

1 Situations and Resolutions– Stroke and Turn | USA Swimming

The following situations and resolutions have been outlined by the USA Swimming Officials Committee and the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee to demonstrate examples of legal and illegal variations of strokes to be used for officials' education and training. While this resource has been designed to be representative of the many situations that an official may encounter, it is not intended to be exhaustive. The core principle of officiating—that the benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer—should always be followed.

Breaststroke

1. A breaststroke swimmer moves his hands in a sculling or flipper movement at the end of the first arm stroke, both after the start and after the turn. Should he be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No, he should not be disqualified. This is legal provided, "All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement." A sculling motion of the hands, only as a part of the arm stroke, is not considered the beginning of a new stroke.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

2. In a 9-10 100 yard breaststroke event, a swimmer completes 50 yards and, thinking that the race is over, pushes back from the wall to read the scoreboard. At this point, realizing that the race is only halfway over, the swimmer returns to the wall, pushes off on the breast, and completes the required distance in good form. What call, if any, should be made?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer left the wall on the back and then returned to the wall before resuming the stroke. One violation that could be called would be that the swimmer was not on the breast when leaving the wall. Additional violations could include that the arm stroke was not simultaneous, depending on what was observed by the judge.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

3. In a 9-10 100 yard breaststroke event, a swimmer completes 50 yards, and, thinking that the race is over, stands on the bottom of the pool to read the scoreboard. At this point, realizing that the race is only halfway over, he pushes off the wall on the breast and completes the required distance in good form. What call, if any, should be made?

Recommended Resolution: No call should be made. The rule states, “It is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

4. In a senior 100 yard breaststroke event, the turn judge calls a disqualification because the swimmer in lane 2 was not on his breast when leaving the wall at the first turn. Upon further investigation, the referee determines that the judge observed the following sequence of events:
- The turn judge picks up the swimmer in lane 2 as the swimmer is headed away from the wall.
 - The turn judge sees that the swimmer is not on his breast.
 - The turn judge shifts her eyes to the feet of the swimmer and sees that they are off the wall.

Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. The rule requires, “After the start and after each turn when the swimmer leaves the wall, the body shall be kept on the breast.” In the sequence that was described, it is possible that the swimmer's feet were still on the wall when the turn judge observed the swimmer not on his breast. By the time the turn judge's eyes had shifted to the feet of the swimmer, the swimmer had left the wall. To give the swimmer the benefit of the doubt, the turn judge must first observe the swimmer leave the wall and then check the position of the shoulders.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

5. When a swimmer left the wall at the first turn of the 50 yard breaststroke, he was on his back. He was disqualified. Should the swimmer have been disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “After the start and after each turn when the swimmer leaves the wall, the body shall be kept on the breast.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

6. After a turn in the 100 yard breaststroke, a swimmer took her first stroke immediately after the turn. When taking this stroke, her shoulders were past vertical towards the breast; however, her right arm was significantly higher than her left arm. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

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Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “All movements of the arms shall simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane.” The rules define horizontal as “parallel to the surface of the water.”

Applicable Rules: 101.2.2, Glossary

7. A swimmer swims the breaststroke in a way that her hands are completely underwater when they are pushed forward together from her breast. She does this because her coach told her that she could not recover with her hands or her arms out of the water. Is her coach correct?

Recommended Resolution: No, he is not. The rule states, “The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water. The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

8. To get further distance out of his breaststroke pulls, a young swimmer’s hands are brought all the way down to his legs on each pull. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: It is not legal. The rule states, “The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

9. Although a breaststroker’s head breaks the surface of the water during each cycle, she was disqualified at a recent meet for not taking a breath during each cycle. Is this a valid DQ?

Recommended Resolution: No. There is no requirement to breathe at any specific point of any swim. The rulebook states, “During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer’s head shall break the surface of the water. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

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10. At the start of the 100 yard breaststroke, a swimmer dives in, and, in this order, executes a butterfly kick, a breaststroke kick, and one arm stroke completely back to the legs. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.” By taking a breaststroke kick before the arm stroke, the swimmer’s breaststroke is out of cycle.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

11. After the start of the breaststroke, a swimmer takes an arm pull, a downward butterfly kick, and a breaststroke kick. He then takes another arm pull. His head is completely underwater for the entire second arm pull. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: This is not legal. The rule states, “The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

12. While swimming the breaststroke, a swimmer realizes that his goggles have come loose. He extends his right arm forward to adjust his goggles. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.” By using only his right arm to adjust his goggles, the swimmer violated both of these rules.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

13. While swimming the breaststroke, a swimmer realizes that her goggles have come loose. She moves both arms forward simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane to adjust her goggles, taking two breaststroke kicks to keep herself afloat in the process. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.” By taking two breaststroke kicks to keep herself afloat, the swimmer violated this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

14. After the start of the breaststroke, a swimmer realizes that his suit has come loose. He reaches back with both arms simultaneously to adjust his suit and brings his hands forward. He then takes a breaststroke kick. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: He should not be disqualified. His act of adjusting the suit, as described above, meets all of the requirements of the first legal breaststroke stroke. However, had this instead happened after the first stroke, it would be illegal if his hands were brought back beyond the hip line.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

15. A coach is teaching his swimmers to do what he believes is a faster technique of getting to the wall on the breaststroke finish. He wants his swimmers, when they are inside of the backstroke flags, to stay completely under the water and not take any breaths. It takes several complete cycles while wholly submerged before the swimmers touch. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer’s head shall break the surface of the water.” Also, at the turn and finish, “The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.”

Applicable Rules: 101.2.2, 101.2.4

16. After a deep forward start in the breaststroke, a swimmer took one arm stroke completely back to his legs followed by a little butterfly kick and a breaststroke kick to get closer to the surface of the water. His head broke the surface of the water before the hands turned inward at the widest part of the second stroke. He was disqualified. Was the disqualification correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “After the start and each turn, at any time prior to the first breaststroke kick a single butterfly kick is permitted.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

17. A coach believes that his swimmer will be able to swim the breaststroke faster if she kicks her legs in a way in which they are always pointed inwards. When his swimmer tried this at her last meet, she was disqualified. Should she have been disqualified?

