

PART 3: OPEN WATER AND LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING RULES

ARTICLE 301: Administration

301.1 Organization

301.1.1 The conduct and organization of open water and long distance swimming for Masters shall be governed by USMS through its Long Distance Committee and LMSCs. The chair and committee members shall be appointed as provided in articles 507.1 and 507.1.7.

301.1.2 Event Host—In open water or pool events, the organization that is granted a sanction and is responsible for the administration of the event.

301.2 Guide to Operations

301.2.1 Open Water Guide to Operations—The Long Distance Committee shall develop and maintain a guide for conducting open water events for the use of USMS open water officials and event hosts. The guide shall contain the governing policies, management of rules, and links to education applying to open water swims.

301.2.2 Virtual Guide to Operations—The Long Distance Committee shall develop and maintain a guide for conducting virtual events. The guide shall contain the manner of implementation, governing policies, and management of the rules applying to virtual swims.

301.3 Membership, Representation, and Sanctions

Membership, representation, and sanctions for open water and long distance events shall be governed by all applicable rules under articles 201, 202 and 108, and 203.

301.4 Age Determining Date

In open water and virtual swims, the eligibility of a swimmer shall be determined by the age of the swimmer on December 31 of the year of competition, except for 18-year-olds, who must be 18 on the day that they swim.

ARTICLE 302: Open Water Events

302.1 Events

An open water event is composed of one or more swims of any distance conducted in an open body of water, either natural or manmade. The distances shall be the same for both men and women.

302.1.1 Open water events shall be composed of individual and/or relay swims.

Article 302.1.2

302.1.2 At the discretion of the event host, open water events may include clinics or other swimming activities.

302.1.3 At the discretion of the event host, open water swims may be competitive (article 303) and/or noncompetitive (article 304).

302.2 Open Water Courses

302.2.1 The Course

- A** The event host shall determine the course and type of start and finish.
- B** The event host shall measure and mark the course as accurately as feasible.
- C** The event host shall eliminate known hazards on the course wherever feasible. Known hazards that cannot be eliminated shall be marked and reported to all participants.

302.2.2 Water Conditions

A Water temperature

- (1) A swim shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 16 degrees Celsius (60.8 degrees Fahrenheit), unless heat-retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers or a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.
- (2) A swim in which heat-retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 13.9 degrees Celsius (57 degrees Fahrenheit) unless a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.
- (3) A swim of 5 kilometers or greater shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 29.45 degrees Celsius (85 degrees Fahrenheit). A swim of less than 5 kilometers shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 31 degrees Celsius (87.8 degrees Fahrenheit).

B Water quality—If water quality meets the standards of the local testing authority, the water quality will be deemed acceptable.

302.2.3 Starting Line

- A** The starting line shall be specifically designated and clearly defined.
- B** Water depth for swims starting from a platform (dock, pier, or ship):
 - (1) For platforms 0.75 meter or less above the water surface, the water depth shall be no less than 2 meters for the first 5 meters of the course.
 - (2) For platforms more than 0.75 meter above the water surface, the water depth shall be a safe depth for the first 5 meters of the course as determined by the referee. Swimmers must enter the water feet first.
 - (3) The referee shall inform all swimmers before the start of each swim/wave of the water depth at the start. Water depth markings on the starting platform or dock are recommended. Before the swim, the referee shall have this start area inspected for underwater hazards and ensure that the starting protocol is safe. The swim shall use an alternative method of starting if hazards cannot be eliminated or the start cannot be safe.

302.2.4 Turns

- A** All turns shall be clearly indicated.

- B Turn buoys shall be passed on the right or left as stated in the pre-swim instructions.
- C Guide buoys may be used between turns to help swimmers navigate. Swimmers may pass these buoys on either side, except for floats on a straightaway swim course or when otherwise directed by the referee.

302.2.5 Finish Line

- A The finish line shall be specifically designated, clearly defined, and easily visible from the water to swimmers approaching the finish.

302.2.6 Feeding Stations

- A Feeding stations shall be fixed in position and shall safely accommodate the number of swimmers and feeders.
- B Feeding stations shall be located on the inner or outer boundaries of the course.
- C Number of feeding stations for swims without individual escorts:
 - (1) For swims 5 kilometers or shorter, feeding stations are optional.
 - (2) For swims longer than 5 kilometers but shorter than 10 kilometers, at least one feeding station is required.
 - (3) For swims 10 kilometers or longer, there shall be at least one feeding station every 2.5 kilometers.
- D For swims requiring individual escorts, feeding stations are optional.

302.3 Straightaway Swim Courses

- 302.3.1 The course shall be a straight, measured distance within plus or minus 6 inches, in stationary open water, and defined by a cable with floats or a continuous marking system visible to the swimmer. Floats on the course shall be a maximum of 10 meters apart.

- 302.3.2 The course shall be certified by a licensed surveyor before initial use and every year if the turning points are not permanent. For permanent courses, certification data need only be filed once unless structural changes have occurred since the original certification.

302.4 Cumulative Relays

- 302.4.1 Cumulative relays shall consist of groups of swimmers from the same USMS-registered club entered in the individual swim. Cumulative relay swims may be contested on a total time/distance or point system basis.

- 302.4.2 **Time/Distance Basis**—A specified number of swimmers on each relay shall be considered in the computations for club scoring. The relay whose specified number of swimmers has the lowest cumulative time or the greatest cumulative distance shall be declared the winner. A similar method shall be used to determine second, third, and subsequent places. Ties shall be allowed.

