



Northern Virginia Swimming League

Referee/Starter Recert

5/13/2024





Objectives

- **Review a typical meet**
- **Focus on meet procedures**
- **Discuss situations that may occur**
- **Discuss how a meet official should conduct themselves**

Goal: To ensure a fair and equitable meet takes place



Philosophy for Officiating

- **The Referee's guiding principle should be fair competition**
- **This is achieved by**
 - **Recording properly observed disqualifications**
 - **Providing a fair and balanced deck through application of jurisdiction and application of technical rules**
 - **Adopt a helpful rather than punitive attitude towards rules enforcement**
- **Officials are representing the NVSL, not their individual teams**
- **Be knowledgeable about all NVSL and USA Swimming rules**
- **Treat each swimmer and each team equally**



Philosophy for Officiating

•The benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer

•If a judge seems uncertain, or if there is concern or doubt about a disqualification, the swimmer should not be disqualified

•If an official, spectator or another swimmer affect a swimmer's performance, the swimmer should not be disqualified and may be deserving of a re-swim



New USA Swimming Rules for 2024

- **Backstroke**
 - **Clarification that if the swimmer fully submerges then resubmerges prior to the touch that is considered as a resubmerge and not part of the finish.**



Before Meet Day

- **Check in with the Meet Manager (team rep for dual meets, division coordinator for divisional meets)**
 - **Confirm key officials will be present**
 - **Make sure marshals will be present before warm-ups to be briefed**
 - **Ask about any unusual/special requests from visiting team**
 - **Confirm all supplies/equipment are ready**
 - **Make sure starting system is charged and a back up system will be present**



Pre-Meet Preparations

- **Referee should arrive at least 90 minutes before the start of the meet**
- **Check in with pool staff and check facility for**
 - Lane lines and 15 meter mark
 - Flags 15 feet from end of the pool, 7 feet above water, 3 flags over every lane
 - Starting system and back up charged and ready to go
 - Diving boards, ladders, obstructions out of the way
 - Locate skimmer covers
 - Clerk of course/understand swimmer flow
 - Tables for recorders, ribbon writers and data entry
 - Announcer area
 - Team, coach and spectator areas
 - Relay take of slips ready to go
 - US Flag flying and plan for national anthem
 - Any other obvious safety concerns



Pre-Meet Preparations: Warm-ups

- **The biggest concern is safety**
 - **Check with lifeguards**
 - **Make sure marshals are watching pool**
 - **Instruct coaches on safe warm up practices: feet first entry, no pushing, no horse play, no running, diving starts only under supervision in one way lanes**
 - **Give each team equal opportunities**



Pre-Meet Preparations: Situation

•The host Team Rep comes to you at 7:40 am and asks if it is OK for the home team to get in at that time because the other team is not there yet and your coach would like some extra warm up time. What do you do?

Answer: You can allow the home team to warm up early, but each team must be given an equal amount of warm up time. Each team is normally allowed 20 minutes



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Marshals

- Confirm position during warm-ups and meet
- Stress importance of safety
 - Discuss safe warm up practices
- Do not allow swimmers to sit on lane lines
- Sportsmanship- no foul language, no intimidation
- Keep baby pool clear of swimmers and spectators
- What to do if foul weather
- Briefing card can be found on the NVSL website
 - Consider printing and laminating for repeat use



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Starter

- Ensure equipment is ready to go
- Discuss when you want the Starter to give optional commands
- Discuss where the Starter will stand for forward and back starts
- Make sure the Starter can see the Referee's outstretched hand in case a start needs to be stopped
- Minimize use of the starting device microphone for announcements
- Reasonably quiet start (does not need to be silent)
- How to handle false starts
- No recall procedure for false starts, only use if an unfair start occurs
- If swimmers with disabilities are present
- Other duties the Referee may want the Starter to do (ie- check readiness of the next heat)



