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| |  | | --- | | **Thoughts from the Chair**  *Kathleen Scandary, Chair, USA Swimming National Officials’ Committee* | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | https://ci6.googleusercontent.com/proxy/hGrq11JG9KecB2nG0ztsJdIJsShd70PcMwlY7vDILI7Fc7SBVfbbc4wG_OUVaE6DKHnxEZLrHYsrLGiKl23tFIyxiTHqbeDSTQkpSvG9=s0-d-e1-ft#https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif |  | | https://ci6.googleusercontent.com/proxy/hGrq11JG9KecB2nG0ztsJdIJsShd70PcMwlY7vDILI7Fc7SBVfbbc4wG_OUVaE6DKHnxEZLrHYsrLGiKl23tFIyxiTHqbeDSTQkpSvG9=s0-d-e1-ft#https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif | https://ci6.googleusercontent.com/proxy/hGrq11JG9KecB2nG0ztsJdIJsShd70PcMwlY7vDILI7Fc7SBVfbbc4wG_OUVaE6DKHnxEZLrHYsrLGiKl23tFIyxiTHqbeDSTQkpSvG9=s0-d-e1-ft#https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif |   I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the members of the National Officials’ Committee:   * Dana Covington (SN) * Sandy Drake (HI) * Clark Hammond (SE) * Jim Holcomb (BD) * Amy Hoppenrath (MV) * Eddie Hughes (SC) * Anne Lawley (CO) * Scott Mengelkoch (ND) * Shelby Mullendore (athlete from MW) * Bill Rose (SN) * Jack Swanson (athlete from MN) * Matt Wilson (IN) * Carol Zaleski (AM)   Additionally, we are all grateful for the work and ideas that came from past members, Jamie Cahn, Melissa Hellervik-Bing, and athlete-member, Patrick Hunter.  The committee will meet at the end of April to discuss plans to move forward in recruitment and retention of officials across the country, as well as ways to educate and promote mentoring opportunities. In the interim, please contact Gina Mensay, at USA Swimming, with questions related to officiating at [gmensay@usaswimming.org](mailto:gmensay@usaswimming.org).  Thank you.  Kathleen Scandary  Chair, National Officials Committee | |

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| |  | | --- | | **The Block - Wedges and Ledges**  *Kathleen Scandary, Chair, National Officials’ Committee* | | Besides the standard measurements of the starting platform (103.14), there is much to be said about what an athlete is permitted or required to do in order to have a legal start from this piece of equipment, should it be used at all.  The forward start from the block is performed with at least one foot at the front of the platform as the swimmer assumes the starting position. The non-slip surface may be covered with a single layer towel should it become slippery from wear, or if the temperature rises to a level that is uncomfortable or even unsafe for bare skin. Some blocks might have hand grips along the sides to assist in the launch. The wedge, or fin as it is sometimes called, has become common-place since the FINA decision allowing its addition to the block a decade ago. It is important to note that an athlete is not permitted to stand with both feet on the apex of the wedge for any start.  All starting platforms are equipped with starting grips for in-the-water backstroke starts, the front of which are both parallel to and flush with the face of the end wall (103.14.4). Other grips that may be part of the platform structure are not allowed to be used for the backstroke start.  Backstroke ledges have provided swimmers the security of having a non-slip start. This may require some getting used to for the developmental swimmer as well as patience from the starter-deck referee team. There are retractable ledges and those that hang passively from the block. The apparatus must conform to specifications stated in the rulebook (103.15) and the athlete must have the toes of both feet in contact with the wall or the touchpad. You may be asked to place and remove the backstroke ledge at a meet, but the swimmer will make the adjustments for their optimum start. | |

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