- 302.4.3 **Point Basis**—Points are awarded on the basis of overall finishing position, with one point for first place, two points for second place, etc. The points of specified relay members are added, and the lowest cumulative score determines the winning relay; the second lowest score, the second place, etc. Ties shall be allowed.

Article 302.4.4

302.4.4 With the exception of national championship swims, the event host may allow special swims in which members of an open water relay need not be from the same club.

302.5 Sequential Relays

302.5.1 Sequential relays shall consist of two or more swimmers from the same USMS-registered club as specified in the entry information. The relay members shall rotate in the same order throughout the swim. The time or distance each swimmer is required to spend in the water shall be specified in the entry information. The changeover to the new swimmer shall be made within one minute after the completion of the previous swimmer's leg. In the exchange in open water relays, physical contact must be made between the two swimmers.

302.5.2 Mixed-gender sequential relays shall consist of at least one swimmer of each gender, as follows:

Total Number of Relay Members	Women	Men
2	1	1
3	minimum 1	minimum 1
4	2	2
5	minimum 2	minimum 2
6	3	3

302.5.3 With the exception of national championship swims, the event host may allow special swims in which members of an open water relay need not be from the same club.

ARTICLE 303: Conduct of Competitive Open Water Events

303.1 Safety

303.1.1 Event hosts shall develop and maintain a written safety plan that must be reviewed by the LMSC authorized representative. Safety plans shall then be included in the sanction application and must be approved by USMS before issue of the sanction.

303.1.2 Swims must conform to the written and approved safety plan, except where conditions warrant modification.

303.2 Scoring Divisions

With the exception of national championship swims, scoring divisions are at the discretion of the event host and may be separated by gender, age group, swimwear, specialty categories, or any other method suitable to the swimmers served.

303.2.1 Scoring divisions shall be subject to the following:

A Scoring divisions shall be the same for men and women.

B Separate scoring divisions may be contested at the same time, with results tabulated separately.

C If awards are given, they shall be of equal value for men and women and for all age groups.

D With the exception of national championship swims, requirements defined in articles 307.7.5 and 307.7.6 may be waived by the Long Distance Committee chair to facilitate the development of new or revised awards systems.

303.2.2 Standard USMS gender scoring divisions consist of:

A Individual—Open, women, and men.

B Relay—Women, men, and mixed.

303.2.3 Standard USMS age group scoring divisions consist of:

A Individual—Open and 18–24, 25–29, 30–34 ... (five-year age groups as high as necessary).

B Relay—Open and 18+, 25+, 35+... (10-year age groups as high as necessary), with the age of the youngest relay member determining the age group.

303.2.4 Standard USMS swimwear scoring divisions consist of Category I and Category II swimwear as defined in article 303.4.

303.3 Officials and Staff

303.3.1 There shall be an event director, safety director, and referee.

A Event director—The event director is responsible for the overall operation of the event. The event director shall be responsible for:

- (1) Securing the sanction and permit(s) for the event.
- (2) Determining the course.
- (3) Recruiting and approving personnel assignments for all event staff.
- (4) Ensuring that the necessary staff for the conduct of the event are at their respective posts.
- (5) Advising the referee to modify the manner in which the swim is conducted, change the course and/or distance, delay the start, and/or stop a swim in progress if circumstances warrant.
- (6) Cancelling the swim if circumstances warrant.

B Safety director—The safety director is responsible for overseeing all aspects of event safety. The position of safety director shall not be combined with the duties of any other staff member or official. The safety director shall be responsible for:

- (1) Completing and complying with the approved safety plan.
- (2) Checking that the entire course, especially the start and finish areas, is safe and free of obstructions.
- (3) Arranging that sufficient suitable water craft, equipment, and safety staff are available during the swim.
- (4) Briefing and assigning safety staff.
- (5) Advising the referee to modify the manner in which the swim is conducted or change the course and/or distance.
- (6) Delaying the start and/or stopping a swim in progress if circumstances warrant.

- C Referee**—The referee is responsible for the fair conduct of the swim. The referee shall be responsible for:
- (1) All officials, including instructing and assigning officials, enforcing all applicable rules, deciding all questions related to the conduct of the swim, and adjudicating protests.
 - (2) Ensuring that all swimmers are briefed about safety procedures, the course, site-specific rules, and other necessary information about the conduct of the swim.
 - (3) Barring, removing, or taking other appropriate action with any swimmer who acts in an unsporting or unsafe manner within the swimming venue.
 - (4) Disqualifying any swimmer violating event or USMS rules or safety procedures.
 - (5) Modifying the manner in which the swim is conducted, changing the course or distance, delaying the start, or stopping a swim in progress if circumstances warrant.
 - (6) Modifying any rule for a swimmer who has a disability. Any such modification shall be in accordance with article 303.10, shall affect only the current swim, and not set precedent.

303.3.2 There shall be additional officials and staff in numbers sufficient to operate the event in accordance with USMS open water rules and administrative regulations.

303.3.3 Safety directors and referees shall be certified in these capacities by a USMS-approved certifying body. If a certified official becomes indisposed, other officials or staff may perform the duties of such positions if they receive training in the specified duties of their positions and are under the direct supervision of the event director.

303.4 Swimwear for Open Water Events

Swimwear allowed for open water events is defined below. It is the swimmer's responsibility to understand the appropriate swimwear allowed at a particular event.

