

# Stroke & Turn Judging - Philosophy, Procedures & Protocols

Virginia Swimming, Inc.

September 29, 2007

## Philosophy of Officiating

- Preamble to the USA-S Rules & Regulations

*“All competitive swimming events held under USA Swimming sanction shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules which are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition.”*
- Enforcing the rules is best thought of as protecting the swimmers who are swimming within the rules rather than as punishing the swimmers who are swimming in violation of the rules
- Our training is geared towards producing well-qualified officials who can enforce the Rules & Regulations within the spirit of the preamble
- Officials should conduct themselves in a professional manner
  - Thoroughly familiar with current USA-S Rules & Regulations
  - Applies current interpretations of the Rules & Regulations
  - Understands and follows standard as well as meet-specific procedures and protocols
  - Treat all swimmers in an unbiased manner regardless of club affiliation or family relationship
  - Dress neatly and according to the current dress code
  - Work regularly so as to develop experience and confidence

## S&T Certification Requirements (Summary – Refer to Current Certification Guidelines for Details)

- Certified as a Timer (includes passing the Timer test)
- Attend training clinic
- Pass written test
- Must join USA-S and display membership card while on deck
- Complete a minimum of five training sessions at meets with predominantly B/C swimming

- Satisfactorily work an additional three sessions (mostly with B/C swimmers) with an assigned trainer and make calls (in white & blue)
- Recommendation of Referees at last sessions
- District Chair has final approval authority and will issue a certification card
- Initial certification is at the V1 level; higher levels of certification are N1, N2, and N3

## S&T Re-certification Requirements

- Work a minimum of six sessions per year
- Complete any continuing education requirements

## Judging Should be Fair and Equitable

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

## Mental Traps – Mind-Sets We Want to Avoid

- Advantage vs. disadvantage – A violation is not judged as to whether or not it gives an unfair advantage to the person violating the rule; sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't, it only matters that a rule was violated
- The “twice theory” – You don't have to see it more than once before it is illegal; if you see a violation and are sure of what you saw, it should be called
- “We don't disqualify 8 & unders” – There are many variants of this statement but the bottom line is that all swimmers are judged by the same rules

- Remember, younger swimmers are not necessarily less experienced than older swimmers – even if we could judge based on experience, age is not an absolute indicator of experience
- There is no reason not to expect young swimmers to have to swim within the rules, this is no different than in any other avenue of life
- “Don’t ask me to judge my child” – Our expectation is that all officials should be able to treat all swimmers equally
- Don’t infer (Call what you see, not what you don’t see) – as an example:
  - In observing a swimmer approach the turn in breaststroke simultaneous you observe one hand touch the wall, while the other hand doesn’t come within several inches of the wall – this is an example of an illegal one handed touch
  - In observing multiple swimmers at the turn in breaststroke you shift your eyes to a swimmer with one hand on the wall and the other hand off the wall, and the swimmer is moving away from the wall – the swimmer might not have touched simultaneously with both hands but then again they might have; you didn’t observe that portion of the turn and therefore you can’t infer something you did not see
- Don’t anticipate
  - Swimmers shouldn’t be judged based on having a reputation of violating a particular rule – and we shouldn’t have discussions that lead to this type of reputation
  - You “might” have seen a swimmer do something in a previous length of the race or in an earlier race – don’t use this as a basis to look for a particular violation

#### **Rules of Thumb –**

- The benefit of the doubt ALWAYS goes to the swimmer
  - In swimming there is no loss of yardage, no foul shots, no penalty box; the penalty for violating a rule is disqualification
  - It is extremely important then to know that with certainty that a rule has been violated; if you’re not sure, don’t make the call

- What we observe in the pool is sometimes white, sometimes black, and sometimes grey
  - White means we’re sure that what we observed is within the rules – it is legal
  - Black means we’re sure that we observed is prohibited by the rules – it is illegal
  - Grey means we’re unsure of what we observed, it might have been legal or it might have been illegal – because we’re not sure the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer and no call is made
- Ugly ain’t (necessarily) illegal
- Know the rules; review the rules before meets
- Experience, experience, experience – Even experienced officials frequently learn something new or experience a situation that they haven’t previously seen; don’t ever assume that you know it all

