



# Officiating Masters Swimming

USMS Officials Committee

[Officials@usms.org](mailto:Officials@usms.org)

Updated September 2009



# Philosophy of Officiating

---

“All competitive swimming events held under corporate sanction shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules which are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition.”

Part 1 of the U.S. Masters Swimming Rules and Regulations

***What does that mean?***

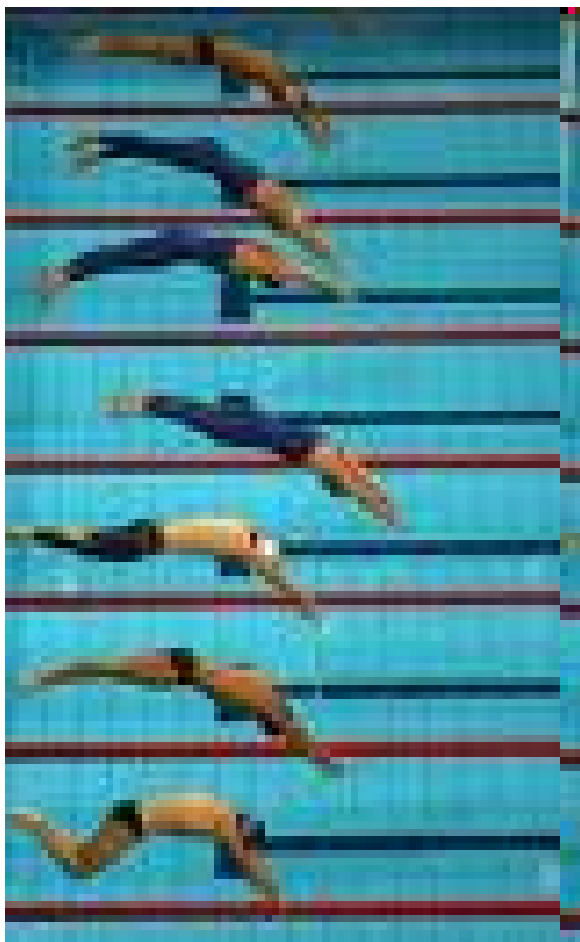


# Fair and Equitable

---

- Judging should be consistent among different officials at a meet.
- Judging should be consistent at different meets.
- All of the rules are enforced, we don't individually choose to enforce some rules and ignore others.
- The rules are enforced across all age groups and levels of ability.
- Officials should be neutral in their enforcement of the rules; don't favor one team over another, don't favor one swimmer over another.
  - All officials at USMS sanctioned meets are representatives of USMS, not a specific team, club, workout group, or LMSC.