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Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

18. When an 8-year-old novice swimmer gets tired in the breaststroke, the propulsive part of her kick is performed by the top instep of one foot and the bottom part of her other foot. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The swimmer is doing a scissors kick. Scissors kicks are not permitted in the breaststroke.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

19. A coach teaches his swimmers that they can swim the breaststroke faster if, off of each wall, they streamline and take at least 5 butterfly kicks before beginning regular breaststroke. Is this revolutionary technique legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “After the start and each turn, at any point prior to the first breaststroke kick a single butterfly kick is permitted.” The rule is very clear that the swimmer is only allowed one downward butterfly kick after the start and each turn.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

20. When a swimmer swims the breaststroke, after each breaststroke kick, his feet travel downward as he recovers and draws the knees forward. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. This is a natural part of the swimmer’s recovery and is not a separate kick.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

21. When a swimmer swims the breaststroke, after each breaststroke kick, his legs move upward, back downward, and then stop, prior to the knees drawing the legs forward during the recovery phase of the kick. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. the swimmer is executing a downward butterfly kick after each breaststroke kick, which is not permitted.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

22. A stroke judge observes significant water turbulence following every breaststroke kick taken by the swimmer in lane 4. She raises her hand and calls a disqualification on the swimmer for butterfly kick during the swim. Upon further questioning by the referee, she admits that she did not see the actual movements of the legs, only the extremely turbulent water. Should the disqualification stand?

Recommended Resolution: The disqualification should not stand. The turbulent water could just as likely be caused by a completely legal breaststroke kick. The official must actually observe butterfly kick in order to make that call.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

23. A swimmer says that he sprained his ankle and cannot turn his foot out in the breaststroke kick. Should he be disqualified if he does not turn his feet out in the propulsive part of the kick?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. This does not qualify as a disability, which is defined in Article 105 as “a permanent physical or cognitive disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” Therefore, no exception to the breaststroke rule is warranted.

Applicable Rules: 101.2.3, 105.1.1

24. Since the elbows can legally come out of the water at the turns and finish of the breaststroke, a coach tells his swimmer that the hands can only touch simultaneously while they are out of the water. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “At each turn and the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level.”

Applicable Rule: 101.2.4

25. While swimming the breaststroke, a swimmer touches the wall at the turn with both hands at the same time. However, the swimmer’s left hand was at the top of the wall, while his right hand touched well below the surface of the water. The turn judge raised her hand and the swimmer was disqualified. Was the call correct?

Recommended Resolution: No, the call was not correct. The breaststroke turn rule states, “The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level.” This allows the swimmer’s hands to be on different levels when they touch the wall. They still need to touch the wall at the same time. The same is true for the touch at the finish of the race.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.4

26. An 8-year-old approaches the turn in the 50 yard breaststroke. Prior to touching, he does a flip turn and pushes off the wall with both feet. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level.” The swimmer should be disqualified.

Applicable Rule: 101.2.4

27. In a breaststroke turn, a swimmer touches with his left hand and then touches immediately after with his right hand. The turn judge raises a hand, signaling a disqualification. The coach argues that the turn is legal because both hands were on the wall at the same time. Should the disqualification stand?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the rule is very clear. The rules state, “At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level.” The rules define simultaneously as “occurring at the same time.” Therefore, the hands must touch at the same time, not one after the other.

Applicable Rules: 101.2.4, Glossary

28. A turn judge observes the touch of a swimmer during the third turn of the 100 yard breaststroke. A couple of fingers are overlapping between the hands when the touch is made. The turn judge raises his hand to signal a disqualification, on the basis of the hands not being separated at the touch. Should the referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: The referee should not accept the call. USA Swimming’s interpretation of the rule provides that incidental contact of the fingers at the touch is permitted.

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Applicable Rules: 101.2.4, “Breaststroke and Butterfly Hands Separated Interpretation”

29. When a swimmer swims the breaststroke, at each turn, and at the finish, she stacks her hands completely on top of each other, as she believes it will allow her to make a more quick and powerful touch. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: This is not legal. The rule states, “At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level.” USA Swimming’s interpretation provides further clarification, expressing that complete stacking of the hands is not permitted.

Applicable Rules: 101.2.4, “Breaststroke and Butterfly Hands Separated Interpretation”

30. After the start of a breaststroke event, a swimmer incorrectly believes that there has been a recall. She stands on the bottom of the pool, but, realizing that no one else has stopped, resumes swimming. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. Any swimmer who stands on the bottom in a stroke other than freestyle will be disqualified.

Applicable Rule: 102.22.5

Butterfly

31. A swimmer in the 100 yard butterfly moves too close to the right lane line. During the recovery portion of an arm stroke, the his right arm hits the lane line, causing the right arm to trail the left arm over and into the water (alternating action). However, the swimmer then pulls both arms back simultaneously during the propulsive portion of the arm stroke. The stroke judge signals a disqualification. Is this a valid DQ?

Recommended Resolution: This is a correct call. The rule states, “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.” In this case, the swimmer’s arms were not brought forward over the water simultaneously. The fact that the lane line prevented the swimmer from recovering both arms simultaneously is not germane to the judging of the stroke.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

32. Near the finish of a butterfly race, a swimmer starts her final stroke and finds herself too close to the wall to make a full recovery. She ducks her head underwater, and reaches forward from the breast simultaneously with both hands to touch. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The swimmer executed an underwater recovery, which is prohibited in the butterfly. The rule states, “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.”

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

33. A swimmer is 8 years old, and his coach thinks that he is a terrific butterfly swimmer. Currently, at the start, he takes only one kick and then one arm stroke that brings him to the surface of the water. The coach thinks that the swimmer would be able to swim faster if he took multiple strokes underwater at the start. Is this allowed?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water, which must bring the swimmer to the surface.”

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

34. A swimmer is 8 years old and has insufficient strength to lift her arms completely over the water during the recovery phase of her stroke. She pushes her arms forward, with her elbow and part of her forearm underwater, but with the remainder of her forearm, her wrists, and her hands clearly out of the water. The stroke judge raises his hand to signal a disqualification on the basis of an underwater recovery. Should the deck referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the call should be accepted. The rules define the arm as “that part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist.” The butterfly rule states, “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water.” Both entire arms must recover over the water; the swimmer in question did not comply with this rule. However, there is no requirement that there be a visible space between the water and the recovering arms. Thus, had this swimmer been able to lift the arms sufficiently so that during the recovery the entire arms were above the water, or even broke the surface of the water even though not completely clearing the water, the swim would have been legal.

Applicable Rules: 101.3.2, Glossary

35. A swimmer is 7 years old and sometimes struggles when swimming the butterfly. When he recovers his arms, the entirety of both arms barely breaks the surface of the water, but there is no visible space between his arms and the water. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rules define the arm as “that part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist.” The butterfly rule states, “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water.” There is no requirement that there be a visible space between the water and the recovering arms.

Applicable Rules: 101.3.2, Glossary

36. At a local championship meet, a coach noticed that many swimmers were dropping their shoulders after the final arm pull prior to the touch. The coach believes and has taught his swimmers that they must keep their shoulders level with the water until the touch is made. Is the coach correct in his belief?

Recommended Resolution: No, the coach is incorrect. The only requirement of the shoulders in the butterfly is that “the swimmer’s shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast.”

