

The “Professional” Starter -or- It’s more than three short words!

The “Professional” Starter should:

- **Know the Rules** and the protocols, procedures, and philosophies for being a successful starter
- **Be on time for each session and officials’ briefing, dressed appropriately in a professional manner**
- **Be flexible and adaptable to all procedures made by the Meet Referee or Head Starter that may differ from the suggested guidelines offered in this document**
- **Confirm assignments, rotations, and invigilating schedule with the Head Starter:**
 - Be aware how heats will run – fly-overs, cleared pool, flighting, or events or heats alternating by gender
 - Confirm the meet procedures for Starters that may include additional responsibilities, including:
 - timer instruction - be aware of timing system (number of buttons and watches or cameras) and provide instruction to timers at the designated time established by meet director
 - a rotation involving stroke or turn judging, taking order-of-finish, distance counting, ringing the bell for the lead swimmer in a distance heat, relay take-off judging or head timer responsibilities
 - Be aware of swimmers with disabilities who may require special starting accommodations and know the rules and procedures
- **Confirm meet protocol and procedures for the Starter-Deck Referee (DR) teams and with the individual Deck Referees with whom you are teamed:**
 - Work as a team with the Deck Referees and Chief Judges
 - Be aware when jurisdiction will be turned over to Starter, indicated by Deck Referee’s out-stretched arm
 - Confirm how to make Deck Referees aware of next-up swimmers behind the blocks affected by suit malfunctions, cap or goggle issues or unexpected empty lanes
- **Pre-Meet and Pre-Session:**
 - Become familiar with the starting system by checking the equipment during the session warm-up period
 - There are a variety of microphones in use. Practice with the mic during warm-ups to feel comfortable with the device
 - Omega microphones display a green light when the timing system is ready for the next start. When outdoors, confirm you can clearly see the green light and be prepared to notify the DR when the green light has not been displayed
 - Check your voice level in the microphone with another Starter monitoring the audio level in all lane speakers
 - After confirming with the equipment staff, perform a test start to get a feel for how sensitive the starting button may be
 - Find your optimum deck positions for both forward and back starts so that all swimmers can be clearly and individually viewed
 - Find out where the Deck Referee will stand adjacent to your position. Ask him or her to extend their arm so that it can be seen in your peripheral vision, without blocking your view of the swimmers. Make sure you and the DR are standing close enough that you can converse quietly. It may be about swimmer issues, green lights, step down requests, etc.
 - Be prepared with a master starter heat sheet if you have been asked to use one for marking all false starts, no shows, declared false starts, and any other notes. Also acquire an OOF (Order Of Finish) heat sheet, if the meet’s procedures call for the off-duty starter to take OOF
- **During the Start:**
 - Assume your deck position to start the upcoming heat prior to the finish of the current heat. In some cases, the previous event’s results are scrolled on the scoreboard, allowing for a bit more time to take position
 - Your body language should convey that you are relaxed and confident
 - On the long whistle (second long whistle for the back start), have the microphone in a “ready” position
 - Secure the cord by holding it with your free hand
 - When all swimmers have stepped on the blocks the Deck Referee will turn over jurisdiction to the Starter

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- Be patient when allowing all swimmers to assume the position on the blocks they want to use for the start. Watch to see their feet are in the final chosen position. The swimmers will then show you when they’re ready to hear the “Take Your Mark” instruction
 - If “track style” starting platforms are used, swimmers may require a bit more time to assume their position
 - If “backstroke ledges” are used, ensure at least one toe from each foot is in direct contact with the end wall or timing pad prior to the start, but not curled over the top of the pad, gutter or end wall or above them
- Deliver the “Take Your Mark” instruction in a calm, conversational tone that’s loud enough for the swimmers to hear over any possible crowd noise, but not so loud the instruction sounds like a shouted command. Use a cadence that is inviting with a slight falling in pitch
- Swimmers start the heats – not the starter! Be patient - the swimmers will show you through their body language when they are ready to hear “Take Your Mark” and for the starting signal
- When that “sweet spot” moment is achieved, and the swimmers are stationary, push the starting button
- After the start be ready to take the mic in the event the heat needs to be recalled
- The microphone should be to a position where it can’t be bumped, and the cord isn’t in a traffic zone that could cause tripping
- Step out of the starting area to allow more room for Deck Referee, Chief Judge and Stroke Judge
 - Avoid conversing with the DR unless it involves a possible false start or another timely matter
- Using the Starter’s heat sheet, confirm the next heat’s swimmers are reporting to the assigned lanes. Note on the heat sheet any “no shows”, “declared false starts”, false starts or other matters for which there should be a record
- Begin preparations to start the next heat
- **Use the False Start Protocol:**
 - Remember the definition of a false start: *Any swimmer **starting** before the starting signal is given, shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a false start occurred.*
 - After the start and the microphone is replaced, calmly mark the Starter heat sheet to indicate which heat and lane the false start was observed. Double-check that mark for accuracy of heat and lane
 - Any mark can be used as long as the Deck Referee can tell a particular heat and lane has been indicated, whether it’s circling the lane number, underlining the lane number and name, placing a visible dot next to the lane, etc.
 - Show the marked heat sheet to the Deck Referee and implement the procedure discussed prior to the start of the meet. It should include pointing out the heat and lane, as well as verbally indicating a false start was observed. The Deck Referee should also show the Starter his/her marked heat sheet as confirmation of a false start. Under no circumstance should a false start confirmation be based solely on a discussion.
 - When a Chief Judge is available, they will fill out the disqualification form and hand it to the Starter for signature. Double check the event, heat, lane and, possibly the name and team, have been correctly noted and the false start box was checked before signing and handing the form back to the Chief Judge
 - When a Chief Judge is not available, the Starter completes and signs the disqualification form before handing it to the Referee for final sign-off
 - If necessary, note any peculiarities to the false start on the heat sheet for later reference; possibly when advising a coach or swimmer of the observed action
 - Don’t hesitate to use the recall option if you feel an external noise (ex. coach’s whistle) or motion (activity around the starting blocks) has interfered with a swimmer’s ability to achieve a fair start
- **When Using Other Commands;**
 - To address the athletes with the microphone, refer to the swimmers as “Ladies” and “Gentlemen”
 - Remember to use “Please” and “Thank you”

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- If it is necessary to stand the field after the TYM instruction, for both forward and back starts, say, “Stand please”
- If the Deck Referee asks for the swimmers to step off the blocks, say, “Ladies (Gentlemen), step down carefully please”
- The Deck Ref may request you clear pool by saying “Thank you Ladies/Gentlemen.” If more instruction is needed, say, “Ladies/Gentlemen, please clear the pool”
- Use of the “Relax please Ladies/Gentlemen” instruction means it will be a prolonged period before the starting sequence will begin. The “Relax” instruction should not be used in place of a “Stand Please” instruction for backstroke starts
- If a swimmer’s toes are curled over the top of the pad, or not in contact with the pad when ledges are used prior to the start of the backstroke, address the swimmer by saying, “Lane 7, toes please”

N2 Starter - Prerequisites for requesting an Evaluation:

- LSC-certified Starter for 16 sessions
- Certified as N2 Stroke & Turn Judge
- Must work at least 4 sessions at the OQM, with at least 3 evaluation sessions as a Starter

N2 Starter - Performance Requirements for an Advancing Evaluation:

- Know the rules for starting
- Understands basic starting protocols and procedures (distance counting, OOF, etc.)
- Understands how to start swimmers with disabilities
- Understands how the starting system operates
- Establishes a comfortable starting position on deck for both forward and back starts
- Prepared and in position prior to each heat; comfortable holding microphone and cord
- Delivers TYM calmly and with necessary volume
- Shows PATIENCE before delivering TYM and starting signal
- Understands the use of other commands
- Understands and practices the False Start Protocol
- If the evaluation is satisfactory and all other requirements are met, submit a “National Certification Application” using the OTS

N3 initial Starter Evaluation (this is not a certification level) – Prerequisites for requesting an evaluation:

- N2 Starter certification and N3 Stroke and Turn certification
- Active as an official in the LSC at all levels of meets
- At least 8 sessions as a Starter, recorded in OTS, since N2 certification

N3 initial Starter Evaluation - Performance Requirements for a recommendation to proceed to an N3 final Evaluation:

- Understands how the starting system operates; tests it during warm-ups without guidance
- Observes, without scrutinizing, next-up swimmers
- Shows preparedness when the heat is turned over by the Deck Referee
- Is comfortable with starting deck position and microphone
- Uses PATIENCE before delivering the TYM, and does so calmly with necessary volume
- Uses the proper TYM cadence that includes a slight falling in pitch
- Shows awareness of external noises or motions that may affect swimmers’ start and properly reacts
- Follows proper deck positioning before, during and after starts

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- Correctly uses other commands, without over-use (e.g. standing swimmers)
- Correctly follows false start protocols
- Shows consistency in delivery, positioning, awareness and demeanor

N3 final Starter Evaluation – Prerequisites for requesting an evaluation:

- Worked at least eight (8) sessions as a Starter, recorded in OTS, after receiving a “recommendation” N3 initial Starter evaluation

N3 final Starter Evaluation - Performance Requirements for Certification:

- Arrives on-time, prepared with necessary personal equipment, and properly/professionally attired
- Knows and consistently follows all the pre-meet/pre-session duties
- Consistently delivers starting instructions showing ideal PATIENCE, timing, cadence and awareness
- Consistently and properly uses other commands
- Consistently follows False Start protocols
- Consistently self-critiques with a determination to improve his/her starting talent
- Consistently shows a starting demeanor that is calm, comfortable and assured

If your evaluation is satisfactory, and all other requirements are met, you will need to submit a “National Certification Application” using the OTS.

Art of the Start

- Preparation before arriving
 - o Professional
 - o Counter sheets
 - o Bell
- Arrive early and checkout the facility
 - o Can traffic be routed around starting area
 - o Starting blocks
 - o Obstacles
 - o Are lane lines marked
- Meet with referee(s)
 - o False start procedures
 - o Where you will stand for forward and backstroke starts
- Checkout all equipment
 - o Starting system charged and working
 - o When and who will put them in
 - o Test starting system after warm-ups
- Timer meeting
 - o Cover unique situations
 - o Check upcoming swimmers
 - o Keep area between blocks clear for starts
- Smile be relaxed and calm in your appearance
- Observe upcoming heat
 - o For potential problems
 - o Number of swimmers
- Be ready to start next heat
 - o Mic in one hand cord in the other
 - o Standing on your spot
- Be **patent** when starting
 - o Wait for swimmers to be ready for start
 - o Wait for the movement to stop
 - o Develop a routine
 - o Minimize disruption to routine
 - o Follow swimmer after start
 - o Secure cord
 - o Mark off heat on program
- Avoid distractions
 - o Swimmers/coaches walking past at the start
 - o People talking to you while your starting
- Calm, monotone, conversational voice always
 - o Take your mark
 - o Stand
 - o Step down
- Be second eyes for referee
 - o Swimmer behind pack
 - o Any observed problem

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Starter

The starter has the responsibility to ensure that all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start. It is important that each competitor be given the opportunity to achieve the best start possible within the confines of the rules. The starter must know the rules governing starting procedures.

