
**2018
U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING
CODE OF REGULATIONS
AND
RULES OF COMPETITION**

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usms.org/rules

Edited by the USMS National Office with assistance from the Rules, Legislation, Open Water, Long Distance, Records and Tabulation, and Championship Committees.

This is an official publication of United States Masters Swimming Inc., the national governing body for Masters Swimming in the United States. Additional copies of this book may be purchased at a cost of \$10 per copy for shipping and handling from the USMS National Office at the above address.

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On the Cover: MOVY Masters swimmer Siphwi Baleka leaving the blocks for the 50 freestyle at the 2017 Nationwide USMS Spring National Championship in Riverside, Calif., April 30, 2017. Peter H. Bick

Rule Book Dedication

Anna Lea Matysek is curious about how everything works. An engineer by trade, she can take something—tangible or not—apart and put it back together before most people have figured out what “it” is. Coupled with the enthusiasm and patience possessed by all great teachers, she can transfer her knowledge and skills to others. She’s been sharing her talents with USMS for nearly 30 years.

Anna Lea joined USMS in 1987, swimming with the Kansas City Blazers Masters. Two years later she began serving as the registrar for the Missouri Valley LMSC, a position she held until 2009. Her first Convention was in 1993, and that sparked more than two decades of service at the national level. She served on the Finance Committee and on the Registration Committee, including four years as chair, and sat on the Board of Directors for three years.

When USMS established its first headquarters, in Sarasota in 2009, Anna Lea was hired as a full-time staff member. Her technical knowledge and deep familiarity with the arcana of our sprawling 52 LMSCs enabled her to amass a storehouse of tutorials for volunteers, which gave them the tools and procedures they needed to serve their clubs, LMSCs, committees, and most importantly, USMS members across the country.

As the membership director, she became the go-to person for everything from, well, literally everything: Questions about member and club registration policies and available tools, how to sanction and host meets and open water events, how to process event results for the national database and create annual Top 10 submissions, and countless other topics.

She also provided individual assistance to members and was instrumental in providing requirements and guidance in the development of the ESTHER online registration tool suite. These services were cheerfully provided not only during work hours, but also nights, weekends, and holidays.

While an employee of the National Office, Anna Lea never lost her volunteer spirit for USMS. She continued to volunteer for her club, the Sarasota YMCA Sharks Masters, and the Florida LMSC, on her own time.

Anna Lea’s time, talents, and tirelessness have had an incalculable impact on USMS members and volunteers across the country. She’s a true team player, never seeking individual recognition for her work, and USMS owes an enormous debt of gratitude for her decades of service.



Anna Lea Matysek

Previous Rule Book Dedications

1989	June Krauser	2005	Walt Reid
1992	Mary Lee Watson	2006	Pieter Cath
1993	Kathrine Casey and Gail Dummer	2007	Pacific Masters XI FINA World Masters Championships Organizing Committee
1994	All USMS volunteers		
1995	E. Kevin Kelly		
1996	Dorothy Donnelly	2008	Steve Schofield
1997	Jack Geoghegan	2009	Meg Smath
1998	USMS All-Americans	2010	Bill Volckening
1999	F.H. "Ted" Haartz	2011	Tracy Grilli
2000	Jim Matysek	2012	Esther Lyman
2001	Gene Donner and the staff of Gateway Printing	2013	Rob Copeland
2002	Nancy Ridout	2015	June Krauser
2003	Tom Boak	2016	Rob Butcher
2004	Joanne Tingley	2017	Tom Taylor
		2018	Anna Lea Matysek

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Organizing Principles

Preamble

United States Masters Swimming is an organization of sportswomen and sportsmen founded in 1970 and dedicated to the premise that the lives of participants will be enhanced through aquatic physical conditioning. USMS supports and encourages competitions among its members and those of other nations. This book establishes certain rules and regulations for the conduct of the organization, the participants and the competitors in the spirit of good sportsmanship.

Mission Statement

To promote health, wellness, fitness and competition for adults through swimming.

Vision Statement

USMS will be the premier resource for adult aquatic fitness in the United States and will make fitness through swimming available for as many adults as possible.

Goals and Objectives

- A** To encourage and promote improved physical fitness and health in adults.
- B** To offer adults the opportunity to participate in a lifelong fitness and/or competitive swimming program.
- C** To encourage organizations and communities to establish and sponsor Masters Swimming programs.
- D** To enhance fellowship and camaraderie among Masters swimmers.
- E** To stimulate research in the sociology, psychology, and physiology of Masters swimming.

Core Objectives

Service the membership.
Educate the membership.
Build the membership.

