

National Federation of State  
High School Associations



# SWIMMING OFFICIALS' GUIDELINES MANUAL

(July 2012)

## INTRODUCTION

This manual is provided to improve the consistency of officiating high school swimming. It is based on the premise that the purpose of swimming officials at a meet is to ensure fair competition for all competitors in accordance with the rules established by the NFHS. In order to accomplish this, officials must understand the rules and enforce all rules without regard for the outcome of the meet.

This manual is not meant to be “another rules book.” Rather, it has been designed to assist all officials in understanding their role in conducting competition. While it should be especially useful for new and less experienced officials, it will also help the veteran official hone their organizational skills along with their mechanics of officiating.

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## Officials Code of Ethics

Officials at an interscholastic athletic event are participants in the educational development of high school students. As such, they must exercise a high level of self-discipline, independence and responsibility. The purpose of this Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all interscholastic officials.

**Officials** shall master both the rules of the contest and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules and officials shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.

**Officials** shall work with each other and their state associations in a constructive and cooperative manner.

**Officials** shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interaction with athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues and the public.

**Officials** shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.

**Officials** shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.

**Officials** shall remain mindful that their conduct influences the respect that athletes, coaches and the public hold for the profession.

**Officials** shall, while enforcing the rules of competition, remain aware of the inherent risk of injury that competition poses to athletes. Where appropriate, they shall inform event management of conditions or situations that appear unreasonably hazardous and not allow warm up or competition to begin until the situation is properly corrected.

**Officials** shall take reasonable steps to educate themselves in the recognition of emergency conditions that might arise during the course of competition.

**Officials** shall maintain an ethical approach while participating in forums, chat rooms and all other forms of social media.

## KEY POINTS FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMING OFFICIALS

- Be knowledgeable of NFHS swimming and diving rules.
- Study the NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Book, including the situations and rulings, attend rules meetings regularly as required by the state association or officials' association to stay informed regarding current rules.
- Be consistent in the application of the rules at all times and at all levels of competition.
- Enforce all rules equitably and fairly. Do not allow rule infractions to go uncalled simply because no one has gained an advantage. Do not try to decide who might be unfairly affected by a violation. If there is a violation, it must be called.
- Exercise fair and unbiased judgment by disregarding a swimmer's identity, team affiliation, etc.
- Make timely decisions.
- Call only those violations you specifically observe. Do not guess or anticipate. Be prepared to explain the "who," "what" and "when" of the violation, as well as, where you were positioned to see the violation. Do NOT notify swimmers or coaches that a swimmer was close to being disqualified. Swimmers are either in violation of the rules or they are not in violation. Do not discuss close calls with coaches or competitors. A close call is a no call!
- Give your undivided attention to your specific assignment.
- Avoid coaching athletes, but a reminder as to legal starting position prior to the start of a race is acceptable. At lower levels or competition, specifically junior high, the explanation of legal starting position may be given in much more detail than at higher levels of competition.
- Explain the rule and the violation to swimmers and/or coaches when requested to do so. Do not give advice to swimmers or coaches on rule violations. At lower levels of competition, specifically junior high, the explanation of the rule and violation may be much lengthier than at higher levels of competition.
- When discussing the circumstances surrounding events that occurred during the meet with other officials, wait until the meet is over or there is a scheduled break and you are away from fans and coaches.
- As an official, never publicly criticize another official or an official's decision. Report any concerns about another official to the meet referee.

- Comments or discussion on a call should not take place with representatives of the media.
- Mentor less experienced officials, as long as it is not a distraction during a meet.
- Admit when mistakes have been made and correct the mistake according to the rules. Do not make a decision to “make up” for a poor decision made earlier.
- Be professional and friendly when interacting with administrators, coaches, athletes, spectators, other officials, etc. Do not socialize with these individuals as it may give the impression of favoring one team over another.
- Dress professionally as per NFHS and/or state association rules.
- Maintain control of the meet, but remember all participants want to do their best while having a fun and enjoyable experience.

### **ALL SWIMMING OFFICIALS**

All swimming officials must remember their primary purposes when on deck. Officials shall conduct the meet in a professional manner, assure compliance with the rules, assure that no competitor has an unfair advantage and assure the safety of the competitors.

***In every meet, all swimming officials should:***

- arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the meet.
- bring with him/her an NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Book, whistle, notepad, pen/pencil, and appropriate forms to record false starts, relay takeoff violations, finish order cards, etc., if applicable.
- turn off cell phones before the meet begins.
- introduce themselves to the coaches from all participating teams.
- signal a stroke, kick, body position, turn, or finish violation by raising one hand over the head with an open palm, immediately upon observing a violation. The official should continue to give the signal until the referee has had an adequate amount of time to see it.
- immediately following the race, report any violations to the referee. The official observing the violation should be able to tell the referee who committed the violation, where it occurred and exactly what violation occurred.

## THE SWIMMING REFEREE

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-2

The referee is the head official at all levels of competition. The referee shall have general supervision over other officials and may overrule another official's call. The referee must set the example for the meet and teach less experienced officials through constructive comments. The referee should display confidence, integrity and complete knowledge of the rules. The referee's decision is final.

The meet referees retain clerical authority over the contest through the completion of any reports, including those imposing disqualifications, that are responsive to actions occurring while the referees had jurisdiction. State associations may intercede in the event of unusual incidents before, during or after the referees' jurisdiction has ended or in the event that a contest is terminated prior to the conclusion of regulation competition.

The referee should be familiar with starting procedures for swimmers with disabilities in the event special accommodations have been authorized by the state association for one or more swimmers.

The referee is not responsible for supervising the warm up period or enforcing posted warm up procedures. If a violation of warm up procedures or the jewelry/uniform rule is observed, the violation should be brought to the attention of the swimmer and swimmer's coach.

### ***Before the meet begins, the referee should survey the pool, paying particular attention to the following:***

- the physical layout of the pool, including markings, lanes lines being taut and deck area for any safety or rule concerns. Determine how the whole pool will be officiated and how officials will communicate with each other during the meet.
- the water level, depth at the starting end, temperature and clarity.
- the starting block height and stability of the blocks.
- the location and adequacy of the backstroke flags and 15 meter markings.
- the starting and timing systems, including touch pads centered in the lanes, recall device and backup timing procedure.
- availability of an adequate number of operable lap counting devices.
- the ordering and numbering of the lanes.
- potential use and positioning of lifeguards.