303.4.1 Rules for All Swimwear for Open Water Events

- A Design**—Swimsuits shall be nontransparent and conform to the current concept of the appropriate. The referee shall have the authority to bar offenders from competition until they comply with this rule.
- B Advertising**—Products involving tobacco, alcohol, or pharmaceuticals containing substances banned under IOC or World Aquatics rules may not be advertised, but the advertiser's name only may be used. Offenders may be barred from competition until they comply with this rule.

303.4.2 Rules for Category I Swimwear for Open Water Events

- A** Swimwear shall include only a swimsuit, cap or caps (including caps made of neoprene when the water temperature is not greater than 78 degrees Fahrenheit), and goggles. Swim caps shall be defined as head gear conforming to a traditional swim cap design, may have a chin strap, and shall not extend to protect the neck and/or shoulders. Nose clips, ear plugs, and wristwatches are also allowed.

- B** The swimmer shall wear only one swimsuit in one or two pieces. All swimsuits shall be made from textile materials and not contain clasps or zippers but may have ties that fasten at the swimmer's waist and on the swimmer's back. For both men and women, the swimsuit shall not cover the neck and shall not extend past the shoulder nor below the ankles.
- C** Exemptions to the restrictions in articles 303.4.2A–B may be granted to a swimmer, on a case by case basis, by the chair of the Long Distance Committee or designee. Exemptions will be granted only for conflicts due to the swimmer's verified religious beliefs or verified medical conditions.
- (1)** Procedures for applying for an exemption will be published by the Long Distance Committee and posted on the USMS website.
 - (2)** No exemptions to these restrictions will be granted for swimwear that would give a swimmer a competitive advantage.
 - (3)** The decision of the Long Distance Committee chair may be appealed only to the entire Long Distance Committee, whose decision shall be final and binding on all parties.
- D** Swimmers are not permitted to wear or use any device or substance to help their speed, pace, navigation, buoyancy, or endurance during a swim (such as wetsuits, webbed gloves, fins, snorkels, buoyant armbands, audio players, etc.). Medical identification items may be worn. Any kind of tape on the body or flat armband is not permitted unless approved by the referee. Any devices used to maintain body heat are not permitted, except for those listed in article 303.4.2A.
- E** At the discretion of the event host, except for national championship swims, swimmers may be required to wear a personal buoy for identification and safety. Requirements for buoys as well as rules for the use of these devices will be included in the event information. The prohibition of personal buoys in national championship swims may be waived by the Long Distance Committee for swims in which individual escorts are required and drafting is not permitted.

303.4.3 Rules for Category II Swimwear for Open Water Events

- A** Swimwear that does not meet the requirements for category I swimwear shall be considered category II swimwear. Swimwear may include a swimsuit or wetsuit, cap or caps, goggles, armbands, and rash guards. Nose clips, ear plugs, wristwatches, and grease are also allowed.
- B** Wetsuits, neoprene caps, or any other heat-retaining swimwear may be allowed at the discretion of the event host, but only when the water temperature is not greater than 25.5 degrees Celsius (78 degrees Fahrenheit).
- C** Swimmers are not permitted to wear or use any additional device or substance to help their speed, pace, navigation, buoyancy, or endurance during a swim (such as webbed gloves, fins, snorkels, audio players, etc.), except in designated events where all swimmers may use similar devices or substances. Medical identification items may be worn. Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by the referee.

- D At the discretion of the event host, except for national championship swims, swimmers may be permitted or required to wear a personal buoy for identification and safety. Requirements for buoys as well as rules for the use of these devices will be included in the event information. Permitted personal buoys, if not required under article 303.4.2E, will be considered category II swimwear for purposes of placement and scoring.

303.5 Seeding

303.5.1 When practical, swimmers shall be seeded by their 1500 meters/1650 yards times. The manner of seeding swimmers without times shall be at the discretion of the event host and stated in the event information.

303.5.2 When wave starts are used in straightaway swims, the swimmers shall be seeded in order of time, with the fastest swimmers receiving the preferred positions in seeded order. If subsequent rows are needed, they shall be seeded similarly.

303.5.3 Events for different age groups and genders may be combined to allow the swimmers to compete at the same time.

303.6 Starts

303.6.1 Types

A Stationary—Swimmers start from a platform or in the water behind the starting line.

B Running—Swimmers line up a short distance from the water behind a marked line. At the starting signal, the swimmers run into the water and swim the prescribed course.

C Wave—At the discretion of the event host, swims may be started in waves in which each wave is separated at the start from other waves by a time interval. Swimmers' times shall be adjusted by the starting time interval and their order of finish shall be determined on the basis of the adjusted time.

303.6.2 Starting Signal—The starting signal shall be both audible and visible.

303.6.3 Straightaway Swims—A stationary water start shall be used in straightaway swims.

303.7 Finishes

303.7.1 Types

A In-water—The swimmer shall have finished the swim when any part of the swimmer touches a vertical surface or crosses the finish line after completion of the prescribed distance. If visual judging is used, order of finish shall be determined as the swimmer touches the vertical surface or crosses the finish line. If electronic chip timing is used, order of finish shall be determined when the timing chip is registered by the electronic timing system or when the independent backup timing system is activated.

B Out-of-water—Swimmers shall leave the water, as defined by the course, and proceed to the finish line. If visual judging is used, order of finish shall be determined as the swimmer's chest crosses the finish line. If electronic chip timing is used, order of finish shall be determined when

the timing chip is registered by the electronic timing system or when the independent backup timing system is activated.