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

37. In the 200 yard butterfly, a swimmer approaching the finish takes a stroke, recovers, and then dives for the wall with a powerful butterfly kick. As part of the dive, he submerges completely prior to touching the wall. The official raises his hand. Should the deck referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: As long as the official can clearly see that the entire body of the swimmer is fully submerged, the call should be accepted. This, however, would be extremely difficult to observe; once the official shifts his observation to the hands for the touch, it would be very difficult to accurately observe whether the swimmer's hips or feet are breaking the surface of the water. The rules require that the swimmer's head must break the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark, and, after that, "the swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish."

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

38. In a 13-14 100 yard butterfly event, the turn judge calls a disqualification because the swimmer in lane 6 was not on her breast when leaving the wall at the first turn. Upon further investigation, the referee determines that the judge observed the following sequence of events:

- The turn judge picks up the swimmer in lane 6 as the swimmer is headed away from the wall.
- The turn judge sees that the swimmer is not on her breast.
- The turn judge shifts her eyes to the feet of the swimmer and sees that they are off the wall.

Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. The rule requires, "After the start and after each turn, the swimmer's shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast." In the sequence that was described, it is possible that the swimmer's feet were still on the wall when the turn judge observed the swimmer not on the breast. By the time the turn judge's eyes had shifted to the feet of the swimmer, the swimmer had left the wall. To give the swimmer the benefit of the doubt, the turn judge must first observe the swimmer leave the wall and then check the position of the shoulders.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

39. At the local aquatic center, not all of the 15 meter marks on the lane lines are aligned, and there is some variation between the lanes. At the start of the butterfly, the swimmer in lane 4 dives in and kicks underwater with a legal butterfly kick. His head does not break the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark in his lane; however, it does break the surface of the water by the 15 meter marks in lanes 2 and 7. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No, the swimmer should not be disqualified. The official should use the most generous of the 15 meter markings (within reason) to ensure that all swimmers receive the benefit of the doubt. If one or more marking is missing or severely out of alignment, the referee should determine which mark will be used for the judging of the 15 meter distance.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

40. During a butterfly race, a swimmer realizes that her goggles have come loose. After taking a legal butterfly stroke, she simultaneously brings her hands forward under the water to adjust her goggles, meanwhile performing a legal butterfly kick to stay afloat. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.” The swimmer was not in compliance with this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

41. During a butterfly race, a swimmer realizes that his suit has come loose. After taking a stroke, he simultaneously reaches back with both arms, pulls his suit forward, and recovers his arms over the water. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.” The swimmer did not do anything to violate this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

42. A swimmer in the 100 yard butterfly takes a simultaneous two-arm pull, kicks several times with her arms at her sides, simultaneously brings both arms forward over the water, keeps her arms stretched out in front of her for several kicks, and then does another simultaneous two-arm pull. She repeats this process throughout the swim. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: She should not be disqualified. There is no rule requiring an arm stroke between leg kicks. The swimmer may kick as many times as desired between strokes as long as both legs kick simultaneously.

Applicable Rules: 101.3.2, 101.3.3

43. An age group swimmer comes off the 50 yard turn in the butterfly on his back, with his arms fully extended, and does two butterfly kicks, before rolling onto his breast and taking his first arm pull. Should he be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. While a swimmer may do one or more leg kicks after the start and each turn in the butterfly, the swimmer's shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.

Applicable Rules: 101.3.2, 101.3.4

44. A swimmer likes to keep his feet separated while kicking to the surface of the water at the beginning of the butterfly. His legs still move simultaneously both upwards and downwards, and do not alternate. He was disqualified for not having his feet and legs together while he was doing the butterfly kick. Is this a valid disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, "All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other." There is nothing in the rules that prohibits the feet from being separated.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.3

45. A swimmer in the 100 yard butterfly enters the water at the start, with her shoulders at or past vertical toward the breast, and kicks on her side. She performs a kick with both legs moving simultaneously, without alternating movement, but moving from side to side. An official calls a disqualification stating that the swimmer did not perform a kick with an up and down motion. Should the DQ be accepted?

Recommended Resolution: The DQ should not be accepted. The view of the kick as up and down is relative to the swimmer's body.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.3

46. When swimming the butterfly, a swimmer's right leg is slightly higher than her left leg. The legs move upward and downward simultaneously and do not alternate in relation to each other. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, this is legal. The rule states, "All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other." For the kick to be considered alternating, the official must observe one foot moving up while the other foot is moving down.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.3

47. At the turn in a 50 yard butterfly event, the turn judge makes a call for a one-hand touch. After further discussion with the official, the chief judge determines that the turn judge observed three swimmers in his jurisdiction come into the wall simultaneously. As the turn judge shifted his eyes across all three lanes, the turn judge observed the swimmer in lane 3 pulling away from the wall with only the left hand in contact with the wall. Since the turn judge did not observe the right hand of the swimmer in contact with the wall, he raised his hand to make a call. Is this a valid DQ?

Recommended Resolution: The chief judge should recommend to the referee that the call not be accepted. Stroke and turn judges should only call what they see, not what they don't see. While it is possible that the swimmer did not make a two-hand touch, it is also possible that a two-hand touch was made, but made before the turn judge had shifted his eyes to that lane.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.4

48. At the 175 yard turn of the 200 yard butterfly, a swimmer, realizing how tired he is, legally touches the wall with two hands, stops, stands on the bottom, and pushes off the wall on the breast a few seconds later. Should he be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, "Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. The shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall." Nothing that the swimmer did violated this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.4

49. A swimmer is 12 years old and is working to improve the speed of her butterfly. Prior to touching during one of the turns, she does a flip turn and pushes off the wall with both feet. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.” The swimmer should be disqualified.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.4

50. In a butterfly turn, a swimmer touches with his left hand and then touches immediately after with his right hand. The turn judge raises a hand, signaling a disqualification. The coach argues that the turn is legal because both hands were on the wall at the same time. Should the disqualification stand?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the rule is very clear. The rules state, “The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.” Therefore, the hands must touch at the same time, not one after the other.

Applicable Rule: 101.3.4

51. A turn judge observes the touch of a swimmer at the finish of the 200 yard butterfly. A couple of fingers are overlapping between the hands when the touch is made. The turn judge raises his hand to signal a disqualification, on the basis of the hands not being separated at the touch. Should the referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: The referee should not accept the call. USA Swimming’s interpretation of the rule provides that incidental contact of the fingers at the touch is permitted.

Applicable Rules: 101.3.5, “Breaststroke and Butterfly Hands Separated Interpretation”

52. When a swimmer swims the butterfly, at the finish, she stacks her hands completely on top of each other, thinking it will help her reach for the wall in a more effective manner. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: This is not legal. The rule states, “The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.” USA Swimming’s interpretation provides further clarification, expressing that complete stacking of the hands is not permitted.