***The referee should also:***

- meet with the meet management to confirm type of meet (dual, double dual, triangular), the meet schedule and any other information related to the meet, i.e. exhibition swims, extra heats, etc.
- meet with the starter and other officials, if applicable, to discuss positioning, dual confirmation for no-recall false starts and relay takeoffs, jurisdiction, responsibilities for turns, strokes and responsibilities during the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle. Positioning, jurisdiction and how officials will communicate with each other will need to be determined based on pool configuration, glare through windows, and other unusual circumstances.
- meet with the visiting head coach in a dual meet so he/she can choose the odd or even lanes.
- meet with the coaches to discuss starting time, entry procedures (individual events and relays), declared false starts, lane assignments, number of heats (in championship meets), exhibition swims, starting protocol, scoring, availability of lap counters and use of lap counting devices, backup timing system, sportsmanship, jewelry/logo rule, length of break and warm up after the 50-yard freestyle, when diving will be conducted (first event or after 50-yard freestyle), time for submission of diving scoresheets, swimmers cheering at poolside leaving space for officials, athletes with disabilities and any other special concerns.
- if necessary, meet with captains to discuss sportsmanship, illegal attire and jewelry, and any general concerns/comments. FINA bar-coded suits are legal for NFHS competition. Tape is allowed to treat a documented medical condition provided an appropriate health-care professional has authorized. Divers may tape their wrists and no medical documentation is required.
- meet with the meet management software operator and timing system operator to be sure they understand their responsibilities related to starts, finishes, registration of the proper number of laps completed and reporting any discrepancies between the pad times and backup times to the referee. Meet management software operators should be told to never adjust any times without being directed to do so by the referee.
  - It is recommended the referee discuss with the meet management software operator his/her role in helping the referee verify that no swimmer has exceeded the individual entry rule. Suggested times to verify entry limitations are: (a) at the end of preliminaries, (b) after each relay during the championship round of a meet with preliminaries and finals, (c) after the last relay event of the meet, (d) before printing heat sheets, and (e) before printing final meet results.

- meet with the timers to give instructions regarding their responsibilities, positioning, clearing of watches, timing and recording times. For example, the head timer is the official lap counter for the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle. It may be wise to emphasize to the timers that they are acting as meet officials and as such, they should be unbiased during all races.
- meet with the announcer to discuss warm ups, announcing heats and lanes, and when to announce results and scores. It may also be wise to have the announcer make a few announcements regarding the use of flash cameras, cell phones, pagers, etc.
- review the scoring procedures with the meet scorer. This will be based on the meet information sent to the visiting team(s) earlier, number of lanes in the pool, number of entries per team and event, etc.
- if a recall rope is used as the recall device, meet with the person(s) who will be dropping the rope to be sure they understand their responsibilities and the safe operation of the rope.
- bring illegal swimmer/diver attire, jewelry, or objectionable body markings to the attention of the coach of any athlete who may be in violation of the rules during competition. Coaches should be reminded that jewelry and markings are not permitted during warm-ups and competition.

***During the meet, the referee should:***

- prior to each heat, not let swimmers step onto the blocks, or into the pool, until they are directed to do so. Call the swimmers to the starting platforms without delay when a contestant fails to report promptly. Inform the starter when it is time for the starting commands to begin. The referee must be aware that any swimmer can request to start from the deck or in the water.
- be prepared to handle any declared false starts.
- Suggested protocol for forward start verbal preparatory commands when there is only one official (referee/starter):
  - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the announcer or referee/starter announces the event/distance/heat, "This is the 200-yard freestyle, heat 2,"
  - referee/starter blows a long whistle,
  - immediately says, "Step up,"
  - *if necessary*, blow whistle or ask for quiet,
  - when swimmers are settled into position, give the command, "Take your mark,"
  - when swimmers are stationary, activate the starting signal.

**Note:** If a swimmer(s) has not responded to the whistle indicating they should step up or step in, the referee/starter should give the verbal commands.



- Suggested protocol for forward start whistle preparatory commands when there is only one official (referee/starter):
  - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the referee/starter blows a short series of whistles (no fewer than 4) followed by the announcer or referee/starter announcing the event/distance/heat, “This is the 200-yard freestyle, heat 2,”
  - when all swimmers have approached the blocks, the referee/starter blows a long whistle for the swimmers to step onto the blocks and take their positions,
  - when swimmers are settled into position, give the command, “Take your mark,”
  - when swimmers are stationary, activate the starting signal.

**Note:** If a swimmer(s) has not responded to the whistle indicating they should step up or step in, the referee/starter should give the verbal commands.
  
- Suggested protocol for backstroke start verbal preparatory commands when there is only one official (referee/starter):
  - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the announcer or referee/starter announces the event/distance/heat, “This is the 200-yard medley relay, heat 2,”
  - referee/starter instructs the swimmers to, “Step in, feet first,”
  - when the swimmers have surfaced, blow a long whistle to have the swimmers return to the wall,
  - *if necessary*, blow whistle or ask for quiet,
  - when swimmers are settled into position, give the command, “Take your mark,”
  - observe whether or not any feet or toes are above or curling over the gutter or pool’s edge,
  - when swimmers are stationary, activate the starting signal.

**Note:** The referee/starter may give the command, “Place your feet,” after blowing the second long whistle and before giving the “Take your mark” command.
  
- Suggested protocol for backstroke start whistle preparatory commands when there is only one official (referee/starter):
  - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the referee/starter blows a short series of whistles (no fewer than 4) followed by the announcer or referee/starter announcing the event/distance/heat, “This is the 200-yard medley relay, heat 2,”
  - when all swimmers have approached the side of the blocks, the referee/starter blows a long whistle for the swimmers to step into the water feet first,
  - when all swimmers have surfaced, blow a second long whistle to have the swimmers return to the wall and assume their starting positions,
  - *if necessary*, blow another long whistle and ask for quiet,

- when swimmers are settled into position, give the command, “Take your mark,”
  - observe whether or not any feet or toes are above or curling over the gutter or pool’s edge,
  - when swimmers are stationary, activate the starting signal.
- Note:** The referee/starter may give the command, “Place your feet,” after blowing the second long whistle and before giving the “Take your mark” command.
- Suggested protocol for referee forward start verbal preparatory commands when there is a referee and starter:
    - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the announcer or referee announces the event/distance/heat, “This is the 50-yard freestyle, heat 2,”
    - referee blows a long whistle,
    - immediately says, “Step up,”
    - *if necessary*, blow whistle and ask for quiet,
    - turn the start over to the starter by a hand signal or saying “Mr./Madame Starter.”
  
  - Suggested protocol for referee forward start whistle preparatory commands when there is a referee and starter:
    - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the referee blows a short series of whistles (no fewer than 4) followed by announcer or referee/starter announcing the event/distance/heat, “This is the 50-yard freestyle, heat 2,”
    - when all swimmers have approached the blocks, the referee blows a long whistle for the swimmers to step onto the blocks and take their positions,
    - *if necessary*, blow another long whistle and ask for quiet,
    - turn the start over to the starter by a hand signal or saying “Mr./Madame Starter.”

**Note:** If a swimmer(s) has not responded to the whistle indicating they should step up or step in, the referee/starter should give the verbal commands.
  
  - Suggested protocol for referee backstroke start verbal preparatory commands when there is a referee and starter:
    - to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the announcer or referee/starter announces the event/distance/heat, “This is the 200-yard medley relay, heat 2,”
    - referee instructs the swimmers to, “Step in, feet first,”
    - when the swimmers have surfaced, either blow a long whistle to have the swimmers return to the wall or advise them to place their feet
    - *if necessary*, blow long whistle or ask for quiet,
    - turn the start over to the starter by a hand signal or saying “Mr./Madame Starter.”
  
  - Suggested protocol for referee backstroke start whistle preparatory commands when there is a referee and starter:

- to bring the swimmers to the starting area, the referee blows a short series of whistles (no fewer than 4) followed by the announcer or referee/starter announcing the event/distance/heat, "This is the 200-yard medley relay, heat 2,"
- when all swimmers have approached the side of the blocks, the referee blows a long whistle for the swimmers to step into the water feet first.
- when all swimmers have surfaced, blow a second long whistle to have the swimmers return to the wall and assume their starting positions,
- *if necessary*, blow another long whistle and ask for quiet,
- turn the start over to the starter by a hand signal or saying "Mr./Madame Starter."

**Note:** If a swimmer(s) has not responded to the whistle indicating he/she should step up or step in, the referee/starter should give the verbal commands.

- Be in position between 5 to 15 feet from the starting end and carry a sounding device to recall the start in the event of an unfair start due to crowd noise or other unforeseen circumstances, *if necessary*. The referee shall notify competitors and coaches of any starting infractions. An entire heat may be recalled without charging any swimmer with a false start.
- Determine disqualifications and promptly notify competitors and/or their coaches of infractions resulting in a disqualification. This notification may be accomplished with a verbal announcement if the competitor and/or coach cannot be reached without further delay of the meet. Swimmers committing a false start are disqualified either before the starting signal is given or at the conclusion of the race, depending on the circumstances.
- Resolve any disagreement about a race in a timely manner.
- Determine when it is appropriate to integrate backup times.
- Keep the meet progressing without unnecessary delays and have the results announced promptly, when possible.
- Before the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle, meet with the lap counters and instruct them to count up (1,3,5, etc.).
- Be aware of how many laps each swimmer has completed in the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle to confirm the lap count is correct.
- Signal by raising one hand over the head with open palm immediately upon observing any swimming violation, except for relay takeoffs and no-recall false starts in meets using dual confirmation.

- Work with the meet management software operator and table personnel, especially after each relay, to ensure there are no individual entry limitation violations.
- Prohibit the use of bells, sirens, horns or other noise makers, as well as signs, cheers and remarks that could be deemed as offensive, during the meet. Be aware of any state association policies regarding the same. This could include cell phones that could affect the start of a race.
- Be in position to independently determine the order of finish for all lanes.
- Record the order of finish for each lane of each heat and keep a record of disqualifications.
- Declare a dual meet a forfeit, score 12-0, when the following conditions exist:
  - without notification to the host team, the visiting team is not ready to begin within 30 minutes of the scheduled starting time.
  - a team refuses to continue competition after the meet has started.
  - a coach has been ejected from the competitive area and no authorized school personnel is present to assume responsibility for the team.
- For outdoor meets, be familiar with the NFHS Lighting Guidelines and be prepared to stop or suspend a meet when required.

***After the meet, the referee should:***

- Check the scorer's calculations to ensure an accurate final score, sign the official scoresheet and record the time the meet was completed. This is the official score unless a clerical error is discovered within 48 hours.
- If the state association requires, file reports for any disqualifications for unsporting conduct or other similar necessary reports.
- Discuss with the host meet management any concerns regarding the facility or other on site concerns.

**THE STARTER**

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-3

The starter has the responsibility to ensure a fair start for all swimmers. This requires concentration, good reactions and confidence. The attributes of a good starter are being calm and consistent (without being predictable) in control of the starts and patient when activating the starting device. The starter is the only official who has a direct bearing on how a swimmer performs. Other officials react to the actions of the swimmers, but the swimmers react to the actions of the starter. Be aware of circumstances that may interfere with a fair start. Some of these might include: excessive cheering by spectators or team personnel, cell phones, camera flashes,

movements in the starting area by timers, etc., equipment problems or conflicts between people on deck, etc.

The starter should be familiar with starting procedures for swimmers with disabilities in the event special accommodations have been provided by the state association for one or more swimmers.

***Before the meet, the starter should arrive early enough to do the following:***

- Become familiar with the starting end of the pool and be aware of any concerns that may interfere with the fair starts, i.e. traffic flow, obstructions, etc.
- Check the starting and recall equipment and become familiar with that equipment.
- Be sure the volume of the sound system is adequate so all swimmers can easily hear the starting commands.
- Check the position of the strobe light to ensure it can be seen by all swimmers on the blocks, as well as the timers.
- Review starting procedures and protocol with the referee.

***During the meet, the starter should:***

- Have an unobstructed view of the swimmers on the starting blocks and be located within 5 feet +/- of where the side wall of the pool meets the end wall.
- Speak slowly and clearly and give the starting commands in a conversational tone. A good thought is that you are “inviting” the swimmer into a starting position. Avoid speaking rapidly and in sharp tones.
- The starter’s attention should be directed toward the entire field during and immediately after the start. Starters should NOT turn their attention away from the swimmers to hang up the microphone immediately after starting the race.
- If a fair start is impossible to achieve after giving the “Take your mark” command, have the swimmers stand up. Give any reminders that may be needed to ensure a fair start and repeat the starting sequence. The referee may need to blow another long whistle and ask for quiet if there is crowd noise that, in the opinion of the starter, interferes with a fair start.
- If an entire race is being recalled due to an unfair start, activate the recall device immediately. If using the horn or other sounding device for the recall, be sure all swimmers have surfaced before discontinuing the sounding device so swimmers can hear the recall.

- When a referee and starter are present, confer with the referee to confirm all false starts, when requested.
- Discharge a sounding device when the lead swimmer in the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle has two lengths plus 5 yards remaining in the race.
- Record the unofficial order of finish for each heat.