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Team Reps

- Determine if there are any questions or concerns
- Determine if there are any swimmers with disabilities
- Check for problems with meet entries
- Discuss how you will communicate with them during meet
- Review foul weather protocol
- Have the Team rep work with the announcer with any commonly mispronounced names
- Find out if it is possible that a league record may be set
- Discuss rules for suits and caps



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Clerk of Course

- Location- how do swimmers get to COC? How do swimmers get from COC to the start end of the pool? Do both teams have equal access?
- How will you communicate with Clerk of Course?
- Where will the next heat up stand (Ready Area)?
- Remind swimmers to be quiet at the start
- Coaches are not allowed in the Clerk of Course area
- Sportsmanship
- Discuss rules for caps and suits



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Announcer

- Confirm the pre-meet timeline
- Check that announcer knows how to pronounce the names of all competitors
- Discuss when you want mandatory announcements (5 minutes prior to the start, just prior to breaks, etc)
- Starting sequence- chirps, long whistle, when to announce names and event)
- Discuss how to communicate during the meet
- Announce score periodically (but suspend if the score gets too lopsided)
- Announce pool/NVSL records
- At start of the meet, remind spectators to be quiet at the start, no flash photography, and silent phones



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Chief Timer

- Determine how the Chief Timer will signal you that timers are ready
- Determine if the Chief Timer is comfortable giving the briefing
- Make sure they check times for consistency
- Watch to make sure towels are removed promptly if they are used at the start

•Coaches

- Remind them they are not allowed in Clerk of Course or starting area
- Sportsmanship
- Go over team areas and designated coaches viewing areas
- Safety during warm ups
- Swimwear and caps



Pre-Meet Preparations: Briefings

•Stroke and Turn

- Use the briefing card from the NVSL website
- Find a place for the briefing that is quiet
- Make sure you have given yourself an adequate amount of time to cover all the material
- Remind S&T to be impartial and judge by the rules
- Proper position at the edge of the pool
- Cover all lanes equally
- Benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer
- Raise hand briefly when infraction occurs
- Avoid discussions with coaches, parents, team reps, etc. Send them to the referee
- Any accommodations for swimmers with disabilities
- Discuss the rules of each stroke
- Assign lanes, rotation and jurisdiction



Pre-Meet Preparations: Situation

•During the S&T briefing a S&T judge states “I have been doing this for 10 seasons. I don’t need to sit through the briefing.” What do you do?

Answer: The S&T briefing is important part of focusing the officials on the upcoming events and is a USA Swimming and NVSL requirement.

If the Official refuses to attend the briefing, they should not be allowed to work the meet. If an official arrives late to the briefing, the Referee should make sure they understand the protocol to be used and go over the stroke if time permits



Pre-Meet Preparations: Situation

•Although you have been assured that there are sufficient officials to conduct the meet, during the S&T briefing one of the judges asks if there have been any recent rule changes as they have not been to a clinic in 3 yrs. What do you do?

Answer: To officiate a NVSL meet, the official must have attended a clinic in the past 2 years. You ask if the judge if they have a current valid USA Swimming certification as S&T. If they do, this may be accepted. If not (and they have not attended a NVSL clinic in 2 yrs), politely explain they cannot work as a S&T judge

Look for a replacement. If one cannot be found, adjust the jurisdiction to balance as best as possible. Avoid taking a quadrant as a Referee



Pre-Meet Preparations: Situation

•The host Team Rep approaches you with a 14 yo swimmer. She explains that the swimmer sprained her ankle at baseball practice this week. He will be swimming breaststroke but can't turn his foot outward because of the ankle bandage that his doctor has put on the ankle. The Team rep asks that the S&T judges not judge the "feet turned outward" for the swimmer as an accommodation under the USA Swimming Rule 105.1.1 which allows accommodations for swimmers with disabilities. What do you do?

Answer: a temporary sports injury is not a disability as defined in the USA swimming rules. An accommodation cannot be made for this swimmer



Starting Philosophy

- **A Starter's responsibility is to provide every swimmer with a fair start, not to "catch swimmers"**
- **Requires concentration, quick reactions and fair decisions**
- **Experience is important**
- **Tone should be conversational**
- **Avoid rapid instructions, sharp commands and extraneous conversations across the microphone**
- **Patience is key**
 - **Make sure swimmers are ready before issuing the "Take your marks" command**
 - **Make sure the swimmers are set before pressing the start button**
 - **If a swimmer is jittery, slow to take a mark or struggling with the starting position, stand the field to allow the swimmers to settle**



Starting Philosophy

- As a starter, what should you do if the field does not settle quickly?
- What can you do if a swimmer does not respond promptly on two successive commands to take your mark?
- What are the aspects of a good start?
- How do we handle hearing impaired swimmers?



Judging False Starts

- **USA Swimming rules**

- **101.1.2.c: “When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal”**

- **101.1.3A: “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given may be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation”**

So what constitutes a False Start?



Judging False Starts

- **Scenario #1**

- **Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and (assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation) the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race.**

This is a False Start



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #2

- Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool.

This may be a False Start. Referee should ask the swimmer a non-leading question “What happened” If they say they heard or saw something that caused the false start, and the referee can confirm it, they may be relieved of a false start.



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #3

•Exactly the same as facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says “Stand Please” after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The 5 other swimmers stand. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2, the starter said “Stand please” and that does not change the false start result. The Stand command is for the benefit of the other swimmers.



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #3

This may be a False Start. Referee should ask the swimmer a non-leading question “What happened” If they say they heard or saw something that caused the false start, and the referee can confirm it, they may be relieved of a false start.



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #4

- Exactly the same as facts as #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand.

This is NOT a False Start. The swimmer remained on the deck like everyone else in the heat, and not starting signal ever sounded



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #5

- Exactly the same as facts as #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command a swimmer other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water.

This is NOT a False Start. The swimmer clearly started in reaction to the “Stand” command



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #6

- The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your marks” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool.

This is NOT a False Start. The swimmer should be given an opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #7

•Just prior to the start of the 50 meter freestyle and after the command is given to “Take your marks” the swimmer in lane 4 twitches his knee. Reacting to the movement, the swimmer in lane 3 dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. If the Starter and Referee confirm that the swimmer in lane 3 started before a starting signal is given.



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #7

This may be a False Start for the swimmer in lane 3. Referee should ask the swimmer a non-leading question “What happened” If they say they heard or saw something that caused the false start, and the referee can confirm it, they may be relieved of a false start. If they say the swimmer in lane 4 caused them to think the race was starting that would not relieve the swimmer in lane 3 of the false start and the swimmer would not be allowed to swim the race.



Judging False Starts

•Scenario #8

•The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your marks” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer seems to set momentarily, jerks forward, catches themselves and resets prior to the Starter sounding the starting signal. The Starter then sounds the starting signal and starts the race. The swimmer was properly set before the starting signal sounded

This is NOT a False Start.



Events- Freestyle

•The 9-10 boys' freestyler in lane 4 finishes well ahead of the other swimmers and immediately climbs out of the pool. He then remembers that his coach told him to stay in the pool to shake hands at the end of the race, so he hops back into the pool. The S&T judge at the finish end of the pool raises a hand. When you approach the judge, they explain that they are disqualifying the swimmer for re-entering the pool. What do you do?

Answer: There is no rule prohibiting the swimmer who has finished their race from re-entering the pool at the end of the race. The swimmer should not be disqualified



Events- Freestyle

•The home Team Rep indicates that one of the assistant coaches is scheduled to swim the 15-18, 50 meter freestyle for the visiting team. Although 18 yrs old, she is not a bona fide member of the visiting team's pool and therefore should not be allowed to compete. What do you do?