Applicable Rules: 101.3.5, “Breaststroke and Butterfly Hands Separated Interpretation”

53. A swimmer completed her butterfly event with a two-hand touch. One hand was under the water and one hand was out of the water, above the water surface, on this simultaneous finish. The stroke and turn official disqualified her for not having both of her hands either out of the water or under the water. Should the swimmer have been disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No, she should not have been disqualified. The rule states, “The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.”

Applicable Rule: 101.3.5

54. After the start of a butterfly event, a swimmer incorrectly believes that there has been a recall. He stands on the bottom of the pool, but, realizing that no one else has stopped, resumes swimming. Should there be a disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. Any swimmer who stands on the bottom in a stroke other than freestyle will be disqualified.

Applicable Rule: 102.22.5

Backstroke

55. A senior swimmer has never used the backstroke ledge before. Her coach tells her that all ten of her toes must be in contact with the touchpad in order for her start to be legal. Is her coach correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. As long as one toe from each foot is in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad, she is complying with the rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.1

56. A swimmer knows that he can swim the backstroke faster if he dives in off the block at the start and then rotates onto his back, as opposed to simply starting in the pool. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips.”

Applicable Rule: 101.4.1

57. In a backstroke start, a swimmer keeps his toes under the water until the starting signal, then slides them up, and takes off from the gutter. Should any action be taken?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, “Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited.” Since the infraction took place after the start, the stroke and turn judge should make the disqualification call.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.1

58. There are yellow buoys on each lane line to mark the 15 meter distance, but some buoys shift and slide haphazardly up and down the lane lines. The swimmer's head in lane 6 breaks the water surface at the edge of the buoy in her lane, but the marker in lane 7 is passed. Is this a DQ?

Recommended Resolution: No. Placement of distinctive colored floats or markers on every lane line must be uniformly set at the 15 meter distance. However, floats “float” and the swimmer should be given the benefit of the doubt by judging the 15 meter mark by the “most generous” of all the appropriate floats in the pool, within reason. If one or more marking is missing or severely out of alignment, the referee should determine which mark will be used for the judging of the 15 meter distance.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

59. In an 8 & under 25 yard backstroke event, the stroke judge raises his hand to disqualify a swimmer on the basis that she swam an “elementary” backstroke and not a “crawl” backstroke. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. The backstroke rules do not specify any particular stroke or kick requirements, only that the race be swum on the back. There is no requirement that the stroke must be "crawl" or that the kick be an alternating kick.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

60. A backstroker starts her race and surfaces prior to the 15 meter mark. She then resubmerges and resurfaces, again prior to the 15 meter mark. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. Once the head breaks the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark, the swimmer may not resubmerge regardless of the fact that the swimmer resurfaces again within the 15 meter mark. The rule states, “Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 meters after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.” Once the surface has been reached, the start or turn has ended, and the requirement of remaining on the surface throughout the race is applicable.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

61. Approaching the finish of the backstroke, a swimmer likes to submerge himself completely underwater, as he knows that it will allow him to achieve a faster finish. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race.” If the swimmer is completely submerged, he is not in compliance with this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

62. An official makes a resubmerged call at the finish of the backstroke. The swimmer's coach speaks with the referee and adamantly believes that the swimmer's toenail was breaking the surface of the water prior to the touch. The referee investigates the call with the official, where he learns that the official did not observe the location of the feet when he made the call. Should the call be upheld?

Recommended Resolution: No, the call should not be upheld. In order to make a resubmerged call, the official must be certain that the entire body of the swimmer is underwater. This is extremely difficult to do while also attempting to observe the touch. By failing to note the position of the feet (or any other part of the body, for that matter) there is no certainty that the swimmer's body was underwater. Therefore, the benefit of the doubt must go to the swimmer.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

63. At the start of the backstroke, a swimmer likes to kick on his side, as he knows that it allows him to achieve a faster time. His shoulders are at vertical and his head breaks the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark. An official raises his hand to signal a disqualification because the swimmer is not flat on his back. Should the referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: The referee should not accept the call. The rules define "on the back" as the "position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the back." The position in which the swimmer is kicking is considered to be "on the back."

Applicable Rules: 101.4.2, Glossary

64. A young swimmer approaches the turn of the 50 yard backstroke. The swimmer rolls from the back to the breast, takes a single arm pull, and initiates his turn. After completing one full flip turn, the swimmer returns to a position facing the wall without ever touching the wall. The swimmer looks up at the official and does another somersault turn, touching the wall this time, leaves on the back, and finishes the race. The turn judge makes no call. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. The swimmer should be disqualified for failure to perform a continuous turn. The second "turn" is not part of the initial rollover turn and is viewed in the same way as sculling back to the wall.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

65. After passing under the flags and preparing for a turn during a 100 yard backstroke event, a swimmer turns past the vertical towards the breast and extends his arm while kicking, eventually executing a flip turn, leaving the wall on his back. Should he be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should be disqualified for delay in initiating the arm pull. As the swimmer does not initiate any turning action after the shoulders pass vertical, the turning action is not continuous. The fact that the swimmer was kicking has no bearing on the disqualification.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

66. A swimmer was disqualified when, after turning past vertical toward the breast to make a turn, he somersaulted and failed to touch the wall with any part of his body. He then continued to swim the backstroke properly. Is this a valid DQ?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall.”

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

67. During a backstroke turn, a swimmer turned her shoulders past vertical toward the breast to make her continuous motion turn. While on the breast, she immediately took one continuous single arm pull and then one continuous simultaneous double arm pull to execute the turn. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The swimmer may only use one continuous single arm pull or one continuous simultaneous double arm pull, not both.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

68. A swimmer is swimming the 100 yard backstroke. At the second turn, she turns past vertical towards the breast and immediately takes a single arm pull. She then kicks and glides prior to executing the turn. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. She should be disqualified for delay in initiating the turn, as this is not a continuous turning motion.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

69. A swimmer is swimming the 200 yard backstroke. At the fifth turn, he turns past vertical towards the breast and immediately initiates a single arm pull. Realizing that he is still too far away from the wall in order to turn, he slowly continues his arm pull, while kicking, until he is ready to turn. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No. By slowly continuing his arm pull, the swimmer's turn is continuous. He should not be disqualified.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

70. A swimmer is swimming the 100 yard backstroke. At the third turn, he turns past vertical towards the breast and immediately takes an arm pull. When his arm stroke concludes, he thrusts his head forward and then initiates the turn. The turn judge raises his hand to signal a disqualification on the basis of delay in initiating the turn. Should the referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: The referee should not accept the call. The swimmer thrusting his head forward is a part of his continuous turning motion. This scenario does not constitute delay in initiating the turn.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

71. A swimmer was swimming the 100 yard backstroke. At the first turn, the turn judge indicated a disqualification stating that the swimmer missed the wall on the turn. The swimmer and her coach come to the deck referee to discuss the call, and both say that she did touch the wall and that her feet just slipped. They also state that the swimmer could not have pushed off the wall if she didn't touch it. Should the deck referee uphold the call?