### **STARTING INFRACTIONS AND NO-RECALL STARTING PROTOCOL**

Subject to the discretion of the referee/starter, or referee and starter when dual confirmation is used, an infraction/false start occurs when a swimmer:

- unnecessarily delays in reporting for the start, or in assuming a starting position (referee's duty);
- does not step into the water feet first for an "in-water" start (referee's duty);
- does not remain stationary immediately prior to the start; or
- leaves the mark before the starting signal.

Swimmers in violation of any of these are disqualified from the event and shall not swim. However, when a swimmer leaves the mark before the starting signal, the race shall continue without recall if the starting signal has been given before the disqualification has been declared.

#### ***When TWO officials are using dual confirmation of a false start:***

*The referee shall:*

- upon observing a false start, record in writing the lane or lanes that have committed a false start.
- at the completion of the race, compare written records with the starter and, upon confirming that both have observed the same violation, disqualify the swimmer(s). He/she will also notify the swimmer(s) and coach(es) of the violation.

*The starter shall:*

- upon observing a false start, record in writing the lane or lanes that have committed a false start.
- at the completion of the race, compare written records with the referee, when requested, to confirm the potential violation.

#### ***When ONE official is determining a false start, the referee/starter shall:***

- upon observing a false start, raise one hand over the head with palm open as soon as possible after the start of the race, but before the swimmers have completed their first length, indicating the violation.
- at the completion of the race, notify the swimmer(s) and coach(es) of the violation.

***The referee or starter may recall the entire event/heat:***

- when the start is such that the referee and/or starter is not satisfied that the race was properly started, it is always permissible for the referee and/or starter to recall the entire heat. It is not necessary to charge any swimmer with a false start under these conditions, although that may also occur.
- if all swimmers do not stop immediately, it is permissible for the referee to delay re-swimming the heat.

**ADDITIONAL MEET OFFICIALS**

Meet management has the responsibility to ensure there are enough officials to properly administer the meet. The recommended minimum number of deck swimming officials is two. Officials have the responsibility to observe swimmers in all lanes throughout the pool. The following is an explanation of the duties of the deck officials.

***Stroke inspectors should:*** (Refer to NFHS Rule 4-4)

- observe swimmers within his/her jurisdiction only.
- from the start of the race, examine the swimming strokes, within their area or jurisdiction, from end wall to end wall. Signal any observed violations by immediately raising one hand overhead with open palm and report them to the referee immediately following the race.
- be in position to see the heads (chin to the top of the head) of the swimmers in the freestyle, backstroke and butterfly break the surface of the water at, or before, the 15-meter mark. Swimmers cannot re-submerge until the final pull into the wall on turns or the finish.
- walk at a pace that keeps you abreast or slightly behind the swimmers in your jurisdiction. As the field spreads out during the race, stay slightly behind the lead swimmers, but do not lose sight of the trailing swimmers.
- record any observed violations at the completion of each heat.

***Turn judges should:*** (Refer to NFHS Rule 4-5)

- observe swimmers within his/her jurisdiction only, which is typically the end farthest from the starting end.
- be in position (preferably in line with, and directly above, the end wall) to observe the last stroke prior to the turn, the turn, and the first full stroke after the turn.
- observe the finishes of the swimmers in their assigned lanes.
- record any observed violations at the completion of each heat.

- remember, swimmers cannot re-submerge until the final pull into the wall on turns or the finish. Signal any observed violations by immediately raising one hand overhead with open palm and report them to the referee immediately following the race.

***Relay takeoff judges should:*** (Refer to NFHS Rule 4-6)

- observe swimmers within his/her jurisdiction only, which is typically the nearer half of the pool at the starting end.
- be in position (approximately where the side wall meets the end wall) to observe first the feet on the takeoff of the departing swimmers, then the touch of the incoming swimmers' hands.
- *in meets where dual confirmation is NOT used*, signal a relay takeoff violation by raising one hand over the head with an open palm, immediately upon observing a violation. The official should continue to give the signal until the referee has had an adequate amount of time to see it. The official shall record in writing the order number of the swimmer committing the violation and the lane in which it occurred. Immediately following the race, any violations should be reported in writing to the referee.
- *in meets where dual confirmation IS used*, the official records the number of the swimmer committing the relay takeoff violation and the lane in which it occurred. The side judge should not signal for a relay takeoff violation until the last swimmer in the heat is in the water. The official should continue to give the signal until the referee, if more than one official is present, acknowledges the signal or sufficient time has been given for such communication to have been observed. The official shall record in writing the order number of the swimmer committing the violation and the lane in which it occurred. Immediately following the race, any violations should be reported in writing to the referee.

## **POSITIONING OF OFFICIALS**

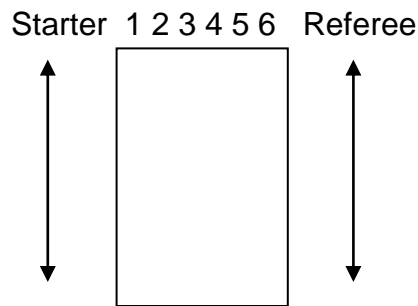
The referee shall determine the positioning and jurisdiction of all deck officials. The positioning and jurisdiction will depend on the number of officials being used and the pool configuration. The key is to focus on the swimmers in scoring position without losing contact with the other swimmers in the pool. Any positioning protocol adopted should provide for consistent viewing of turns, strokes and finishes in all lanes. Pre-meet communication between officials is essential to be sure swimmers in all lanes throughout the pool will be observed during the meet. The following information and diagrams provide suggestions for the positioning and jurisdiction of officials with various pool configurations.

***Configuration A:***

For a rectangular 25-yard pool, both the referee and starter will be on opposite sides of the pool at the starting end for starts and relay exchanges, if dual confirmation is being



used, in order to independently confirm legal starts and relay exchanges. If possible, the referee should be closest to the meet management software operator for the most effective and efficient management of the meet.

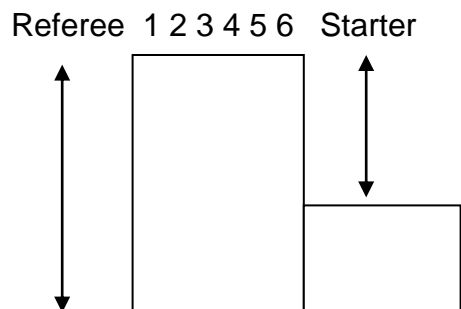


For the individual events, both officials will typically walk the length of the pool to judge strokes and turns. The referee may determine that the referee or starter will stay in the nearer half of the pool throughout the race to observe turns in all lanes while the other official walks the length of the pool to observe strokes and turns at the far end of the pool in all lanes. There may be times when the referee determines that the referee and starter cover the half of the pool closest to them so there is more consistent coverage of all lanes as the swimmers become more spread out during a race. At the conclusion of the race, the referee must be in position near the starting end to independently determine the order of finish.

