

# Swimmers With Disabilities – Meet Situations & Resolutions

## Central Zone USA Swimming

This guide provides consistent, rule-aligned examples of how to apply Article 105 and general technical rules when addressing situations involving swimmers with disabilities. These scenarios are adapted for use by **Central Zone officials, referees, coaches, and meet administrators**.

Clear communication between the Meet Referee (MR), Deck Referee (DR), Starter, and the athlete's coach is essential. When in doubt, pause and confer — decisions apply only to the current competition and do not set precedent.

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### Situation 1 – Tourette's Syndrome & Potential False Start

**Scenario:** Athlete has involuntary movements due to Tourette's; coach requests protection from false start DQ.

**Central Zone Guidance:** - Use Article 105 principles — involuntary movement is not a false start. - Starter must ensure all swimmers are reasonably stationary before initiating the starting sequence. - Coach or Personal Assistant (PA) may remain near the block for support.

**Resolution:** - Inform Starter and DR before the event. - Clarify that **uncontrolled, involuntary movements ≠ initiating a start**. - If both Starter and Referee confirm the swimmer initiated early movement toward the water, a DQ remains appropriate.

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### Situation 2 – New Athlete With Autism; Coach Unsure of Needs

**Scenario:** Coach is unfamiliar with swimmer's sensory, communication, or anxiety-related needs.

**Central Zone Guidance:** Acceptable accommodations may include: - Parent or PA accompanying swimmer behind the blocks. - Bypassing Clerk of Course if overwhelming. - Modified staging or quiet space until race start.

Needs may change as the athlete becomes more comfortable.

**Resolution:** - Meet Referee and coach collaborate to identify necessary accommodations. - Document accommodations on the appropriate form for later sessions.

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### Situation 3 – Breaststroke: Leg Modification vs. Other Violations

**Scenario:** Swimmer with approved leg modification performs an unrelated violation (e.g., non-simultaneous touch).

**Resolution:** - Modifications apply **only** to the limb(s) affected. - All other rules must be followed. - A DQ for non-leg violations is correct.

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### Situation 4 – Breaststroke: Foot Turnout

**Scenario:** Swimmer inconsistently fails to turn feet outward during kick.

**Resolution:** - Outward foot rotation is required unless specifically modified. - Without an approved modification, this is a stroke violation. - DQ is appropriate.

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### Situation 5 – Breaststroke: Extra Butterfly Kicks

**Scenario:** Athlete with one modified leg performs two butterfly kicks with the unmodified leg.

**Resolution:** - Rule allows **one** butterfly kick at start/turn. - Modification applies only to the impaired limb. - Extra kick with non-modified limb = DQ.

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### Situation 6 – No Submitted Modification; One Working Limb

**Scenario:** Athlete has one functioning arm or leg, but no accommodation form was submitted.

**Central Zone Guidance:** - Officials must call observed violations. - DR reports to MR.

**Resolution:** - Without prior modification, the standard rulebook applies. - DQ is correct. - Coach should immediately confer with MR; Article 105 may be applied **for future swims** once discussed and documented.

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### Situation 7 – Butterfly: No Legs, One Partial Arm; No Advance Notice

**Scenario:** Athlete arrives using mobility device; swims butterfly with non-simultaneous arms; no prior modification declared.

**Resolution:** - Without declared and approved modifications, standard rules apply. - Non-simultaneous arm recovery is a violation; DQ stands. - Coach should complete accommodation documentation for subsequent events.

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## **Situation 8 – Backstroke: Delayed Turn Due to Paralysis**

**Scenario:** Swimmer with partial paralysis takes significantly longer to initiate their backstroke turn.

**Resolution:** - Article 105 does **not** modify timing requirements for turns. - Delay of turn remains a violation. - DQ is correct.

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## **Situation 9 – Breaststroke: Breathing Pattern Variation**

**Scenario:** Swimmer with dwarfism breathes every other stroke but surfaces legally.

**Resolution:** - Rule requires head to break surface each stroke cycle. - All other components are legal. - **No DQ** – performance is compliant.

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## **Situation 10 – Freestyle: Standing & Pushing Off Bottom**

**Scenario:** Athlete stands and pushes off pool bottom during a free event; disability undisclosed.

**Resolution:** - Standing and pushing off bottom is a clear rule violation. - DQ is correct. - Coach should be connected with LSC/Zone disability resources for education.

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## **Central Zone Guidance Summary**

- **Advance disclosure** is essential for applying Article 105 modifications.
  - **Officials call what they observe**, then MR determines if Article 105 applies.
  - Decisions apply only to the current race or meet.
  - Communication ensures fairness and inclusion for all swimmers.
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**Prepared for Central Zone USA Swimming**