# USMS Officials

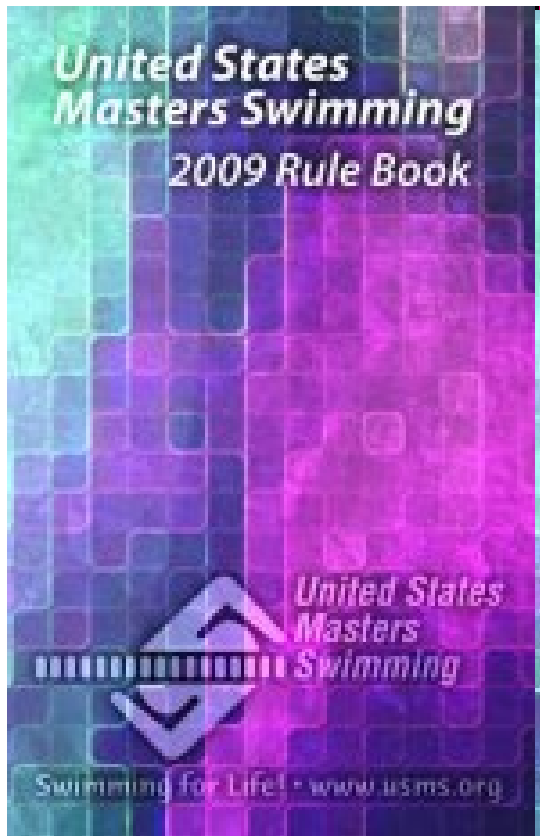


- Who is a USMS Official?
  - Anyone who officiates at a USMS sanctioned meet.
- What is the primary goal of the USMS Officials Program?
  - To educate our officials on our rules so we can achieve the “fair and equitable” standard of officiating.
  - Increase the pool of qualified officials so we can offer more opportunities to compete for our membership.

**More Officials = More Meets**  
**Well Trained Officials = Fair and Equitable**

# Mental Traps

---



## True or False?

- Everything you need to know is in the rule book.
- A swimmer should not be disqualified if the action does not create an advantage.
- A swimmer should not be disqualified if they only do something once.
- We do not disqualify 75-and-overs.
- Officials are mean and are judged on how many DQ slips they produce in each meet.



# Role of the Meet Referee

---

## Multiple Choice

The primary role of the Meet Referee is to:

- A. Blow the whistle.
- B. Check the Chlorine level in the pool.
- C. Make sure nobody has any fun.
- D. Oversee all officials, assigning and instructing them, enforce all applicable rules; decide all questions relating to the conduct of the meet; over-rule officials on points of rule interpretations, or on judgment decisions pertaining to actions to which the referee has personally observed.
- E. Get the doughnuts.
- F. Both D and E.

# Meet Referees

---

- Meet Referee must be a certified official.
  - Minimum level is a Stroke and Turn Judge per USMS Rules.
  - There is much more to being a Referee than just knowing the rules!
    - Consider leadership factors as well.
- Meet Referees have full authority over all assignments and placement of officials.
  - Administrative Officials are officials too!
  - Stroke and Turn Officials are not typically trained in starting, timing, seeding, and other administrative rules.

**Taking a proactive role in ensuring that qualified Meet Referees are assigned and educate them on USMS rules. Consider factors beyond the minimum qualification standards.**



# Role of the Meet Referee

---

## Multiple Choice

The job of the Meet Referee begins:

- A. At the start of the first heat.
- B. The first time someone observes a potential infraction.
- C. Well before the start of the meet, even in the early planning phase, being involved in aspects of planning that relate to the competition and in the recruitment and assignment of officials.
- D. When the doughnuts arrive.



# Role of the Meet Referee

---

## Multiple Choice

The job of the Meet Referee ends:

- A. At the conclusion of the final heat.
- B. When all record applications have been signed and protests resolved.
- C. Well after the meet, being involved in evaluating how the meet was conducted, how the officials performed, and ensuring that this information is provided to LMSC leadership.
- D. When all of the doughnuts have been eaten.

**Take a proactive approach in recruiting a qualified Referee early, involve the Referee in planning for the meet, and ask for a post-meet report that will help improve future meets.**

# USMS Officials

---

- Referee and Starter may not be the same person.
  - Should be stationed on the same side of the pool unless there is a shortage of officials.
- A minimum of two Stroke and Turn Officials are required.
  - Referee and Starter may double as S&T Judges if feasible.
  - Jurisdictions should be clearly defined.

**Minimum number of officials may not be the right number of officials. It depends on the size of the meet, the venue, the format, the experience level of officials, and other factors.**

**Non-certified officials must be educated on USMS rules in order to perform their duties.**

# A Good Story....

---

## Where were you?



I was stationed as the turn judge between lanes 3 and 4. At the first turn, the swimmer in lane 4 touched with his right arm. The left arm never touched the wall. After the turn, the swimmer turned and pushed off the wall. The swimmer should be disqualified for failing to touch with two hands simultaneously.

