



**UNITED STATES
MASTERS SWIMMING**

**ePOSTAL
NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP
GUIDELINES**

June 2014

Prepared by the Long Distance Committee

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Introduction

These guidelines apply to the ePostal national championship events. These guidelines are intended for use *after* an ePostal National Championship event host has been selected by the Long Distance Committee. Instructions for bidding on an ePostal national championship event can be found on the USMS website.¹

The USMS Long Distance Committee (LDC) appoints a liaison to support the host and to serve as the point of contact with other entities within USMS.

Sections in *italics* represent best practices, not requirements.

Applicable Rules

Event hosts must become familiar with all applicable articles of Part 3: Open Water and Long Distance Swimming Rules of the current USMS rule book.

Definitions

ePostal Event: A swimming competition conducted in multiple pool locations with results compiled in a central location. There are five ePostal National Championship events held each year: the One Hour, the 5k & 10k (held simultaneously), and the 3000-yard & 6000-yard (held simultaneously).

Team: Women, men, or mixed relay team.

Club: Member organization registered by USMS.

Host: The Organization that agrees to conduct a USMS Long Distance National Championship event according to the terms of the USMS Long Distance ePostal National Championship contract and the current USMS rules for Long Distance Swimming.

Event Director: The individual representative of the Host who signed the contract and serves as the main contact between the LDC and the Host.

LDC: Long Distance Committee

Liaison: A person (or persons), appointed by the LDC to work with the Host, who is the primary point of contact with the LDC and USMS.

¹ <http://www.usms.org/longdist/bidinfo.pdf>

OHeP: One Hour ePostal

Club Assistant: The private company that provides the online entry and management program currently used by all USMS ePostal National Championships.

Club Assistant

The Host is required to use the full extent of the Club Assistant online entry and management services. The Liaison and LDC National Championship Oversight Committee can set up a conference call with a Club Assistant representative to introduce the Host to the tools available for managing the event.

ePostal Timeline

The table in Attachment A outlines the responsibilities and due dates for each ePostal National Championship event. Some work is required months before the event, but the majority of work occurs when the event starts and peaks after the entry deadline. The more tasks the Host prepares early, the easier the results will come together on time. Completion before due dates will help later. Information pertaining to the timeline elements is provided in the subsections below.

1.1 Championship Contract

A well-run ePostal event should be enjoyable for the swimmers and provide official results and awards in an accurate and timely manner. The purpose of the USMS Championship Contract (Contract) is to ensure that a USMS ePostal National Championship event is conducted properly with these ends in mind. The contract includes the necessary terms for the proper conduct of the event.

1.2 Championship Forms

The Championship Forms include report forms in Excel format for the awards order, results, All-American listings, USMS records, financial statement, and event evaluation. The Liaison will email these forms to the Event Director, and the Liaison will review the forms with the Event Director if requested.

1.3 Creating the Entry Form

The LDC ePostal National Championship Oversight Sub-Committee will prepare the Club Assistant Online event information page as the draft entry form and will share the event's URL with the Host and Liaison for review. After approval by the LDC Liaison, the Host must request sanction for the event from the LMSC sanctioning officer. When the sanction is obtained, the Host will email the sanction number to the Liaison for inclusion on the Online event information page. The Liaison will submit the online entry URL to USMS for posting on the USMS website and linking in official USMS email newsletters.

1.4 Awards

For the OHeP, the Host must give awards through 10 places for individuals in each age group and through 6 places for relays in each relay age group. For all other ePostal National Championship events, the Host must give individual awards through 6 places for individuals and 3 places for relays.

For all events, the Host must give USMS National Championship patches to first place finishers in both individual and relay events, but award only one patch for each event.

If a Host chooses to use the standard USMS Long Distance medals, the Host must use the awards order form, which describes how to order and pay for awards and return unused awards. The Host may choose to order awards elsewhere, but the LDC Chair must approve the design of these awards before the event. The Host must use USMS National Championship patches, which are ordered from USMS using the awards order form,. *The LDC strongly recommends that the Host count the awards upon receipt. The Host should count potential awards immediately after preliminary results are done and order more awards than necessary to accommodate corrections. The Host may return unused awards.*

1.5 Performance Bond

The Host must submit a performance bond of \$200, check payable to *USMS*, to **Tracy Grilli, PO Box 185, Londonderry, NH 03053-0185**. Based on the event evaluation, USMS will return the bond or a portion thereof at the conclusion of all Host obligations.