Major Changes for 2018

World Records and USMS Records: Applications for world records and USMS records will no longer be accepted when timed with manual watches or with a semiautomatic timing system (automatic start with a button finish) as the primary timing system. World and USMS records must be timed with automatic timing (automatic start and touchpad finish) or, in the event of an individual lane malfunction, with a semiautomatic backup system consisting of three, two, or one button(s). An overhead video system may also be used as a backup system in the event of a touchpad failure. Manual watches and semi-automatic buttons will continue to be accepted for USMS Top 10 recognition.

Notification of Timing System in the Meet Announcement: If it is not possible to satisfy the timing system requirements for world records, USMS records, or USMS Top 10, the meet announcement must include a statement notifying swimmers of this situation. If a change in primary timing is necessary prior to a meet or during a meet that affects the ability to earn records or Top 10 recognition, meet directors must ensure that swimmers are notified of the change.

Starting Grips: Handgrips on the starting platforms are distinguished between grips for backstroke starts and grips for forward starts. During backstroke events, swimmers may not use handgrips installed on the top of the starting platform intended for use during forward starts. During backstroke starts, swimmers must place both hands on the gutter or on the backstroke starting grips.

Freestyle during Individual Medley and Medley Relay events: Swimmers must be at or past the vertical towards the breast during the freestyle leg of an individual medley or medley relay event, except that during a turn (freestyle turn or breast-to-free transition), swimmers may leave the wall in a position at or past the vertical towards the back. Swimmers must return to a position at or past the vertical towards the breast before any stroke or kick.

Relay Starts with Adjustable Back Plates on the Starting Platform: The second, third, and fourth swimmers on a relay team must have at least part of one foot in front of the adjustable-setting back plate during a relay takeoff.

Modification of Age Groups: Organizations outside of USMS requesting a USMS sanction to conduct a meet may modify the age groups to correspond to different minimum and maximum ages if their organization's age policies differ from USMS.

Meet Announcement: The order of events must be published in the meet announcement at least one week prior to the entry deadline.

Dual Sanctioned Meets: When a USMS meet is held in conjunction with a USA Swimming sanctioned meet (swimmers from both organizations swimming together in one or more sessions), swimmers must select only one organization with which to compete for the entire meet.

Warm Down: A swimmer who completes a race may warm down in their assigned lane while the rest of the swimmers finish the heat and shall not be disqualified if that swimmer does not delay the start of the next heat.

Automatic Splits at National Championships: Recording of intermediate splits is a mandatory requirement for hosts of national championship meets.

Glossary

Administrative Referee—an official certified as an administrative referee who supervises entries, seeding, determination of official times, results, and meet personnel assisting with these duties.

Aggregate Time—times achieved by four individuals in separate starts that are added together to arrive at a relay time for entry purposes.

Anchored (Starting Platform)—stable at all times without human aid.

Arm—that part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist.

Bulkhead—moveable end wall of a course.

Cable Swim—a type of straightaway swim defined by a cable.

Club—an organization or group of permanent character that is a member of USMS, registered through an LMSC, and that actively promotes and/or participates in Masters Swimming.

Corporation—United States Masters Swimming Inc. (USMS).

Course—designated distance over which the competition is conducted.

Long Course—50 meters.

Short Course—25 yards or 25 meters.

Deck-Entered—all entries are accepted on the first or later day of that meet and subsequently seeded into events.

Deck-Seeding—with or without check-in, events seeded at the time of the event using entries received prior to or at the meet.

Drafting—in open water and long distance events, an individual swimming behind or next to a single swimmer or support craft for the purpose of taking advantage of the reduced water resistance.

Dual Meet—competition between two clubs.

Dual-Sanctioned Meet—A USMS sanctioned meet held in conjunction with a USA Swimming sanctioned meet in which swimmers from both organizations are competing together in the same session(s).

Electronic Timing Chip—used to trigger the timing system and may not be used as an audible pacing device in swimming.

End of the Course—designated wall for racing turns or finishes.

Escort Craft—boats or paddle boards that accompany swimmers in an open water swim for safety and logistical support, including the person or people that staff them.

Event—any clinic, demonstration, series of races in a given stroke and distance, or meet: including pool, long distance, and open water.

Event Director—the person responsible for the administration and conduct of the event.

Ex Officio Member—a committee member, appointed by virtue of an office or position held, who has participatory rights of membership but no vote.

FINA—Fédération Internationale de Natation (International Federation of Swimming).

Finish—the instant that a swimmer touches the wall at the end of the prescribed distance.

Finish Point—the physical location where the race terminates.

Fitness Events—events designed to encourage and enhance fitness.

First Day of Meet—day on which first competitive swimming event is conducted.

Foreign Swimmer—athlete member of a FINA member federation other than USMS.

Forward Start—an entry made while facing the course or a start made while in the water either facing the course or not facing the course.

Foul—an instance of obstruction, interference, collision, or equipment malfunction that prevents the successful completion of a race.