Starter Preparation

Personal Preparation - The starter should review the rules and schedule of events and establish protocol procedures with the meet referee. In addition, the starter should be familiar with the guidelines for officiating swimmers with a disability.

Competition Course - Preparation begins long before the start of the first heat in the meet. The starter should become familiar with the competition course and determine the location where the starter will be positioned. This position shall be within 10 feet of the starting end of the pool and should be free from any obstruction that might block or restrict the view of the athletes on the blocks. This position should also be coordinated with the referee. Each block should be examined for proper position and ability to support the starting action of an athlete. If used, the location and operation of the recall rope should be reviewed and tested.

Equipment - The starter must become familiar with the type of equipment that will be used. If a pistol is to be used for either starting or for recall, the starter must be certain it is in working order, that there are enough shells to finish the meet, and that a backup starting pistol is available. The starter must check that the pistol is loaded prior to each heat and double check that there are enough shells in the pistol to recall the heat if there is a need.

When a horn start system is used, the starter should check the system at least one-half hour before the first race so that any needed repairs or modifications can be made. The system should be retested with the timers in place just before the start of the meet. Since horn start systems are electrically operated, it is important for the starter to know how to prevent common malfunctions and how to repair the simple problems that may occur. The starter should also test the functioning of the recall system verifying that the microphone works properly. The number of speakers and their placement and proper operation should be checked verifying that there is proper volume to be clearly audible to all starting positions. The strobe light for the starting signal should be located such that it is clearly visible to all swimmers and timers (including backstroke events).

Starting Procedures

At the commencement of each heat, the Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles to remove all clothing except for swimwear, followed by a long whistle indicating that they should take and maintain their positions on the starting platform. This procedure allows the athlete to take any position desired on the starting platform. In backstroke and medley relay events, at the referee's first long whistle the swimmers shall immediately enter the water and at the second long whistle return without undue delay to the starting position.

When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter's control.



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On the Starter's command "take your mark", the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position, in the forward start, with at least one foot at the front of the block, or, in backstroke and medley relay events, assume the backstroke starting position. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.

When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command "take your mark", the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command "Stand Up" upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.

Backstroke Starts-The backstroke requires different starting conditions, since the swimmers start the race in the water. The swimmers line up in the water facing the starting end with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips. The swimmer may not stand in or on the gutter nor curl the toes over the lip of the gutter prior to the start. It is the duty of the starter to ensure that these requirements are met prior to giving the starting signal.

False Starts

Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee or a designated Assistant Referee confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "Stand Up" command and may step off the blocks. The Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.

When it becomes apparent, because of uneven motion or delay of the swimmers in assuming their positions, that a fair start will be difficult to achieve, the starter should give the command "stand up" or for backstroke starts, "stand down". Upon hearing this command, the swimmers should stand up on the starting platform; backstrokers may relax. Any swimmer who enters the water or backstroker who leaves the starting area shall be charged with a false start, except that a swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relieved of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer's reaction to the command. This, however, does not relieve any swimmer from disqualification for deliberate delay if he intentionally enters the water.

If a false start is observed and the starting signal has been given, the race should be continued and not recalled. In this case, any swimmers charged with a false start will be notified of the disqualification upon completion of the race. If the recall signal is activated inadvertently, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start and the Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.

If the starter or referee observes a false start, each should write down the lane of the swimmer committing the false start so that conversation is needed to have dual confirmation of the infraction.

Philosophy

Starters are charged with a great amount of responsibility in seeing that one swimmer does not gain an advantage over the others during the start. This responsibility requires concentration, quick reactions and fair decisions. It takes practice to become a good starter. With experience, the



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starter will be able to accurately judge when the field is ready to race. This will help to prevent the false starts caused by the swimmers being jumpy or in a hurry because they aren't ready.

Starters should speak in a conversational tone, avoiding rapid instructions and sharp commands. The voice of a good starter will lead the swimmers into their starting positions, not break their concentration with unexpected orders or remarks. At the same time, the starter must protect all of the competitors by not allowing any one swimmer to gain an unfair advantage.



USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

1. In the girls 10 & under 50-yard breaststroke, the starter has just finished giving the command “take your mark” when the swimmer in lane 4 comes down and immediately falls in the water headfirst. The referee could not tell why the swimmer went into the water. However, the starter indicated he/she thought the swimmer had lost her balance when she came down for the start. What should occur and why?

Recommended Resolution: The starter should “Stand up” the remaining swimmers. It should be determined if the swimmer had any outside interference, which they responded to such as a flash camera or horn sound. If the referee agrees that the swimmer fell before becoming set and this was not a starting motion, the swimmer should be allowed to swim with the heat.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.2C, 101.1.2D, 102.13.1

2. At a long course Sectional, several National Team and Olympians are seeded into the championship final. Each swimmer will be competing in major international meets representing the USA later that summer. Just prior to the start and after the command is given to “Take your mark” the lane 4 swimmer twitches his right knee. Reacting to the movement, the lane #5 swimmer takes off. No starting signal has been given. What is the ruling?

Recommended Resolution: If it is determined that this swimmer started before the start signal and both the starter and referee confirm this, the offending swimmer in lane #5 should be disqualified. The referee should first, however, determine that there were no extenuating circumstances such as a flash from a camera, etc. If the starter and referee both saw the movement in lane #4 as well and felt that it was a starting action, the swimmer in lane #4 should also be disqualified.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.2C

3. During the 1000-yard freestyle the turn judge, having been given the jurisdiction to sound the warning signal, rings the bell over the leader in Lane #4 at 900 yards. The leader and the swimmer in second place, Lane #5, continue beyond 950 yards and complete the race. The coach of the swimmer in Lane #4 files a written protest stating that his swimmer visibly increased his pace to a sprint at the sound of the warning bell. Realizing that he was not done and having nothing left, he was only able to finish third instead of second, causing his team to lose the meet team championship. What decision should be made with regard to the protest?

Recommended Resolution: The protest should be disallowed. Although a warning signal is required, USA Swimming Rules and Regulations also state that it is the responsibility of the swimmer to complete the prescribed distance.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.4, 102.5.6E

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

4. A swimmer makes finals in the 100 backstroke at a preliminary/finals A/B meet where the penalty for failure to show in a preliminary seeded heat is being barred from individual and relay events for that day. At the start of his next event, the 100 butterfly, the coach asks the referee if his swimmer may be disqualified for delay of meet since he wants to save his energy for finals in the 100 backstroke. What should the referee do?

Recommended Resolution: The Starter may disqualify a swimmer who deliberately disobeys a starter's command to step on the block with the concurrence of the Referee. The Referee may now permit a "Declared False Start" in order to keep the meet going and not unnecessarily disrupt the start of a heat.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5A, 101.1.3D

5. A backstroke heat is started with one swimmer having curled his toes over the gutter prior to the start. The starter and deck referee did not notice although the meet referee and the turn judge did. The swimmer had stopped moving and was in a set position at the start, yet clearly gained an advantage. How should this be handled?

Recommended Resolution: As there was no movement at the start, no false start occurred. Since the toes were already above the water and the toes curled over the gutter at the time of the start, no stroke violation occurred. Since no call/warning was made prior to the start, no call may be made afterwards. This situation is an example where the expeditious recall of the heat could have corrected the advantage gained by the swimmer in question over the rest of the field.

Applicable Rules: 101.4.1, 101.4.2, 101.1.3, 101.1.2C

6. A swimmer in the backstroke stands on the edge of the pool with his back to the pool and his heels in the water. The starter starts the race and the swimmer dives backward from the edge of the pool and wins the race. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No. The race should never have been started. The backstroke rule prohibits standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start. This swimmer clearly had his toes above the lip of the gutter. The correct starting position for a swimmer is the responsibility of the Starter. If, prior to the start of a race a swimmer assumes an illegal starting position that is not corrected by the Starter and the race commences, the swimmer should not be disqualified.

Applicable Rules: 101.4.1

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

7. The backstroker in the lane closest to the starter moved his feet up over the gutter just before the starter said, "Take your mark". The starter did not see the toes in an illegal position and did not hear the referee trying to tell him to issue the "Stand Up" command. When the heat was started, the swimmer had stopped moving and was in a set position. No warning had been given to this heat about toes. The meet referee also observed the situation. The deck referee did not blow his whistle to recall the heat and turned to the meet referee asking what should be done. The meet was operating under the whistle start and no recall protocols. What should have been done in this situation?

Recommended Resolution: The position of the feet for the backstroke start is the responsibility of the starter. The heat should not be started if any swimmer is not in the correct starting position. Since the race was started and allowed to continue, there is no disqualification. Also, the stroke rule for the backstroke would not apply as the feet were in an improper position prior to the start and were not moved there after the start.

Applicable Rules: 101.4.1, 101.4.2, 101.1.2C

8. The multi-whistle command is given and then the one long whistle for the 200M fly. The referee turns over the pool to the starter by raising her/his arm in the designated manner. John, age 12, in Lane 3 is not up on the block and before the starter gives the "take your mark" command, jumps up on the block. Is John disqualified for delay of meet rule? If the starter believes that it has not distracted the field, does he/she still ask the swimmers to step down or does the starter start the race?

Recommended Resolution: This is a situation that occurs at many meets and the decision can vary depending on the type of meet, the crowd conditions around the blocks, etc. The decision to allow the heat to go or to step the swimmers down is the referee's. The starter should probably step the heat down and the referee should investigate the situation. This occurrence should be discussed prior to the start of the session so that the starter knows how the referee wishes to have it handled.

In the situation described, if the meet is running a very tight timeline with a lot of activity and crowds behind the blocks, the referee could permit John to swim as he may have just gotten caught in the crowd. If this is the championship final of a prelims and finals meet and the referee was patient in waiting to raise his/her arm to indicate that the heat was closed, then a delay of meet DQ would be in order. As stated earlier, a lot depends on the circumstances surrounding the meet and all details need to be taken into account in making a fair decision.

Applicable Rules: 102.13.1, 102.13.4, 101.1.5B

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

9. In a heat of the 50-yard freestyle, the swimmers in all lanes take a set position following the "take your mark" command. At the start, the swimmer in lane 4 leaves her mark early. The starter recalls the heat and upon returning to the start end, the swimmers are signaled to step up by the deck referee sounding a long whistle. The coach of the swimmer in lane 5 immediately protests verbally, claiming that the false start was clear to everyone and that the starter recalled the heat intentionally. Should the swimmer in lane 4 be allowed to swim?

