

Officials Guidelines for FSSL Swim Meets

The goal of the FSSL officials is to provide a safe, fair and fun environment for all swimmers, coaches and spectators at each swim meet. Referees, Starters and Stroke and Turns Officials have all been provided training by the FSSL to insure that each meet is run and judged in a consistent manor within the rules established by the league. Meets will be officiated in accordance with the USA swimming rules for the current year, modified as noted for false starts and relay take offs. If we do our jobs properly we set a positive tone for each and every swim meet.

Format of Dual Meets

1. The home team shall provide a Starter (one person) for the meet. The most senior S & T official will act as referee. This may be the Starter. The Starter is only to make false start and early take off calls for the relay, unless they are assuming the role of an S & T after the start of the race.
2. At least four S & T officials will be assigned to work each meet. Officials are to be positioned with at least 2 at the start end and at least 2 at the turn end of the pool. Each S & T will be responsible for the calls made in their jurisdiction, typically from the wall to the middle of the pool.. Each team should provide at least 2 S & T's and they are to position themselves so they alternate on deck. If a fifth S & T is available, it is recommended that they act as a Chief Judge and notify the swimmers of their DQs. This helps speed the meet up.

Format for Divisionals and All Stars

1. The host team will arrange for one Referee and the Starter/Starters for the meet. The Referee should be a USS certified official or a YMCA Level II certified official. The Referee and the Starter should not both be from the same team in Divisionals, unless agreed upon by all teams. If there are not certified officials available to assume the Referee position, the most experienced FSSL official should be used. The Referee and Starter should make only false start or early relay take off calls, unless they are assuming the role of an S & T after the start.
2. At least four S & T officials will be assigned to work each meet. Officials are to be positioned with at least 2 at the start end and at least 2 at the turn end of the pool. Each S & T will be responsible for the calls made in their jurisdiction. Each team should supply 2 S & T officials. The Referee will make the assignments of the S & T's on the deck with preference given to any USS or YMCA certified officials. If a fifth S & T is available, it is recommended that they act as a Chief Judge to notify the swimmers of their DQs. Again, this helps speed the meet up.

Stroke and Turn Judges

The S & T Judge's role is to determine whether the swimmer performed their strokes, turns and finishes in accordance with the USA Swimming rules for that year. Each S & T Judge must be thoroughly familiar with these rules and be willing and able to make a call for any rule violation they have seen in their jurisdiction.

1. If a disqualification is seen in your jurisdiction, immediately raise your hand to indicate you have seen an infraction and have it marked on the timers sheet for that swimmer. It is a good idea to note what you saw on your heat sheet so you have something to reference if a coach questions the call.
 - a. If you are at the turn end of the pool make sure you get the S & T's attention at the start end of the pool so they can mark the timers sheet DQ for that swimmer.
2. S & T Judges should not review or discuss a potential disqualification with anybody other than the Referee. The call is yours to make! If you have a question about the call you can check with the Referee and take back your call if you were wrong. If you did not raise your hand, the call can not be made. If you are not sure, remember "the swimmer gets the benefit of the doubt".
3. Don't be afraid to consult the rule book or ask the referee about something you have seen but are not sure about. Treat this as a learning experience for yourself so that the next time you see the same thing you can make the call. We all miss things, but the key is to learn from the things you have missed.
4. Always conduct yourself in an unbiased and professional manor. Please refrain from cheering for your swimmers or any other swimmers in the meet.
5. If a coach questions a call you may explain the call to them in a polite manner. If they continue to question your call, refer them to the Referee. The meet should not be held up while a coach is discussing a call with a deck S & T Judge.
6. If you are the S & T Judge that has been selected to talk to the swimmers after the DQ, make sure you get down to their level, present it as a learning experience and end on a positive note.
7. Remember your jurisdiction – if you are lanes 1 2 & 3 on the start end you only make calls for infractions you saw in your lanes up to the mid point in the pool. YOU WILL see calls that should have been made in another S & T's jurisdiction, but you are not to make those calls. If you do, that swimmer would have been watched by more than one S & T and we consider that over judging the swimmer.
8. Important – UGLY is not a reason to DQ a swimmer. You will see many ugly swims over the summer, but you need to know the infraction that occurred to DQ the swimmer. Remember – the swimmer always gets the benefit to the doubt.
9. PLEASE – make the calls when you see things that should be DQ's, regardless of the swimmers age. Swimmers will not learn to correct their strokes if they are not DQed when they do something incorrectly.
10. Last but not least – have fun, you have the best seat in the house.