**The Meet Referee should clearly establish jurisdictions at the start of the meet. The Referee needs to determine whether the official had the appropriate vantage point to make the observation.**

## A Good Story....

---

### What did you see?



I was stationed as the turn judge between lanes 3 and 4. At the first turn, the swimmer in lane 4 touched with his right arm. The left arm never touched the wall. After the turn, the swimmer turned and pushed off the wall. The swimmer should be disqualified for failing to touch with two hands simultaneously.

**The Official's observation and how it is communicated to the Referee is just as important as the rule citation.  
Officials are there to observe and record, not inspect.  
Swimmers always receive the benefit of the doubt.**

# A Good Story....

---

## What rule was violated?



I was stationed as the turn judge between lanes 3 and 4. At the first turn, the swimmer in lane 4 touched with his right arm. The left arm never touched the wall. After the turn, the swimmer turned and pushed off the wall. The swimmer should be disqualified for failing to touch with two hands simultaneously.

**Disqualifications must be clearly anchored to rules.**

## A Not-So-Good Story....

---



I was over at the corner of the deep end. I didn't make it back in time to my position after getting some coffee. I waived to a friend up in the stands and when I looked back at the pool, I thought I saw the swimmer over in lane 4 with only one hand on the wall. So, it must have been a one-hand touch. I'm pretty sure it was the last heat, but I forgot to write it down.

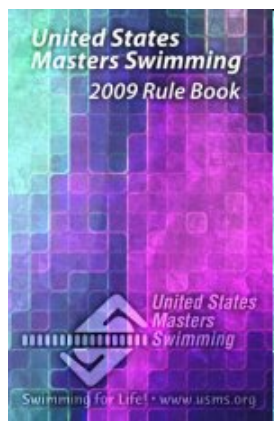
**There is more to being an official than knowing the rules.**

# Which Rule Book?

---

## Multiple Choice

Which rule book do we use at meets?



A



B



C



D



E

F. Who needs a rule book?



# Masters Competition

---

## True or False:

- Masters meets are just like age group meets. You really cannot tell the difference.
- You never have to worry about National and World Records, especially at small local meets.
- You won't need to worry about dealing with swimmers of different ages and ability levels at masters meets.
- Everyone who enters a masters meet is familiar with how they are run and what they should do.
- All swimmers are affiliated with a club and will have a coach with them at meets. No need for officials to deal with athletes directly.
- Medical emergencies never occur at masters meets.
- All USA-Swimming, YMCA, NCAA, and High School officials know all of the above already and so there is no need to tell them.

**We need to educate our officials on the unique aspects of officiating masters swimming!**

Updated September 2009





# Standards for Success

---

- Keep a roster of Officials as a resource for Meet Directors.
  - Utilize other NGB contacts at the local level.
- Be proactive about ensuring that qualified Meet Referees are assigned and ensure that they are educated on USMS Rules.
- Ensure that all officials are briefed on USMS Rules.
- Require mandatory pre-meet briefings for all officials.
  - Mechanism to educate our officials on the unique aspects of masters swimming and USMS rules.
- Use Meet Referee reports to assess “lessons learned’ after each meet.
  - Communication in both directions is key!

# Situation

---



Mary is swimming the 200-meter butterfly.

After the start, she takes a breaststroke kick while she is submerged, then starts to pull. Her first pull brings her to the surface.

She continues to swim and alternates breaststroke kick with butterfly kick throughout the race, but takes only one breaststroke kick each time she pulls.

Before the first turn, she takes one last breaststroke kick, but then touches the wall with two hands before taking another pull. She turns, and then takes two breaststroke kicks before the first pull and starts swimming again.

At the second turn, she takes multiple butterfly kicks off of the wall without a breaststroke kick. On the final length, she stops doing the breaststroke kick and takes 3-4 butterfly kicks with each pull.