Answer: Confirm the facts. If the visiting Team Rep confirms the swimmer is not an eligible member of the pool, then the swimmer cannot swim. If the visiting Team Rep indicates the swimmer is a bona fide pool member and the home Team Rep continues to disagree, the Referee should announce the meet is being swum under protest and permit the swimmer to swim.



Events- Backstroke

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•Key Points

- Proper starting position is the responsibility of the Starter and Referee before the start
 - If the Starter or Referee allow an improper starting position and starts the race, there is no DQ
- Swimmer may not stand in the gutter
- When using legs, hands must be below the knees
 - No more than one assistant for legs
 - No head coach, timer or officials may offer legs
 - Heels of legs may not extend over the vertical plane of the end of the pool
 - No shoe requirements
- A single thickness towel can be used



Events- Backstroke

•You receive your first stroke DQ of the meet during the 11-12 boys backstroke event. The S&T judge at the turn end of the pool raises their hand for what is described as a non-continuous turn. What do you do?

Answer: Ask the S&T what happened. Make sure you understand what the judge saw, why it was a DQ and that you are satisfied that the judge was in the correct position to make the call. Ensure the DQ is properly written. Check the event, heat and lane. Give the original slip to the scoring table. Provide a copy to the Team Rep and provide a brief description of the DQ.



Events- Backstroke

•Rushing to Clerk of Course for her event, an 11-12 backstroker stubs her toe and cannot swim her event. The Team Rep proposes to substitute a swimmer who swam backstroke last week and has a faster time for the event. What do you do?

Answer: Substitutions may be made in individual events and relays when necessary because of injury, sickness or absence of competitor. However, a substitution may not be made of a faster swimmer for a slower one. The Team Rep cannot substitute the proposed swimmer but can substitute a swimmer with a slower time (or “no time”)



Events- Backstroke

•As you blow the first long whistle to invite the swimmers into the water for the 15-18 boys backstroke, the swimmer in lane 4 does a forward flip into the water. What do you do?

Answer: By flipping into the water, the swimmer willfully disobeyed the Starter's or Referee's instructions. In this case, the swimmer may be charged for deliberate delay or misconduct and disqualified before the race.



Events- Breaststroke

•So far the meet score is close. The excitement is increasing as is the noise during the start. What can you do to manage the noise situation?

Answer:

- Wait an appropriate short time
- Ask the announcer to ask the crowd to be quiet for the start
- DO NOT use the starter microphone to ask for quiet
- Raise your hand and if necessary use a loud, long whistle as you turn to face and scan the crowd
- If you use a marshal, make sure you are in control of when they speak
- The Referee may prohibit any noise making devices that interfere with the start



Events- Breaststroke

•**At the start of the 11-12 boys breaststroke, you clearly see the swimmer in lane 2 take 2 butterfly kicks after initiating the arm pull but prior to the first breaststroke kick. You look and see the S&T judge's hand goes up. It does not. What do you do?**

Answer: Observe whether or not the judge was in proper position for the call. Determine if the judge was looking at another lane at the time or if they were just not sure of what they saw. If appropriate, discretely and politely coach the judge on position and what to look for. The Referee should not make the call



Events- Breaststroke

•The visiting Team Rep explains to the Referee that one of their 15-18 girls had her wisdom teeth removed two days earlier. The swimmer is afraid that starting from the deck might cause her to tear her stitches. The Team Rep asks if the swimmer can start from the water. What do you do?

Answer: Any swimmer can be allowed to start from in the water. The swimmer must have 1 hand in contact with the wall.



Events- Butterfly

•An instant before the starting horn sounds for the start of the 11-12 girls' butterfly, a car alarm sounds in the parking lot. The swimmers in lanes 1, 2 & 4 seem unaffected but the swimmer in lane 6 starts at the sound of the car horn, the swimmer in lane 3 stands and looks at the starter then dives in and the swimmer in lane 5 does not start. What do you do?

