



Age Group Development Committee Proposal to Restrict Tech Suits for 12-and-Under Swimmers

Overview

The Age Group Development Committee proposes the following rule to take effect September 1, 2020.

102.8 SWIMWEAR

.1 Design

- G. No Technical Suit may be worn by any 12 & Under USA Swimming athlete member in competition at any Sanctioned, Approved or Observed meet.
- 1) Exceptions to the foregoing restriction are only for Junior Nationals, US Open, National Championships, and Olympic Trials.
 - 2) A Technical Suit is one that has the following components:
 - a. Any suit with any bonded or taped seams regardless of its fabric or silhouette; or
 - b. Any suit with woven fabric extending past the hips.
(Note: WOVEN FABRIC-A suit with woven fabric and sewn seams that does not extend below the hips is permitted.)
(Note: KNIT FABRIC-A suit with knit fabric and sewn seams not extending below the knees is permitted.)

Age Group Development Committee Key Considerations

- Maintaining the status quo will negatively impact swimmer development by continuing to emphasize the suit as a quick (and false) path to success versus long-term skill development, practice, athlete effort and coaching.
- Curbing the over-zealous parent mentality of needing to “keep up with the Joneses” in order to compete.
- The status quo often removes decision-making from the coach to recommend the best long-term development plan.
- While cost was less of a factor than initially thought, the committee is mindful of managing the overall cost of participation and its impact on athlete retention.

Education

There is strong consensus from the Committee, coaches, suit manufacturers and USA Swimming staff of the importance of education to all parties. USA Swimming and the suit manufacturers will jointly create an educational campaign that will focus on the function and impact tech suits play in the performance of swimmers and the key features, suit options or styles, and cost appropriate suits for different levels of swimming. This educational campaign will integrate with USA Swimming’s American Development Model (ADM).

Timing

The September 2020 implementation date allows an adequate lead time for the manufacturers to update current suit styles, develop any relevant new styles, manage existing inventory and planned production, and incorporate the appropriate identification on the suits. Lead time for suit production can be 18 months or more.

Existing or Future LSC Rules

At least 11 LSCs have either created or have pending legislation regarding tech suit restrictions, each with varying interpretations. This scattered approach is not sustainable for officials, coaches, suit manufacturers or families. Should this proposal pass the House, USA Swimming and the Committee recommend all LSCs with existing rules adopt the definition, restrictions and timing consistent with the proposed rule. If the rule passes, LSCs would be prohibited from having their own more restrictive rules after September 1, 2020.

Suit Manufacturer Feedback

Suit manufacturers have a vested interest in both this legislation and future growth of the sport. Virtually all the manufacturers agree that the high end/highest cost tech suits are not appropriate for use by younger swimmers. Manufacturers have provided significant input during the process of defining tech suits and have been given a reasonable lead-up time to adjust product lines and have agreed to adapt to the proposed restrictions. All major brands in the USA market were actively involved in this process and 14 manufacturers overall were consulted.

Identification, Approval and Enforcement

The Committee’s goal is to develop a simple, quick and effective way to identify restricted and approved suits without interfering in the efficient and safe management of age group swim meets.

Virtually all suits that fall within the proposed Rule definition of restricted tech suits have been through the FINA approval process and bear the FINA approved logo. There are only a handful of suits in the market with the FINA logo that would be considered legal for Age Group competition. These suits will bear an additional logo developed by USA Swimming to indicate approval. All suits with the FINA logo and without the secondary approval logo will be easily identified as a restricted suit for 12 & under competition. There will be an alternative restricted mark available if any suits are made that fall under the restricted definition but do not have the FINA approval sticker. There are none of these currently in the market. Suit manufacturers are supportive of this proposed process.

Restricted Suit Database and Review & Approval Process

A database of restricted Tech Suits is being finalized by USA Swimming. This will be a critical tool for manufacturers, team dealers, parents, swimmers and coaches in monitoring restricted suits.

USA Swimming will also create a Suit Approval Group to review any questionable suits, FINA approved suits that would be legal for 12 & Unders, and newly defined technical suits not processed by FINA. The Committee anticipates on-going monitoring and tweaking of the rule will be necessary given the evolutionary nature of suit technology.



Age Group Development Committee Proposal to Restrict Tech Suits for 12-and-Under Swimmers

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: Can boys still wear “jammers”? The proposed rule says, “Any male or female suit with woven fabric extending to the knee or mid-thigh is defined as a technical suit...”**
- A:** Boys can still wear jammers. The key phrase in the proposal is “woven fabric”. There are plenty of jammer suits available that are not made of a woven material.
- Q: Can girls still wear suits down to the knees?**
- A:** Girls can still wear suits to the knees. Similar to the question above, there are plenty of female suits available that are not made of a woven material.
- Q: Can a 12-Under swimmer wear a tech suit at an LSC Championship meet or Zone Championships?**
- A:** No. The only meets where a 12-Under will be allowed to wear a tech suit is one that is in USA Swimming’s Championship series of meets (Sectionals, Futures, Junior Nationals, Pro Swim Series, US Open, National Championships or U.S. Olympic Trials) or the YMCA National Championship.
- Q: Can an LSC now make a rule restricting the use of tech suits earlier than the national restriction that goes into place September 1, 2020?**
- A:** The Age Group Development Committee (AGD) spent the last three years looking at the complexity of this issue from all sides in terms of markings, manufacturing, cost, officiating, retail and more to form this recommendation. The AGD strongly recommends LSCs hold any legislation until the national implementation date. This will allow for the proper time period for all aspects of the industry to be ready for the implementation.
- Q: Should LSCs with existing rules “fall in line” with this rule and timing?**
- A:** There was unanimous agreement that for this rule to be effective, it will require consistency nationally. It is the recommendation of the Age Group Development Committee that LSCs match this proposal on definition and timing.
- Q: How does USA Swimming plan to educate parents, coaches and swimmers on what is a technical suit and what isn’t?**
- A:** USA Swimming, with the help of all suit manufacturers, is planning to create an educational piece(s) on suits and what will be legal and what won’t. This campaign will include information to help parents choose the best suit for their young swimmer that is consistent with the American Development Model. USA Swimming will also publish a list of restricted suits.
- Q: What is the marking system to identify a tech suit?**
- A:** The primary identifier will be any suit that has the FINA logo will be considered a tech suit. This will address 99% of the issues today with 12-and-unders and is a marking system that higher-level officials are accustomed to seeing. It is easily identifiable even at a busy meet and does not require any additional cost or production for manufacturers. This will also keep consumer costs lower without adding additional steps in manufacturing.
- Q: Are there some suits with the FINA logo that could still work for 12-and-unders?**
- A:** There are currently a small number of suits (less than 5 today) that have a FINA logo but do not meet the definition of a tech suit. Those suits will require an additional visual mark (ex. a bright check mark surrounded by a circle) to signify it is ok for 12-and-under competition.
- Q: Are there suits that don’t have a FINA logo, but are still considered a tech suit?**
- A:** In the event that a manufacturer chooses not to go through FINA approval on a suit that meets the definition of a tech suit, an additional mark signifying it is not allowed for 12-and-unders will be used. Currently, no companies have a suit in this category.
- Q: If, for example, a 12-year-old is entered in an open/senior meet that is not on the list of exempted meets (i.e. an LSC Senior meet or an Open Invitational) how would an official know that they shouldn’t be wearing a technical suit since there isn’t an age classification for the meet or event?**
- A:** Because most heat sheets list the age of the athlete, it should be relatively easy at the beginning of the meet for the meet referee to look through the heat sheet and identify any 12-Under swimmers entered in the meet/events. The officials would then need to ensure that those swimmers are not competing in a suit with the FINA logo on it. The burden is really on swimmers, parents and coaches to comply with all rule changes.