The Starter/ Referee or Starter

The Starter has the responsibility to ensure that all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start. They should speak in a calm, conversational tone leading the swimmer to their starting position, and avoid any sharp or rapid commands that may break the swimmers concentration. They also need to carefully observe each swimmer to see that they have come to a motionless position prior to starting the race. The Starter needs to understand the starting procedures, false start rules and early relay take off rules being used by the FSSL swim league. Be consistent and follow the same routine throughout the entire meet so the swimmers and coaches know what to expect from you. Remember, you are the person running the swim meet. By acting in a calm professional manner throughout the meet, you set a positive tone for the entire meet. Leave your ego at home - this is about the swimmers, coaches and fans – not you!!

Responsibilities of the Starter - arrive 45 minutes prior to the start of the meet

1. Check to see that the starting system is set up within 10 feet of the start end of the pool and working properly. Bring a whistle as a backup just in case the starting system is not working.
2. Call a meeting of all S & T Judges – Referee does this in Divisionals & All Stars.
 - a. Determine who will act as the Referee (hopefully the Starter is).
 - b. Either you or the Referee will do the S & T rules briefing for the meet.
 - c. Decide position on the deck for the 4 S & T Judges (at the ends of the pool) & if you have a 5th S & T have them do swimmer DQ notifications.
 - d. Decide at what point the S & T Judges will rotate and/or substitute.
 - e. Go over false starts and early relay take offs – both need dual confirmation to DQ a swimmer. The S & T Judges need to be in position for this.
3. Call a meeting of the timers (usually half the timers are from each team).
 - a. Assign 3 timers per lane, trying to make sure they are not all from the same team – make sure one clip board per lane.
 - b. Identify head timer & their function.
 - c. Explain the starting routine you use then go through what they do - start the watch on the flash (sound if your starting system does not have a flash), check their watch after the start to make sure it started, stop the watch when any part of the swimmers body touches the wall. Lean over the pool to see the touch. Timers are not concern about it being a legal touch. All three times should be written on the time sheet. The individuals running the meet scoring system may request the middle time be circled (find out before the timers meeting). Do a test start.
 - d. Instruct timer to stand back at the start so you can easily observe the swimmer coming to a motionless position before the start.
 - e. Check swimmers name at start for 50's & finish for 25's.

Protocol for Starters

1. Confirm 3 timers are in each lane and all S & T Judges are in place before the 1st event at mid point and after any events the timers change ends of the pool.
2. Announce the event and number of heats in that event (ex: Girls 11- 12 100 Free – 5 heats). This is announced before the beginning of each event.
3. Ask the heat #__ to step to the starting area.
4. Ask the swimmers “Heat #___ Please Step up”, ask if “Timer and Judges ready”, then announce the event and heat again (all swimmer should be at the edge of the pool now or on the starting blocks) and say “Take your mark”. Observe swimmers coming to a motionless ready position then sound the starting signal. Observe swimmers until they surface checking for a false start. For backstroke starts you will announce the event and heat then ask the swimmer to “Enter the Pool or Step In”, then ask them to “Place their feet” brief pause then ask them to “Take Your Mark” (observe them coming to a motionless position after this command) then sound the starting signal.
 - a. If you determined a swimmer did not respond promptly or is still moving you can ask them to “Stand Please” or “Stand Down Please” (for backstroke). You may need to ask the swimmer to “Respond Promptly” and/or “Please Come to a Motionless Position at the Start”, then redo the commands in #4.
 - b. Determining what is an acceptable motionless position is up to the Starter. Remember, you will be dealing with ages 4 through 18, so the definition of motionless position can vary quite a bit depending age. This is the most difficult part of starting, but with practice the Starter will be able to determine when the heat is ready to be started. This IS NOT the point to try and speed up the meet by rushing the start.
5. After the swimmers from the heat you just started surface you may announce “Heat Number # __ Please Step to the Starting Area”, or go back to #2 & #3 if the next heat is a new event. Coordinate this with the Clerk of Course so they can help get the swimmers in the next heat out of the staging area to the starting area. Once you have observed the last swimmer in the heat exiting the pool and the timers recording the times, go back to #4. This is where you can speed the meet up by having the next heat ready to go as soon as the previous heat exits the pool. **Remember, you can bring them to the starting area once the prior heat has started, but do not bring them to the edge of the pool (or starting blocks) until the last swimmer has exited the pool.**
6. It is permissible for any swimmer to start from a sitting position or in the pool with one hand on the wall. The swimmer must still be in a motionless position prior to the start.