Recommended Resolution: Stroke and turn judges are taught to call what they see and not what they don't see. This philosophy is very evident in the missed touch at the turn where the turn judge must actually observe the swimmer not touch the wall, as opposed to merely not observing the swimmer touch the wall. The judge also cannot infer an infraction from other evidence such as a slow departure from the wall that normally accompanies a missed touch. The referee should further investigate the call and find out exactly how the judge knew that the swimmer missed the wall.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

72. During the 50 yard backstroke, a swimmer approaches the turn. When he moves past vertical towards the breast to make a flip turn, he finds himself in contact with the wall. Without doing a flip turn, the swimmer leaves the wall past vertical towards the back. What action should the turn judge take?

Recommended Resolution: No action is required. The rule states, “During the turn the shoulders may be turned past vertical towards the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or immediate continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.” Nothing that the swimmer did violated this rule; there is no requirement for the swimmer to do a flip turn.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

73. During the backstroke turn, a swimmer turns past vertical towards the breast, executes a single continuous arm pull, flips, touches the wall with his feet, and accidentally pushes off the wall on his stomach. Realizing that he had made a mistake, he immediately turns past vertical towards the back. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rules state, “The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.” The swimmer did not do this.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

74. An official is observing turns in the 100 yard backstroke. He sees a swimmer turning in the backstroke that appears to be past vertical towards the breast after flipping and raises his hand to report an infraction. Upon further investigation by the referee, the referee determines that the official did not know the location of the swimmer’s feet when he observed the shoulders. Should the referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.” It is possible that the swimmer’s feet were still on the wall when the official observed the shoulders past vertical towards the breast.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.3

75. At the turn in the 50 yard backstroke, a very young swimmer touched the wall with his elbow, while on his back. At the finish, he touched with his head. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rules state that “some part of the swimmer” must touch the wall. There is no requirement that it be any specific body part.

Applicable Rules: 101.4.3, 101.4.4

76. A swimmer is 8 years old. She is very afraid of hitting her head on the wall, so, at the finish of the backstroke, she turns past vertical towards the breast and touches the wall while on her stomach. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.”

Applicable Rule: 101.4.4

77. A swimmer is entered in the 100 yard backstroke. When she places her feet, she bends her toes around the top of the touchpad. The starter does not notice. After the starting signal is sounded, the swimmer’s toes are still in this position. The stroke and turn official raises his hand to disqualify the swimmer for bending her toes around the top of the touchpad. Should the referee accept the call?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the starter.”

Applicable Rule: 101.1.2E

78. During the 200 yard backstroke, a swimmer gets very tired. He stands up in the middle of the course. He does not walk or spring off from the pool bottom, but rests and then resumes swimming. Should there be a disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. Any swimmer who stands on the bottom in a stroke other than freestyle will be disqualified.

Applicable Rule: 102.22.5

Freestyle

79. A swimmer wants to swim in the style of backstroke during the 200 yard freestyle, and understands that this is legal as freestyle has no stroke or kick requirement. She would like to begin her race with a conventional backstroke start, in the water, with her back facing the course. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The forward start shall be used.”

Applicable Rule: 101.5.1

80. A swimmer wants to swim the corkscrew during the 50 yard freestyle. His coach informs him that this would not be legal, as the freestyle must be swum on the breast. Is his coach correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. There is no required body position for the freestyle events, except for that the forward start shall be used.

Applicable Rules: 101.5.2, 101.5.1

81. A swimmer dives in to the pool to start the 100 yard freestyle, and kicks on her breast in a streamline position. Her shoulder blades break the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark, but her head breaks the surface of the water slightly past the 15 meter mark. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule requires the head to break the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

82. A meet is conducted at a facility with aging lane lines. The floats designating the 15 meter mark are not perfectly aligned among the lanes. At the start of the freestyle, the swimmer in lane 6 legally executes the forward start, but her head does not break surface of the water by the 15 meter mark in her lane. It does, however, break the surface of the water by the 15 meter marks in lanes 1, 4, and 8. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No, the swimmer should not be disqualified. The official should use the most generous of the 15 meter markings (within reason) to ensure that all swimmers receive the benefit of the doubt. If one or more marking is missing or severely out of alignment, the referee should determine which mark will be used for the judging of the 15 meter distance.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

83. A swimmer wants to swim the freestyle in a unique way. He intends to begin with a forward start and swim entirely underwater, except for periodically coming to the surface to breathe. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: This is not legal. The rule states, “Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 meters after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.”

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

84. To achieve a faster finish in the freestyle, a swimmer likes to take a powerful stroke towards the end of his race that forces his entire body to be underwater before he touches the wall. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 meters after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.” By resubmerging after the 15 meter mark, the swimmer is in violation of this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

85. A swimmer likes to swim the butterfly. She would like to swim the butterfly during a freestyle event. An official tells her coach that she can swim butterfly, but she can't alter the stroke at any time during the race. Is this a correct statement made by the official?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “In an event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style.” Regardless of how the swimmer chooses to swim, the swim may only count as a freestyle time.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

86. A swimmer missed her championship cut in the 200 yard butterfly by less than one second. She is also entered in the 200 freestyle. Her coach tells her that if she swims legal butterfly during a freestyle race, her time can count as a butterfly time, giving her another opportunity to earn her championship cut. Is her coach correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. Although a swimmer may swim in any style during a freestyle event, the time may only be officially recorded as a freestyle time.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

87. A young swimmer can't make up his mind what stroke he wants to swim during the 50 yard freestyle. He decided to do the backstroke and the butterfly during the first 25 yards and the breaststroke and the freestyle during the last 25 yards. For the first length, he did a forward start and then a corkscrew to get into position to do his backstroke. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, "In an event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style."

Applicable Rule: 101.5.2

88. During a turn in the 500 yard freestyle, a swimmer misses the wall. The turn judge signals an infraction. At what should be the end of the race, the coach shouts, "swim another 50," and the swimmer does so. Is there any limit to when a swimmer can go back and touch a missed wall? Does the disqualification stand? What if the event is 100 yards or 1,650 yards? Does the length of the race have any bearing on the disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: The disqualification should stand. The rules require that the swimmer touch the wall upon completion of each length. When the swimmer makes the next touch at the opposite end of the pool, she has lost the opportunity to correct the missed touch. The length of the race has no bearing.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.3

89. A young swimmer just completed the only turn in the 50 yard freestyle, but didn't touch the wall. She started to swim, and got as far as the middle of the pool, when she decided to return to the turn end of the pool, and touch without doing a flip turn. In the meantime, the official raised his hand and wrote a disqualification slip. Was this a valid disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: No. The disqualification should be pulled. Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall. She should not have been disqualified if she went back and touched the wall at the turn end prior to touching the wall at the finish end.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.3

90. In a 100 yard freestyle race, the turn judge observes a swimmer miss the wall at the first turn. When should the judge raise her hand?

