



Starter Clinic



Agenda

- Ozark Swimming Philosophy
- Certification Requirements
- Introduction and Preparation
- Equipment and Setup
- General Information
- Commands
- Whistle Start Protocol
- Starts and False Start Protocol
- Resources



Ozark Swimming Officiating Philosophy

One set of rules enforced by certified officials provides and equitable and level playing field for all competitors – from beginning swimmers to Olympians.

An official is an “interested observer” who reports infractions witnessed during competition.



What does this mean?

- Success of every meet depends on the official's integrity, knowledge, concern and regard for the competitive interest of the swimmer.
- One set of rules that apply to all swimmers regardless of age or ability.
- The benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer!
- Officials demonstrate impartiality and professionalism at all times before, during and after a meet, when in uniform.



Zero Tolerance Policy

There will be no inappropriate physical contact, no abusive actions, verbal or otherwise, inappropriate language, or other inappropriate interaction with swimmers or others.

- **Applies to:** Officials, Coaches, Chaperones, Meet Workers, Club Board Members, Others in positions of authority over swimmers.
- Policy extracted from USA Swimming Code of Conduct, Article 301.
- Incidental contact – will happen but must be kept to minimum.
- One – on – one situations in other than public areas must be avoided.



Certification Requirements

You are responsible for tracking your apprenticeship requirements and the requirements to maintain your certification. These can be found in the Advancement Guidelines.

Advancing to Starter:

- Attend Ozark Official Advancement Clinic for Starter.
- Must take and pass the online exam(s) within 30 days of attending the clinic and prior to apprentice sessions. The Starter tests include the following:
 - **Recertification Tests:** Stroke and Turn Judge / Timer.
 - **Certification Test:** Starter, Timing Judge, Clerk of Course.
- A minimum passing grade of 80% on all tests is required.



Certification Requirements cont'd

Apprentice on deck at Ozark sanctioned meets:

- Minimum of 6 sessions from at least 3 Ozark Sanctioned meets as Starter with 2 different Deck Referees.
 - 4 sessions must be at sessions where the majority of athletes are 12 & under.
 - 1 session must be as Timing Judge. This session is to be deemed successful by the Meet Referee.
- Receive written recommendations from 2 Meet / Deck Referees that you have worked with, confirming your readiness for certification as a Starter.



Certification Requirements

cont'd

Observation:

- Upon completion of apprentice sessions submit your completed “Apprentice Form” to the Ozark Officials Coordinator and schedule your observation as a Starter
- Observations are held during sessions where the majority of athletes are 12 & under

All apprentice sessions and observations must be completed at non-championship format meets and meets / sessions without time standards. These meets must be Ozark / USA Swimming sanctioned meets. Intra-squad meets will not be counted toward apprentice sessions.

This process must be completed within 6 months from the date of the clinic the candidate attends or they must restart the process



Maintaining your Certification

Each Season (September 1 – August 31):

- Be current member of USA Swimming (non-athlete or athlete) without any lapse.
 - Work a minimum of 6 sessions as a certified official at Ozark/USA Swimming sanctioned meets hosted by teams other than your own.*
- Work 1 session as a certified official at an Ozark Swimming sponsored Championship meet:
 - A Champs – November
 - Division I – February
 - Long Course Champs – July

Every two years:

- Must attend appropriate Ozark Official Recertification Clinic.
- Must take and pass the appropriate online examinations within 30 days after attending the re-certification clinic. A score of 80% or better on all tests taken is necessary to pass the official's test.

Recertification Tests – Re-certification Starter

***Note: Apprentice sessions do not apply towards this requirement.**

Ozark Swimming Starter Clinic



Starter Introduction

The Starter is a critical position on deck and cannot be taken casually.

- You are in direct contact with the swimmers during a critical phase of the race – **THE START!**
- Your actions can clearly affect the swimmer's performance.
- Starting should be constantly practiced and improved.
- The best Starter is the one that no one can remember at the end of the meet.



Philosophy of Starting

GOAL: A fair start for all swimmers. Three main aspects to understand:

- Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
- Knowing when the field is ready to be sent
- Knowing when it is necessary to intervene so that these two goals may be realized



Starter Preparation

- Take officiating responsible seriously
- Work regularly at the job and always be open to continually trying to improve
- Be professional in manner
- Accept the assignment you are given cheerfully
- Always be in the proper attire for an official
- Check your Ego at the door



The Mindset of a Starter

- The STARTER reads the field, to determine when THE FIELD is ready to start—Not the other way around!
- PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE
- Control your emotions so that the swimmers can control theirs!