1.6 USMS Surcharge

The Host must submit the USMS surcharge, check payable to *USMS*, to **Tracy Grilli, PO Box 185, Londonderry, NH 03053-0185**. This surcharge is \$1.00 per individual entrant for each event entered (the 5k & 10k, and the 3000 & 6000, are all separate events.). The surcharge does not apply to relays.

1.7 ePostal Results

When all discrepancies and errors have been corrected, the Host and Liaison must review the preliminary results using the reports from the Club Assistant program and put them into the Excel results forms. The Host and Liaison should also particularly check results to ensure that each reported swim matches the swimmer's capabilities, paying special attention to the top 10 finishers in each age group. If deemed necessary, the Host may request a copy of the form showing the recorded splits. The host must report any perceived discrepancies to the LCD Chair.

After Host and Liaison review, the Liaison will convert the preliminary results to a pdf format and send them to the USMS website, where they will be posted for two weeks for review by the event entrants. At the time of posting, the Host must send an email to all swimmers stating that preliminary results are available on the website for review, giving the deadline for reporting errors to the event Host, asking for changes in swimmer mailing address after submittal of entries, and reminding entrants that merchandise will be ordered and mailed when received.

After final review; and LDC has approval the final results will be posted on the website and the Host may distribute official results, awards and merchandise to swimmers.

The Host must submit both preliminary and final results in the format provided in the Excel forms. The Host must submit the following reports:

- Individual results: This report is reported in order by gender (women then men) and age group (youngest to oldest). It includes age group place, name, age, club, USMS number, official time/distance, quality points (for 5k, 10k, 3000 & 6000 only), and national record indicator for every swimmer who breaks a national record. Although the form only lists 10 places, the form must be expanded to include all swimmers. For the OHeP, women's and men's results must be reported on separate forms due to the size of the event. Other ePostal event results must be submitted on separate forms for each event (e.g., 5k and 10k results will be separate reports).
- Relay results: This report is reported in order by relay category (women, men, & mixed, in that order) and age group (youngest to oldest). It includes age group place, club name & designation (A, B, etc.), official time/distance, names, ages, & official time/distance for each member of the team, and national record indicator for every relay team that breaks a national record. For the OHeP, each relay category must be reported separately due to the size of the event.
- Club results: This report includes the total combined points, women's points, and men's points, in order, for each club. For the OHeP only, the Host and Liaison will determine the sizes of club divisions.

1.8 ePostal Evaluation

The main input for evaluation is meeting the deadlines accurately, and a passing evaluation ensures the return of the entire performance bond. The Host should review this form to understand all expectations.

1.9 All-American/Records

Swimmers who break or set an individual national record must submit their split sheets by the entry deadline, either by mail or a scanned version by email. The Host must review the split sheets of all individual record swims.

The Host must report first- place USMS member finishers and record breakers/setters in each age group, for both individual swims and relays, using the Excel forms. International swimmers who are not USMS members must not be included in this tabulation, as only USMS members can be All Americans and record holders.

1.10 Awards to Participants

The Host is responsible for distributing all individual & relay awards to each individual swimmer, at cost to the Host. The Host may not distribute relay awards to a club's Relay Contact Person unless that person specifically requests to receive and distribute individual and/or relay awards at their own cost.

1.11 Financial Report

The purpose of this report is to provide information for planning and budgeting future ePostal events.

Eligibility

Swimmers must be members of USMS, or an equivalent FINA organization on the day of their swim. One Event (OEVT) entrants are not permitted in ePostal national championships.

The 3000 & 6000 and 5k & 10k ePostal events each consist of two swims (3000 and 6000 and 5k and 10k, respectively). A swimmer who wishes to swim in both events must swim both events separately; however, a swimmer may request to use a split time to establish a national ePostal record.

The age of a swimmer is age on the date that the swimmer actually swims the event. Swimmers who age up between the start and end dates of an event may swim the event twice and may submit one entry for each age group, and having done so may also enter in one same-gender relay and one mixed-gender relay in each age group.

Same-gender relays must consist of three swimmers. Mixed-gender relays must consist of four swimmers, including two of each gender. All members of a relay team must be members of the same club.

Foreign swimmers who are members of a FINA organization and not USMS members may compete in ePostal events, but cannot hold USMS national records or be considered for All-American or All Star calculations. The Host must place an asterisk by their names or relays in the results for easy identification.

Merchandise

The Host may offer souvenir T-shirts, swim caps, or other merchandise. For the ePostal events that consist of two swims, the Host should offer only one of each item. The design must include

- The exact title and year of the event (e.g., 2014 5k & 10k ePostal National Championships);
- The USMS logo or name spelled in full (the USMS logo can be found on the USMS website²); and
- The USMS Sponsor logo, merchandise, or other details if required and stated by the contract.