#### **What to Do When You Observe An Infraction of the Rules**

- Immediately raise one hand overhead on observing a violation of the rules that occurs within your jurisdiction
  - By rule, if you don’t immediately raise your hand there can be no disqualification
  - If you raise your hand, you don’t have to make a call – for example, you realize that what you saw isn’t a rule violation
  - If you’re hesitant in raising your hand, the call was probably too close to make
- Keep your hand up long enough for the Referee/Chief Judge to see it
- After raising your hand, continue to observe all the swimmers in your jurisdiction – don’t miss something because your attention has been turned elsewhere
- S&T Judges usually fill-out the disqualification slip for the infraction they observed (at championship level meets this is sometimes done by the Chief Judge)

- Disqualification reports must contain the following information -
  - Confirmed name of swimmer
  - Event #, Heat #, Event name
  - Violation
    - Most, but not all, violations are listed on the DQ slips
  - Your signature
  - Referee's signature
- Each infraction that you observe should be called –
  - Don't assume that because you've already written up one violation you can skip the next; the first might be overturned and the second might have been upheld had it been called
  - Don't assume that because you've seen a hand go up at the end of the other end of the pool the swimmer has already been disqualified; it could be a different swimmer, a different violation, or a violation that is ultimately overruled
- The Referee must approve the disqualification which will sometimes be done through the a Chief Judge
- For each infraction, be prepared to answer the following three questions:
  - What was your jurisdiction?
  - What did you see?
  - Which rule was violated?
- If you made a mistake, admit it
  - Don't penalize the swimmer for your mistake
  - Learn from your mistake
- Use proper terminology when describing a rules infraction, for example -
  - It is not illegal to execute a flip turn when transitioning from butterfly to backstroke during the individual medley, but it is illegal to not finish while on the breast during that transition
- Talking with the Swimmer

- With the exception of Senior Champs our current practice is for the Referee/Chief Judge to inform the coach of the infraction rather than having the S&T official inform the swimmer
- If asked to inform the swimmer of the infraction you should -
  - Inform the swimmer of the violation, don't coach
  - Don't touch the athlete
  - For age-group swimmers it is best to -
    - Get down to eye level
    - Good, bad, good (You had a good swim, but you forgot to touch with two hands at the turn. If you work with your coach on this you should be good next time)

### **Disputes Over Calls By Coaches/Parents**

- In general, all questions should be directed towards the Referee, however, a simple inquiry as to what occurred can be answered if it doesn't distract the official from observing the swimmers within their jurisdiction (sometimes a coach just didn't see what happened or a parent is curious as to what happened)
- Any dispute or protest should be directed towards the Referee

### **Placement and Rotation of Officials**

- Determined by Referee or Chief Judge
- Dependent upon pool configuration
- Dependent upon the number of officials available
- Frequently rotate clockwise to the next position after a defined number of events

### **Jurisdiction of Officials**

- The jurisdiction of each S&T official will be set by the Referee or Chief Judge
- A call can only be made by a S&T official when the infraction occurs within that official's jurisdiction
- Each S&T official will be assigned one or more lanes and can only make calls occurring within the assigned jurisdiction

- Jurisdiction within a lane will be further restricted depending upon the number of officials present and the level of the meet
- Stroke & Turn Judges on the end of the pool only (no judges walking the sides)
  - Jurisdiction extends from the end of the pool at which the judge is stationed to middle of pool
- End (Turn) and side (Stroke) judges
  - Specific assignments will be made
- Equal time should be spent observing each of the swimmers within your jurisdiction
  - If one or more lanes are empty, an equal amount of time should be spent on the empty lane(s)
- Your full attention should be on the swimmers when they are within your jurisdiction

### **Relay Takeoff Judging**

- Dual confirmation is used
- Referee or Chief Judge will assign positions
- When the toes of the outgoing swimmer leave the blocks, look down to see if the incoming swimmer has touched
- As the take-offs are observed, mark your relay take-off slip for each take-off in your jurisdiction (O = okay; X = early)
- Do not raise your hand if you observe an early take-off
- Compare your observations with those of the second takeoff official; only if both agree as to the same swimmer taking off early is it a DQ
- All relay takeoff slips should be turned in to the Referee/Chief Judge as part of the official record

### **Judging Swimmers with Physical Disabilities**

- Judge, in accordance with USA Swimming rules, any part of the body that is used
- Do not judge a part of the body that cannot be used
- Base your judgment on the actual rule, not the

## Rules Highlights

The following sections are meant to illustrate particular points and are not meant to be an all inclusive summary of the rules