Recommended Resolution: While a race can be recalled for an "unfair" start, by rule it is not recalled for a false start. Therefore, even though the starter recalled the race in reaction to the false start, it is still inadvertent in that the recall should not have taken place. As the rule states that "if the recall signal is activated inadvertently, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start...." The swimmer is not charged with a false start and is allowed to swim.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3C

10. Robert is seeded in lane 2, heat 7 of event 24. The lane timer tells him to step up when the referee's whistle blows for heat 6. The deck referee and starter do not realize the incorrect swimmer is on the block and they start the race. Should Robert be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. It is the Head Lane Timer who shall determine whether the swimmer or relay team is present and in the correct lane, heat, and event, and the relay swimmers are swimming in the order listed. However, it is important that the time achieved be credited to the correct swimmer.

Applicable Rules: 102.16.3. B (1)

11. On the second day of a three-day prelim/finals meet, the start time of the morning session is moved from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. Unaware of the change, a 13-year-old swimmer coming from out-of-town misses the 100 breaststroke. The referee allows the swimmer to fill an empty lane in the 15 & over event. The time the 13-year-old achieves while swimming in the wrong age group would place her in the championship heat of the 13-14 age group. The swimmer is placed in the championship final, displacing swimmers who thought they were in finals or consolation finals. The late swimmer ends up placing in the top three. Was the situation rectified properly?

Recommended Resolution: As the missed swim was not the swimmer's fault the decision to let the swimmer into a subsequent heat was proper. The real lesson is to make sure that you do not change the schedule unless all affected clubs and swimmers can be notified in advance.

Applicable Rules: 102.8.2, 102.8.3

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

12. The starter and deck referee are both counting the number of lengths swum in the 1650 freestyle and they believe that the swimmer in lane 2 has swum two fewer lengths that her counter is showing. What should be done?

Recommended Resolution: The deck referee should take action to be sure of the lap count for each swimmer. This can include checking with the console operator to see what the timing console shows, checking with timers, other officials and even coaches, if necessary. This is a good reason for the deck referee and the starter to avoid “shooting the breeze” during the 1650 or any other event for that matter. If the referee and starter are sure they are correct, the referee could check with the swimmer’s coach (presuming enough time is left in the race) and advise him that the counter for his swimmer may have the incorrect count. The referee could also advise the coach that the swimmer is responsible to swim the correct distance even if the counter or an official makes an error.

Applicable Rules: 102.5.6

13. At a local championship meet, Coach Smith noticed that many swimmers during the breaststroke were dropping their shoulders after the final arm pull and prior to the touch. Coach Smith taught his swimmers to keep their shoulders level with the water until the touch was made. He went to the Deck Referee to protest the lack of action from the stroke and turn officials. What should the Deck Referee tell Coach Smith?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee could explain to the coach that the officials understand the rules of the breaststroke and that the rules don’t address the position of the shoulders during the swim or the finish and then refer him to the appropriate section of the rulebook.

Applicable Rules: 101.2.2, 101.2.4

14. As the deck referee, you hear a second beep from the electronic starting system. You observe half the field stop swimming and look around before continuing their race. What should be done?

Recommended Resolution: The referee should instruct the starter to recall the heat either by blowing his whistle or by verbal command. This is one of the situations where having the microphone in a ready position and the microphone key depressed is beneficial as it would allow the starter to readily signal a recall.

Applicable Rules: 102.13.1, 102.13.4

15. As the deck referee, you observe the starter has not waited until all swimmers have become stationary before sending the heat. What should the deck referee do? Recommended Resolution: The appropriate course of action will depend on the level of the meet. For young, novice swimmers, what you see may be as good as its going to get. For a meet with older, more experienced swimmers, the deck referee could ask the starter to recall the heat and explain to the starter why he or she was asked to do so. The deck referee could also speak to the starter about making sure to wait until all swimmers are stationary. If the problems continue and another starter is available, the starter could be replaced.

Applicable Rules: 102.13.1, 102.13.4, 101.1.2C

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

16. In the bonus final, the deck referee blows the long whistle and all swimmers step onto their blocks. After the deck referee turns the heat over to the starter, the starter instructs the field to “take your mark.” The starter’s voice waivers and is somewhat low but all swimmers appear to have taken their marks. At the start, lane 7 stands up on the blocks and lane 8 starts late. What should be done?

Recommended Resolution: This could be viewed as an unfair start and the heat could be recalled. If the referee or starter heard or saw something that could have caused the problem, then a recall would be in order. If the heat does not get recalled, the deck referee should investigate what happened and determine if any other swimmers in that heat were affected. Those affected by the situation can be offered a re-swim. The times from those with the re-swim would count instead of their first swim. Both heats would be combined to determine the finish order for the bonus final.

Applicable Rules: 102.10.9

17. After the start of the last heat of the women’s 400-meter freestyle, the starter sounds the recall. However, none of the swimmers respond and since there is no recall rope, they all continue swimming. Half of the swimmers are stopped at the 50-meter turn while the other half get to the 100-meter turn before stopping. What should the deck referee do?

Recommended Resolution: The heat needs to be re-swum but the swimmers will need some time to recover. The swimmers and/or their coaches should be asked how much time they will need to recover and be ready to swim. As the men’s 400-meter freestyle is the next event, the referee should start that event and then re-swim the women’s heat after one or more of the men’s heats have been swum. Also, if a time line has been published, verify that all swimmers seeded into the first heat of the men’s 400-meter freestyle are present before starting the event.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3C, 102.13.1, 102.13.4

18. A swimmer in a 200-yard freestyle relay swims 15 yards, loses his goggles and then swims back to the start end. The relay continues without anyone noticing the infraction except the turn judge at the turn end who does not raise his hand as the swimmer was not in his jurisdiction. A couple heats later, the embarrassed coach approaches the referee, explains what happened and asks the referee to disqualify the relay. What should the referee do?

Recommended Resolution: The referee cannot disqualify the team because no hand was raised at the time of the infraction. However, the referee or chief judge needs to have a discussion with the turn judges regarding freestyle jurisdiction, making the call when the swimmer does not touch the wall and being generally more observant. The turn judge at the turn end should have raised his hand when the swimmer turned and started swimming back to the start end.

Applicable Rules: 102.10.15F

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

19. During the course of a session a starter has, in several heats, issued the stand command and “saved” the swimmer or swimmers from a false start. In a subsequent heat, the starting signal was given and the swimmer in lane 2 started early and was disqualified for a false start at the end of the race. The swimmer’s coach came to the referee and asked why the starter hadn’t “saved” his swimmer. What should the referee do?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer was disqualified after the starting signal by the referee and starter for starting prior to the starting signal when they independently declared the false start after the starting signal was given which is the correct protocol. The stand command is a judgment call by the starter. When all the swimmers are stationary the starter shall give the starting signal.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.2D, 101.1.3B

20. In a heat of the mens 400-meter individual medley, all eight swimmers step up on the blocks in response to the referee’s long whistle. The referee turns the field over to the starter and subsequently the starter asks the swimmers to “take your mark.” At that point, the referee notices that the swimmer in lane 7 has stepped off the block to remove his drag suit. The referee attempts to take back control of the heat but the starter starts the race as the swimmer in lane 7 is starting to get back on the block. What should be done?

Recommended Resolution: If both the starter and the referee agree, the swimmer could be charged with delay of the meet and disqualified. Alternatively, the starter could have immediately recalled the heat. After the heat is run, the swimmer who caused the incident should be spoken to about his actions to try to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5A

21. In a 200-meter backstroke event, the referee blows the first long whistle. The swimmer in lane 3 leaps as far as he can into the pool and slowly sinks to the bottom of the pool. He slowly rises to the surface moving farther away from the start end after which the referee blows the second long whistle. While the other seven swimmers assume a position at the wall, the lane 3 swimmer very slowly swims to the wall and very slowly assumes a starting position. The starter asks that the swimmer in lane 3 be disqualified for delay of the meet. The referee concurs and the swimmer is disqualified. Is this a correct call?

Recommended Resolution: This is a call that requires good judgment from the referee. Did the swimmer delay so much that he was creating a problem for the other swimmers? Swimmers have different ways to prepare to race and you don’t want to interfere with that unless it negatively affects other competitors. An alternative to a DQ might be to discuss the situation after the race with the swimmer and/or the coach. This is especially useful for the first occurrence of this type of activity. Is the call correct? It might be but this is a situation that can only be decided on site.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5A, 101.1.2A

USA Swimming Situation Resolutions – Starter/Deck Referee

The following situations have been reviewed by the USA Swimming Officials and Rules Committee

22. At an LSC championship meet with over-the-top starts and a very tight timeline, the swimmer in lane 4 of the next to last heat of the 200-meter butterfly is called for an alternating kick prior to the head breaking the surface of the water. At the end of the heat, the swimmer is advised of the DQ but she says that a swimmer from the previous heat was making faces at her and caused her to start giggling and then swallowed water after the start. Should the coach's request for a re-swim due to interference be granted?

Recommended Resolution: Unless the actions of the swimmer in the water were very flagrant and deliberate, the actions of the swimmer in the water at the start should probably not be considered unsportsmanlike conduct. However, the referee might seek out the swimmer or her coach and explain that there are safety and fairness concerns with swimmers affecting the starts of other swimmers.

Applicable Rules: 102.10.3, 102.10.9

23. In a 200-yard freestyle event, a swimmer asks the referee if he can swim the backstroke. The referee replies that he can but that the time can only be used as a freestyle time. At the referee's long whistle the swimmer enters the water to do a backstroke start. The referee signals to the starter that the field is his and the starter starts the race. Was this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No. In the freestyle events the forward start must be used. However, as the starter and referee allowed the swimmer to start in the water, the swimmer cannot be disqualified for starting in the water.

Applicable Rules: 101.5.1

24. In the final preliminary heat of the 400-meter individual medley, the swimmers assume a stationary position at the start. The starter starts the race. The swimmer in lane 2 slips on the block pushing off and "flops" into the pool a body length behind the field. Should the starter have recalled the race?

Recommended Resolution: This is a judgment call that needs to be made on site. There could have been a problem with the block or with something next to it that contributed to the situation. As the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer, the starter should recall the heat and then the referee should check on what happened in order to preclude further problems. All swimmers will be allowed to swim the heat.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3C

The following situations and resolutions have been outlined by the USA Swimming Officials Committee and the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee to demonstrate examples of various situations that Starters and Deck Referees may encounter during the starting sequence to be used for officials' education and training. While this resource has been designed to be representative of the many situations that a Starter or Deck Referee may come across, it is not intended to be exhaustive. The core principle of officiating—that the benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer—as well as the use of common sense and good judgment—should always be followed.

