

# USMS OFFICIALS BRIEFING 2: DIFFERENCES WITH USA-S and GUIDANCE ON OFFICIATING USMS ATHLETES

## RULES

- USMS National Championships are conducted under USMS Rules. For purposes of documenting infractions, informing swimmers, and resolving protests, officials must use the USMS Rule Book (not the appendix of the USA Rule Book).

## OBSERVED SWIMS FOR USA-S SWIMS DATABASE

- By exception, swimmers who **request** their times to be included in the USA-Swimming SWIMS database must be observed for compliance with USA Swimming rules.

## OFFICIAL TIMES

- For automatic splits, officials **MUST** note on their slips the heat/lane number of any 2nd relay swimmer who starts in the water, or on the deck standing on top of a “live” touchpad.
- When a lane experiences an individual pad malfunction, USMS records are still valid with one or two backup buttons. The backup buttons must be used without adjustment. If the semiautomatic backup system fails completely, then the watch times must be used.
- FINA no longer accepts world records for swims that are not timed with automatic timing. In the event of an individual lane malfunction, a backup semiautomatic time may be submitted for world record consideration (using one, two, or three buttons). As of 1/1/2018, USMS will follow the same rules for USMS records. If both the pad and buttons malfunction, USMS records can be set with a minimum of two valid watch times.
- For LC Nationals when automatic splits are in place, remind lap counters **NOT** to put the counters in the water for the first turn as pads at the turn end are live and putting the numbers in the water could interfere with the first 50 split.

## STARTS

- In-the-water starts and starts from the deck are common.
- Swimmers who do in-the-water starts may face any direction for forward starts. Backstroke starts are permitted for in-the-water starts in freestyle events, and a backstroke ledge may be used. A backstroke start may be used by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th swimmer in a freestyle relay.
- One foot **MUST** be in the **front half of the block** prior to “Take Your Mark”. Some older swimmers will not place the foot at the front edge due to balance issues, front half is legal.
- A swimmer starting in the water must have at least one foot and one hand on the wall.
- For Butterfly, Breaststroke, and IM events, USMS permits facing in **any** direction when starting in the water. However, the swimmer must be towards the breast when the feet leave the wall. Swimmers will rotate as they launch.
- Note that no certification is required for diving off the blocks.

## BREASTSTROKE

- FINA/USMS/USA rules are the same for all points.

## BUTTERFLY

- Breaststroke kick in the Butterfly is legal in USMS. Only one breaststroke kick per arm stroke and the swimmer can interchange the breaststroke and dolphin kicks at any point(s) throughout the race.
  - A swimmer could do 5 dolphin kicks, one breaststroke kick, and five more dolphin kicks followed by an arm pull. There’s no limit to the number of dolphin kicks per arm pull.
  - As with breaststroke, if a swimmer does a breaststroke kick and touches the wall for the turn without an arm pull that is OK to have that incomplete cycle before the turn and the finish.
- All other points of Butterfly are the same for FINA/USMS/USA.

## BACKSTROKE

- Elementary backstroke (double-arm backstroke with breaststroke kick) is common with older swimmers.
- Open turns (grabbing the wall with hands as part of the continuous turning motion) are common.

## **FREESTYLE**

- Swimmers who do in-the-water starts may face any direction for forward starts. Backstroke starts are allowed for in-the-water starts on freestyle, and a backstroke ledge may be used.

## **IM**

- The FINA interpretation on the freestyle leg of the IM applies to USMS.

## **RELAYS**

- Relay swimmers are permitted to remain in the water until all swimmers have completed the heat. Remind swimmers to remain in the lane and not cross active lanes to get out before all lanes have completed the race.
- For automatic splits, officials MUST note on their slips the heat/lane number of any 2nd swimmer who starts in the water, or on the deck standing on top of a “live” touchpad.
- If the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th swimmer starting in the water loses touch prior to the exchange, but corrects their position prior to the incoming swimmer making the touch, this does not constitute an early take-off. All relay swimmers starting in the water must have at least one foot in contact with the wall prior to the exchange. The officials should look at the touch of the incoming swimmer and the feet of the outgoing swimmer. The outgoing swimmer could be in motion or remove a hand from the wall, but the feet cannot lose contact with the wall prior to the incoming swimmer touching the wall.
- The FINA interpretation on the freestyle leg of the medley relay applies to USMS.

## **SWIMWEAR AND TAPE**

- Swimwear: FINA approval stamp is not required but the suit must be all textile, navel to not-below-the-knee for men and shoulder to not-below-the-knee for women, and no fasteners except for a waist tie (two-piece suit is OK if one piece is not on top of the other); no modesty wear is allowed at any level of competition.
- Swimwear medical exemptions may only be issued by the Rules Chair. NOTE: only accept the USMS medical exemption for USMS meets, not a FINA exemption.
- MEDIC ALERT ID BRACELETS: Do not ever ask or require a swimmer to remove/cover a medic alert ID bracelet!
- Caps: USMS doesn't have a rule about requiring another club's permission to wear their cap.
- USMS's only advertising rule is no tobacco, psychoactive cannabinoids, drugs, or alcohol but can use the advertiser's name.
- No rules about body advertising other than no tobacco, psychoactive cannabinoids, drugs, or alcohol.
- The use of therapeutic elastic tape is never permitted in USMS competition regardless of the circumstances.  
[http://www.usms.org/rules/20160626\\_therapeuttape.pdf](http://www.usms.org/rules/20160626_therapeuttape.pdf)

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- USMS allows counters for the short-course-meter 400 free.
- USMS allows athletes to 'cool down' in their own lanes during distance events while the heat finishes.
- Swimmers should be judged in the same manner, regardless of age or ability level.
- There are no swim-offs for ties, all events are Timed Finals.
- USMS uses a protest committee instead of a meet jury.