For relay events, the referee and starter should both be in position at the starting end of the pool for dual confirmation on all relay takeoffs. While observing relay takeoffs in events other than freestyle relays, both officials should also observe that the proper stroke is being swum after the swimmers enter the water. The referee may direct the starter to use his or her discretion regarding being at the finish end, versus observing other swimmers in the pool, if a close finish is not anticipated.

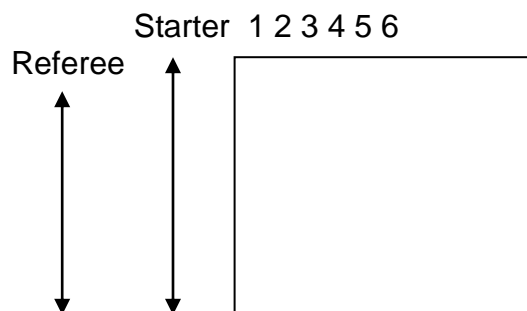
**Configuration B:**

For an L shaped pool, both the referee and starter will be on opposite sides of the pool at the starting end for starts and relay exchanges, if dual confirmation is being used, in order to independently confirm legal starts and relay exchanges. If possible, the referee should be closest to the meet management software operator for the most effective and efficient management of the meet. The referee is typically located where he/she can walk the entire length of the pool to call stroke violations and turn violations on the far end of the pool and the starter is on the opposite side to call stroke violations and turn violations on the starting end of the pool. The positioning of the referee and starter may be dependent upon the location of the timing system operator. At the conclusion of the race, the referee and starter must be in position near the starting end to independently determine the order of finish.



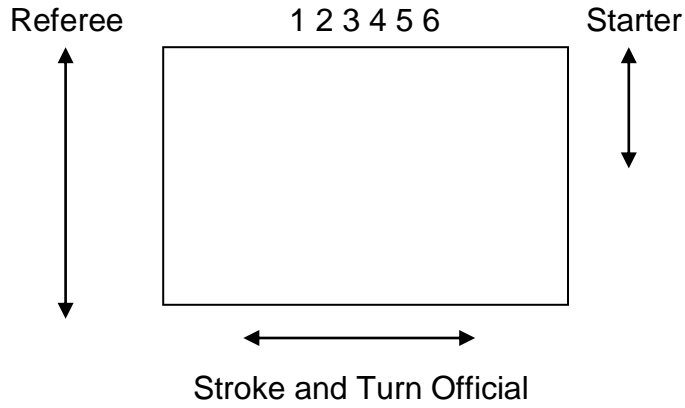
**Configuration C:**

For a pool that is wider than the number of lanes being used for the competition, and the competition lanes are not in the middle of the pool, both the referee and starter will be at the starting end for starts and relay exchanges, if dual confirmation is being used, in order to independently confirm legal starts and relay exchanges. If possible, the referee should be closest to the meet management software operator for the most effective and efficient management of the meet. The referee will typically walk the length of the pool to call stroke violations and return to the starting end to call turn and stroke violations and be in position for the finish. The starter typically goes to the turn end of the pool to call turn and stroke violations. The positioning of the referee and starter may be dependent upon the location of the timing system operator. At the conclusion of the race, the referee and starter must be in position near the starting end to independently determine the order of finish.



**Configuration D:**

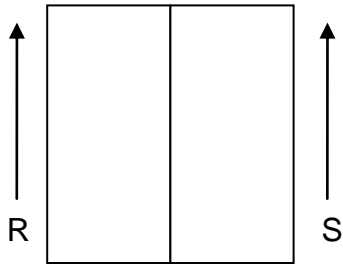
For a 25-yard by 50-yard/meter pool where the competition lanes are in the middle of the pool, it is advisable to have 3 officials. Both the referee and starter will be on opposite sides of the pool at the starting end for starts and relay exchanges, if dual confirmation is being used, in order to independently confirm legal starts and relay exchanges. If possible, the referee should be closest to the meet management software operator for the most effective and efficient management of the meet. The referee will typically walk the length of the pool while the starter stays at the nearer half of the pool. A stroke and turn judge is located at the turn end of the pool. The positioning of the referee and starter may be dependent upon the location of the timing system operator. At the conclusion of the race, the referee and starter must be in position near the starting end to independently determine the order of finish.



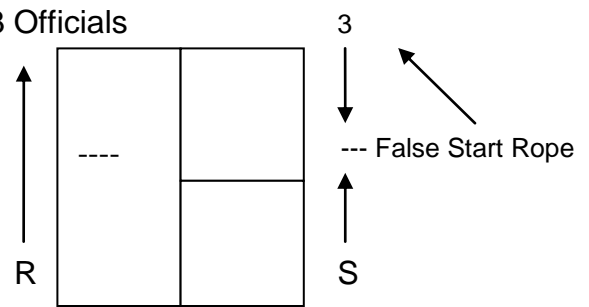
**Other Examples:**

R = Referee; S = Starter

2 Officials

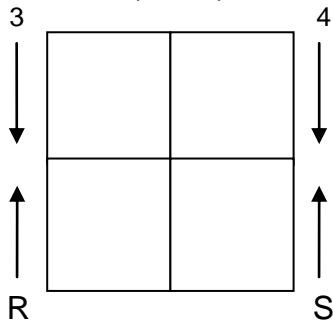


3 Officials

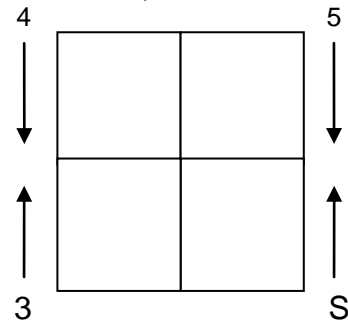


3<sup>rd</sup> official tends false start rope and return to end of pool

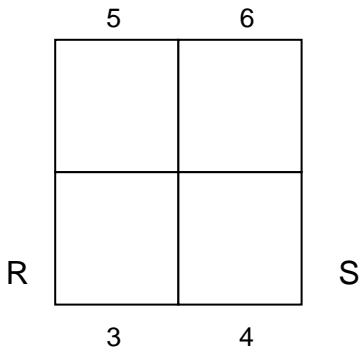
4 Officials (Invite)



5 Officials (Conference/Invite)



## 6 Officials



### **SWIMMING ANNOUNCER**

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-13

The announcer helps control the flow of the meet, keeps the meet moving on schedule, makes appropriate announcements and informs swimmers, coaches and spectators regarding the status of the meet. The announcer should be knowledgeable in all aspects of swimming.