The Host may be required to purchase merchandise from a sponsor's vendor. The Liaison will assist in finding a vendor if necessary.

The LDC recommends that the Host use a professional designer to develop the art work for the T-shirt. The designer should be able to recommend color combinations that work and also provide a budget estimate. The Host should then verify the design with the printer and agree on price (the designer may be able to direct you to a printer). The LDC also recommends that the Host provide a picture on the merchandise page of the online entry form showing the T-shirt design, so that the artwork for the shirt design is available for event promotion. Historically, about 20% of swimmers order T-shirts. If the event has a large number of swimmers, then a large number of shirts will need to be printed, which may take over a week.

Typically, caps will take longer than T-shirts to print. Therefore, plan early to locate the vendor and complete the art work.

Entry Processing Guidelines

1.12 Verification of Entries

For the 3000 & 6000 and 5k & 10k ePostal events, swimmers who enter both swims must have completed both distances (i.e., separate entries for the 5k and the 10k). The Host must verify that split times in the 6000 or 10k swims are not used for 3000 or 5k entries.

² <http://www.usms.org/logos/>

The Club Assistant program automatically checks for completion and errors; by not accepting incomplete entries or entries with large errors. The online entry system also usually eliminates erroneous name, age, and USMS number information and also calculates relay information, including age group and total distance/time.

Entry problems should be resolved immediately to avoid delaying the preliminary results reports.

The Host must carefully verify the information on all entries. At minimum, this must include:

- For record split sheets in the OHeP, that the distance is tallied correctly. Occasionally, the timer will mark the last 50 swum and will inadvertently add 50 to the total, or will round up to the nearest 50 instead of rounding down to the nearest 5 yards. The consistency of split times. Errors such as the ones above may result in an unrealistic time for the last segment.
- For swims completed in meters in the OHeP, 3000, and 6000, the Club Assistant program will provide accurate conversion to yards that the Host must use in all situations. All other conversions are unacceptable.
- In questionable cases;
 - Compare performances with previous ePostal events; and/or
 - Verify times against times swum in other recent pool events (e.g. 1650yd); and/or
 - Compare with other swimmers

The Host may request additional information from the swimmer to verify an entry. After such a request, if an entry still appears to contain erroneous information, the Host may refuse to accept the entry and may disqualify the swimmer. In such a case, the Host must notify the Liaison before notifying a swimmer of entry refusal or disqualification.

When requesting information about entries, the Host must maintain a log of all emails, calls, and other communication. Any changes to the entry, including the split sheet, must be logged so that the adjustment can be traced if questions arise.

When in doubt about the validity of an entry, contact the Liaison promptly.

1.13 Refusing Late Entries

The Host MUST accept only entries that are received before the entry deadline. Accepting late entries is unfair to the other swimmers. The online entry system does not allow late entries. (Under extraordinary circumstances (extreme weather such as Superstorm Sandy, the LDC reserves the right to extend the deadline at the request of the Host.)

Result Processing Guidelines

1.14 Individual and Relay Results

Using the Club Assistant program, the Host can generate individual and relay results reports that resemble the result reports included in the Championship Packet.

The order of individual and relay results for the OHeP is from highest to lowest yardage in each age/gender category; the order of individual and relay results for the 3000 & 6000 and 5k & 10k ePostal events is from fastest to slowest time for each age/gender category. If individuals or relays tie, the next individual or relay takes the place two (or more) places down (e.g., if two swimmers tie for third, the next swimmer is fifth; if four swimmers tie for second, the next swimmer is sixth).

The Club Assistant program includes and automatically notes USMS records, but they should be checked for accuracy. The Host must send a complete copy of the individual entry form—including the split sheet—for each individual record swim to the Liaison.

Report the first USMS individual and relay finishers in each age group to the Liaison on the All-American forms.

Report results to the Liaison on Excel spreadsheets supplied in the format provided. The Liaison should review and approve all information before sending it to the LDC Chair and LDC member who oversees posting them on the website.

1.15 Club Results

Club results for the OHeP are calculated as the sum of the distance (in yards) of all individual swimmers of each club. Club size categories for the OHeP are based on the number of swimmers for each club and must be decided together by the Host and Liaison.

No such size classification is made for the other ePostal events. Individual results for the 5k, 10k, 3000, and 6000 events are calculated by quality points (the age group record divided by a swimmer's time, then multiplied by 1000), which is automatically calculated by the Club Assistant program. Club results are calculated as the sum of the quality points from each individual swimmer for the club. There are no quality points for relays, so relays are not included.

