **recommended** that one to three designated timers be assigned to each lane for nonchampionships and non-NCAA championships meets.

Requiring Watch Times

ARTICLE 2. Regardless of the availability of automatic and/or semiautomatic timing equipment, a minimum of one human timer per lane and one manual watch per lane is required for all non-NCAA championships meets and is **recommended** for all nonchampionships meets.

## **SECTION 23: HEAD JUDGE**

Priority of Judging and Timing Equipment

ARTICLE 2. a. Three levels of judging and timing equipment (primary, secondary and tertiary) are required for all championships meets. A minimum of two levels of judging and timing equipment **should** be used for all nonchampionships meets.

d. For a time to be considered for entry into an NCAA championship it **must** have been achieved using priority level one equipment (automatic equipment).

If a malfunction is confirmed by the head judge with priority level one equipment, then priority level two equipment (three-button semiautomatic equipment) is acceptable.

If a malfunction is confirmed by the head judge with priority level two equipment, then priority level three equipment (three manual watches per lane) is acceptable. (See Rule 4-18-5.)

No other priority level is acceptable for NCAA championships time qualification.

For a time to be considered for entry into a non-NCAA championships or nonchampionships meet, any priority level equipment is acceptable provided the conference rules accept all levels of equipment.

# RULE 5: Lanes, Seeding and Qualifying Procedures

## **SECTION 1: LANE ASSIGNMENTS**

### Dual Meets

ARTICLE 1. For dual meets, the visiting team shall have its choice of odd or even lanes. Once made, this choice applies to all swimming events on the program.

### Double-Dual, Triangular and Quadrangular Meets

ARTICLE 2. a. For double-dual and triangular meets, lane assignments in six-lane racing courses shall be by lot with teams swimming in lanes one and four, two and five, and three and six. In eight-lane racing courses, the lane assignments shall be two and five, three and six, and four and seven. Once this assignment is made, it shall apply to all swimming events on the program.

b. For quadrangular meets, lane assignments in eight-lane racing courses shall be by lot with teams swimming in lanes one and five, two and six, three and seven, and four and eight. Once this assignment is made, it shall apply to all swimming events on the program.