Answer: The car alarm affected the fair start. The Referee should tell the Starter to recall the race. If the Starter or Referee fail to recall the race and some swimmers complete their swim, those swimmers may keep their times. If the swimmer accepts the re-swim, their second time is the official time



Events- Butterfly

•Just before the start of the 15-18 boys butterfly, the home Team Rep complains that the visiting swimmer in lane 2 has already swim freestyle and backstroke and should not be allowed to swim butterfly. The visiting Team Rep says they did in fact make that mistake and the swimmer has already swum 2 events. The visiting Team Rep proposes to substitute a swimmer who has not swum butterfly yet this year. What do you do?

Answer: Swimmers may only swim 2 individual events so the initial 15-18 swimmer is not eligible to swim butterfly and must be scratched. A substitution is not permitted in this case



Events- 10 min Relay Break

- **During the break before relays, you should:**
 - **Open pool for a short warm up period. Make sure a Marshal is present and the Announcer makes the appropriate announcements and manages the timeline**
 - **Double check relay take off slips are ready for distribution**
 - **Conduct a Relay take off briefing (using the briefing card from the NVSL website), emphasize**
 - **Dual confirmation, but no discussion between judges**
 - **Make sure you are in position to see the touch under the coping**
 - **Observe feet and then the touch**
 - **Do not raise hand**
 - **Write an “X” for an early take off “O” for clean**
 - **Determine how you will collect the slips**
 - **Assign lane vs side Relay Take Off Judge**



Events- Relays

•Just before the relay events, the home team discovers that one of its 13-14 boys is missing so they can't swim the event. The Team Rep scratches the 13-14 relay and moves the fastest 13-14 swimmer to the 15-18 event, substituting for a slower swimmer. Both Team Reps come to you, explain what was done and state that they both agreed to the substitution so that the 13-14 swimmer gets a chance to swim. What do you do?

Answer: A swimmer may not be moved from one event to another under any circumstance. The 15-18 relay is a separate event from the 13-14 relay. If the team swims with he substitute 13-14 swimmer, the team should be disqualified



Know the Scratch Rules

- For individual events a faster swimmer can't be substituted for a slower swimmer.
 - This does **not** apply in the case of relays
- Team Reps cannot change the substitution rules by agreement
- You may not be aware of the substitution error until reviewing the meet results
 - If identified, confirm the substitution error
 - Disqualify the improper swimmer and adjust the results



Events- Relays

•During the 8 and under freestyle 100 meter relay, the swimmers are positioned at both ends of the pool with swimmers 1&3 at the start end and 2&4 at the turn end. At the sound of the starting signal, swimmers 1&2 of the visiting team enter the pool from both ends. What do you do?

Answer: Per rule 101.7.3C, a swimmer other than the 1st swimmer shall not start until his/her team member has completed his/her leg. A Stoke & Turn judge should make this call and raise a hand to indicate a possible DQ. It is likely the S&T judge will not recognize this as their jurisdiction and not indicate the DQ. If no judge raises a hand to indicate a possible DQ, the Referee should raise a hand to indicate the possible DQ, and disqualify swimmer 2



Events- Relays

•During the girls 8&u 100 m Freestyle Relay the 1st swimmer on the home team finishes her leg but remains in the pool. As the 3rd swimmer from the home team is halfway down the pool on her leg, a turn end S&T judge notices the 1st is still in the pool. The judge reaches down and lifts the first swimmer from the pool before the 3rd swimmer completes her leg. During the commotion, the 4th swimmer from the visiting team (which had the lead in the race) begins her leg. The visiting team finishes 1st in the race, but the RTO Judges confirm that the 4th swimmer of the visiting team left early. What do you do?

Answer: The judge's actions may have interfered with the race, causing the early take off. Before disqualifying the visiting team, the Referee should investigate to determine if the judge's actions or actions of any officials caused the early take off. If the referee determines that the official's actions caused the early take off, the visiting team should NOT be disqualified despite the confirmed early take off.