1. In the 200 yard breaststroke, the Referee asks the Starter to recall the heat, on the basis of an unfair start. The Starter is inexperienced and unfamiliar with the starting system, and is unable to recall the heat. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee may also attempt to use her whistle and/or a recall rope, if present, to recall the heat. In the event that the swimmers do not stop, the Referee may offer all of the swimmers in the heat the opportunity to re-swim the race. For the swimmers that choose to re-swim, only the times of their re-swims will count.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.1, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1, 103.19

2. At an age group meet, the electronic starting system malfunctions and cannot be immediately fixed. How should the meet proceed?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, "A loudspeaker start system conforming to 103.18, with or without an underwater recall device, and an electronic strobe signal visible to all manual timers for forward and backstroke starts, shall be the preferred starting device." While this is the preferred starting device, it is not the only acceptable starting device. The Referee may consider allowing the Starter to use a whistle to sound the starting signal, ideally in conjunction with the use of another loudspeaker device to give the verbal commands. The coaches should be consulted before these changes are implemented.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.1, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 103.18

3. In the 200 yard backstroke, the swimmers enter the water upon the Referee's first long whistle, returning to the wall on the second long whistle. When the swimmer in lane 7 returns to the wall, she places her feet on the wall as required by the rules, and places her hands on the starting grips on top of the block, which are intended to be used for the forward start. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, "Handgrips for the forward start may be installed on the sides of the starting platforms." As the rule clearly states that these handgrips are for the forward start, they may not be used for the backstroke start. The Starter should ask that the swimmer assume a legal starting position and should not allow the race to proceed until the swimmer assumes a legal starting position. In the event that the swimmer refuses to comply, the Starter may recommend to the Referee that the swimmer be disqualified for willful disobedience of the command.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2A, 101.1.2E, 101.1.5A, 101.4.1, 103.14.3

4. At the start of the 50 yard freestyle, the Referee blows the long whistle, indicating for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. A swimmer is standing behind the block in lane 7, but does not step up. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: First, the Referee should ask the Starter to give a command for lane 7 to "step up." If the swimmer responds to the command by stepping up onto the block, the heat should proceed normally. If the swimmer does not respond to the command by stepping up onto the block, the Referee should investigate the situation—it is possible that the swimmer may not understand the command. If no extenuating circumstances are found and the swimmer is simply refusing to comply, a disqualification for delay of meet, or a penalty for failure to compete (no-show), may be in order.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2A, 101.1.5A, 101.1.5B

5. During the 200 yard breaststroke, the swimmer in lane 8 does not immediately step up onto the block upon the Referee's long whistle. The Referee outstretches his arm to the Starter, at which point, the swimmer in lane 8 steps up onto the block. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: This is a situation where the circumstances of the individual swimmer and meet, as well as “level-appropriate decision-making” must be applied. If the Referee considers the delay to not be excessive and/or a disruption to the other swimmers, he may allow the heat to proceed normally. In the event that the Referee considers the delay to be excessive, he should ask the Starter to step down the heat, and then investigate the situation. If the Referee finds that the delay was outside of the control of the swimmer and that other circumstances were involved, he should allow the swimmer to swim. If he finds the delay to be in the control of the swimmer, a disqualification for delay of meet may be in order. The Referee must remember that the swimmer should always receive the benefit of the doubt. The fact that the Referee had outstretched his arm to the Starter has no bearing on the situation; the Referee may always rescind his arm and take back control of the heat if necessary.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2A, 101.1.5A, 101.1.5B

6. In the 100 yard freestyle, the Referee blows the long whistle, and the swimmer in lane 3 steps up onto the block with one foot towards the back of the block and his other foot a few inches away from the front of the block. Is this an acceptable starting position? If not, how should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: This is not an acceptable starting position. The rule states, “On the Starter’s command ‘Take your mark,’ the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position, in the forward start, with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform or the deck.” If, once the “Take your mark,” command is given, the swimmer still does not have one foot at the front of the block, the Starter should stand the heat and ask the swimmer to assume a legal starting position.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.2D

7. In the 50 yard breaststroke, the Starter has just finished giving the command, “Take your mark,” when the swimmer in lane 4 comes down and immediately falls into the water, head-first. The Referee could not determine why the swimmer went into the water. However, the Starter indicated that she thought the swimmer had lost her balance as she was assuming her starting position, having never assumed a stationary position. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Starter should stand the heat. As the Starter determined that the swimmer had never assumed a stationary position, the swimmer falling into the water is not considered to be a starting motion. Therefore, the Starter should not record the observation of a false start, and the swimmer should return to the block and be allowed to swim with the heat.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.2D, 101.1.3A

8. During the course of a session, a Starter has, in several heats, given the stand command, “saving” multiple swimmers from a false start. In a subsequent heat, a swimmer leaves his stationary position prior to the starting signal, but the starting signal is given, and the swimmer is disqualified for a false start upon completion of the race. The coach of the disqualified swimmer approaches the Referee, and asks why the Starter did not “save” his swimmer. What should the Referee do?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should explain to the coach that the swimmer was disqualified for starting prior to the starting signal, as observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee. Issuing the stand command is a judgment call made by the Starter. The rule states, “When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.”

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.2D, 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

9. During an age group session, the Starter is relatively inexperienced. He uses the “Stand, please,” command nearly every heat, commenting to the Referee, “They’re just not coming down together.” How should the Referee respond?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should suggest that the Starter be more patient before giving the “Take your mark,” command, providing the swimmers with a few more moments to settle on the blocks. If the swimmers have a few more moments to settle once stepping up onto the blocks, they will likely respond better to the “Take your mark,” command. Additionally, the Referee should suggest that the Starter exercise a bit more patience after giving the “Take your mark,” command, prior to resorting to standing the heat, as the swimmers might just need another moment or two to become stationary.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.2D, 102.12.1

10. In the 50 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. The swimmer in lane 1 establishes a stationary position, jolts forward, and then re-establishes a stationary position, prior to the starting signal. Should the swimmer be disqualified for a false start?

Recommended Resolution: No, the swimmer should not be disqualified for a false start. The swimmer was stationary when the starting signal was given, and, therefore, the swimmer did not start before the starting signal, and should not be charged with a false start.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

11. At a long course sectional meet, several members of the National Team are seeded into the championship final of the 100 yard breaststroke. The swimmers will be competing in major international meets, where they will be representing the USA later that summer. Just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your mark,” command is given, the swimmer in lane 4 twitches his right knee, *but does not leave his stationary starting position*. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 5 dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: If possible, the Starter should stand the heat. If it is observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee that the swimmer in lane 5 started before the starting signal, the swimmer lane 5 should be disqualified for a false start. If the Starter is able to stand the heat, this swimmer should be removed from the heat; if not, the race shall continue without recall. As the swimmer in lane 4 did not leave his stationary starting position, the knee twitch is not considered to be a starting motion, and the swimmer should not be disqualified. The fact that that the false start in lane 5 may have been in reaction to the movement of the swimmer in lane 4 has no bearing on the disqualification.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

12. At a long course sectional meet, several members of the National Team are seeded into the championship final of the 100 yard butterfly. The swimmers will be competing in major international meets, where they will be representing the USA later that summer. Just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your mark,” command is given, the swimmer in lane 6 twitches his right knee, *leaving his stationary starting position* and diving into the pool. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 7 leaves his stationary starting position and dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: If possible, the Starter should stand the heat. If it is observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee that both swimmers started before the starting signal, both swimmers should be disqualified for false starts. If the Starter is able to stand the heat, the swimmers should be removed from the heat; if not, the race shall continue without recall. The fact that the false start in lane 7 may have been in reaction to the false start in lane 6 has no bearing on the disqualification.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

13. The Starter for the 100 yard butterfly events is relatively inexperienced, and is “holding” the swimmers after the “Take your mark,” command for an extended period of time. The swimmer in heat 2, lane 4 starts before the starting signal. How should the Referee handle the situation? How should the Referee handle the situation if these same events occur over the course of several heats?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee must keep in mind that the other swimmers in the heat did not start before the starting signal. That being said, if the Referee determines that the start was “held” so long that it was unfair, she may ask the Starter to recall the heat; in this case, the swimmer in lane 4 would not be charged with a false start. In the event that this occurs over the course of several heats, the Referee should speak to the Starter in a constructive way, suggesting that he give the starting signal as soon as all of the swimmers are stationary, working with the Starter to help him learn and improve. If this is a higher-level meet and/or if the starts do not improve after this mentoring, it would be appropriate for the Referee to replace the Starter, if another Starter is available.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

14. At a local meet, the Starter does not use an inviting voice when giving the “Take your mark,” command. Instead, he yells the command in a harsh-sounding voice. How should the Referee handle the situation?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should remind the Starter that the “Take your mark,” command is an invitation to swim, and should be delivered in a calm, inviting voice. She should work with the Starter in a supportive and mentoring way, helping him work to improve his voice.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

15. During the session at a local senior meet, the Starter uses an odd cadence when giving the “Take your mark,” command, delivering the words in a short, choppy, fashion, with extended pauses between each word, “Take....your....mark.” It is clear to the Referee that the swimmers are not responding well to his commands. How should the Referee handle the situation?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should remind the Starter that the “Take your mark,” command is an invitation to swim and should be delivered accordingly, in a smooth manner, with a slight dropping in tone. The Referee should work with the Starter in a constructive and mentoring way to help him improve.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

16. A coach complains to the Referee that the Starter is “holding the swimmers too long” and asks that she be replaced. The Referee has been closely monitoring the starts, and considers the starts to be patient and fair. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should explain to the coach that the Starter is being patient for the swimmers to assume a stationary position and that the swimmers have been receiving fair starts. The Referee cannot reassign the Starter simply because a coach not is pleased with her performance.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

17. The Referee observes, over the course of several heats, that the Starter is not waiting for all swimmers to become stationary before giving the starting signal. What should the Referee do?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should, in a respectful, educational, and encouraging way, remind the Starter of the importance of patience during the starting sequence. More specific feedback can and should be given based on the actual situation. If the Referee determines a start to be unfair, he may ask the Starter to recall the heat. If it is a high-level meet and/or if the issues continue, the Starter could be replaced, if another Starter is available.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

18. During an age group session, the Starter is relatively inexperienced. The Referee notices that during every heat, after giving the “Take your mark,” command, the Starter waits for almost exactly two seconds prior to giving the starting signal, regardless of whether or not the swimmers are stationary—or if they were already stationary, “waiting” for the signal. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, “When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.” The Referee should remind the Starter that he should be observing the swimmers and watching for them to become stationary before giving the starting signal, and should not be focused on using a fixed timing pattern. The Referee should mentor the Starter, working with him to help him to improve his observation and patience.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.12.1

19. During the preliminaries of a senior meet, the Referee observes that, after giving the “Take your mark,” command, the Starter waits for every swimmer to become stationary at the front of the block prior to giving the starting signal. She observes, however, that many swimmers are still moving backwards and are not yet completely stationary when the starting signal is being given. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, “When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.” The Referee should remind the Starter that she should be observing the entire bodies of the swimmers when determining if they are stationary, as, just because a swimmer may be stationary at the front of the block, he or she may not be entirely stationary and ready to start. The Referee should mentor the Starter, working with her to help her to improve her observation and patience.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.12.1

20. At a novice meet, many young swimmers are competing for the first time. When the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, many of the swimmers are wobbly. The Starter is concerned that the swimmers are not becoming “stationary.” How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, “When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.” Stationary does not mean motionless. Young swimmers may be wobbly at the start, and whether or not they are stationary is a judgment call made by the Starter. The Starter should certainly exercise great patience when starting these novice swimmers, but, once the Starter judges that the swimmers have become as stationary as they are going to become, given the level of meet, he should give the starting signal.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 102.12.1

21. During the 100 yard backstroke, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. The swimmer in lane 4 does not promptly respond to the command, so the Starter gives the “Relax, please,” command. Is this correct procedure?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct procedure. The “Relax, please,” command should only be used at the discretion of the Referee, to notify swimmers that there will be a prolonged period before the starting sequence will begin. It is not an acceptable substitute for the “Stand, please,” command.