303.7.2 Straightaway Swims—An in-water finish shall be used in straightaway swims.

303.7.3 Final Time—For cable swims, when a final time has been submitted to the nearest second, 0.99 second shall be added to the time submitted. When a final time has been submitted to the nearest tenth of a second, 0.09 shall be added to the time submitted. For other open water swims, this timing adjustment is not required.

303.7.4 Backup Timing and Judging—In open water swims in which electronic timing is used, an independently operating backup timing and judging system is required.

303.8 Disqualifications

A disqualification can be made only by the referee, the starter, or a judge within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed. Swimmers shall be disqualified if they:

303.8.1 Or their personal escort intentionally delay the progress of another swimmer. Accidental contact, especially at the start, shall not be considered a disqualification. However, flagrant disregard of another swimmer’s rights shall result in disqualification.

303.8.2 Fail to complete the prescribed course.

303.8.3 Fail to complete the prescribed course within the preannounced time.

303.8.4 Fail to follow the rules of the swim.

303.8.5 Make forward progress by pulling on or pushing off the venue bottom, other than near the start and finish and at specified locations.

303.8.6 Make forward progress by pulling, pushing, or maintaining contact on physical features and/or craft on or near the course. Event hosts may choose to prohibit deliberate contact between swimmers and craft and physical features if it has been announced in the event information.

303.8.7 Draft in swims in which drafting is prohibited.

303.8.8 Violate rules on escorted swims as described in article 303.9.3 or receive similar assistance from any craft on the course.

303.8.9 Receive unauthorized assistance at the start or finish.

303.8.10 Violate swimwear rules.

303.8.11 Swim in a manner in which personal safety is jeopardized.

303.8.12 Act in an unsporting or unsafe manner within the swimming venue.

303.9 Escorted Swims

303.9.1 In any swim for which it has been arranged that an escort craft will accompany each swimmer throughout the swim, all swimmers shall be accompanied by such an escort craft. If the escort craft becomes disabled or cannot continue to accompany the swimmer, the swimmer may:

- A** Stay in the water near the disabled escort craft until a replacement arrives
- B** Join another escort craft that is accompanying only one other swimmer until another escort craft arrives or
- C** Exit the water.



Article 303.9.2

303.9.2 If a swimmer's escort craft becomes disabled as per article 303.9.1, an escort craft for another swimmer may assume responsibility for the swimmer with the disabled escort craft, subject to the following conditions:

- A** Any one escort craft may escort no more than two swimmers.
- B** The two swimmers must stay within 3 meters of each other. Failure to stay within 3 meters shall result in immediate disqualification of the second swimmer assigned to the escort craft and the immediate exit of that person from the water.

303.9.3 Swimmers may receive the following assistance from any escort craft:

- A** The escort craft may pass to and receive from the swimmer food, drink, and/or legal swim equipment.
- B** The escort craft may assist the swimmer with navigation, including verbal and written communication.
- C** The escort craft may verify the swimmer's compliance with the rules.
- D** At the discretion of the event host, the escort craft may support the swimmer without forward progress being made.
- E** The escort craft may perform emergency rescue.

303.9.4 Swimmers shall not receive the following assistance from any escort craft:

- A** Swimmers shall not receive forward progress from any escort craft.
- B** Swimming directly behind nonmotorized escort craft shall not be permitted when other open water is readily available. Swimming directly behind motorized escort craft shall not be permitted at any time.
- C** Escort craft shall not obstruct other swimmers in the swim.

303.9.5 In any swim in which individual escorts are required and motorized escorts are allowed, drafting from any craft or other swimmers is prohibited. Swimmers must attempt to remain 3 meters or more from other swimmers, except when rounding buoys, when overtaking other swimmers when space is not readily available, when unescorted at the start and finish of the swim, and when the swimmer's escort craft becomes disabled as per articles 301.9.1 and 303.9.2. Incidental or accidental incursion into the 3-meter zone of another swimmer shall not be the basis for disqualification.

303.9.6 In any swim in which individual escorts are required and nonmotorized escorts are used, the event host may choose to allow drafting or prohibit drafting in accordance with article 303.9.5.

303.10 Swimmers With Disabilities

303.10.1 Authority—The USMS rules and regulations grant the referee the authority to modify the rules for the swimmer with a disability (see article 103.6.9). Disability is defined as a permanent physical or cognitive disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

303.10.2 Responsibilities

A Swimmer/coach—The swimmer (or the swimmer's coach) is responsible for notifying the event director, prior to the competition, of any swimmer with a disability and of the requested accommodations and/or modifications. The swimmer/coach shall provide any assistant(s) or equipment if required.

B Meet referee—The meet referee's responsibilities include:

- (1) Determining if the requested accommodations/modifications are appropriate, can be met, and conform to safety standards.
- (2) In communication with the remaining officials, a meet referee may:
 - (a) Instruct them to observe and report ANY violation of the rules and apply article 303.10 to confirm or overturn the call against the approved modification(s) or
 - (b) Share the specific modification(s) and instruct them to observe and report any violation except the approved modifications.

303.10.3 Accommodations/Modifications

- A** Accommodations are considerations that allow a swimmer with a disability to access the venue and afford the athlete the time, assistance, and space required to obtain a starting position for each swim.
- B** Modifications are any exception to the technical rules approved by the meet referee (see article 303.3.1C(6)) allowing a parallel performance for a swimmer with a disability. Aids to speed, pace, navigation, buoyancy, or endurance are not allowed with category I swimwear (see article 303.4.2). Aids to speed, pace, navigation, and endurance are not allowed with category II swimwear.