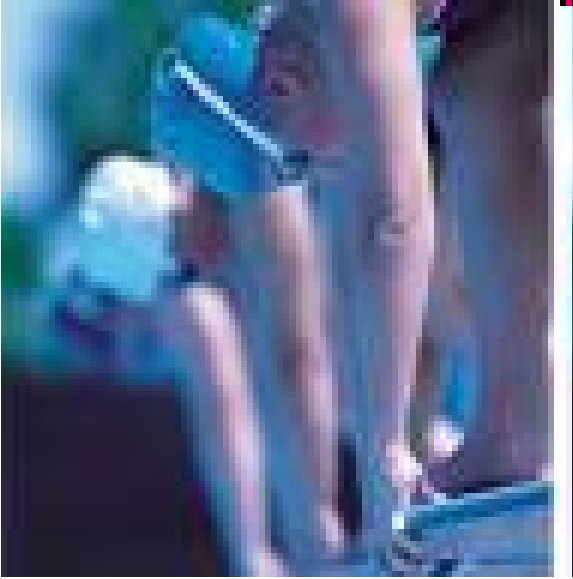
# Butterfly Kick Rule

---

- The use of breaststroke kick is permitted in Butterfly.
- Dolphin kick and breaststroke kick may be used interchangeably throughout the race.
- The arms must recover over the water with each breaststroke kick if used.
- After the start and after each turn, swimmers may take only one breaststroke kick prior to the first arm pull. Multiple butterfly kicks are permitted.
- The last breaststroke kick prior to the touch at the turn or finish need not be followed by an arm pull.

# Situation

---



Jeff is swimming the 200-yard breaststroke and decides to start from in the water due to recent knee surgery. Prior to the start, the starter instructs Jeff that he must face the course when starting since breaststroke requires a forward start.

During the same heat, another swimmer steps onto the starting platform with both feet several inches from the front of the block. The swimmer steps forward after the “Take Your Mark” command is given, so the starter proceeds to give the starting signal.

Is the starter correct?

# Start Rules

---

- Forward Start: At the Referee's signal (long whistle), swimmers must take their positions on the starting platform or deck, with at least one foot at the front of the block.
  - USMS glossary does not define the forward start as facing the course.
- Swimmers are permitted to start from the deck or in the water.
  - One hand and one foot must be in contact with the wall or starting platform if starting in the water.
- A backstroke start (in the water) is permitted in freestyle events.
  - The foot placement requirements do not apply in freestyle events.
- Swimmers are permitted to exit the pool via side ladders if needed after the race.

# Timing

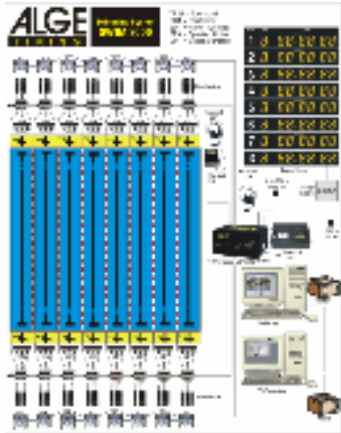
---

## True or False

- Timing is easy. Start the watch, stop the watch, write down the time. A caveman could do it.
- Fully automatic timing systems run themselves. Everything works perfectly all of the time.
- Swimmers are highly reliable. They always touch pads, never miscount the number of lengths, and always swim in the right heat and lane.
- Being a timing system operator is easy. There is no need to observe the race – simply press the buttons hand the printout to the timing judge.
- Timing judges are obsolete. The computer does it all now.

**Brief Administrative Officials on rules and procedures!**

# Situation



After the Men's 50-meter Freestyle, the results are published as follows:

1. Joe Schmoe :26.52
2. John Doe :26.53



The officials confer and later publish a revised result as follows:

1. John Doe :26.51
2. Joe Schmoe :26.52



What happened here?