False Starts

FSSL utilizes a Recall Starting Procedure which means a heat may be recalled if it was determined there was a false start. The first false start is to be called by the Starter (no dual confirmation). The first false start is charge to the entire heat, the field notified and the heat swims again. Once the first false start has been called it becomes necessary to have dual confirmation for the second false start. The Starter should ask the Referee or another S & T Judge to observe the second start. If the Starter observes a false start the second time the heat **may** be recalled (Starters decides). If both officials independently agree there was a false start, that swimmer will be disqualified. If they do not agree, then no false start is called. The Starter & Referee will decide if the heat needs to swim again.

1. A false start is called after the “Take you Mark” call has been made, the Starter perceives all swimmers have assumed a stationary position and he/she is ready to sound the starting signal. If the swimmer leaves their mark (stationary position) to start the race before the starting signal sounds, the false start should be called. If a second swimmer leaves early in response to the first swimmers movement, that swimmer is not to be charged with a false start. The first swimmer should be charged for the false start if they induced another swimmer to false start by moving early, even though they may not have entered the pool.
2. A false start is not to be called if a swimmer loses their balance and accidentally falls in the pool.
3. A false start is not to be called if the Starter has asked the heat to “Stand Please” and a swimmer enters the pool in response to that command instead of standing. If the swimmer has already left their mark to begin the race and the Starter asks the heat to “Stand Please” this swimmer should be disqualified since they started on their own, not in response to the Starter.
4. If you feel you did something out of the ordinary to cause a false start or an unfair start, you can re-swim the heat as long as you sound the recall signal immediately.

Relay - early take off

All relay take offs should be judged by two officials and both officials must agree they saw the same infraction before the relay can be disqualified. Each official must independently observe the same swimmer leaving early. The official **should not** raise their hand to indicate they saw an early take off because the other official may not agree there was an early take off, thus the relay can not be disqualified. For take offs occurring in the shallow end, the swimmer leaving the wall must have their hand in contact with the wall at the time the incoming swimmer touches the wall. The swimmer may have somebody place their hand on the swimmers hand to help them time the take off. If the swimmer leaving the wall still has their feet on the wall, but their hand has left the wall prior to the touch, they should be disqualified (dual confirmation). Taking a running start by the 2nd, 3rd or 4th swimmer is not allowed, thus the relay should be disqualified.

Referee

The role of the Referee in FSSL will be to resolve any disputes occurring at the meet, answer question or clarify rules for the S & T's, and in some meets, select and organize the S & T officials on the deck for the meet. Their role may vary depending on whether it is a Dual meet, a Divisional meet or an All Star meet. The Referee should run the officials briefing prior to the meet; making certain to cover jurisdiction, positioning on deck, early relay take off and false start procedures. The Referee is also responsible for seeing that a timers briefing is run prior to the meet. The Starter or Referee may run that briefing. The Referee should be a USS or YMCA Level II certified official or the most experience FSSL official, if a certified official is not available or willing to assume that role. The referee is also responsible for dealing with any unsportsmanlike conduct from anyone on the pool deck.

In a dual meets the Referee **will** act as the Starter/Referee or as an S & T/ Referee. When acting in the Starter/Referee capacity they will handle false start and relay take off, but not S & T calls in the pool. When acting as an S & T/Referee they will make S & T calls in their jurisdiction of the pool. They will also be responsible for items noted in the first paragraph.

The Referee in the Divisional meets and the All Star meet will handle responsibilities as noted in the first paragraph. In these meets the Referee technically has the authority to make any call in the pool, but they are asked not to make S & T calls, since that would be considered over officiating a particular swimmer. The Referees role is to observe the S & T officials and Starter to see they are performing their jobs properly, dealing with issues arising with coaches, dual confirmation on the 2nd false start and relay take off and any other issues that may arise. Their focus should always be towards what is going on in the pool. The Referee is in essence overseeing the Divisional and All Star meets.

We ask the Referee to allow the Starter to run the meet in FSSL. If the Referee feels the Starter is not moving the meet along and/or allowing the swimmers to achieve a fair start they may work with the Starter to correct the situation. We are not asking the Referee to turn each heat over to the Starter or confirm each DQ, as in done in USS meets. The Referee will have the authority to remove/replace any Stroke & Turn official or Starter they feel is not doing their job properly.