303.10.4 Recommendations for allowable modifications are described in the *Open Water Guide to Operations*.

303.11 Incomplete Swim

303.11.1 Authorities

- A** The event director, safety director, or referee shall have the authority to determine if the start of a swim is to be postponed.
- B** The referee and/or safety director shall have the authority to stop a swim in progress.
- C** Only the event director shall have the authority to cancel a swim or event.

303.11.2 If a swim is stopped and swimmers are removed from the water for their safety, the referee, with the agreement of the safety director, shall determine if the swim is to be restarted or considered official. If the referee determines the swim is to be official, article 303.8.2 may be waived and the referee shall determine the order of finish of the swimmers who had not finished when the swim was stopped.

303.11.3 In swims with cutoff times, the entry information shall state whether swimmers who have not finished or reached a specified point on the course by the cutoff time will be advanced to the finish line, considered to be officially finished, or disqualified.

303.12 Protests

303.12 .1 Any protest arising from an open water swim (other than national championship swims—refer to article 307.7.8) shall be made to the event referee within 30 minutes after the release of results at the venue. If results are not released in a timely manner, a protest may be made to the event director in writing within three days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing promptly to the LMSC. If the LMSC does not satisfactorily resolve the



protest, the protester may appeal in writing promptly to the USMS Long Distance Committee chair.

ARTICLE 304: Conduct of Noncompetitive Open Water Swims

304.1 Noncompetitive Swims

Noncompetitive swims are those in which swimmer placement is not included in results.

304.1.1 Conduct of noncompetitive swims shall be at the discretion of the event host, as long as they conform to articles 301, 303.1, and 303.3.

304.1.2 At the discretion of the event director, noncompetitive swims may provide timing as a courtesy to swimmers.

ARTICLE 305: Conduct of Long Distance Pool Events

305.1 Events

Long distance pool events shall consist of individual and/or relay competitions. The distances shall be the same for both men and women.

305.2 Definitions

305.2.1 Long Distance Pool Event—A long distance pool event is any swimming event that contains one or more distance-based swims of more than 1650 yards (1508.8 meters) in length or time-based swims equal to or longer than 60 minutes in time. Freestyle rules shall apply. Long distance pool events may be conducted in a designated pool or as a virtual event. Except for national championship swims, the event host shall designate the time/distance of the swims and the sizes of the pools in which they may be swum.

305.2.2 Distance-Based Swims—The object of a distance-based swim is to determine who can swim a specific distance in the shortest amount of time.

305.2.3 Time-Based Swims—The object of a time-based swim is to determine who can swim the greatest distance in a specific amount of time.

305.2.4 Virtual—A virtual event is a competition in which swimmers participate at a place of their choosing and submit the time or distance achieved to a central location for tabulation. The USMS National Office in coordination with the Long Distance Committee shall have jurisdiction over virtual events that meet the requirements given in article 305.2.1, except for national championship events described in article 307.2.3.

305.3 Cumulative Relays

Cumulative relays are composed of groups of swimmers from the same USMS-registered club entered in the individual swim. Cumulative relay swims may be contested on a total time/distance or point system basis.

305.4 Sequential Relays

Sequential relays shall consist of two or more swimmers from the same USMS-registered club as specified in the entry information. The relay members shall rotate in the same order throughout the event. The time or distance each swimmer is required to spend in the water shall be specified in the entry information. The composition of

mixed-gender sequential relays is governed by article 302.5.2. Relay exchanges are governed by articles 101.7.3C and 101.7.3F.

305.5 Age Groups

Age groups in individual and relay events for men and women shall be the same as the standard USMS age group scoring divisions (listed in article 303.2.3).

305.6 Awards

If awards are given, they shall be of equal value for men and women and for all age groups.

305.7 Protests

Any protest arising from a long distance pool swim (other than national championship swims—refer to article 307.7.8) shall be made to the referee within 30 minutes after the release of results at the venue. If results are not released in a timely manner, a protest may be made to the event director in writing within three days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing promptly to the LMSC. If the LMSC does not satisfactorily resolve the protest, the protestor may appeal in writing promptly to the USMS Long Distance Committee chair.

ARTICLE 306: Conduct of Virtual Events

306.1 Rules

Long distance events conducted in pools must comply with all applicable pool event rules in Part 1 of the rule book and in article 305, except as noted in article 306.

306.2 Pool Size

306.2.1 Events shall be swum in a pool at least 25 yards in length.

306.2.2 Requirements for pool certification (article 105.1.6) and pool measurement (article 105.1.7) shall not apply to virtual events.

306.3 Officials

306.3.1 Referee—An adult acting as referee shall be present at all times to ensure that the swim(s) is safe and conducted according to the rules.

306.3.2 Starter—An adult acting as starter shall ensure the swim(s) begins with a legal start.

306.3.3 Timer—Each swimmer shall have a timer who shall time, count lengths, and record times and length counts. One person may serve as timer for no more than two swimmers simultaneously.

306.3.4 One adult may serve as referee, starter, and timer simultaneously.

306.4 Eligibility

All swimmers in national championship virtual events must be currently registered members of USMS or a World Aquatics—member national governing body on or before the day of their swims.

306.5 Multiple Swimmers per Lane

306.5.1 No more than two swimmers shall share a lane.

306.5.2 Drafting shall not be permitted.

Article 306.5.3

306.5.3 When two swimmers are sharing the same lane, they shall conform to articles 102.10.4A(6)(a)–(b).

306.6 Timing

306.6.1 A stopwatch or electronic timing system shall be used to time the event.

306.6.2 Cumulative split times must be recorded to the nearest second.

306.6.3 When a final time has been submitted to the nearest second, 0.99 second shall be added to the time submitted. When a final time has been submitted to the nearest tenth of a second, 0.09 second shall be added to the time submitted.