Recommended Resolution: The judge should raise her hand when the swimmer starts swimming the next length after missing the wall. If the swimmer realizes his error, returns to the wall, and touches it before reaching the other end of the pool, the judge can reverse her call.

Applicable Rule: 101.5.3

91. During the turn of the 50 yard freestyle, a swimmer touched the wall with only his toe. At the finish, he touched the wall with his head because he was looking under the water at the swimmer in the next lane and not looking for the wall in his lane. Were these legal touches?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. In the freestyle, any part of a swimmer's person touching the wall constitutes a legal touch.

Applicable Rules: 101.5.3, 101.5.4

92. A swimmer in the 400 yard freestyle notifies the deck referee that he will be trying for a 100 yard split. After the first 100 yards, the swimmer sees that he has not made the desired time, swims about 25 yards out, and then swims back to the start end and exits the pool. What infraction has occurred? When should the judge raise his hand?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer has committed two infractions. The first is that he did not touch the wall at the completion of each length. Additionally, he left the pool prior to the completion of the race. The turn judge at the turn end should raise his hand when the swimmer starts to swim back to the start end from 25 yards out. The turn judge at the start end should raise his hand when the swimmer exits the pool. The swimmer's 100 yard split will not count, as the swimmer did not legally finish the race.

Applicable Rules: 101.5.3, 102.22.5, 102.24.1A(1)(d)

93. In the 1650 yard freestyle, a swimmer exits the pool to use the restroom. She re-enters with an in-water start with a push off of the wall. At the completion of her race, she is notified that she has been disqualified for leaving the pool. The swimmer argues the disqualification citing special provisions in the rules for distance events. Should the swimmer have been disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should have been disqualified. The special provisions in the rules for long distance events are for pool events longer than 5000 yards or meters. The 1650 yard freestyle is not subject to these special provisions.

Applicable Rules: 101.8.1, 102.22.5

94. A swimmer leaves the pool believing that he has finished his freestyle race. Finding out that he has not swum the correct number of lengths, he enters the pool again to finish. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “A swimmer must not leave the pool.”

Applicable Rule: 102.22.5

95. A swimmer believes that he has finished a freestyle race and walks a few steps away from the wall. He is advised to swim two more lengths. He returns to the wall and completes the required distance. Should he be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should be disqualified. The rule states, “A swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom.”

Applicable Rule: 102.22.5

96. A swimmer got very tired during the 500 yard freestyle. She decided to stop and rest. By resting, her feet touched the bottom of the pool. After the short rest, she sprang from the bottom of the pool and completed the race. Should she be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but a swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom.”

Applicable Rule: 102.22.5

97. A swimmer, towards the end of a 50 yard freestyle race, grabs the lane line to rest and, in the process, pushes backwards towards the turn end before resuming and completing the distance. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. The rule states, “Grasping lane dividers to assist in forward motion is not permitted.” There is nothing in the rules that prohibits pushing backwards on the lane line. Freestyle has no prescribed cycle or form so resting, floating, and pushing back are not stroke violations.

Applicable Rules: 102.22.10, 101.5.2

Individual Medley

98. A coach has conducted several experiments in his practices and has determined that the individual medley can be swum faster if the swimmer swims the strokes in the order of butterfly, breaststroke, backstroke, and then freestyle. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance in the following order: the first one-fourth, butterfly; the second one-fourth, backstroke; the third one-fourth, breaststroke; and the last one-fourth, freestyle.” It is not legal to swim the strokes in any other order.

Applicable Rule: 101.6

99. A swimmer is an extremely fast breastroker, but is not particularly skilled in the butterfly. She would like to swim breaststroke in the place of butterfly during the individual medley. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance in the following order: the first one-fourth, butterfly; the second one-fourth, backstroke; the third one-fourth, breaststroke; and the last one-fourth, freestyle.” A swimmer may not swim the same stroke for more than one-fourth of the race in the individual medley.

Applicable Rule: 101.6

100. During the breaststroke portion of the individual medley, a swimmer takes a downward butterfly kick following each breaststroke kick. When discussing the call with the referee, he argues that his kick was legal, as butterfly is also a part of the individual medley. Should the referee uphold the call?

Recommended Resolution: The referee should uphold the call. The rule states, “The stroke for each one-fourth of the designated distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke.”

Applicable Rule: 101.6.2

101. A swimmer is a very strong butterfly swimmer. She would like to swim butterfly during the freestyle leg of the individual medley, as she understands freestyle to be swimming in any style that she chooses. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “In a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke.” Thus, in the individual medley, it would not be acceptable for the swimmer to swim the freestyle portion of the race in the style of butterfly.

Applicable Rules: 101.6, 101.5.2

102. A swimmer begins the freestyle leg of the individual medley by taking several butterfly kicks. He is disqualified for swimming more than one quarter of the race in the style of butterfly. Is this a correct disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not a correct disqualification. The butterfly kick is only one element of butterfly; it is not the defining characteristic. A swimmer would need to use both a butterfly kick, as well as a simultaneous double arm pull, in which the arms recover over the surface of the water, in order to be disqualified for swimming more than one quarter of the race in the style of butterfly.

Applicable Rules: 101.6, 101.5.2

103. A swimmer begins the freestyle leg of the individual medley with a breaststroke kick followed by a breaststroke pull. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The swimmer utilized both fundamental characteristics of breaststroke—the kick and the pull. Although she performed them in a sequence that would be illegal in breaststroke (the pull must come before the kick), by using both fundamental characteristics of breaststroke, she is considered to be swimming more than one quarter of the race in the style of breaststroke.

Applicable Rules: 101.6, 101.5.2

104. During the freestyle portion of the 400 yard individual medley, a swimmer becomes extremely tired, and, mid-pool, turns past vertical towards the back, in order to catch her breath and recover. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, she should be disqualified. The rule states, “In the freestyle, the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn.” By turning past vertical towards the back, the swimmer is in violation of this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.2

105. In an intermediate butterfly turn in the 200 yard individual medley, a swimmer is disqualified for touching the wall with only one hand. His coach argues the call, citing that the requirement to touch simultaneously with both hands is a butterfly rule, not an individual medley rule. Should the call be upheld?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the call should be upheld. The rule states, “Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke.”