The club results report includes the club name, number of swimmers for the club, and the total distance or points. Club totals are shown in women, men, and combined categories. International clubs are marked with an asterisk.

Processing Awards and Merchandise

Award and merchandise processing includes:

- Ordering and receiving awards
- Ordering and receiving merchandise
- Preparing envelopes to send awards and merchandise
- Filling envelopes with awards and merchandise
- Sending awards and merchandise to participants

The Host should prepare for these activities as soon as preliminary results are available.

1.16 Ordering Awards

USMS provides, at a reasonable cost, gold, silver, and bronze medals for individual and relay swims to be awarded for 1st through 3rd places, and smaller bronze medals for places 4th through 10th places. A Host may opt to use its own awards, but the LDC Chair must approve the design before the event. The Host must award USMS Long Distance National Championship patches for each first place, except that a swimmer can only be awarded one championship patch for each event (3000, 6000, 5k and 10k are four events). For example, if a swimmer places first in a 5k individual swim, a 5k relay, and a 10k individual swim, that swimmer gets two championship patches, one for the 5k and one for the 10k.

The best way to determine how many awards need to be ordered is to create an awards report similar to the merchandise report provided by the Club Assistant program. This would provide an awards count by swimmer and also the total count that could then be used to fill out the awards order form and fill the envelopes. Such a report is not available now from Club Assistant, but the LDC recommends that the Host create such a report using the method described below, also including merchandise information.

Step 1 – Set up the Awards & Merchandise Report

Start with the individual result reports, which are separate for each swim (e.g., one for 5k and one for 10k) and thus will be modified into two separate spreadsheets. Retain columns for Distance, Gender, Age Group, Place, First Name, Last Name, Club, and Age. Add columns for patch, 1st place, 2nd place, 3rd place, small bronze, T-shirt, and caps. Set up the resulting report in landscape format to show all columns of the spreadsheet.

Step 2 – Enter Awards and Merchandise information

This step is best performed by two people. Open an Awards & Merchandise Report as created in step 1 (e.g., for the 5k) on a computer. If you have two computers, open the Relay Results Report on another computer. Starting at the top of the Relay Results Report, going relay by relay, person A reads the name, age and place information to person B, who enters award information in the Awards and Merchandise Report for the event. In the first go-around through the women's and men's relays, there will be only "1"s in the spreadsheet.

When going through the mixed relays, some of the "1"s may have to be changed to "2"s. Now person A can go through the individual results (first eight columns of the report) and update the awards and merchandise information in the spreadsheet on the screen by including the individual results). This may result in a few more "2"s and a few "3"s. Note that there can only be "1"s in the patch column. The process is similar when there is only one computer available. In this case, person A will read the information from a printed version of the relay results.

Step 2 can now be repeated for the second event (in this example the 10k). It is tempting to add the 5k and 10k Awards and Merchandise Reports together but this makes things more complicated without adding much benefit, and makes checking much harder. By simple column additions in the spreadsheet the total number of awards can now be determined. The

merchandise information can now be entered by reading information from the Merchandise Report.

In their entries, some participants may have chosen to decline awards. Indicate this in the reports, and consider this when ordering awards. The LDC recommends that the Host order several more awards than necessary based on the count, as there may be mistakes of various kinds.

The Host should include a thank you message in each envelope, congratulating the swimmer and encouraging participation in future ePostal events.

1.17 Ordering Merchandise

The Club Assistant program generates a merchandise report that provides count and size information. This report shows each individual order as well as total counts.

Sometimes a swimmer who enters both events in the 3000 & 6000 and in the 5k & 10k will order merchandise for each one of the two events mistakenly assuming that the merchandise will be different for each event. When this happens, the Host should ask the swimmer's intent when the entry is received.

The Host should order merchandise as soon as possible, as merchandise orders can get delayed. The Host should also verify the design of the art work with the merchandise vendor(s) well ahead of deadlines so that any problems can be resolved early.

1.18 Preparing Envelopes

Before buying envelopes, inquire at your local post office to find whether it is economical to send awards using priority mail envelopes. If your club is a 501c3 corporation, you can save lots of money on postage; inquire with your local post office for details. For shipping just one medal, it is probably less expensive to use regular envelopes. For sending multiple awards, sturdy priority mail or flat rate envelopes might be better. For shipments that include a T-shirt, a Tyvek envelope is probably the best solution.