306.7 Determining Distances in Time-Based Events

306.7.1 Distances shall be determined by multiplying the total lengths swum by the length of the pool and adding the last completed 5-yard/5-meter increment.

306.7.2 If the size of the pool is not designated, all distances shall be reported in yards.

306.7.3 If distances are to be reported in yards and the event is swum in a metric pool, the distances shall be determined to the last completed meter converted to yards by multiplying 1.0936 times the number of meters completed and rounding off the distance to the last completed 5-yard increment.

306.8 Determining Times in Short-Course Distance-Based Events

306.8.1 Swimmers may choose to swim events in 25-meter pools, swimming the same nominal number of meters as yards.

306.8.2 Times done in 25-meter pools shall be reported as if swum in a 25-yard pool, by dividing times by 1.0936 and integrating them with 25-yard times.

306.9 Split Times

306.9.1 Split times from individual virtual events may not be used for entry into a separate individual virtual national championship event of a shorter distance.

306.9.2 Split times from individual virtual events may not be used as part of a relay entry into a separate relay virtual national championship event of a shorter distance.

306.10 Integrity of Results

306.10.1 Each entrant shall be responsible for the validity of the split times and/or the final time/distance submitted.

306.10.2 Event hosts may request additional verification of completion from any entrant and may request that the Long Distance Committee chair refuse to accept, or disqualify, any entry that appears to contain erroneous information.

306.11 Determination of Place

306.11.1 In distance-based events, the person or relay swimming the fastest time shall be declared the winner. Ties shall be allowed.

306.11.2 In time-based events, the person or relay swimming the farthest shall be declared the winner. Ties shall be allowed.

ARTICLE 307:
Open Water and
Long Distance National Championships

307.1 Rules

Open water and long distance championships shall be governed by articles 301, 302, 303, 305, and 306. In addition, the following rules apply specifically to championships.

307.2 Open Water and Long Distance Championship Events

307.2.1 The Long Distance Committee shall award open water national championships as:

- A** Individual championships
- B** Multi-championship swim festivals
- C** A combination of A and B or
- D** Any other configuration that enhances the value of USMS open water championships.

307.2.2 At the discretion of the Long Distance Committee, national championships may be awarded in the following categories:

- A** Sprint-Distance Championship (1 mile swum in a quarter-mile straight-away or open water course).
- B** Two-Mile Cable Championship (quarter-mile straightaway).
- C** Open water Middle-Distance Championship (greater than 1 mile and less than or equal to 3 miles).
- D** Open water Long-Distance Championship (greater than 3 miles and less than 6 miles).
- E** Open water Marathon-Distance Championship (greater than or equal to 6 miles and less than 9 miles).
- F** Open water Ultramarathon-Distance Championship (greater than or equal to 9 miles).
- G** Other national championship events and distances may be awarded at the discretion of the Long Distance Committee chair.

307.2.3 The USMS National Office in coordination with the Long Distance Committee shall conduct the following virtual national championships:

- A** Virtual 1-Hour Championship (in a pool 25 yards or longer).
- B** Virtual 5- and 10-Kilometer Championship (each event swum separately on a 50-meter course in a pool).
- C** Virtual 3000- and 6000-Yard Championship (each event swum separately on a 25-yard or 25-meter course in a pool).

307.2.4 Cumulative Relays

- A** Cumulative relay competitions shall be contested in virtual championships and may be contested in other championships. Recognized relays shall be three-person women's relays, three-person men's relays, and four-person mixed-gender relays with two women and two men. Exceptions for open water national championships may be granted by the Long Distance Committee chair.

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- B** Age groups for relay swims shall be the same as those listed in article 303.2.3B.
- C** All relay members shall also be entered in the individual swim. Exceptions for open water events only are at the discretion of the event host with prior approval of the Long Distance Committee chair.
- D** All team members shall be from the same USMS-registered club.
- E** Competitors shall be allowed to swim in only one same-gender and one mixed-gender relay per championship swim.

307.3 Site Selection

The manner of site selection for national championships shall be at the discretion of the Long Distance Committee and shall depend upon the championship structure chosen under article 307.2. Should a bidding system be selected, it shall be accomplished in the following manner:

- 307.3.1** Suitable bids shall comply with all applicable USMS swimming and open water and long distance rules, policies, and procedures.
- 307.3.2** All bids shall be submitted to the chair of the Long Distance Committee no later than July 1. If no timely suitable bid is received, the committee shall continue to solicit bids.
- 307.3.3** Championships shall be awarded by the Long Distance Committee one to three years in advance of the national championship event.
- 307.3.4** A three-area award system may be followed for the bidding of open water championships (see Appendix B for map and description of areas). In this system, suitable bids from a qualifying area shall receive preference over bids from other areas.

National Championship Bid Rotation (see article 307.2.2 for distance definitions)			
Year	Area 1 West	Area 2 Central	Area 3 East
2025	Middle-Distance Ultramarathon-Distance	2-Mile Cable Marathon-Distance	Sprint-Distance Long Distance Festival
2026	Sprint-Distance Long Distance Festival	Middle-Distance Ultramarathon-Distance	2-Mile Cable Marathon-Distance
2027	2-Mile Cable Marathon-Distance	Sprint-Distance Long Distance Festival	Middle-Distance Ultramarathon-Distance

307.4 Contract

Representatives of the host organization that is the successful bidder for an open water and long distance championship event shall sign a written contract with USMS, which specifies the responsibilities of the event host and of USMS.