#### ***Before the meet, the announcer should:***

- become familiar with the PA system and make sure the volume is adequate.
- discuss with meet management the schedule for team introductions, National Anthem, announcements concerning concessions, etc.
- confirm with the referee the starting protocol being used.
- remind spectators to turn off, or silence, pagers and cell phones to ensure a fair start for all swimmers.
- inform spectators of any policies regarding the use of flash cameras at the start of a race.
- where possible seek out proper pronunciation of names of competitors.

#### ***During the meet, the announcer should:***

- announce each event in the manner prescribed by the referee. If possible, introduce the swimmers by lane before each heat.
- be sure exhibition swimmers are properly announced as such prior to the race.
- assist the referee in silencing the crowd, if requested.

- be aware of where the referee is at all times in the event he/she needs your attention.
- be aware of possible record setting performances and announce those performances, national time standards and All-American standards.
- announce the results of each event, from last place to first place, including disqualifications.
- make appropriate announcements to assist competitors, coaches and spectators of the progress of the meet.
- for the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle, ask the lap counters to report to the end of the pool immediately following the 100-yard freestyle.
- announce awards presentations, if applicable.
- announce intermediate scores throughout the meet and before the final relay and final score.
- make other announcements, such as location of the concession area or results of other contests of local interest (i.e., football, basketball, wrestling, etc.) only when those announcements will not interrupt the flow of the meet or be a distraction to the competitors. Such announcements should be cleared with the referee prior to the meet.

***After the meet, the announcer should:***

- recognize key personnel who helped with the meet.
- announce the final team scores.
- thank everyone for attending the meet.

**TIMING EQUIPMENT OPERATOR**

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-8

The timing equipment operator is responsible for all timing equipment, including the scoreboard. The timing equipment operator reports to the referee or his/her designee. Ideally, the timing equipment should be located on the referee's side of the pool and in such a way that the timing equipment operator is able to view all turns and finishes.

***The timing equipment operator should:***

- ensure all timing equipment starts properly and properly registers all turns and finishes for each lane.

- assure the timing system is registering each lap completed for each swimmer and add or subtract touches as necessary.
- observe whether each swimmer touches the finish pad.
- report to the referee any discrepancies of 0.3 (three-tenths), or more, of a second between the pad times and back up times or any system problem that could affect the accuracy of the times.

### **SCORER**

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-12

#### ***The scorer should:***

- record the official time, order of finish, contestant(s) name, team and points scored for each event.
- keep cumulative team scorers throughout the meet.
- operate, or assist in operating, the visible scoring device.

### **MEET MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE OPERATOR**

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-10

The meet management software operator reports to the referee. He/she is responsible for seeding the meet, if necessary, and producing event or heat sheets for each race. The meet management software operator should assist the referee in determining if individual entry limitations have been violated. The meet management software operator may also be responsible for scoring the meet and producing result sheets, which include final team scores, at the end of the meet.

### **TIMERS**

Refer to NFHS Rule 4-9

#### ***The chief timer should (head meet timer):***

- Instruct each lane timer on how to time a race, read the watch, when to reset the watch and how to determine the official time.
- should have multiple watches running to replace any malfunctioning watch during each race.

#### ***A head lane timer should be assigned to each lane and should:***

- record the times for the assigned lane and deliver the time card to the chief timer. Record all times in their lane to the hundredth of a second (.01). Do not record any digits on the stopwatch beyond the hundredths of a second.
- assist the referee in determining if the swimmer has properly finished the race.

- when automatic timing is being used, be the operator of the primary back-up button.
- for the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle, keep a written tally of the number of laps completed by the swimmer in that lane. This can be accomplished by using the meet program, lane heat sheet (on the back of the timer's card), or a timesheet.

***Lane timers should:***

- become familiar with the stopwatch and back-up button being used and know whether the back-up button is pushed only at the end of the race or at the beginning and end of the race.
- be alert at all times.
- be impartial and not cheer for swimmers during a race, as timers are considered meet officials.
- if there is no back-up button, use the index finger on the dominant hand to start and stop the stopwatch. If operating both the stopwatch and the back-up button, use the index finger of the non-dominant hand to activate and stop the back-up watch and the index finger on the dominant hand to stop, or activate and stop, the back-up button. Push and release the button with no hand or arm movement.
- watch the starter's console at the start of each heat. Start the watch upon seeing the illumination of the strobe light. If no strobe is available, activate the watch at the sound of the starting device. Do not remain close to the end of the pool during a race (except for the 50-yard freestyle). Approach the starting end after the swimmer makes his/her final turn.
- if there is a heat sheet or program provided, timers may be asked to confirm the correct swimmer has reported to their lane by asking for the swimmer's name.
- start the watch for every race even if no swimmer is in their lane so it can be used if another watch does not start.
- notify the head timer in their lane if the watch does not start at the beginning of the race.
- be in position, looking over the edge of the pool, at the finish end of their lane to observe the finish of the race, even if the touch occurs well under the water. When automatic timing/judging equipment is used, a legal finish occurs when the swimmer touches the finish pad or the end wall where the finish pad should have been when in proper position. Timers should watch closely enough to tell the referee where the swimmer touched.
- provide the time to the head lane timer, who shall record it.

- notify the head timer in their lane if their watch time is more than 0.3 (three-tenths) of a second slower or faster than the time on the display board.
- not clear their watches until the time has been recorded, or until they have been directed to do so by the referee or head timer.

## **LAP COUNTERS**

Lap counters for the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle are most often teammates of the competing swimmers. They are not meet officials, but must understand the importance of their job. Lap counters are not only performing an important function for the competitor in their lane, but also for the referee and head lane timer.

Only one lap counter is permitted per lane. If a swimmer is not using a lap counting device for a particular lane, no one should be allowed at the turn end of that lane.

### ***Lap counters should:***

- arrive immediately when instructed to do so by the referee or announcer. Lap counters are only allowed at the non-starting end of the pool.
- remain within the lateral limits of the lane for which they are counting.
- always keep the correct number(s) on the counter facing the starting end of the pool counting in ascending order from one to seventeen.
- change the count after the swimmer turns at the starting end of the pool.
- turn the counter to show all orange on the final turn.
- restrict any comments to cheering and not give splits or place in the race.
- always place the counter as close to the end wall as possible and remove it from the pool prior to the swimmer starting the turn.
- not enter the water to retrieve a dropped lap counting device without permission of the referee.
- remain in place until the race is over, return the lap counters to the 01 or beginning position, and leave the counters on the pool deck when the race is over.