Applicable Rule: 101.1.2D

22. In the 200 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers become stationary. The swimmer in lane 7 leaves her stationary position prior to the starting signal. Upon realizing the early starting motion, the swimmer attempts to stop this motion, trying to remain on the block. The Starter gives the “Stand, please,” command, and the swimmer in lane 7 remains on the block and stands up. Is this a false start?

Recommend Resolution: No, this is not a false start. The swimmer successfully responded to the “Stand, please,” command and remained on the block with the other swimmers in the heat.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2D, 101.1.3A

23. In the 100 yard butterfly, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers become stationary. The swimmer in lane 1 leaves his stationary position prior to the starting signal. Upon realizing the early starting motion, the swimmer attempts to stop this motion, trying to remain on the block. The Starter gives the “Stand, please,” command, and the swimmer in lane 1 falls into the pool. Is this a false start?

Recommend Resolution: Yes, this is a false start. The rule states, “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred.” The rule also states, “When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command, ‘Take your mark,’ the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command ‘Stand up,’ upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.” When this command is given, the swimmers may either stand up or step off the blocks; the swimmer in lane 1 did neither—he fell into the pool. Pending that the Referee independently observed and confirmed the Starter’s observation of a false start, the swimmer in lane 1 should be disqualified and removed from the heat.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2D, 101.1.3A

24. In a heat of the 100 yard breaststroke, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. As several of the swimmers seem “wobbly” and struggle to promptly assume a stationary position, the Starter stands the heat. The swimmer in lane 4 has assumed a stationary position, and remains set in this stationary position as the other swimmers stand up. The Starter recommends to the Referee that the swimmer in lane 4 be disqualified for failing to obey the “Stand, please,” command. How should the Referee handle the situation?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. The rule states, “When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command ‘Take your mark,’ the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command ‘Stand up,’ upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.” The swimmers *may* stand up when the “Stand, please,” command is given; they are not required to stand up. The swimmer in lane 4 should not be disqualified.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2D, 101.1.5A

25. Excitement is in the air during the finals of the 200 yard butterfly. It is a big race for all of the swimmers involved and the crowd is very excited. The Referee blows the long whistle, signaling for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. The swimmers step up onto the blocks, and the Referee outstretches his arm to the Starter, turning the field over to the control of the Starter. The Starter waits several seconds for the crowd to quiet, and, once it becomes quiet, gives the “Take your mark,” command. The crowd once again erupts in noise. How should the Starter proceed?

Recommended Resolution: As soon as the noise begins again, the Starter should stand the heat. She should wait for the venue to become quiet again before giving the “Take your mark,” command. If the issue persists, the Referee should ask the Starter to step down the heat, and the Referee should ask that an announcement be made regarding maintaining a quiet environment during the start.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2D, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

26. During an age group session, the Starter is relatively inexperienced. Whenever he stands a heat, he delivers the “Stand, please,” command in a harsh and abrupt manner. As a result, multiple swimmers have fallen into the water in response to the “Stand, please,” command. How should the Referee handle the situation?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should, in a respectful, educational, and encouraging way, suggest that the Starter use a quiet, calm, and inviting voice when giving the “Stand, please,” command, working with the Starter to help him improve. By delivering the command in this manner, the swimmers will not be as alarmed by the command, and will be more likely to respond to the command by standing up or by stepping off the blocks, as opposed to falling into the water.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2D, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

27. A backstroke heat is started with one swimmer having curled his toes over the gutter prior to the start, but the Starter and Referee did not notice. Although the Turn Judge did notice, he was not able to notify the Starter or Referee prior to the start of the heat. The swimmer was in a stationary position at the start, although he clearly gained an advantage. How should this be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The race should continue, and the swimmer should not be disqualified. The rule states, “A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.”

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2E, 101.4.1

28. At the start of the 100 yard backstroke, the swimmer in lane 2 stands on the gutter with his back to the pool and his heels in the water. The Starter starts the race, and the swimmer dives backward from the gutter, proceeding to win the race. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct. The race should never have been started. The backstroke rules state, “Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited.” However, the rules also state, “A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.” Since the Starter allowed the race to continue, despite the swimmer’s illegal starting position, the swimmer cannot be disqualified.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2E, 101.4.1

29. At a championship meet, backstroke ledges are being used during the backstroke events. The Referee determines that the Turn Judge for each lane that is positioned at the start end of the pool will observe the placement of the toes of the swimmer in his/her lane to ensure that they are in a legal starting position, and will signal to the Starter once a legal starting position has been achieved. A coach complains to the Referee, claiming that the “enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.” Is the coach correct?

Recommended Resolution: The rule states, “Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.” That being said, nothing in the rules prohibits other officials from aiding the Starter in determining that a correct starting position has been achieved. This is a decision that is made at the discretion of the Referee.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2E, 101.4.1, 102.11.1, 102.11.5

30. In the 200 yard freestyle, a swimmer asks the Referee if he can swim the backstroke. The Referee replies that he can but that the time can only be used as a freestyle time. At the Referee's long whistle, the swimmer enters the water to do a backstroke start. The Referee outstretches his hand to the Starter and the Starter starts the race. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct. The freestyle rules state, "The forward start shall be used." Thus, the swimmer started from an illegal starting position. However, the rules also state, "A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter." The Starter should have asked the swimmer to assume a legal starting position prior to giving the "Take your mark," command.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.2E, 101.5.1, 102.24.1A(2)

31. At an age group meet, the swimmer in lane 3 starts before the starting signal during the 50 yard butterfly. The Starter stands the heat, and approaches the Referee with the observation of a false start in lane 3. The Referee has independently observed and confirmed the observation, but chooses to not remove the swimmer from the heat, as he does not want to "humiliate" the swimmer. Instead, he allows the swimmer to swim with the heat, and disqualifies the swimmer at the end of the race. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct. The rule states, "Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the 'Stand up,' command and may step off the blocks." The swimmer should be disqualified and not permitted to swim with the heat. While the Referee may feel that he is doing no harm by allowing the swimmer to swim with the heat, he could actually be doing a disservice to the swimmer, as the swimmer is utilizing energy to swim a race that will not count.

Applicable Rule: 101.1.3A

32. At the start of the 200 yard breaststroke, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. The swimmer in lane 2 shoots forward and starts before the starting signal, but the motion is very subtle. The Starter records the observation of the false start and reports it to the Referee. The Referee did not record an observation. The Starter and Referee talk casually about what the Starter observed, and the Referee responds, “Okay, that’s fair. I’ll call it.” The swimmer is disqualified upon completion of the race. Is this proper protocol?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not proper protocol. The rule states, “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred.” Since the Referee has discussed the potential violation with the Starter prior to recording an observation, any observation that he makes is no longer independent, meaning that the swimmer should not be disqualified for a false start.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

33. During the finals of the 50 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. The swimmer in lane 4 clearly starts well before the starting signal. The race continues without recall. After the start, the Starter approaches the Referee with the observation of a false start in lane 4. The Referee had recorded the observation of a false start in lane 5. Seeing that the observations did not match, the Referee quietly whispers to the Starter, “Darn! I wasn’t sure which lane it was, but it was so obvious!” and quickly changes his recorded observation to lane 4. Is this correct protocol?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct protocol. The rule states, “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred.” The Referee cannot “change his observation” after conferring with the Starter, as it would make his observation no longer independent. Regardless of how obvious the false start may have been, this is a situation where the swimmer receives the benefit of the doubt.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

34. In the 100 yard breaststroke, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers become stationary. The swimmer in lane 6 leaves her stationary position prior to the starting signal. Upon realizing the early starting motion, the swimmer attempts to stop this motion, trying to remain on the block. The swimmer fails to halt this motion, and the starting signal is given. Is this a false start?

Recommend Resolution: Yes, this is a false start. The rule states, “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred.” Assuming that the false start was observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee, the swimmer should be disqualified upon completion of the race.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

35. In the 50 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers become stationary. The swimmer in lane 2 leaves his stationary position prior to the starting signal. Is this a false start?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, this is a false start. The rule states, “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred.”

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B

36. In the 200 yard individual medley, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers assume their stationary starting positions. The swimmer in lane 4 starts before the starting signal, but the starting signal is given, and the race continues without recall. After the start, the Starter approaches the Referee with an observation of a false start in lane 4, which the Referee also independently observed and confirmed. At the conclusion of the race, when the swimmer is notified that his swim has been disqualified for a false start, he claims that he had heard somebody shout “Go!” which caused him to start before the starting signal. The Referee did not hear this himself. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should investigate the situation, consulting the Starter, and possibly other officials at the start end of the pool, to determine whether or not somebody did, in fact, yell “Go!” during the start. If the Referee is able to confirm that this did, in fact, happen, he may allow the swimmer to have the opportunity to re-swim the race. If the Referee cannot confirm that somebody did, in fact, yell “Go!” at the start of the race, the disqualification should be upheld, as the Referee cannot overturn the disqualification simply because the swimmer claims to have heard someone shout at the start, as it would set a precedent that could not be sustainably continued.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B, 102.11.1, 102.11.5

37. At an LSC championship, during the finals of the 200 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmer in lane 4 starts well before the starting signal. The race continues without recall. After the start, the Starter approaches the Referee, with the observation of a false start in lane 5. The Referee has also independently observed and confirmed the Starter’s observation of a false start in lane 5. At the end of the race, the swimmer in lane 5 is notified of the disqualification. He claims that he did not false start. His coach—as well as several other coaches in the venue—claim that the false start was called on the wrong lane. A parent even has video to prove that the Starter and Referee were incorrect! How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should investigate the situation. If the available evidence makes it clear that the false start was called on the wrong lane, the Referee may withdraw his observation of the false start. The swimmer in lane 4 should not be charged with the false start, as a false start in lane 4 was not observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee. In any case, the Referee should not view or consider the video offered by the parent, as the rule states, “Video replay footage from cameras approved in writing in advance of the competition by the Program Operations Vice Chair may be used to review stroke or turn infractions called on deck.” A video provided by a parent does not meet any of these requirements.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.22.14

38. During the finals of the 100 yard backstroke, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. The swimmer in lane 1 clearly starts well before the starting signal. The race continues without recall. The Starter does not approach the Referee with any observation of a false start, but the Referee raises his hand to disqualify the swimmer in lane 1 for a false start, knowing that the Referee “has the authority to disqualify a swimmer(s) for any violation of the rules that the Referee personally observes.” Is this correct protocol?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct protocol. The rule states, “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred.” The rule is very clear that it takes both the Starter and the Referee to disqualify a swimmer for a false start.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B, 102.11.2