307.5 Financial

- 307.5.1** The host organization shall agree to underwrite the full event expenses, including but not limited to the following:
- A** Costs associated with the event (setting up the course, supplies, equipment, etc.).
 - B** Cost of all national championship event awards (medals and patches) and/or other appropriate awards.
 - C** A fee per individual entrant in the championship swim (or a fee per individual entrant in each championship swim in an event with multiple championship swims) and a performance bond shall be determined by the Long Distance Committee and paid to USMS. All or a portion of the performance bond shall be returned to the host organization, based upon compliance with the conditions set forth in the event contract.
 - D** Any other costs that may be reflected in national championship event contracts.
- 307.5.2** Complete financial statements shall be forwarded to the Long Distance Committee chair on the championship forms provided.

307.6 Entry Fee

The event host shall determine the individual and relay entry fees for open water national championships. The USMS National Office shall determine individual and relay entry fees for virtual national championships.

307.7 Rules of Conduct

- 307.7.1 Event Host**—The event host shall follow the applicable USMS open water and long distance swimming rules and administrative regulations.
- 307.7.2 Entry Forms**—A Long Distance Committee representative and an LMSC representative shall review entry forms, including paper forms and forms used in the online entry system, for content and sanctioning before distribution.
- 307.7.3 Officials**—In addition to the officials required by article 303.3, the following officials are required for national championship events:
- A** The Long Distance Committee shall appoint an event liaison to assist the event host in planning, to ensure that the event is conducted in accordance with the contract, to ensure that all rules are observed, and to evaluate the event.
 - B** For open water events, a turn judge shall be located at each change of direction in the course. The turn judge shall:
 - (1)** Be positioned in clear view of the turn to ensure that all swimmers complete the turn as indicated in the event information and as directed at the pre-swim briefing.
 - (2)** Record any violation of the turn procedures.
 - (3)** Report such violation to the referee.
- 307.7.4 Eligibility**
- A** Swimmers with one-event registrations shall not be eligible to compete in open water and virtual national championships, nor shall they be eligible for records, All-American status, or any other USMS special

awards. Such swimmers may be allowed to participate in a separate nonchampionship category in these swims.

B On the day of the championship swim, swimmers shall present their photo IDs at check-in to verify their identity.

307.7.5 Age Groups—Age groups in open water swims shall be the standard USMS age groups as defined in article 303.2.3.

307.7.6 Swimwear

A Open water

(1) Only swimmers wearing category I swimwear as defined in articles 303.4.1 and 303.4.2 may compete in national championship swims.

(2) At the discretion of the event host, swimmers wearing category II swimwear as defined in articles 303.4.1 and 303.4.3 may participate in events containing national championship swims but shall be excluded for the purposes of articles 307.8–308.1. In addition, category II competitors shall have a separate start time, unless drafting is prohibited under article 303.9.6.

B Virtual—Only swimmers wearing swimwear as defined in article 102.12.1 may complete in national championship virtual swims.

307.7.7 Assistance During the Swim

A Feeding is permissible but use of alcohol or illegal drugs is forbidden.

B Escort craft may be permitted by the event director under the conditions in article 303.3.

307.7.8 Protests

A Any protest arising from an open water championship swim shall be made to the referee within 30 minutes after the release of results at the venue. If results are not released in a timely manner, a protest may be made to the event director in writing within three days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing promptly to the Long Distance Committee chair.

B Any protest arising from a virtual championship swim shall be made to the event director in writing within three days after all swimmers are notified of the release of preliminary results or amendments to the preliminary results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing promptly to the Long Distance Committee chair.

307.8 Results

Individual and relay results and records (when appropriate) shall be tabulated and distributed to the Long Distance Committee chair and all participants in the event. Date of birth shall not be included in published results or results distributed to participants.

307.8.1 Individual results shall be tabulated electronically by gender and age group in order of finish. Women's results shall be shown first, followed by men's results. As a minimum, the following information shall be reported for each swimmer:

A Age group.

B Age group place.

C Swimmer's name (as it appears on the USMS membership card).

D Age.

- E Club (official USMS club abbreviation).
- F USMS number.
- G Official time/distance or disqualified.
- H Whether the time or distance is a USMS record.

307.8.2 Relay results shall be tabulated electronically by gender and age group in order of finish. Women's results shall be shown first, followed by men's results, then mixed-gender relays last. As a minimum, the following information shall be reported for each relay team:

- A Age group.
- B Age group place.
- C Team's full name (USMS club followed by blank, A, B, etc.).
- D Official time/distance or disqualified.
- E Names, ages, and official time/distance for each member of the team.
- F Whether the total time or distance for the relay team is a USMS record.

307.9 Club Scoring

Club scoring shall be officially tallied for virtual national championships. At the discretion of the event host, club scoring may be officially tallied for open water national championships.

307.9.1 Scoring

- A Club scoring for the Virtual 1-Hour Championship shall be calculated based on total club yardage for individual swims.
- B Club point scoring for the Virtual 3,000- and 6,000-Yard and 5- and 10-Kilometer Championships shall be calculated for individual swims using a formula, approved by the Long Distance Committee, based on percentage of time differences from the age group national record times.
- C Club scoring for other national championships shall be calculated based on point value for placing in individual swims. Points shall be scored to 10 places (11-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1).