## SUGGESTED PROTOCOLS FOR ELECTRONIC RELAY JUDGING EQUIPMENT

Refer to NFHS Appendix B

- In non-championship meets, at least two relay takeoff judges must be assigned to observe the relay exchanges. In championship meets, at least four relay takeoff judges must be assigned this responsibility.
- In championship meets, a relay takeoff judge shall be assigned to observe relay exchanges in no more than four lanes.
- If the electronic relay judging equipment detects an exchange differential (takeoff pad time minus finish pad time) of -0.09 through +0.09 second inclusive, from the manufacturer's starting point, the decision(s) of the relay takeoff judge(s) shall be considered to confirm a disqualification. The determination of the electronic relay judging equipment shall be official when indicating an exchange differential of -0.09 through -0.01 seconds from the manufacturer's starting point, if confirmed by at least one takeoff judge. If the electronic relay judging equipment indicates values of 0.00 through +0.09 seconds there shall not be a rules violation, and the observations of the takeoff judges is not considered.
- If the electronic relay judging equipment records an exchange differential outside the range -0.09 through +0.09 second from the manufacturer's starting point, a disqualification shall occur if there is confirmation of a rules violation: (a) by the electronic relay judging equipment and either takeoff judge; or (b) dual confirmation by the takeoff judges.
- An alleged rules infraction that is observed by either takeoff judge shall be recorded immediately in writing. Each relay takeoff judge who observes an alleged rules violation shall wait until the last competitor of the heat is in the water before signaling an observed violation by raising a hand overhead, with open palm.

## SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIATING SWIMMERS WITH DISABILITIES

A competitor with a disability requesting a specific accommodation(s) in the start, strokes, turns, etc. which does not require equipment, **must** seek written approval from the state association, which may be granted providing the accommodation(s) does not fundamentally alter the sport and/or no advantage is gained. Written approval from the state association should include what accommodations the referee should make for the swimmer.

The disabled swimmer and/or his/her coach are responsible for notifying the referee, prior to the competition, of the disability and of the written state association-approved modification(s) that should be made. The swimmer/coach shall provide any assistant(s) or special equipment (tappers, deck mats, etc.), if required.

***The referee's responsibilities include:***

- determining how to implement the state association-approved modifications in the facility where the meet is being held.
- instructing the starter and stroke and turn officials as to the accommodations to be made for a swimmer(s).

***Some of the modifications which the referee should be aware of are:***

- Reassignment of lanes within a heat, e.g., exchanging Lanes 3 and 1.
- Allowing the swimmer's assistant(s) on the deck or in the water to assist with a start.

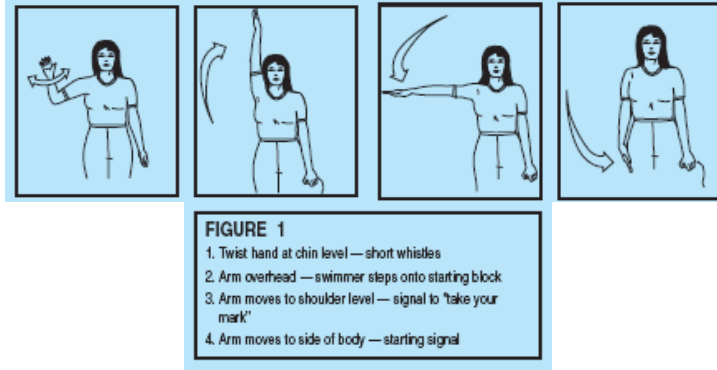
***Some of the following modifications which the referee should be aware of are:***

*Modifications for the blind or visually impaired may include:*

- Starts – With an audible starting system, no modification is usually required for a blind or visually impaired swimmer. A swimmer may, however, require assistance getting to and on the block, or into the water if an in-water start is used.
- Turns and finishes – A blind or visually impaired swimmer may be permitted to have a “tapper”, which is a pole with a soft-tipped end. The swimmer is tapped with the “tapper” as notification of turns and the finish. Sounding devices should not be used as they may cause confusion for other swimmers. It is the swimmer's responsibility to provide the tapper(s) and operator(s), who shall be positioned within the confines of the swimmer's lane at the ends of the pool.
- Relay takeoffs – A physical touch may be required to signal the relay swimmer when his/her teammate has touched the wall. The specific method may be tailored to the swimmer's preference so long as it does not interfere with the timing system.

*Modifications for the deaf and hard-of-hearing may include:*

- Deaf and hard of hearing swimmers require a visual starting signal, i.e., a strobe light and/or starter's arm signals. The modification may include the referee reassigning lanes within the swimmer's heat, i.e., exchanging one lane for another, so that the strobe light or starter's arm signal can more clearly be seen by the deaf or hard-of-hearing swimmer. Standard starter's arm signals are shown in Figure 1. A false start rope may be required in the event of a recall.
- Strobe light location – The referee, or his/her designee, shall advise the swimmer and their coach as to the location of the strobe light and the light should be located where the swimmers can clearly see it for the start.



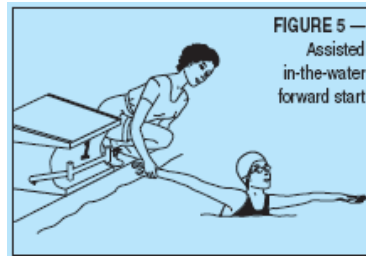
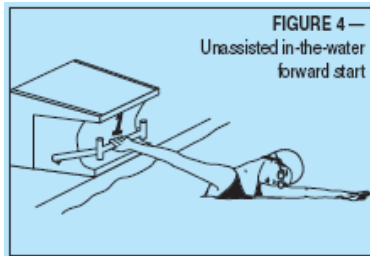
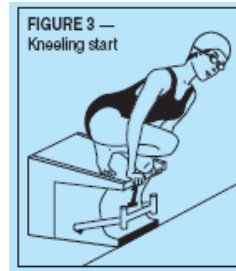
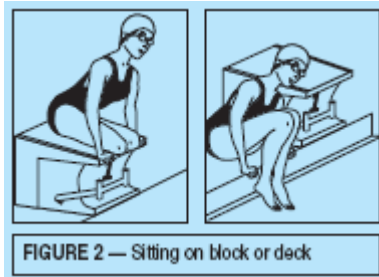
Photos provided by USA Swimming.

*Modifications for the mentally impaired may include:*

A deck or in-water start is allowable and the swimmer may be permitted to have an assistant on the deck or in the water when necessary. No other specific rule modifications are required other than patience and clarity in communicating instructions.

