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March 24, 2009

To: LSC General Chairs  
LSC Officials Chairs  
USA Swimming Coach Members  
USA Swimming Officials  
Rules & Regulations Committee  
USA Swimming Board of Directors

From: Bruce W. Stratton, Chair, USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee

Re: Clarification of Restriction on Wearing More Than One Swimsuit

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On March 18, 2009, an interpretation of Article 102.9 was issued which stated that the use of more than one swimsuit during competition is prohibited. Based upon the significant number of questions I have received since issuing the interpretation, it has become apparent there is a great deal of confusion about the intent and purpose of the restriction. The following is meant to clarify the intent of the interpretation and the manner in which it should be enforced.

The interpretation by USA Swimming was issued as the result of an interpretation by FINA that the use of more than one swimsuit at a time during competition is not allowable. USA Swimming is required to conform to the technical rules and related interpretations of FINA and the interpretation was issued in order to comply with that requirement. FINA's interpretation was issued primarily as a result of swimmers who were wearing highly "technical" suits that provided both compression and buoyancy and was considered to provide an unfair competitive advantage. It should be noted that the NCAA has previously determined that the use of two suits is not allowable.

The following points are all important in understanding the applicability of the restriction to only allow one swimsuit at a time during competition:

- The restriction applies only to actual competition (i.e. a race). Swimmers may wear more than one suit during warm-up and warm-down as well as around the pool deck between their actual races.
- Swimmers may use as many different suits as they desire during any particular swim meet or any particular day during a swim meet and may change those suits as often as they desire as long as they do not wear more than one swimsuit at a time during their actual competitive events (races).

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- The restriction applies to all types, models and makes of swimsuits, not just so-called “technical” suits. Wearing a second suit during a race as a “drag” is therefore prohibited.
- The restriction was not intended to apply to athletic supporters or modesty type wear. For purposes of the one swimsuit restriction, one (1) swimsuit may include the wearing of a single pair of “briefs” or “bikini bottoms” to ensure the modesty and privacy of swimmer.
- A swimmer who does wear more than one swimsuit during competition (a race) will be subject to disqualification. Officials, especially referees, need to be very proactive in educating swimmers and coaches about the restriction. This should, at a very minimum, include announcements at the coaches/general meeting. Especially during the initial implementation of this new restriction, swimmers should be given every opportunity and/or a reasonable amount of time to remove a second suit prior to the start of a race. If officials are doing their job correctly, a swimmer should never be disqualified for wearing two suits at one time during a competition. Except in very unusual circumstances, and especially during the initial implementation of this, a referee should never allow a race to start if they know a swimmer is wearing two suits without warning them of such and, within reason, giving them time to remove the additional suit.
- A great deal of common sense must to be exercised by swimmers, coaches and officials alike. Officials, particularly referees, are likely going to be put in difficult and uncomfortable situations in trying to apply this restriction. Everyone’s recognition of these difficulties will result in keeping the best interests of the athletes uppermost in our minds and, at the same time, recognizing the need for the athletes’ adherence to our rules.

The above is intended to provide information, clarification and guidance regarding the restriction of wearing only one suit at a time during a competitive event. If you need additional information, please contact me at the e-mail address shown above.

Sincerely,



Bruce W. Stratton, Chair  
USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee