

# Training Starters

General guidelines for training starters:

- Help the trainee become comfortable in his/her new role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced.
- Ask your trainee about clinic and other on-deck training experiences. Review what training session this is. What were the positive takeaways from the last session? What were the development needs? What would they like to focus on? What do you as the trainer want to achieve?
- Set a specific focus goal or two for your training session.
- Work on one thing at a time, offering short, focused comments and suggestions. Consider not commenting on every start; it will take several for your trainee to assimilate your suggestions.
- Be patient! We learn to start by doing. Do not comment after every start – let the trainee learn to self-critique and improve. Debrief when a set is completed. DO NOT make the inflection of TYM or cord control your number one focus early on. Work on patience, and reading swimmers for readiness to hear TYM and stationary positions before the beep.
- Give your trainee some space. Observe him/her from the other side of the pool or even from the stands. Some people find it difficult to work under continual close scrutiny.
- These are guidelines. Common sense, flexibility and creativity should apply to your specific training session.

## Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session

### Session One

- Teach by example here, possibly even starting an early set. Work with the other members of the starter/ref team to establish an environment and rotation that will serve your trainee well. Be sure your trainee will get at least 25 starts.
- During warm-ups, get trainees hands-on experience with the starting device and sound system. The starter should practice saying “take your mark” with particular emphasis on volume and tone of voice. Encourage your new starter to be conversational and calming; the swimmers should not be alarmed nor put on alert.
- Have a pre-meet conversation with the deck referee to review starting procedures and pace, and how false starts will be handled. Work with the trainee before the session on false start protocol and remind them the starter initiates the conversation.
- Carefully select the first starts for your new starter. Choose longer races and experienced (or at least older) swimmers for the first starts when possible. Give close guidance for the first several starts. Stand immediately behind the trainee, ready to prompt him or her with a whispered “stand them up” or “check lane two’s feet.”
- Discuss your observations about how to tell swimmers are ready and when to use the “stand” command. Talk about reading the athletes, about holding swimmers too long on the blocks, or not giving them enough time to get set. Remind the trainee that his/her job is to provide fair starts by making and keeping the swimmers as relaxed as possible.
- Be supportive and offer focused comments. Praise what the new starter does correctly.

### Session Two

- Discuss the false start scenarios and try to come up with examples for them to think about.
- Add in more starter responsibility - observing swimmers behind the blocks, order of finish, rotation and backup work. Watch a timers meeting
- Have them shadow you in discussions with other starters and referees on “box” protocols.
- Review after each set, give one thing to work on next set. Focus should still be on patience and reading the swimmers and basics such as posture and developing a routine.
- Take notes on your separate heat sheet for each start if possible

- If voice tenor or cadence is a problem (not volume) give feedback about it when you are certain they are comfortable with the start process. It is even OK to have it be a homework assignment.
- Give an appreciative, but honest review. Tell them it takes a lot of starts to be really good, encourage to keep working and give them things to work on in the next session.

### Session Three

- The trainee should do the timer's meeting and should handle (with your oversight) all aspects of checking equipment, etc. pre-session.
- By this session they should have developed a pre-start routine for themselves. Your job should be to help them take the edges off of the routine, reminding them that their movements are watched by the swimmers and should be calm throughout. If they do not have a routine make sure they have one by the end of this session.
- If the command and responsiveness is to an appropriate level, you can work with them more on the voice cadence and tenor. Help them learn to say TYM conversationally.
- Give feedback after sets based on trends you see – too fast, too slow, etc.

### Session Four

- Focus pre-meet discussion on patience and how to read swimmers
- Have them perform all pre-meet duties and you shadow, but support and help
- Patience, routine, posture, position, and voice are the keys, work through each from the point of most help needed to least help needed, consider observing them from the other side of the pool
- Trainees should do Order of Finish for at least a few sets.
- During review give them homework thoughts
- Remember - appreciative but honest review, they are about to fly solo, do not leave things hanging for the next person to catch or notate their forms on what you think needs extra work and tell them to bring their forms to the next session.

### Session Five

- Ask trainee about the keys they have learned, and try to quickly assess what the greatest weaknesses are.
- Discuss what they look for from the field before TYM, make sure they understand the need for patience both before and after the TYM command.
- Have them do all pre-meet discussions with referees, do a timers meeting, and check the equipment with you only as a shadow.
- Review after each set: Voice, Position, Patience, Routine, with patience being the most important thing.
- Remind yourself that if you pass them, next time there is not a safety net as they fly solo. If you are not comfortable with that thought there is nothing wrong with suggesting another training session.

### Completing a Training Card:

Please use the main portion of the card to give constructive advice for improvement. Praise what was done well and offer advice on what to try to focus on in future trainings. There is no expectation that newer trainees are completely proficient.

At the bottom, circle Y or N for advancement. N means the training session will not be counted, Y means they are proficient enough for their relative level of training. Only use N when a trainee does not show proper learning for their training status.

### After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee, and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!