39. The Starter for an age group session is relatively inexperienced. The Referee and the Starter are standing on the lane 1 side of the pool, and the Referee observes, throughout the session, that the Starter fails to observe false starts occurring in lanes 1 and 2. How should the Referee handle the situation?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should suggest that the Starter try standing in a different position, one that will allow her to better observe all 8 lanes simultaneously. This will better allow her to achieve fair starts. As false starts must be observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee, none of the swimmers, in these cases where the Starter has failed to observe the false starts, should be disqualified.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B, 102.12.1

40. In the 400 yard individual medley, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers assume their stationary starting positions. The swimmer in lane 2 starts before the starting signal, and the Starter stands the heat. The Starter approaches the Referee with an observation of a false start in lane 2, which the Referee also independently observed and confirmed. When the Referee removes the swimmer in lane 2 from the heat, the swimmer informs the Referee that he saw a flash, which caused him to start before the starting signal. The Referee did not observe a flash himself. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should quickly investigate the situation, first consulting the Starter to see if he had observed a flash. If this takes more than a moment or two, the Referee should ask the Starter to step down the heat and ask the field to relax, so as to not disrupt their competitive environment. If, given the information available, the Referee determines that there was, in fact, a flash, she should allow the swimmer to swim with the heat. If she cannot confirm that there was, in fact, a flash, the swimmer should be disqualified for a false start and removed from the heat. The Referee cannot overturn the disqualification simply because the swimmer claims to have seen a flash, as it would set a precedent that could not be sustainably continued.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3A, 102.11.1, 102.11.5

41. In the 50 yard freestyle, the swimmers in all lanes become stationary following the "Take your mark," command. The swimmer in lane 4 starts before the starting signal. The Starter recalls the heat, and upon returning to the start end, the Referee blows the long whistle, signaling for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. The coach of one of the other swimmers in the heat approaches the Referee, claiming that the false start in lane 4 was clear to everyone and that the Starter recalled the heat intentionally. Should the swimmer in lane 4 be allowed to swim?

Recommended Resolution: While a race can be recalled for an unfair start, by rule it is not recalled for a false start, as the rules direct, in the event of a false start, "If the starting signal has been given before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue without recall." Therefore, even though the Starter recalled the race in reaction to the false start, it is considered to be an inadvertent recall, as the recall should not have taken place. The rule states, "If the recall signal is activated inadvertently, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start." The swimmer in lane 4 should not be charged with a false start and should be allowed to swim.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.3B, 101.1.3C

42. In the 100 yard backstroke, the Starter gives the "Take your mark," command and then the starting signal. The swimmer in lane 3 starts before the starting signal. After the start, the Starter accidentally activates the recall signal, and the heat is recalled. The Starter recorded an observation of a false start in lane 3, and the Referee independently observed and confirmed the Starter's observation. The swimmer in lane 3 is disqualified and removed from the heat, as the false start was independent from the recall. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct. The rule states, “If the recall signal is activated inadvertently, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start.” The swimmer in lane 3 should not be disqualified for a false start and should be allowed to swim with the heat.

Applicable Rule: 101.1.3C

43. During the 200 yard breaststroke, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. Several of the swimmers appear to be taking a while to assume a stationary starting position, so the Starter stands the heat. The swimmer in lane 6 jolts forward in a starting motion in response to the “Stand, please,” command, entering the water. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: No, the swimmer should not be disqualified. The rule states, “A swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relieved of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer’s reaction to the ‘Stand up,’ command.”

Applicable Rule: 101.1.3D

44. In a heat of the 400 yard individual medley, all eight swimmers step up onto the blocks in response to the Referee’s long whistle. The Referee turns the field over to the Starter and subsequently, the Starter gives the “Take you mark,” command. At this point, the Referee notices that the swimmer in lane 7 has stepped off the block to remove his drag suit. The Referee attempts to take back control of the heat but the Starter starts the race as the swimmer in lane 7 is starting to get back on the block. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: Ideally, this type of situation should be proactively handled so that it does not occur. Prior to blowing the long whistle, the Referee should have approached the swimmer and asked him to remove the second swimsuit. Had the Referee not noticed until the swimmer was up on the block, he should have asked the Starter to stand down the heat, and then approached the swimmer, asking him to remove the second suit. The Referee in this situation, however, did not take any of these proactive measures. At this point, the swimmer stepped off of the block when the starting sequence had already begun, and should be disqualified for delay of meet.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5A, 101.1.5B

45. In the 200 yard backstroke, the Referee blows the first long whistle. The swimmer in lane 3 leaps as far as he can into the pool and slowly sinks to the bottom of the pool. He slowly rises to the surface, moving farther away from the start end, after which the Referee blows the second long whistle. While the other seven swimmers quickly place their feet, the swimmer in lane 3 very slowly swims to the wall and places his feet. The Starter reports the swimmer in lane 3 to the Referee for delay of meet. Should the Referee disqualify the swimmer?

Recommended Resolution: This is a call that requires good judgment from the Referee. Did the swimmer delay so much that he was creating a problem for the other swimmers? Swimmers have different ways to prepare to race and the Referee should not interfere with these preparations unless they negatively affect the other competitors. An alternative to a disqualification might be to discuss the situation after the race with the swimmer and/or his coach. This is especially useful for the first occurrence of this type of activity.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5A, 101.1.5B

46. During the 100 yard breaststroke, the Referee is about to blow the long whistle, signaling for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks, when the goggles of the swimmer in lane 8 break. The swimmer in lane 8 approaches the Referee, asking for a few moments to obtain a new pair of goggles. Should the Referee grant the request?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the Referee should grant the request. Obtaining a new pair of goggles should only take a few moments and should not be considered delay of meet.

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5A, 101.1.5B, 102.11.1, 102.11.5

47. During the preliminaries of the 50 yard freestyle, the Referee blows the long whistle, signaling for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. The swimmer in lane 6 is missing. The Referee outstretches his arm to the Starter, and the Starter delivers the “Take your mark,” command. When the Starter gives the starting signal, the starting device beeps twice, confusing the swimmers. The Starter recalls the heat. When the swimmers return to the blocks to re-start their heat, the swimmer in lane 6 appears. Should the swimmer in lane 6 be allowed to swim?

Recommended Resolution: No, the swimmer in lane 6 should not be allowed to swim. The rule states, “The Referee shall disqualify a swimmer who fails to appear at the starting platform ready to swim in time for the initial start of his/her heat.”

Applicable Rules: 101.1.5B, 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

48. During the 100 yard backstroke, a swimmer chooses to utilize the backstroke ledge. While all of her toes are in contact with the ledge, none of her toes are in contact with the touchpad or end wall. Is this legal?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not legal. The rule states, “When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad.” USA Swimming’s interpretation of the rule requires that, in this case, “the toes of both feet” is defined as one toe of each foot.

Applicable Rule: 101.4.1

49. After the start of the 200 yard breaststroke, the Referee hears a second beep come from the electronic starting system. Several of the swimmers in the heat stop swimming and look around before continuing the race, while some swimmers continue swimming. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should ask the Starter to recall the heat. This is one of the situations where it is very beneficial for the Starter to have the microphone in a ready position with the microphone key depressed after a start, as it will allow him to readily signal a recall. In the event that the heat is not recalled, the Referee may offer all of the swimmers in the heat the option to re-swim the race. Any swimmers that choose to re-swim will have the times from the re-swims replace the times from their original swims.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

50. In the 100 yard butterfly, the Referee blows the long whistle and all swimmers step up onto the blocks. After the Referee turns the heat over to the Starter, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command. The Starter’s voice waivers and is somewhat low, but all swimmers appear to have taken their marks. At the start, the swimmers in both lanes 7 and 8 start late. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: If the Referee is able to immediately determine that the start was unfair, she may ask the Starter to recall the heat. If not, the Referee should investigate to gain a better understanding of the situation. If, upon further investigation, the Referee determines that circumstances, such as a faulty speaker, excessive noise, or the Starter failing to sufficiently project the “Take your mark,” command contributed to unfair racing conditions, she may offer all of the swimmers in the heat the opportunity to re-swim the race. Any swimmers that choose to re-swim will have the times from their re-swims replace the times from their original swims.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

51. In the 100 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, and the swimmers assume their stationary starting positions. The swimmer in lane 8 starts before the starting signal, but the starting signal is given. The Referee heard a door slam just as the Starter was sending the heat, which clearly prompted the starting motion of the swimmer in lane 8. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: As the Referee clearly heard the door slam, and was able to see the impact that it had on the start, the start can and should be considered to be unfair. He should ask the Starter to recall the heat. The swimmer in lane 8 should not be charged with a false start and be allowed to swim with the heat.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

52. At an age group meet, the starting system is providing considerable feedback. A screechy noise—that sounds similar to the starting signal—occurs on nearly every start. In some heats, some of the swimmers start in response to the screech instead of in response to the starting signal. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: First and foremost, the Starter should work with the Referee, the facility staff, and the equipment to determine what steps may be taken to mitigate the problem. These steps could include the Starter standing in a different place, turning down the volume on the starting system, repositioning the speaker on the starting system, or, if another starting system is available, replacing the starting system. The swimmers starting in response to the screech should not be disqualified for false starts; if unfair starts occur because of the feedback, those heats may be recalled.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

53. In the 200 yard individual medley, the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command and gives the starting signal. The swimmer in lane 1 starts before the starting signal. Meanwhile, the swimmers in lane 7 and 8 do not start, as they could not hear the commands and starting signal due to a speaker malfunction. The Referee asks the Starter to recall the heat, on the basis of the speaker malfunction causing an unfair start. The Referee also independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation of a false start in lane 1. When the swimmers make their way back to the start end, the Referee removes the swimmer in lane 1 from the heat, as she determines the false start to be independent of the speaker malfunction. Is this correct?