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3A

106. In a freestyle to freestyle turn in the 400 yard individual medley, a swimmer executes a flip turn, pushes off of the wall past vertical towards the back, and takes several butterfly kicks before turning past vertical towards the breast. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke, except that in the freestyle turn, the swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.” The swimmer kicked while still past vertical towards the back, warranting disqualification.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3A

107. In a freestyle to freestyle turn in the 200 yard individual medley, a swimmer executes a flip turn, and pushes off of the wall past vertical towards the back, but rotates past vertical towards the breast prior to taking any kick or stroke. The turn judge standing over the swimmer’s lane disqualifies the swimmer on the basis of swimming more than one quarter of the race in the style of backstroke. Is this a correct call?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not a correct call. The rule states, “Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke, except that in the freestyle turn, the swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.” The swimmer returned to the breast prior to taking any kick or stroke, making his swim legal.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3A

108. A swimmer is competing in the 400 yard individual medley. In one of the intermediate freestyle turns, she executes a flip turn, pushes off the wall, and kicks on her side—her shoulders are at vertical. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rules define “on the breast” as the “position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the breast.” Therefore, it is perfectly legal for the swimmer to kick in the position described.

Applicable Rules: 101.6.3A, Glossary

109. In the butterfly to backstroke turn of the 200 yard individual medley, a swimmer leaves the wall with her shoulders past vertical towards the breast, but then immediately rotates towards her back, and begins swimming backstroke. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “The shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.” The swimmer did not do this.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3B(1)

110. During the butterfly to backstroke turn of the 400 yard individual medley, a swimmer legally finished the butterfly with a two hand touch. Her turn was rather irregular. When the turn judge observed her in a position with her shoulders towards the breast, he raised his hand to disqualify her for not being on her back at the start of the backstroke. The referee determines, upon further investigation, that the turn judge was not aware of the location of the swimmer’s feet when he observed her shoulders past vertical towards the breast. Should the referee uphold the call?

Recommended Resolution: No, the call should be overturned. Since the turn judge did not know the location of the swimmer’s feet when he observed her shoulders past vertical, it is possible that she was still on the wall at the time the call was made, and that her body was in a legal position when she left the wall.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3B(1)

111. For the backstroke to breaststroke turn of the 200 yard individual medley, a swimmer likes to utilize the “crossover” turn. She touches while on her side, and then swings her legs around to push off of the wall on her other side. Her shoulders were at vertical when she touched the wall, and at vertical when she left the wall. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, this is legal. The rule states, “The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.” Nothing the swimmer did violated this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3B(2)

112. A swimmer is 11 years old. He also attempts to execute the “crossover” turn. At the finish of the backstroke, he reaches back to touch the wall, but his shoulders turn past vertical towards the breast in this process. He also pushes off the wall with his shoulders past vertical towards the back. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.” While the swimmer attempted a “crossover” turn, which is legal, if done correctly, he did not successfully execute it in accordance with the rules.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3.B(2)

113. A swimmer prefers to use a “bucket” turn. She touches the wall on her back, somersaults backwards, and pushes off the wall on the breast. At a recent meet, an official disqualified her, stating that a flip turn is not a legal means to transition from backstroke to breaststroke. Was the official correct?

Recommended Resolution: The official was not correct. The rule states, “The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.” The swimmer touched the wall while on her back, and left the wall while on her breast. She did not violate these rules.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3.B(2)

114. An age group swimmer sees no reason why he cannot use a traditional backstroke flip turn to transition from backstroke to breaststroke. As he approaches the wall, he turns past vertical towards the breast, takes an immediate continuous single arm pull, and immediately initiates a flip turn. His shoulders are past vertical towards the breast when he leaves the wall. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.” The swimmer did not finish the backstroke by touching the wall on his back. He may not use a traditional backstroke flip turn, as this is considered the finish of the backstroke, not a turn.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3.B(2)

115. In a breaststroke to freestyle turn in the 100 yard individual medley, a swimmer touches the wall with a legal breaststroke finish, pushes off of the wall past vertical towards the back, and takes several butterfly kicks before turning past vertical towards the breast. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule requires the swimmer to “return to the breast before any kick or stroke.” The swimmer kicked while still past vertical towards the back, warranting disqualification.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3B(3)

116. During the breaststroke to freestyle turn in the 200 yard individual medley, a swimmer executes a legal breaststroke finish and proceeds to push off the wall on her back. She later rotates to a position in which her shoulders are past vertical towards the breast, and does so before taking any kick or stroke. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, this is legal. The rule states, “Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner and must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.” The swimmer’s swim was in accordance with this rule.

Applicable Rule: 101.6.3B(3)

117. After legally finishing the breaststroke leg of the individual medley, a swimmer pushes off the wall on his side and takes several butterfly kicks, with his shoulders at vertical, before surfacing and swimming a traditional freestyle. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: This is legal. The rules define “on the breast” as the “position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the breast.” Therefore, the is considered to be kicking on the breast.

Applicable Rules: 101.6.3B(3), Glossary

Relays

118. During the 400 yard freestyle relay, the team in lane 6 decided to swim in medley relay order. The first swimmer began with a forward start and rotated onto his back after the start of the race. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, this is legal. Swimmers may use “any desired stroke(s)” during the freestyle relay.

Applicable Rule: 101.7.1

119. A medley relay team would like to swim the relay legs in the order of backstroke, butterfly, freestyle, and then breaststroke. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rules require that the medley relay legs be swum in the order of backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and then freestyle.

Applicable Rule: 101.7.2

120. The butterfly swimmer on a 200 yard medley relay team swims his leg of the race using the breaststroke kick instead of the butterfly kick. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “Rules pertaining to each stroke used shall govern where applicable.” A breaststroke kick is not permitted in the butterfly; therefore, it is not permitted in the butterfly leg of the medley relay.

Applicable Rule: 101.7.2

121. A swimmer is a very strong breaststroke swimmer. She would like to swim breaststroke during the freestyle leg of the medley relay, as she understands freestyle to be swimming in any style that she chooses. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “In a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke, or backstroke.” Thus, in the medley relay, it would not be acceptable for the swimmer to swim the freestyle portion of the race in the style of breaststroke.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.5.2

122. A swimmer begins the freestyle leg of the medley relay by taking several butterfly kicks. He is disqualified for swimming butterfly during the freestyle leg of the medley relay. Is this a correct disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not a correct disqualification. The butterfly kick is only one element of butterfly; it is not the defining characteristic. A swimmer would need to use both a butterfly kick, as well as a simultaneous double arm pull, in which the arms recover over the surface of the water, in order to be disqualified for swimming butterfly during the freestyle leg of the relay.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.5.2

123. A swimmer begins the freestyle leg of the medley relay with a breaststroke kick followed by a breaststroke pull. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The swimmer utilized both fundamental characteristics of the breaststroke—the kick and the pull. Although he performed them in a sequence that would be illegal in the breaststroke (the pull must come before the kick), by using both fundamental characteristics of breaststroke, he is considered to be swimming breaststroke during the freestyle leg of the medley relay.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.5.2