Events- Relays

•During the 9-10 boys relay, the visiting team finishes first, but swimmer 2 gets so excited that he forgets himself and jumps into the pool and swims another length before the home team completes their final leg of the relay. What do you do?

Answer: Any relay team member shall be disqualified if a team member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg enters the pool in the area where the race is conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race. The visiting team should be disqualified

If a swimmer enters the pool after the last swimmer touches, the race has completed and there is no penalty



Events- Relays

•The 11-12 girls relay finish is very close. The timecards indicate that the home team had the fastest time. A seasoned stroke and turn judge (from the visiting team) sees the times as they are posted and comes to you. The judge states that they were watching the finish touch and the judge is certain the visiting team touched first. What do you do?

Answer: Order of finish is determined by properly recording the official watch times. Barring an unusual and rare circumstance, the time cards should determine the order of finish. The home team's first place stands.



After the Meet/Results

- **Note the finish time on the Referee program**
- **Offer to de-brief judges and the Starter**
 - **Answer questions they might have and discuss the situations encountered**
- **Review the results, looking for**
 - **Final score**
 - **Obvious administrative errors**
 - **DQs noted on the meet sheet are all reflected in the results and properly recorded**
 - **NVSL records properly recorded**
 - **No shows**
 - **Substitutions**



Special Situations

•During the meet, the Team Rep approaches the Referee. The Team Rep is very unhappy with a particular call and insists on filing a protest. What do you do?

Answer: Accept the protest for a stroke and turn call or false start and make a final ruling based on all of the facts you have before you.

Remind the Team Rep that technical protests can only be made to the Referee who makes the final determination, and that issues on technical calls are not protestable to the league



Special Situations

•**At the end of the 13-14 girls breaststroke you hand a DQ slip to the home Team Rep for a one handed touch at the turn end of the pool. The Team Rep objects to the disqualification and says that the girl's father was videotaping the race and has a video that clearly shows the swimmer touched with both hands. What do you do?**

Answer: The NVSL does not use video replay in any capacity. You explain to the Team Rep that you cannot use the video in the ruling. If you feel the S&T judge was in proper position to make the call and properly described what the judge saw and why it was a DQ, the call stands



Special Situations

•A rare Saturday morning thunderstorm kicks up in the middle of the relay events. After a ½ hr delay, the weather maps indicate several more hours of storm activity. The Team Reps come to you proposing to cancel the rest of the meet. They have discussed the possible times to schedule the remainder of the meet but can't find a time acceptable to both teams. Since the total points remaining will not impact the outcome of the meet, the Team Reps have agreed to simply split the remaining relay points to finalize the score. What do you do?

Answer: The Team Reps, in consultation with the DC, may agree to schedule to resume the meet, or terminate the meet at the last completed event. No points will be awarded for events not swum. The final score should not include points for the canceled events.



Special Situations

•At the Divisional Championship Meet, the division coordinator approaches you and states “this meet does not affect the division standing and should really be an opportunity for the swimmers to have fun and possibly win a medal. I would like you to only make calls if they are obvious to everyone. I don’t want a lot of DQs slowing down this meet.”

Answer: Politely explain to the DC that NVSL expects divisional championships to be conducted using USA Swimming and NVSL rules. Judges always give the benefit of the doubt to the swimmer but to give all swimmers a fair competition, properly observed DQ’s will be recorded



Summary

- **A Referee must attend to many responsibilities during a swim meet**
- **Her/His knowledge, honesty, fairness will create a climate for an equitable and rewarding competition**
- **The deck referee's service is designed for the betterment of all those who participate in NVSL swimming**

- **Lingering Questions?**
 - **Check out the resources on the NVSL website**
 - **Email the NVSL officials chair at nvslofficials@gmail.com**



Ref/Starter Recert Presentation

Thank you!
See you on deck!