Recommended Resolution: A heat may be recalled if the start is considered to be unfair. It cannot be considered to be fair to some swimmers and unfair to others. If the heat is recalled, the swimmer in lane 1 should receive the benefit of the doubt and be allowed to swim with the heat.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

54. In the 400 yard individual medley, a Starter recalls a heat because she determines that the start was unfair. The swimmers in lanes 2 and 4 stop as soon as the recall signal is activated, the swimmers in lanes 3 and 7 stop after swimming 50 yards, and the swimmers in lanes 1, 5, 6, and 8 continue swimming and do not stop. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: If the swimmers in lanes 1, 5, 6, and 8 do not respond to the recall following an effort to recall the swimmers, the Referee should allow them to continue swimming. After they have finished swimming, the Referee should gather all of the swimmers in the heat, along with their coaches, and offer all of the swimmers in the heat the opportunity to re-swim the race. For any swimmer who elects to re-swim the race, only the time from the re-swim will count.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

55. In the 50 yard freestyle, the Starter recalls the heat because he believes that the swimmers did not receive a fair start. All of the swimmers promptly respond to the recall signal, stop swimming, and return to the start end. The Referee immediately blows the long whistle, signaling for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. When the coach of one of the swimmers involved approaches the Referee asking that the swimmers receive a few minutes of rest before having to swim again, she denies the coach’s request, telling him, “It’s only a 50. They’ll be fine.” Is this correct protocol?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct protocol. Regardless of the length of the race, the swimmers should be allowed a few minutes to catch their breath and recover prior to starting again. The Referee should have offered this option to the swimmers when they returned to the start end.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.12.1

56. During an age group session, a swimmer is seeded in heat 3, lane 6 of the 100 yard freestyle. One of the lane timers misreads her timer sheet, thinking that the swimmer is supposed to be in heat 4, and stops the swimmer from stepping up onto the block at the long whistle. The Referee and Starter do not realize what has happened, and they start the race. Should the swimmer be allowed to swim?

Recommended Resolution: Yes, the swimmer should be allowed to swim. The rule states that the Head Lane Timer shall “determine whether the swimmer or relay team is present and in the correct lane, heat and event, and record the names and order of relay swimmers prior to the start of the race, and determine that the relay swimmers are swimming in the order listed.” The swimmer should not be penalized by an error made by a timer. If an empty lane is available in that same event, the Referee may insert the swimmer into that lane. If not, the Referee should find another suitable place for that swimmer to swim, such as by creating a new heat of the same event, by splitting an existing heat into two heats.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.17.2A

57. During the 200 yard freestyle, the Referee blows the long whistle, signaling for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. A swimmer does not step up in lane 8. The Referee outstretches his hand to the Starter, and the Starter gives the “Take your mark,” command, followed by the starting signal. When the swimmers are midway down the pool, a swimmer steps up onto the block in lane 8, dives in, and begins swimming. How should the Referee handle the situation?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should first investigate the situation to determine who swam in lane 8. If she finds that it is the swimmer who was originally seeded to swim in lane 8, the swimmer should be charged with failure to compete (“no-show”) and any corresponding penalties associated with failure to compete. The swimmer did not partake in the start of the race and therefore failed to compete in the race. On the other hand, if the Referee determines that the swimmer was not entered in said heat, the swimmer shall be disqualified from his next individual event, as the rule states, “Any swimmer not entered in a race who enters the pool or course in the area in which said race is being conducted before all swimmers therein have completed the race shall be barred from the next individual event in which that swimmer is entered on that day or the next meet day, whichever is first.”

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 102.22.7

58. At a local senior meet, the adjustable back plate on the lane 1 starting block malfunctions midway through the preliminaries of the 100 yard butterfly and cannot be fixed. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: If one adjustable back plate becomes inoperable, the adjustable back plates must be removed from all of the blocks to provide a fair competitive environment for the swimmers. The Referee should ask the facility personnel to remove the adjustable back plates from all of the starting blocks. The preliminaries should be continued without the adjustable back plates on the blocks. The swimmers in previous heats should not be required to re-swim without the adjustable back plate, and their times achieved should remain unchanged. If the adjustable back plate is later fixed and/or a replacement adjustable back plate is found, it should not be introduced midway through the event, but may be used for subsequent events and during finals.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 103.14.3

59. At a local senior meet, the backstroke ledge in lane 7 malfunctions midway through the preliminaries of the 200 yard backstroke and cannot be fixed. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: If one backstroke ledge becomes inoperable, no swimmers should be permitted to use the ledge going forward. The preliminaries should be continued without the use of the backstroke ledges. The swimmers in previous heats should not be required to re-swim without the use of the backstroke ledge, and their times achieved should remain unchanged. If the ledge is later fixed and/or a replacement ledge is found, it should not be introduced midway through the event, but may be used for subsequent events and during finals.

Applicable Rules: 102.11.1, 102.11.5, 103.15

60. A swimmer is seeded in heat 7, lane 2 of the 100 yard freestyle. One of the lane timers directs him to step up when the Referee blows the long whistle for heat 6. The Referee and Starter do not realize that the incorrect swimmer is on the block, and they proceed in the starting sequence. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

Recommended Resolution: The swimmer should not be disqualified. The rules state that the Head Lane Timer shall “determine whether the swimmer or relay team is present and in the correct lane, heat and event, and record the names and order of relay swimmers prior to the start of the race, and determine that the relay swimmers are swimming in the order listed.” However, it is important that the error is communicated to the Administrative Official/Referee so that the time achieved is credited to the correct swimmer.

Applicable Rule: 102.17.2A

61. A session is being conducted using flyover starts. At the conclusion of heat 3, the swimmer in lane 2, upon finishing his race, sculls away from the wall to read the scoreboard, not realizing that he is posing a distraction to the swimmer in heat 4, lane 2, who is on the block preparing to start. How should the situation be handled?

Recommended Resolution: The Referee should ask the Starter to ask the swimmer in heat 3, lane 2, to return to the wall. If the swimmer complies, no further action is necessary. In the event that the swimmer refuses to comply, the rule states, “Obstructing or otherwise interfering with another swimmer shall disqualify the offender, subject to the discretion of the Referee.” This follow-up action should only be used as a last resort.

Applicable Rule: 102.22.6

62. In the 50 yard freestyle, the Referee notices, after the start, that the electronic timing system did not automatically start. As a result, he asks the Starter to recall the heat. Is this correct procedure?

Recommended Resolution: No, this is not correct procedure. The rules provide a means for integrating and adjusting backup times, in the event of a timing system malfunction affecting an entire heat. The Referee should instruct the timing system operator to manually start the system, allowing the Administrative Official/Referee to adjust and integrate the times using the method provided in the rules.

Applicable Rule: 102.24.4E

THE STARTER

I'm going to skip the part about the Philosophy of Starting, we should all understand by now, like all Officials we are here for the athlete and the benefit always goes to the swimmer. That being said, we as Starters always want to give every swimmer the best possible fair start.

Starters like all Officials should always look professional and be professional. Be in a correct properly fitting clean meet uniform, and clean proper footwear. Nothing looks worse than clothing that is dirty, stained, or doesn't fit.

The first thing a Starter must do when arriving at a meet is report to the Head Starter who will inform all Starters of Protocol, meeting times and location. If you are the Head Starter you should report to the Meet Referee and be prepared to assume other duties as assigned. The head Starter usually but not always takes care of the rotation of Deck Referees and Starters, assigning them to the events they will be on duty for. The Head Starter may also assign off duty Referees and Starters to relay takeoff or to take the place of Stroke and Turn Officials if needed.

Starters may be asked to give instructions to the timers. Be familiar with the recommended briefing.

Head Starters may be evaluating other Starters depending on the meet. All Starters may be asked to help.

Check the starting system before every session. Check how your voice sounds before every session whether you are the Head Starter or one of the team. Once the volume is set do not change it without checking with the Head Starter.

Before each session the first up Starter with the help of another Starter or the first up Referee should check the starting system and blocks. Check that it can be heard from all lanes, that the speakers are working, and all starting blocks are tight and safe. Check if the system operator wants a test start.

All Starters should know when the system has been reset, check scoreboard, lights on microphone if an Omega System is being used, or thumbs up from the operator.

All Starters should be familiar and practiced with the proper starting procedures for the hearing impaired Athlete.

All Starters should expect to take order of finish when asked, usually but not always then next up Starter has this responsibility.

The Starter is often said to be the second set of eyes for the Deck Referee. What this means is even Referees are only human, they may miss something on deck, the Starter should never turn their backs to the pool, always pay attention to what is going on and if you believe the Referee has missed something never hesitate to let the Referee know. The Starter must know how many Swimmers should be in each heat and what lanes should be empty. When there is an unexpected empty lane or a Swimmer in a lane who shouldn't be there it is imperative the Starter let the Referee know. Most times the Referee already knows and may have told you already. The back and forth is usually, from the Referee "lane 4 will have no swimmer", "lane 4 will be empty", or from the Starter "I do not see a Swimmer in lane 4", "are you alright with lane 4?" Communication between Starter and referee is very important. Watch the Swimmers at least until their head is up; if it is a long event watch them halfway down the pool. After you are satisfied there is no problem with the heat backup a little if there is room and check the upcoming heat, pay attention to all lanes and timers but always be aware where the Referee is and that you may be needed. Note empty lanes or problems timers might be having with Swimmers. Communicate anything necessary to the Referee before he steps the heat onto the blocks.

Starters should take a position where he or she is able to see all lanes clearly. Don't position yourself too close to the line as you will only see a portion of each Swimmer, further out from the start end you are able to see more of each Swimmer and able to judge what is going on much better. For backstroke there is no need to move closer than is required to see the toes when using standard touchpads. When full size touchpads like Omega are used there is no need to move from your forward start position.

The Starters voice should be calm, conversational, and inviting. It needs to be no louder than if you were talking face to face with another person. Don't try to project; don't talk as though you are on a megaphone warning of impending doom. Simply say, "take your mark" as though you were having a conversation and those three words came up, no louder.

Timing should depend on the Swimmers in each heat. When the Swimmers are on the blocks and the Referee has handed control over to you, give everyone a reasonable time to settle, adjust their caps, goggles, and be comfortable. When you are satisfied every swimmer is ready say "take your mark". Every Swimmer in the heat should immediately assume their starting position. Be reasonable when interpreting immediately, it is rare when everyone responds exactly at the same time. Give all Swimmers time to respond. When all have taken their marks give them all an extra heartbeat to hold, not a long time but just enough so if they are jumpy they can settle and be stationary when the start is given. We do not want to overuse the "Stand Please"! This is very important as it disrupts the timing and flow of the meet. Only use it if absolutely necessary! If a Swimmer jerks his or her

elbows or body before the signal but holds when the signal is given that is fine, it is a fair start, does not disrupt the start or rhythm of the meet. Any movement before the start signal is given is not a false start as long as the Swimmer is stationary at the start. Patience is the key.

If you see a false start note the lane on your program or clipboard and show it to the Referee. It is all right if you say, "I have a possible false start" but it is not necessary, but no further discussion should take place. If the Referee has the same lane marked he or she will usually show it to you and call the false start in. There is no need for the Referee to say, "We have a dual confirmed false start". The fact that it was called and confirmed by the Deck Referee is implied; just make sure it's recorded on both heat sheets.

ALWAYS HAVE PATIENCE!
NEVER RUSH STARTS BECAUSE OF A TIMELINE!
Be confident!
Relax and smile!
Have a good time!
Did I forget to mention PATIENCE?

Paul Memont

WHAT IS A FALSE START?

The rules state... “When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.c) and “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation” (101.1.3A).

So what constitutes a false start? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. This is a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. This is a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says “stand please” after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said “stand please”, but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the “stand” command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He fell into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. This is a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. This is NOT a false start. Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and no starting signal ever sounded.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the “stand” command. This is NOT a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action. This is NOT a false start.