307.9.2 Categories—Club scoring shall be tabulated for women's, men's, and combined categories.

307.9.3 Divisions—Up to four divisions may be recognized for club scoring based on the number of swimmers entered from each club in the event. The number of entrants from a club that shall constitute division I (very large), division II (large), division III (medium), and division IV (small) shall be determined by the Long Distance Committee chair and the event host after the event entry deadline.

307.10 Awards

307.10.1 National championship medals or other appropriate awards approved by the Long Distance Committee chair shall be awarded to at least the first six place winners of individual championships in each age group. In national championship events with 1,000 or more entrants, individual awards shall be awarded to at least the first 10 place winners of individual championships in each age group.

307.10.2 National championship medals or other appropriate awards approved by the Long Distance Committee chair shall be awarded to the members of at

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least the first three place winners of relay championships in each age group. In national championship events with 1,000 or more entrants, awards shall be awarded to the members of at least the first six place winners of relay championships in each age group.

307.10.3 A USMS championship patch shall be awarded to each individual champion and each member of a championship relay. A swimmer shall receive only one patch per championship.

307.10.4 Appropriate awards approved by the Long Distance Committee chair may be awarded to the first, second, and third place club winners in each division if warranted by the size of the event entry. Club awards are not required.

307.11 All-American

307.11.1 The highest placing USMS member in each age group of each individual open water and long distance pool national championship event shall qualify as a USMS Long Distance All-American for the calendar year in which the event was conducted. Ties shall be allowed.

307.11.2 The members of the highest placing USMS relay in each age group of each open water and long distance pool national championship event shall qualify as USMS Long Distance Relay All-Americans for the calendar year in which the event was concluded.

307.11.3 The event host shall submit the name, age, date of birth, club affiliation, time or distance, and USMS membership number for each competitor achieving All-American status to the Long Distance Committee chair.

307.12 All-Star Team

307.12.1 A USMS All-Star Team shall be selected each calendar year from the official results of the USMS open water and virtual national championship events.

307.12.2 To be eligible for the All-Star Team, a USMS member shall legally complete at least three events, of which at least one shall be an open water event and at least one shall be a virtual event. Cancellation of an open water championship shall not relieve the requirement of completing an open water event to qualify for the All-Star Team.

307.12.3 A swimmer shall earn points for a top 10 finish in each open water and virtual national championship event in the following manner: 1st: 11 points, 2nd: 9 points, 3rd: 8 points, 4th: 7 points, 5th: 6 points, 6th: 5 points, 7th: 4 points, 8th: 3 points, 9th: 2 points, 10th: 1 point.

307.12.4 The swimmer with the highest point total in each age group shall be named to the All-Star Team. Ties shall be allowed.

ARTICLE 308: USMS Records

308.1 Records

308.1.1 The fastest official time or farthest distance achieved, as applicable, by a USMS member in a USMS-sanctioned competition, as verified by a fully completed USMS Long Distance Record Application, shall be designated as a USMS record. For records for pool meets, see article 105.3.

- 308.1.2** Individual and relay USMS records will be maintained in quarter-mile straightaway swims (1-mile and 2-mile) and time/distance pool events (1-hour, 3000-yard, 6000-yard, and 5- and 10-kilometer virtual).
- 308.1.3** To be considered for a USMS record, individual participants and relays must enter and complete the swim in a sanctioned event conducted in compliance with USMS rules.
- 308.1.4** **Timing for Records**
- A** Record times shall be listed in hundredths of a second (two decimal places). If times are tied to the hundredth of a second, the results shall be declared a tie and records should be shared by all swimmers thus tied.
- B** When a record attempt has been timed to the nearest second, 0.99 second shall be added to the time submitted. When a record attempt has been timed to the nearest tenth of a second, 0.09 second shall be added to the time submitted.
- 308.1.5** **Cable Swims**
- A** Cable swim records may be made only in stationary, fresh water. No cable swim records will be recognized in any kind of sea or ocean water.
- B** The official time for establishing records shall be achieved and determined in accordance with articles 303.7.1A and 303.7.4.
- C** Swimmers must wear category I swimwear as defined in article 303.4.2 to be eligible for USMS records.
- D** USMS records for cable swims may not be established by using a swimmer's split time in an individual event.
- 308.1.6** **Long Distance Pool Swims**
- A** Long distance pool records can be made only in fresh water. No records will be recognized in any kind of sea or ocean water.
- B** The official time for establishing records shall be achieved and determined in accordance with article 306.6.
- C** Swimmers applying for a USMS long distance pool record in an individual or relay event must submit a copy of their split sheets in addition to their event entries.
- D** An individual may use the split time in one long distance pool event to establish a USMS record in a different long distance pool event if:
- (1) The split is swum as an initial distance within an event.
 - (2) The swimmer completes the full distance or time of the sanctioned event.
 - (3) The intent to record a split time is brought to the attention, in writing, of the event director at the time of entry in the longer event, and
 - (4) A stopwatch or electronic timing system is used to record the record split in accordance with article 306.6.
- E** A relay team may use their split times in one long distance pool event to establish a USMS record in a different long distance pool event if:
- (1) Each split is swum as an initial distance with an event.
 - (2) Each swimmer completes the full distance or time of the sanctioned event.

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- (3) The intent to record a split time for each swimmer is brought to the attention, in writing, of the event director at the time of entry in the longer event, and
- (4) A stopwatch or electronic timing system is used to record the record split in accordance with article 306.6.