124. During the freestyle leg of the 200 yard medley relay, a swimmer becomes extremely tired, and, mid-pool, turns past vertical towards the back, in order to catch her breath and recover. Should the relay team be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the relay team should be disqualified. The medley relay rules note that article 101.6 is in effect for the medley relays, for which part 101.6.2 states, “In the freestyle, the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn.” By turning past vertical towards the back, the swimmer is in violation of this rule.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.6.2

125. In a freestyle to freestyle turn in the 400 yard medley relay, a swimmer executes a flip turn, pushes off of the wall past vertical towards the back, and takes several butterfly kicks, before turning past vertical towards the breast. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The medley relay rules note that article 101.6 is in effect for the medley relays, for which part 101.6.3A states, “Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke, except that in the freestyle turn, the swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.” The swimmer kicked while still past vertical towards the back, warranting disqualification.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.6.3A

126. In a freestyle to freestyle turn in the 200 yard medley relay, a swimmer executes a flip turn, and pushes off of the wall past vertical towards the back, but rotates past vertical towards the breast prior to taking any kick or stroke. The turn judge standing over the swimmer’s lane disqualifies the relay team on the basis of the freestyle swimmer swimming backstroke during the freestyle leg of the medley relay. Is this a correct call?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not a correct call. The medley relay rules note that article 101.6 is in effect for the medley relays, for which part 101.6.3A states, “Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke, except that in the freestyle turn, the swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.” The swimmer returned to the breast prior to taking any kick or stroke, making her swim legal.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.6.3A

127. A swimmer is competing in the 400 yard medley relay. In one of the intermediate freestyle turns, he executes a flip turn, pushes off the wall, and kicks on his side—his shoulders are at vertical. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rules define “on the breast” as the “position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the breast.” Therefore, it is perfectly legal for the swimmer to kick in the position described.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.2, 101.6.3A, Glossary

128. At the local 8 & under championships, a team has three 8 & under girls entered in the meet, but only one 8 & under boy. For the mixed 200 yard medley relay, they would like to swim a relay consisting of three girls and one boy. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “Mixed gender relays must consist of two (2) males and two (2) females.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.3

129. At an age group meet, a team has only three 11-12 girls. For the 11-12 girls 200 yard freestyle relay, they would like to have the fastest of the three girls swim twice. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4A

130. At an LSC championship meet, electronic relay judging equipment is being used to confirm potential relay take-off violations. The third swimmer on the lane 5 relay team touches the top of the wall at the end of his length, but never touches the touchpad. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “When automatic relay take-off judging is used, each swimmer must touch the touchplate or pad in his/her lane at the end of the course to have finished his/her leg of the relay race.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4B

131. In the 400 yard freestyle relay, the third swimmer on the lane 5 relay team enters the water while the first swimmer on her team is swimming, as she wants to get wet, so that she is more ready to begin her leg of the race. Should her relay team be disqualified as a result of this action?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Any relay team member and his/her relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg enters the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4D

132. A novice swimmer will be swimming the breaststroke leg of the 200 yard medley relay. She is nervous, and does not want to do a dive start off of the block, but her coach tells her that she cannot do an in-water start, as the rules prohibit entering the water during any leg other than her own. Is her coach correct?

Recommended Resolution: Her coach is not correct. The rules grant an exception to the restriction on entering the water during any other leg in cases “when an in-the-water start is required or such start is approved by the Referee.” It is perfectly fine for the swimmer to do an in-water start.

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4D

133. During the 400 yard medley relay, the breaststroke swimmer doesn’t get out of the pool before it is time for the freestyle swimmer to make the final exchange with the butterfly swimmer. The team is disqualified because the breaststroke swimmer didn’t get out of the pool in time. Is this a valid disqualification?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “Each relay team member shall leave the water immediately upon finishing his/her leg, except the last member.” There is an exception to this rule, however, for swimmers with a disability. The rule states, “Relay swimmers who cannot exit the water immediately may be allowed to remain in the lane until all relays have finished so long as they do not interfere with the other swimmers or the timing equipment.”

Applicable Rules: 101.7.4E, 105.5.4

134. In the 200 yard freestyle relay, the third swimmer on the team in lane 4 misjudges her finish into the wall, and takes an extra stroke that the team’s fourth swimmer was not anticipating. As a result, the fourth swimmer loses contact with the block prior to the third swimmer touching the wall. Should the relay team be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “In relay races the team of a swimmer whose feet have lost touch with the starting platform (ground or deck) before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified.”

Applicable Rules: 101.7.4F, 101.7.4C

135. A relay take-off judge makes note of an early take-off observation for the second swimmer of the relay team in lane 2. He observed the first swimmer touch the wall, and then observed that the second swimmer had already left the block. Is this a valid observation?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not a valid observation. A relay take-off judge must observe the next-up swimmer lose contact with the starting platform before checking to see if the swimmer in the pool has finished. By doing this in reverse order, it is very possible that legal exchanges could be called as early take-offs, as the swimmer may leave the block while the judge is shifting his/her eyes. By observing the swimmer lose contact with the starting platform, and then shifting focus to the swimmer in the water, it is ensured that the swimmer always receives the benefit of the doubt.

Applicable Rules: 101.7.4F, 101.7.4C

136. The third swimmer on the medley relay team in lane 6 chooses to use an in-water start. He enters the water and places one hand and both feet on the wall. His hand, as well as both feet, lose contact with the wall prior to the touch of the second swimmer. Should the relay team be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: Yes. The rule states, “In relay races involving in-the-water starts, the team of a swimmer who has lost touch with the end of the course before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified, unless the swimmer in default returns to the original starting point at the wall.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4G

137. The fourth swimmer on the freestyle relay team in lane 3 chooses to use an in-water start. She enters the water and places both feet on the wall. Both feet lose contact with the wall prior to the touch of the third swimmer, but she returns to her original starting position after the swimmer has touched, and starts her leg of the race. Should the relay team be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No. The rule states, “In relay races involving in-the-water starts, the team of a swimmer who has lost touch with the end of the course before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified, unless the swimmer in default returns to the original starting point at the wall.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4G

138. The third swimmer on a 200 yard freestyle relay team executes his relay take-off with one foot behind the adjustable back plate of the block and one foot on top of the adjustable back plate of the block. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “On relays, the second, third and fourth swimmers are prohibited from starting from the top of the adjustable back plate. A swimmer must have at least one foot in contact with the starting platform in front of the adjustable back plate during a relay exchange.”

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4H (Effective May 1, 2018)

139. The fourth swimmer on a 400 yard medley relay team executes her relay take-off using the “stepover” start. She begins with one foot behind the adjustable back plate and one foot on top of the plate, and later steps forward, leaving the block with one foot on top of the plate and one foot in front of the plate. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, this is legal. One foot is in contact with the starting platform in front of the adjustable back plate when the swimmer leaves the block, making her start in compliance with the rules.

Applicable Rule: 101.7.4H (Effective May 1, 2018)