*Modifications for the physically disabled may include:*

- Starts (all strokes):
  - May take longer to assume their starting position.
  - May have difficulty holding onto the starting grips or gutter/pool end for a start.
  - May need assistance from someone on the deck or in the water to maintain a starting position.
  - May need to assume a modified starting position on the blocks, deck, gutter, or in the water in order to maintain their balance.
- Starts (freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly): A forward start (facing the course) shall be used. However, modifications include:
  - Allowing the swimmer to start from a sitting position on the block or on the deck.
  - Allowing the swimmer to assume a starting position in the water, with or without assistance.
  - Allowing a swimmer who cannot use a hand and/or foot to maintain contact with the wall to use some other part of the body.
  - For breaststroke and butterfly, after the start and after each turn, allowing a swimmer who is unable to push off with the leg(s) to perform one arm stroke that need not be simultaneous or in the horizontal plane to attain the breast position.
  - Examples of modified starting positions are shown in Figures 2 through 5.



Photos provided by USA Swimming.

- Strokes and kicks: The referee and stroke and turn judges should follow the general rule that, “If a part of the body is absent or cannot be used, it is not judged; if it is used during the stroke or kick, it should be judged in accordance with the NFHS Rules and Regulations”.
  - Judgments should be made based on the actual rule, not on the swimmer’s technique. For example, the breaststroke swimmer with one arm or leg shorter than the other may have a non-symmetrical stroke or kick, but as long as the arm or leg action is simultaneous, it would meet that portion of the rule.
- Turns and finishes: Touches should be judged in the same manner as strokes and kicks, i.e., on the basis of the arm(s) and/or hand(s) that the swimmer can use. In breaststroke and butterfly events, the swimmer must reach forward as if attempting a simultaneous two-hand touch. When a swimmer has a different arm length, only the longer arm must touch the wall, but both arms must be stretched forward simultaneously. Swimmers with no arms or with upper limbs too short to stretch above the head may touch the wall with any part of the upper body.
- Relays: Relay swimmers who cannot exit the water immediately may be allowed to remain in the lane until all relays have finished so long as they do not interfere with other swimmers or the timing equipment.

# Appendix A

## RELAY TAKEOFF CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Circle one: (**SIDE** or **LANE**)

	<u>Swimmer Number</u>			
Lane 1	1	2	3	4
Lane 2	1	2	3	4
Lane 3	1	2	3	4
Lane 4	1	2	3	4
Lane 5	1	2	3	4
Lane 6	1	2	3	4
Lane 7	1	2	3	4
Lane 8	1	2	3	4

Place an **X** through the lane & swimmer in violation or **circle** the lane & swimmer not in violation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

## RELAY TAKEOFF CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Circle one: (**SIDE** or **LANE**)

	<u>Swimmer Number</u>			
Lane 1	1	2	3	4
Lane 2	1	2	3	4
Lane 3	1	2	3	4
Lane 4	1	2	3	4
Lane 5	1	2	3	4
Lane 6	1	2	3	4
Lane 7	1	2	3	4
Lane 8	1	2	3	4

Place an **X** through the lane & swimmer in violation or **circle** the lane & swimmer not in violation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

## Appendix B

### FALSE START CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_

LANE #

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Place an **X** through the lane and swimmer in violation.

### FALSE START CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_

LANE #

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Place an **X** through the lane and swimmer in violation.

### FALSE START CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_

LANE #

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Place an **X** through the lane and swimmer in violation.

### FALSE START CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_

LANE #

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Place an **X** through the lane and swimmer in violation.

### FALSE START CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_

LANE #

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Place an **X** through the lane and swimmer in violation.

### FALSE START CARD

Event # \_\_\_\_ Heat # \_\_\_\_\_

LANE #

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Place an **X** through the lane and swimmer in violation.

**New York State Certified Swimming  
Officials' Association, Inc.**

**RELAY FALSE START VERIFICATION**

200 Medley Relay

200 Freestyle Relay

400 Freestyle Relay

**Lane #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heat #:** \_\_\_\_\_

Swimmer(s)      2<sup>nd</sup>      3<sup>rd</sup>      4<sup>th</sup>  
                                    

*Directions: Complete information above indicating the swimmer(s) you have observed in violation and submit to the meet referee immediately at the conclusion of the heat/event.*





## Appendix D

### SAMPLE BALLOT FINISH FORM

The following form may be used for the ballot system of determining places when automatic or semiautomatic timing systems fail or when manual timing is the primary timing system.

<b>LANE:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Referee's Pick	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Starter's Pick	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Timed Place	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Points	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Order of Finish</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The competitor who procures the lowest total points when adding the rundowns of the starter and the referee and the time rundown is declared the winner.

The competitor with the second lowest total is awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place and this practice is continued for all competitors.

If two or more competitors have the same sum total, they tie for that position, the lower position(s) are left vacant.

In case of a tie by two or more competitors for any place scoring in an event, the points for all places involved in the tie shall be divided equally among the tying competitors.

## Appendix E

### LAP COUNT SHEET – 6 LANE POOL

**Note: Discharge sounding device when lead swimmer is 5 yards before distance underlined.**

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

## Appendix F

### LAP COUNT SHEET – 8 LANE POOL

**Note: Discharge sounding device when lead swimmer is 5 yards before distance underlined.**

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										

EVENT:			HEAT:			12		16	X	20
Lane	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	<u>450</u>	500
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										

## Appendix G

### OFFICIAL'S SCORESHEET

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

MEET: \_\_\_\_\_ vs \_\_\_\_\_

ODD LANES: \_\_\_\_\_ EVEN LANES: \_\_\_\_\_

SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

Event	JV Finish Order	Varsity Finish Order	Home	Visitor
200 Med Relay				
200 Free				
200 IM				
50 Free				
Diving				
100 Fly				
100 Free				
500 Free				
200 Free Relay				
100 Back				
100 Breast				
400 Free Relay				

6 lane pool 6-4-3-2-1; 8-4-2

\*\*Circle a DQ

## **CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS PUBLICATION**

Colorado High School Activities Association  
Delaware Swimming and Diving Officials Association  
Indiana High School Athletic Association  
Iowa High School Athletic Association  
Michigan High School Athletic Association  
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North Carolina High School Athletic Association  
North Dakota High School Activities Association  
North Dakota Officials' Association  
Ohio High School Athletic Association  
Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association  
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*Campaign materials delivered electronically for easy  
implementation*



### RESOURCE DISC (DVD-ROM):

- Implementation guide (printable PDF file)
- Overview video
- Motivational video
- Posters, student pledge cards, artwork (customize with your school logo) (printable PDF files)
- PSA scripts to read at school/games/events
- Radio PSAs (for use on-air)

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- Full-screen, full-resolution videos
- Overview and implementation video
- Motivational video – for all audiences
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