

INSTRUCTIONS FOR - STARTER

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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.

1. ***Starter Preparation***

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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 and recall starter will be positioned. This position shall be within 5 meters 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 (referee will normally be to the starters left). *Before the competition starts*

Check the following and discuss any shortcomings with the Referee.

- marshalling/ready areas,
- microphone operation and volume,
- any starting device,
- false start rope operation and placement,
- placement of the Starter's stand (both ends if necessary),
- timekeepers' view of the starting signal,
- false start rope is 15 metres from the starting end of the pool (both ends if necessary)
- Each block should be examined for proper position and ability to support the starting action of an athlete.

- 1.3. 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 recall starting, 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 false start.

- 1.3.1. 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

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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).

2. **Starting Procedures**

- 2.1. 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 their positions on the starting platform and remain there. 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 shall place their hands and feet in preparation for the start. 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.
- 2.2. On the starter's command "take your marks", the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position 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.
- 2.3. 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.

3. **False Starts**

- 3.1. The Starter's most important responsibility is to judge whether a start has been fair to all competitors, i.e. whether all competitors have taken up a starting position and are stationary. If a start is not fair, the Starter must declare a false start. "**Stationary**" means that there is "**no apparent movement**" and is defined in this way to prevent a competitor getting an advantage at the start.
- 3.2. The starter and referee will independently write down the lane they observed to false start. If no lane is observed simply write (zero). If the referee and starter concur as false start is declared. This procedure may vary depending on the level of meet.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. The Referee may also decide a start was not fair.

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- 3.5. Any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given, shall be disqualified. If the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon completion of the race. If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given.

Disqualification would not be appropriate:

- When a competitor is unable to stand up when instructed to do so because of a starting stance leaning forward over the water and so overbalances into the pool.
- When a competitor overbalances from the starting platform following a false start by another competitor. This is to be distinguished from a deliberate action – a matter for your discretion in this situation.
- When a competitor slips off the platform following a false start by another competitor. This is more likely with very young or inexperienced competitors who need you to help and encourage, rather than to strictly apply the rule.

4. *Philosophy*

- 4.1. 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 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.
- 4.2. If something happens to prejudice the chances of a swimmer in a material way, such as the false start rope being dropped and fouling a competitor or a premature “all ready” signal being given by the Check Starter, the Referee can declare a false start and direct that competitors be recalled for a restart of the race.
- 4.3. 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.