After acquiring envelopes, print address labels using a tool provided by the Club Assistant program. You will not need all labels, as you will probably not need to mail awards and/or merchandise to all swimmers. Remember to print enough return address labels. Label

the envelopes before filling with awards and merchandise. Make sure that labels stick, using tape if necessary.

Experience strongly recommends keeping envelopes in the same order as the individual results report, using plastic or cardboard storage boxes until mailing. For easier handling and mailing, keep envelopes for international participants separate.

1.19 Filling envelopes

Start by putting the different awards in boxes, preferably using a different color for each box. The Host may consider sticking small labels on each award indicating the event and place before filling the envelopes. Make labels for individual and relay placement for each event (thus, for a 5k & 10k event, you would need four different labels). Print enough “congratulation letters”, and paper results if necessary. Now put awards, merchandise, and letters in the envelopes. If swimmers request a paper copy of the results, do this also when filling envelopes.

This can best be done by three persons:

- *Person A reads the awards that a participant will receive from the Awards and Merchandise Reports.*
- *Person B gathers the awards needed from the boxes and labels the awards.*
- *Person C puts the awards and merchandise in the envelopes.*

Now put T-shirts into the Tyvek envelopes.

For very large events such as the OHeP, consider doubling the assembly line, i.e., one for women and one for men. Experience recommends putting the teams in separate rooms or even separate locations to maintain concentration. A Host may want to consider adding an auditor to verify the content of each envelope before it is sealed.

Finally, seal the envelope once filled. Envelopes may not seal properly because the contents are not flat, so use tape if necessary.

1.20 Mailing envelopes

Inquire at the local post office for their preferred way to mail envelopes to swimmers. Some post offices may want you to drop off boxes with envelopes without postage and wait to

pay for the total postage, others may want you to sort envelopes into different weight categories, and some may even invite you in the “back room” to help with the process.

1.21 Other communication with participants

Some swimmers will have not ordered merchandise, have not qualified for awards, and/or have declined awards. The LDC recommends that the Host send all such swimmers a “thank you” message that congratulates them on their participation, encourages them to participate in future ePostal events, asks them to promote participation in future ePostal events among their teammates, and provides them a link to the posted results on the USMS web site.

Club Awards

Appropriate awards may be given to the first, second, and third place club winners in each size division if warranted by the event Entry. Club awards are not required.

Miscellaneous

The LDC requires the Host to keep general entry and any logged information for three years.

ATTACHMENT A

ePostal Timeline

In the table below, LDC responsibilities and due dates are in *Italic*.

USMS ePostal Swims		One Hour	5k & 10k	3000 & 6000
Event period		January 1-31	May 15-September 15	September 15-November 15
Contract and ePostal Championship package to host	Due	July 7	November 7	February 7
Signed contract (prior to event) to LDC Chair	Due	August 1	December 1	February 1
Draft entry form to LDC liaison	Due	July 15	January 1	April 1
Draft entry form with review comments to host	Due	July 22	January 15	April 15
Sanctioned final entry form to LDC liaison	Due	August 1	February 1	May 1
Entry form to USMS for publication in Swimmer and on web site	Due	August 1	N/A	N/A
Event setup and online entry ready for testing	Due	October 1	March 15	June 15
Club Assistant Tutorial Arranged by LDC Liaison	Due	December 1	April 15	August 15
Current event records to Club Assistant	Due	December 27	May 10	September 10
\$200 Performance bond to USMS (Tracy Grilli)	Due	December 31	September 5	November 5
Entry deadline		February 10	September 25	November 25
USMS surcharge (\$1/swimmer) to USMS (Tracy Grilli)	Due	March 2	October 15	December 15
Awards order	Due	February 27	October 12	December 12
Awards to host	Due	March 6	October 19	December 19
Preliminary results to LDC liaison	Due	March 12	October 25	December 25
LDC liaison to provide preliminary results to USMS for posting on website	Due	March 12	October 25	December 25
Preliminary results review comments to host	Due	March 26	November 8	January 8
Final results to LDC liaison	Due	April 2	November 15	January 15
All American/Records to LDC liaison	Due	April 7	November 20	January 20
Unused awards returned with payment	Due	April 12	November 25	January 25
Awards and merchandise to swimmers	Due	April 12	November 25	January 25
Financial Report to LDC liaison	Due	May 2	December 15	February 14
Evaluation report to host	Due	May 16	December 29	February 28
Performance bond remittance to host	Due	May 30	January 13	March 14

All Timeline Dates are subject to slight change, based on how various dates fall on a weekly calendar (holidays, Sundays, etc.). The timeline is also subject to negotiation between the Host, Liaison and Chair.