Grease—a substance used by swimmers to reduce friction or reduce the loss of body heat during a swim.

Heat—a division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time.

Horizontal—parallel to the level surface of the water.

IOC—International Olympic Committee.

Initial Distance—that first portion of a race for which an official time may be recorded but which is not itself a completed event.

Lane—the specific area in which the swimmer is assigned to swim.

Lane Line—continuous floating markers attached to a line stretched from one end of the course to the other for the purpose of separating adjacent lanes.

Lane Markers—the guide lines on the bottom of the pool and in the center of the lanes running from one end of the course to the other.

Last Day of the Meet—day on which last competitive swimming event is conducted.

Leadoff—the first part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

Leg (Relay)—the part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

Length—the extent of the course from end to end.

LMSC—Local Masters Swimming Committee.

Malfunction—a mechanical or electronic equipment failure; not a human failure by the swimmer.

Manual Start—the start of any timing device by an individual in response to the same starting signal given to the swimmers.

Mark—(take your) starting position.

Masters Swimming—a program including training, competition, and other activities affiliated with United States Masters Swimming through the participation of USMS members or through a USMS sanction.

May—permissive, not mandatory.

Medical Identification Item—an item worn by a swimmer that identifies medical conditions, emergency contacts, or other information necessary to protect the health of the swimmer. Medical identification items are not considered part of swimwear.

Meet—an event or series of events held under a single sanction or recognition and conducted within 10 consecutive days, except for postal meets.

Member—an individual, club, or organization registered with USMS.

Must—mandatory.

On the back—position of the body when the shoulders are at or past the vertical towards the back.

On the breast—position of the body when the shoulders are at or past the vertical towards the breast.

Paddler—a person on a paddle board or manually propelled craft who supports a swimmer or group of swimmers.

Pool—the physical facility in which the competition is conducted.

Postal Event—a swimming competition conducted in multiple pool locations with results compiled in a central location.

Preliminary Heats—competition in which a number of heats are swum to qualify the fastest swimmers for the finals.

Preseeding—events are seeded prior to the day of competition.

Propulsive—having the power to propel.

Recognized Events—the written acknowledgment by an LMSC for a designated competition conducted in conformance with relevant USMS rules, or a demonstration, clinic, or exhibition conducted by USMS member clubs, individual members, or organizations other than USMS in which both members and nonmembers may participate. Times or distances achieved by members at recognized competitions will be considered for recording purposes by USMS.

Register—enroll as a member of USMS through an LMSC.

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- Safety Plans**—written plans for the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency or need for medical intervention.
- Sanction**—the written authorization of an LMSC to permit members to participate in a specific competition, demonstration, clinic, exhibition, or Swim-A-Thon®.
- Scissors Kick**—use of the top of the instep of one foot and the bottom of the other foot in the propulsive part of the kick.
- Scratch**—withdraw an entry from an event or fail to report to the assigned lane in the assigned heat.
- Seeding**—distributing swimmers among the required number of heats and/or lanes, based on submitted times.
- Session**—any portion of a pool meet distinctly separated from other portions of the meet by locale, time, day, or type of competition; i.e., first day and second day, morning and evening, etc., exclusive of a short break between events such as before the start of distance events or relays.
- Shall**—mandatory.
- Should**—recommended but not mandatory.
- Soft Touch**—a swimmer’s touch that does not register a time at the point of contact with the touchpad.
- Split Time**—time recorded from official start to completion of an initial distance within a longer event.
- Still Water**—water contained within four walls or landlocked, having no perceptible current or movement other than that caused by wind or by swimmers.
- Straightaway Swim**—any swim of any length where the course shall be a straight, measured distance in stationary open water and defined by a cable with floats or a continuous marking system visible to the swimmer.
- Submitted Times**—those filed with an entry as having been previously achieved or reasonably estimated; also known as seed times.
- Time Trial**—a timed heat conducted within a meet where the swimmer races against the clock to establish an official time.
- Timed Finals**—competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by the times achieved in the heats.
- Touch**—contact with the end of the course.
- Turn**—a point on the course where the swimmers reverse or change direction of the swim.
- USA-S**—USA Swimming Inc.
- USAS**—United States Aquatic Sports Inc.
- USMS**—United States Masters Swimming Inc.

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- Venue**—geographical area and environs where a swim event is conducted.
- Wall**—the vertical portion of the pool, the contiguous surface of the deck and overflow gutters, the front portion of the starting block or platform, or the touchpad at the end of the course.
- Warning Signal**—a bell, whistle, air horn, or other appropriate audible device.
- Wave**—the second or subsequent start used if the start area cannot accommodate all contestants at the same time.
- Will**—consent to do, an expectation.
- Workout Group**—a subordinate organization (subgroup) of a USMS-registered club.
- Zone**—a geographic section of the country that includes all LMSCs within that section.

