



Officiating Masters Swimming

USMS Officials Committee



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Philosophy of Officiating

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

Part 1 of the USMS Rules and Regulations



USMS Officials

- Who is a USMS Official?
 - Anyone who officiates at a USMS sanctioned meet.
- What is the primary goal of the USMS Officials Program?
 - To educate our officials on our rules so we can achieve the “fair and equitable” standard of officiating.
 - Increase the pool of qualified officials so we can offer more opportunities to compete for our membership.
- How is this accomplished?
 - Partnerships with other NGB’s at the national and local levels.
 - Mentorship system: USMS Officials Committee to LMSC Officials Chairs to Meet Referees to all Officials.

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



Fair and Equitable

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

Mental Traps

- Everything you need to know is in the rule book.
- Reading things into the rules that are not there.
- Advantage vs. disadvantage.
- The “twice theory”.
- “We don’t disqualify 75-and-overs”.
 - Corollary to “We don’t disqualify 8-and-unders”.
- Difference between “different” and illegal.
- Calling things you infer, not what you saw.
- “I think I saw.....”

USMS Officials

- Meet Referee must be a certified official.
 - Minimum level is a Stroke and Turn Judge per USMS Rules.
 - Meet Referees who are not certified at the Referee level should be trained further. (Certified does not necessarily equate to qualified.)
 - There is much more to being a Referee than just knowing the rules!
 - Regard the Meet Referee as a representative of USMS for the purposes of training and educating the other officials.
- Referee and Starter may not be the same person.
 - Should be stationed on the same side of the pool unless there is a shortage of officials.

USMS Officials

- A minimum of two Stroke and Turn Officials are required.
 - Referee and Starter may double if feasible.
 - USMS Rules should be interpreted as a minimum requirement.
 - The right number of officials depends on the size of the meet, the venue, the experience level of people available, and other factors.
 - Jurisdictions should be clearly defined.
- Meet Referees have full authority over all assignments and placement of officials.
 - Administrative Officials are officials too!



Standards for Success

- Keep a roster of Officials as a resource for Meet Directors.
 - Utilize other NGB contacts at the local level.
- Proactively select or assign Meet Referees and ensure that they are educated on USMS Rules.
 - LMSC should take ownership of this process.
 - Use Meet Referees to educate other officials.
- Brief non-certified Starters and Stroke and Turn Judges on USMS Rules.
- Require mandatory pre-meet briefings for all officials.
- Use Meet Referee reports to assess “lessons learned’ after each meet.
 - Communication in both directions is key!



USMS Rules and Regulations

- USMS follows Articles 101, 102, and 105 of the USA Swimming Rule Book unless USMS adopts a change.
 - Appendix B of the USMS rule book provides a summary of rules differences between USMS and other NGBs.
- Differences affecting Starts, Strokes, Turns, and Relays.
 - Butterfly Kick
 - Forward Start
 - Relays
- Differences in Administrative Rules and Facility Standards.



Masters Competition

- USMS and World Records can be set anywhere!
- A typical USMS meet will include swimmers of all ages and ability levels.
- Many swimmers may lack basic familiarity with rules or meet procedures.
 - Preventative Officiating goes a long way to assisting swimmers!
 - Be on the lookout for situations that can be dealt with before it becomes an issue.
- Many swimmers are not coached or affiliated with a club.
 - Establish a practical means to notify swimmers of infractions. Officials should be prepared to deal directly with swimmers to explain the rationale behind DQs.
- Consider the possibility of medical emergencies and how you will deal with them.



USMS Butterfly Kick Rule

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



USMS Start Rules

- USMS follows the same whistle commands as USA-Swimming.
- No-recall rule is in effect for all USMS sanctioned meets.
- Referee may permit optional verbal commands to assist swimmers if needed.
- Recommend that announcing protocols be established to provide a consistent announcement of event and heat numbers.
 - Ensure that swimmers are able to hear the announcements clearly behind the blocks or in the pool area.



USMS Start Rules

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



USMS Competition Rules

- Swimmers may remain in the water following their legs of the relay and permitted to exit more slowly following the race.
- USMS Rules require continuous warm-up lanes.
 - If no separate warm-up area is available, lanes must be set aside in the competition pool. (Usually one or two outside lanes).
 - No diving or racing starts are permitted in these lanes during competition. Swimmers must enter the water feet first and exit carefully.
 - The use of equipment is not permitted.
- Referees and Starters should be aware of swimmers entering and exiting the pool and adjust accordingly.



USMS Administrative Rules

- Individual Age Groups
 - 18-24, 25-29, 30-34, etc. (5-year increments as needed).
- Relay Age Groups
 - SCY: 18+, 25+, 35+ (10-year increments as needed). Age is determined by youngest swimmer on the relay team.
 - SCM or LCM: 76-99, 100-119, 120-159, (40-year increments as needed). Aggregate age of all swimmers on the relay team.
- Age Determination
 - SCY: Last day of the meet.
 - SCM or LCM: December 31 of the year of the meet.



USMS Administrative Rules

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



USMS Administrative Rules

- For backstroke and relay events, initial splits may be recorded as official times if the swimmer notifies the Referee in writing prior to the event.
 - Must be recorded with fully automatic timing to be valid for USMS records and Top 10.
 - Relay leadoff splits are not valid if the second swimmers starts in the water.
- For all other events, the swimmer may notify the Referee prior to the conclusion of the meet.
- USMS record documentation requires timing system printout or timer card with signature of three timers.
- Winning the heat is not a requirement for records.
- Recommend that Referees look for potential records prior to the start of the meet.



USMS Administrative Rules

- A pool measurement certification is required for records and Top Ten times submissions.
- Initial certification must show all lanes and be measured with steel tape or other acceptable device.
- Bulkhead measurements must be confirmed at the conclusion of each session in three locations (two outside lanes and one of the center lanes).
- Strongly recommend that bulkheads also be measured prior to each session to ensure proper placement.



Meet Referee's "Toolbox"

- Rule Books for Officials
 - Only the USMS Rule Book should be displayed.
- USMS Pre-Meet Briefing Guidelines
- USA-Swimming Recommended Safety Checklist.
- Timer Instructions.
- DQ Slips.
- Meet Evaluation Forms.
- Record Applications.
- Report of Occurrence Forms.



Disability Swimming

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



Disability Swimming

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



Other Recent Situations

- Interpretation of the rule on pacing devices with respect to wearing watches.
- Enforcement of the single whistle command to “step up”.
- Proper recording of infractions on disqualification slips.
 - Non-continuous turning action for backstroke turns.
 - Arms not in the same horizontal plane on breaststroke pull-out.
- Requirement to notify swimmers of disqualifications.
- Individual swimmer requests to add time trials are not permitted.



Summary

- Our objective is to educate USMS officials on USMS rules and best practices for officiating masters swimming.
 - Fair and equitable officiating is the standard.
- System works on a mentorship basis.
 - Officials Committee
 - LMSC Officials Chairs
 - Meet Referees
 - Deck and Administrative Officials.
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!