The Referee/Starter Team

I use the term “Team” because the Starter is the backup for the Referee and the Referee is the backup for the Starter.

We all know or should know: We have heard these points many times!

The Starter picks his position on the deck and the Referee finds a place close enough to make contact if the noise level is high.

The Referee controls the pace of the meet by deciding when to hand the heat over to the Starter.

We all should have read the documents concerning the Referee and Starter on the USA Swimming Website, including the Checklists.

What many of us may not know is how these two; the Referee and Starter interact with each other before, and during a meet. My opinions follow.

Before a meet the Referee and Starter should talk about any procedures and protocol that may be meet or Meet Referee specific. All meets at all levels are separate and have differences because of preferences. When National Evaluators mentor they should mention that details will change from meet to meet and from Meet Referee to Meet Referee. We all find procedures that work best for us and Meet Referees usually have minor differences in the way they like the deck to run. Remember, the Meet Referee sets the protocol and we all follow it! There is not one way to do anything! We should not hear “This is the National way” or “This is the way it’s done at Nationals and the only way it should be done”! There are many paths we take that lead to the same destination and great results. None of us are or should be puppets! Be prepared to follow instructions handed down by the Meet Referee.

There is a chain of command. Above we mention the Meet Referee is the leader, decider of policy, He or She sets the atmosphere and attitude of the meet. On deck there is also a chain of command. The Deck Referees all receive their marching orders from the Meet Referee. The Starters receive the protocol that may vary meet to meet from the Head Starter (if there is one) who usually meets with the Meet Referee and Deck Referees before the meet. If the Meet Referee has no direct input for the Starters the Head Starter decides who will take order of finish and other protocol and procedures.

Back to the “team”!

During the meet the Referee and Starter should communicate before every heat. Sometimes the Referee will mention there will be an empty lane, a DFS, or another issue with a heat. The Starter should always communicate with the Referee before every heat, mention every empty lane, mention a lane that you think should be empty but has an Athlete. You, the Starter are the failsafe for the Referee, his or her other set of eyes. The more communication, even small talk between heats serves to relax the two of you, it will show everyone watching that you both are actually having a good time, not suffering through another boring swim meet! So

communicate with each other often even if both sets of heat sheets are marked with DFSs! This communication should become a positive routine, reduce mistakes, and lighten the mood on deck.

What I believe is not proper:

I've received a few complaints from Certified Starters concerning overzealous Referees and more experienced Starters. The complaint is usually another Referee or Starter keeps telling them how to start, where to stand, how to say take your mark. When I talk to the Official they don't understand why I tell them it's improper to over mentor, they don't understand why I try hard not to give too much input. They typically say "with your experience don't you think you should mentor everyone every chance you have?" I think it falls into the same category as a National Evaluator not giving an evaluation unless asked for. At the LSC Level when we have a qualified Starter working in the position, unless they are hurting the Athletes, we should let them work, if one little suggestion may help greatly then feel free, but be very frugal with advice unless asked. When we get to the higher levels it's even more important to let the Starter work without criticizing them, remember we are a team. If the Athletes are not getting good starts then a little mentoring may be reasonable but it's very important not to overdo it. Lead and mentor by example. We should never be telling Starters where to stand, to hurry it up because we have a timeline, talk louder (it's alright to pass on to the Starter that there may be an issue being heard). When the starting system is Omega and not the standard Colorado or Daktronics system we should never tell Starters how to hold the microphone, for instance, "you must hold the microphone with one hand" or "you must hold the microphone with two hands". These are personal preferences only; the important thing is that all Athletes get a fair and patient start, it doesn't matter how we hold the microphone. I don't think this applies to the Colorado, Daktronics, or any standard microphone, we should be using one hand with these so our free hand can give hearing-impaired signals if needed.

So remember, communicate with each other! This cuts tension and lets everyone on and off the deck see how much fun you are having, they may want to take part next meet!

For the same reason smile as often as you can!

Don't mentor unless asked or the Athlete is not getting a fair start!

Don't assume the other sees everything----let them know!

Have lots of patience with not only the Athletes but also everyone!

Mentor by example!

Enjoy or stay home!

Be a TEAM!

WHAT IS A FALSE START?

The rules state... “When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.c) and “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation” (101.1.3A).

So what constitutes a false start? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. This is a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. This is a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says “stand please” after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said “stand please”, but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the "stand" command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He fell into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. This is a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. This is NOT a false start. Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and no starting signal ever sounded.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the “stand” command. This is NOT a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action. This is NOT a false start.

WHAT IS A FALSE START? Adopted from USA Swimming April 2012 newsletter and expanded from the Officials Committee of NC Swimming 7/5/12.

Our job as starters is to ensure that all swimmers achieve a fair start. We need to remember to be patient before the TYM command to allow the field to be ready to hear the command. After the TYM command, we need to be patient to allow the swimmers to achieve their starting position. This requires us to take just that small amount of extra time (that will seem like forever to us) to allow the field to be ready for the starting signal. Please remember that the referee's job is to turn over the heat to you when he/she recognizes that all swimmers are present. This doesn't mean that you need to immediately send them. It **ONLY** means that they are in your jurisdiction to do the above.

The rules state... "When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal" (101.1.2.C) and "Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation" (101.1.3A).

So what constitutes a false start and what does not? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position with a forward starting motion prior to the starting signal and continues into the pool as the starting signal is given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position with a forward starting motion prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start. The starter should immediately release the swimmers remaining on the blocks with "stand please". Assuming the referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the referee should inform the swimmer(s) who entered the pool prior to "stand please" that they will not be able to compete in that event.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says ~~stand please~~ immediately after the first swimmer leaves the set or stationary position with a forward starting motion. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said ~~stand please~~ before the offending swimmer entered the pool but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the "stand" command is for the benefit of the other swimmers who remain on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the swimmers have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He went into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start. In this case, assuming the referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the referee should inform the offending swimmer that they will not be able to compete in that event.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command %stand please+is issued, the offending swimmer struggles but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is NOT a false start.** Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and did not enter the pool.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the %stand please+ command a swimmer(s) **other than the offending swimmer** instantly bolts or falls from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly reacted to the %stand+command. **This is NOT a false start for the second swimmer however it is still a false start for the first swimmer if he goes into the pool and the starter and referee independently observe and confirm this.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command %take your mark+, starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any forward starting action. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #7

The swimmer, upon hearing the command %take your mark+takes a set or stationary position. The back of the swimmers foot is twitching at the start. **This IS NOT a false start.** Rule 101.2C only requires that a swimmer be stationary, not motionless. Muscle tics, twitches or other body movements that do not change the relative position of the swimmer on the blocks do not result in a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #8

Swimmer sets in a stationary position but leaves the set or stationary position in a forward starting motion prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion catches himself/herself and becomes stationary again before the starting signal is given. **This is NOT a false start because the swimmer was stationary and did not start before the starting signal was given as required by the rule. The starter is in control and should know when to be patient to allow everyone to become stationary before the signal.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #9

After the start a swimmer comes running up and dives into the lane he/she was supposed to swim in. This is considered a NO show rather than a false start since the swimmer did not appear at the starting platform ready to swim in time for the initial start of his/her heat as required in rule 101.1.5 Dual confirmation is not required in this scenario. All administrative rules would then apply for anyone missing their heat.

FALSE START SCENARIO #10

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position in a backward motion prior to the starting signal. **This is a false start.** The direction of movement is wholly irrelevant; this swimmer had left his stationary position before the starting signal and should be charged with a false start.)

When should a Referee extend his hand?

A Referee should put out his/her hand (turn control over to the starter) as soon as all swimmers present to swim in the heat have stepped on the block. Starters are being trained to watch for when the entire heat is ready to take their marks and start.

Premeet Preparation

- Prior to arrival:
 - Proper attire
 - All necessary forms
 - Bell
 - Download and read the meet info
- At Facility:
 - Locate and introduce yourself to facility personnel.
 - Walk the Deck, inspect Blocks and all starting equipment.
 - Scout hotbox to determine your best position for forward and back starts.
 - Determine that your chosen position will not conflict with where the equipment and other staff personnel are located.
 - Check for feedback from the starting system
 - What will be the traffic pattern around the starting area.
 - Determine if the equipment or the starting area will be moved during the meet.
 - Are Lanes Marked?
 - Different starting systems have operational differences make sure you check this out before the meet
 - Report any problems to facility personnel
- Prior to session:
 - Meet with Referee to discuss any delegated duties
 - Discuss procedure for false start.
 - Discuss at what point Referee will turn heat over to starter. This should be as soon as all the swimmers that are going to swim step up on the blocks.
 - Discuss where you will stand for forward and backstroke starts.
 - If conducting Timers meeting see section on “Timers Meeting”
 - Poll timers for volume and site check.
 - Test Start with pad and button check

Starter tips

- 3 keys to Starter - Patience, Patience, Patience
- Breath thru nose
- Do the same thing every time
 - E.g., Bring mike to mouth on the long whistle
- Put a glass box around the swimmer after the request to TYM
- Conversational TYM
 - Thornton tip -- put it in middle of sentence, e.g., “The starter only has to say take your mark and nothing else.”

TIMERS MEETING

- The first thing you should do is know your timing configuration. (two watches & one button, two watches & two buttons etc). Know your Time Line and if there will be any breaks or if you will be doing rotations for timers. If swimmers have to supply their own timer for a distance race, know what is coming up in your session.
- Introduce yourself.
- Thank them for their help. (A short explanation of the importance of their job could be done at this time)
- Ask about people who haven't timed before
- Tell them how many buttons, watches you'll be using.
- Demonstrate how to use the watch, have them practice. This seems silly but a lot of people are confused about it.
- Explain how to use the button – push only at the finish.
- **Start on the strobe.** Stand behind the blocks for the start so as to not interfere with the swimmers or the starter's view.
- Once the heat has started check to see that your watch is running. If not or you think you got a bad start then raise your hand with the watch in it to get the Head Timers attention. They will trade watches with you.
- Introduce the Head Timer and explain their duties.
- At the finish of the race, move to the edge of pool so you can look down at the touch. Expect to get wet.
- Stop your watch and/or push your button when any part of the swimmer touches the wall.
- DO NOT write down a time that you know is incorrect. If you missed the finish write "missed finish" for the time. Do not copy what is on the scoreboard.
- Times are recorded in hundredths of a second. (if you have checked all the watches and they only show hundredths then you do not have to address this with the timers)
- Be consistent writing your time on the sheet, so if you write timer 1 first and timer 2 second then continue this.
- If no one is in your lane start your watches anyway.
- If you notice a swimmer missed the pad at the finish then note that beside their name. Bad touch or BT
- Help keep all swimmers behind the timers except for the next one up.
- Check names of the swimmers
- Don't worry if a swimmer is not on your timer sheet. Get their name and team. The referee will come ask if he needs the information. Please don't waive your hand at the start to alert the referee.
- Explain Breaks or rotations if that is being done.

They usually want to know the time line or if they will not be timing for a distance race during the session.