

GUIDE TO OFFICIATING

CHAPTER 3 - STARTER

Starter

The starter has the responsibility to ensure that all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start. It is important that each competitor be given the opportunity to achieve the best start possible within the confines of the rules. The starter must know the rules governing starting procedures.

Starter Preparation

Personal Preparation - The starter should review the rules and schedule of events and establish protocol procedures with the meet referee. In addition, the starter should be familiar with the guidelines for officiating swimmers with a disability.

Competition Course - Preparation begins long before the start of the first heat in the meet. The starter should become familiar with the competition course and determine the location where the starter will be positioned. This position shall be within 10 feet of the starting end of the pool and should be free from any obstruction that might block or restrict the view of the athletes on the blocks. This position should also be coordinated with the referee. Each block should be examined for proper position and ability to support the starting action of an athlete. If used, the location and operation of the recall rope should be reviewed and tested.

Equipment - The starter must become familiar with the type of equipment that will be used. If a pistol is to be used for either starting or for recall, the starter must be certain it is in working order, that there are enough shells to finish the meet, and that a backup starting pistol is available. The starter must check that the pistol is loaded prior to each heat and double check that there are enough shells in the pistol to recall the heat if there is a need.

When a horn start system is used, the starter should check the system at least one-half hour before the first race so that any needed repairs or modifications can be made. The system should be retested with the timers in place just before the start of the meet. Since horn start systems are electrically operated, it is important for the starter to know how to prevent common malfunctions and how to repair the simple problems that may occur. The starter should also test the functioning of the recall system verifying that the microphone works properly. The number of speakers and their placement and proper operation should be checked verifying that there is proper volume to be clearly audible to all starting positions. The strobe light for the starting signal should be located such that it is clearly visible to all swimmers and timers (including backstroke events).

Starting Procedures

At the commencement of each heat, the Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles to remove all clothing except for swimwear, followed by a long whistle indicating that they should take and maintain their positions on the starting platform. This procedure allows the athlete to take any position desired on the starting platform. In backstroke and medley relay events, at the referee's first long whistle the swimmers shall immediately enter the water and at the second long whistle return without undue delay to the starting position.

When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter's control.



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On the Starter's command "take your mark", the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position, in the forward start, with at least one foot at the front of the block, or, in backstroke and medley relay events, assume the backstroke starting position. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.

When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command "take your mark", the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command "Stand Up" upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.

Backstroke Starts-The backstroke requires different starting conditions, since the swimmers start the race in the water. The swimmers line up in the water facing the starting end with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips. The swimmer may not stand in or on the gutter nor curl the toes over the lip of the gutter prior to the start. It is the duty of the starter to ensure that these requirements are met prior to giving the starting signal.

False Starts

Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee or a designated Assistant Referee confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "Stand Up" command and may step off the blocks. The Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.

When it becomes apparent, because of uneven motion or delay of the swimmers in assuming their positions, that a fair start will be difficult to achieve, the starter should give the command "stand up" or for backstroke starts, "stand down". Upon hearing this command, the swimmers should stand up on the starting platform; backstrokers may relax. Any swimmer who enters the water or backstroker who leaves the starting area shall be charged with a false start, except that a swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relieved of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer's reaction to the command. This, however, does not relieve any swimmer from disqualification for deliberate delay if he intentionally enters the water.

If a false start is observed and the starting signal has been given, the race should be continued and not recalled. In this case, any swimmers charged with a false start will be notified of the disqualification upon completion of the race. If the recall signal is activated inadvertently, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start and the Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.

If the starter or referee observes a false start, each should write down the lane of the swimmer committing the false start so that conversation is needed to have dual confirmation of the infraction.

Philosophy

Starters are charged with a great amount of responsibility in seeing that one swimmer does not gain an advantage over the others during the start. This responsibility requires concentration, quick reactions and fair decisions. It takes practice to become a good starter. With experience, the



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starter will be able to accurately judge when the field is ready to race. This will help to prevent the false starts caused by the swimmers being jumpy or in a hurry because they aren't ready.

Starters should speak in a conversational tone, avoiding rapid instructions and sharp commands. The voice of a good starter will lead the swimmers into their starting positions, not break their concentration with unexpected orders or remarks. At the same time, the starter must protect all of the competitors by not allowing any one swimmer to gain an unfair advantage.