### Breaststroke

- Breaststroke is the only stroke that has a stroke cycle
  - The cycle must begin with a pull which is then followed by a kick
  - At the start and at each turn, the swimmer may also take one downward, butterfly kick
    - This kick is optional, it is not mandatory
    - If taken, the first arm pull must have been begun or finished, and it must be taken prior to the first breaststroke kick which still must be taken
- The arms (not the shoulders) must pull in the same horizontal plane and this includes the first pull following the start and each turn
- When judging whether or not the swimmer is on his breast following a turn the judge should first determine that the swimmer has left the wall and then determine if the correct body position has been achieved

### Butterfly Infractions

- Arms not recovered over the surface of the water
  - The arm is anything above the wrist and below the shoulder – there is no requirement that a particular part of the arm such as the elbow be recovered over the surface of the water
  - Looking for any part of the arm to break the water surface – there is no requirement to see air between the arm and the surface of the water
- Don't infer that an alternating kick has occurred if it is not observed
- When judging whether or not the swimmer is on his breast following a turn the judge should first determine that the swimmer has left the wall and then determine if the correct body position has been achieved

### Backstroke Infractions

- Toes curling over the gutter after the starting signal are the responsibility of the Turn Judge; prior to the start it is the responsibility of the Starter
- There is no requirement for a particular stroke or kick in this event – only that the stroke be swum on the back
- If a swimmer elects to go past vertical towards the breast to execute a turn –
  - They are entitled to a single arm pull or simultaneous double arm pull
  - A long, slow arm pull can sometimes save a swimmer from a non-continuous turning
  - If the swimmer isn't pulling or turning it is a non-continuous turning action
  - A poorly executed turn in which the swimmer turns too close to the wall and who's hand(s) contact the wall rather than continuing through the flipping motion is legal as long as it was a continuous turn up to the point at which contact with the wall was made
- A swimmer may be completely submerged at the finish:
  - If the swimmer completely submerges prior to the turn judge having to shift his/her attention to the touch at the wall, the submersion occurred prior to the finish and merits a disqualification

### Freestyle Infractions

- In general, the crawl stroke will be swum as it is the fastest stroke for most swimmers, but any stroke or combination of strokes is allowed as long as it is not the freestyle leg of the individual medley or medley relay
- If breaststroke, butterfly, or backstroke are swum during freestyle they are judged according to the freestyle rules
- Potential violations include walking on or pushing off the bottom, using the lane line or gutter for propulsion, not breaking the surface by 15 meters, and failing to touch the wall at the turn

## Individual Medley

- Strokes not swum in proper order
- Violation of stroke and turn rules for each stroke
- The last ¼ of the race must be swum as something other than butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke
  - The USA-S Rules & Regulations Committee has ruled that *“When a swimmer has traveled a sufficient distance that the official can with certainty judge the competitor is swimming in the style of butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke, then a DQ is appropriate.”*
- When transitioning from one stroke to the next, there must be a legal finish for the stroke being concluded and a legal finish for the stroke being started

## Medley Relay Infractions

- Strokes not swum in proper order
- Violation of stroke and turn rules for each stroke
- The last ¼ of the race must be swum as something other than butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke
- Early take-off

## Freestyle Relay Infractions

- Violation of freestyle stroke and turn rules
- Early take-off

## IM and MR Rules Interpretation

- The Rules and Regulations Committee adopted the following parameters regarding touching the bottom during a turn: *“Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. Therefore, standing on the bottom after a legal touch has been made and prior to pushing off the wall should be considered part of the turn and no DQ should be called.”*

## Additional Rules

- A swimmer must start and finish in the same lane

- Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but a swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom
- Standing on the bottom during any other stroke other than freestyle shall result in disqualification
- Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across or otherwise interfering shall disqualify the offender, subject to the discretion of the Referee
- Any swimmer not entered in a race who enters the pool during ongoing competition shall be barred from their next individual event (excludes dipping goggles/splashing)
- Grasping lane dividers to assist forward motion is not permitted

## United States Masters Swimming (USMS) Rules Differences

- Butterfly kick rule
  - The use of breaststroke kick is permitted in Butterfly.
  - Dolphin kick and breaststroke kick may be used interchangeably throughout the race.
  - The arms must recover over the water with each breaststroke kick if used.
    - USMS interpretation: A second breaststroke kick may not be initiated without an over-the-water recovery.
    - A single breaststroke kick is permitted after the start and after the turn before an arm pull.
    - A single breaststroke kick is permitted before the touch at the turn and finish without being followed by an arm pull.