# Timing System Malfunctions

---

- There is no provision in USMS rules for a “Judges Decision” that would overrule the placement according to time, even for manually timed races, based on place judge observations.
- The Referee can determine that a timing system malfunction exists and may correct the time in accordance with 103.12.4.
  - “Horizontal” adjustment using pad-button differences on other lanes.
  - “Vertical” adjustment using pad-button differences for several heats of the same lane.
  - Pad-Watch differences for malfunctions affecting an entire heat.



# Administrative Rules

---

- **Fully Automatic Timing**
  - World Records, USMS National Records, and USMS Top-10 Times.
  - Initial splits and Relay Lead-Off Splits for all purposes (see next slide).
- **Semi-Automatic with Three Buttons or Three Watches**
  - World Records, USMS National Records, and USMS Top-10 Times.
  - Initial splits and Relay Leadoff Splits for World Records Only.
- **Semi-Automatic with Two Buttons or Two Watches**
  - USMS Top 10 Times.
- **Backup time corrected for system malfunctions may be used as official times equal to the level of the timing system to which it is being corrected.**
  - Example: Pad times corrected for a heat or lane malfunction using the backup buttons are considered the same level as other pad times.



# USMS Administrative Rules

---

The Meet Referee's role in National Records, World Records, Top Ten, and all other official times recorded in the officials results is:

- A. Ensuring that record applications are on hand.
- B. Ensuring that the pool measurement certification is complete.
- C. Ensuring properly documented bulkhead placement.
- D. Ensuring that timers and timing systems are in place and officials have been instructed on how to handle timing system malfunctions and corrections.
- E. Establishing a process for intermediate split requests and recording these in the results.
- F. Establishing a process for observation of swims, if applicable. (USA-Swimming official time purposes)
- G. All of the above and then some.



# Disability Swimming

---

- Referee has the authority to modify the rules for a swimmer with a disability.
  - Article 108 contains guidelines and suggestions for modifications.
- The Referee acts in response to a request for specific modifications from the coach or the athlete with a disability.
  - The standard of determination for Referee decisions is common sense.
- The Referee's decision shall affect only the current meet and shall not set precedent for other competitions.
  - But, Referees are strongly encouraged to communicate for purposes of “lessons learned” and guidance.
- It shall be the responsibility of the swimmer or a representative to notify the referee of the disability prior to competition and request a modification.
  - Encourage swimmers to bring requests to Referees prior to meets.

# Disability Swimming

---

- *Does the athlete have a permanent physical or cognitive disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities (Article 108.1.1)?*
  - The Referee is expected to apply common sense - not to evaluate detailed medical evidence or otherwise demonstrate expertise about disability.
- *Does the proposed modification facilitate participation by the swimmer with a disability?*
  - The spirit of Article 108 is to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Note the emphasis on participation - there is no guarantee of success!
- *Is the proposed modification fair to other swimmers in the event?*
  - Modifications should not provide an unfair advantage to the swimmer with a disability, nor should modifications interfere with the opportunities of other swimmers to compete.
- *Is the proposed modification feasible?*
  - Possible concerns include the meet timeline or facility limitations; however, these concerns should not squelch efforts to include the swimmer with a disability. Instead the Referee and coach should collaborate to determine an appropriate method of inclusion.



# USMS Certification

---

- Objective
  - Supplement the pool of officials available from USA-Swimming, NCAA, YMCA, and High School Federations.
- Basic Requirements
  - Clinic, Test, and Apprenticeship
- USMS is maturing requirements for certification at the local level and developing resources for training and education.



## If You Were Asleep.....

---

- Any official at a USMS sanctioned meet is a masters swimming official. Our job is to educate our officials on our rules.
- LMSC's should take a proactive role in Meet Referee selection and education.
- Work with Meet Referees before, during, and after the meet. They can help educate other officials and improve how our meets are conducted.
- Use the mandatory pre-meet briefings to educate your officials.
- Proceed carefully if using non-certified officials.
- The right number of officials depends on the meet – it is usually more than the minimum.
- USMS is unique. Do not assume a certified official from another NGB knows all of the differences.