Starting Rules

From Section 101.2 of the USA Swimming Rulebook:

- 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.
- 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. Swimmers starting in the water must have at least one hand in contact with the wall or starting platform. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.



Starting Rules

From Section 101.2 of the USA Swimming Rulebook:

- 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.
- 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.



Before Each Heat

- Looking at swimmers behind the blocks
- Short whistles
- Long whistle(s)
- Be in position and ready to go at long whistle



Two Parts of the Start

- Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
- Knowing when the field is ready to receive the starting signal



“The First Part of the Start”

- Patience as the swimmers settle into position
- Forward Start—One foot at front of block
- Backstroke Start—Toes not curled over gutter
- Once all swimmers are in position, ready for the command



“Take Your Mark”

- Conversational tone
- Inviting the swimmers to swim
- Slightly descending tone
- Statement, not a question
- Delivered in a relaxed, but confident way
- “Close the door” “Pass the Salt” “I love you”



“The Second Part of the Start”

- Wait for the swimmers to become stationary
- Stationary does **NOT** necessarily mean motionless
- Stationary = Establishes vertical plane at front of block
- Send the swimmers once all are stationary



If Things Don't Go As Planned...(For ANY Reason!)

- “Stand, please”
- To be delivered more softly and extremely calmly
- PATIENCE to allow swimmers to refocus before giving the command again



Once The Heat Has Started

- Hold microphone open and in position until heads surface, in case necessary to recall
- Starter can recall a heat for any reason that caused swimmers to not have a fair start
- Recall = No Swimmers Charged with False Start
- Mark any empty lanes in starter program



The False Start

- A Swimmer STARTING early—breaking his/her stationary position before the start
- Record violation by notating on heat sheet
- Dual confirmation procedures



Where to Stand

- Within approximately 5 meters from start of pool
- Want to be able to observe entire field but also distinguish between individual lanes
- Starter chooses first, referee adjusts to starter



Starter Equipment

Starting device: More than the microphone

- Electronic timing system with a horn starting signal and strobe light
- Strobe light should be clearly visible to both swimmers and timers
- Speakers located so swimmers can easily hear starting commands and signal
- After warm-ups, work with Timing Table staff to check that the system is working correctly. This may include a test start and recall test.



Starter Equipment cont'd

- A test start, under direction of the Referee and Timing System Operator should be performed when switching connections from one end of the pool to the other to ensure that a starting signal is being received by the timing equipment.
 - This is not necessary when the starting system is moved, but not disconnected from the Timing System.
- The starting unit should be switched off and connected to the charger between sessions.
- A Starter should also have a the most current heat sheet, DQ slips, pens / pencils, and a clipboard.
 - Starters should come prepared with count sheets for distance events.



Becoming Familiar With Equipment

- Always test microphone, they are all different!
- Test volume, be sure you can be heard from all lanes!



Other Things to Say (And Not To Say!)

- Refer to the swimmers as “ladies” and “gentlemen”
- NEVER deviate the language of “Take your mark,” and “Stand, please”
- “Relax, please” or “Swimmers, relax” for prolonged delay
- “Lane __, toes, please,” if necessary to lower toes in backstroke
- “Thank you, ladies (gentlemen),” to clear pool
- Additional instructions only as directed by referee



Other Possible Responsibilities of the Starter

- Timers Briefing
- Sound warning signal for distance events



Practice, Practice, Practice!

- The more experience you gain, the more comfortable you will be!
- You are still a stroke and turn judge!



Referee / Starter Team

Prior to the meet the Starter is responsible for:

- Giving the Timer's Briefing to the Timer's for the session
- Checking the Starting / Timing System

Referee / Starter team(s) should discuss protocols with the Meet Referee regarding:

- False starts
- Delay of meet
- No shows, Declared False Starts
- Disqualifications
- Timelines
- Athletes exiting the pool
- Any special instructions



Referee / Starter Team cont'd

- Let the Referee know where you prefer to stand, this may change for forward and backstroke starts
 - The Starter must be 10 feet from the start end of the pool
- Be prepared for your assigned duties several heats before you are to take the deck
- Always use a conversational tone when giving commands. Never shout or use a commanding voice



Referee / Starter Team cont'd

General Procedures for the Start:

- The Referee will blow four or more short whistle blasts signaling swimmer in the upcoming heat that their start is coming up and they should be ready and behind the blocks.
- One long whistle blast by the Referee signals the swimmers to step up on the blocks or enter the water.
- For backstroke starts, an additional whistle blast signals for swimmers to return to the wall.
- The Referee will hand control of the deck to the Starter with an outstretched hand.



Referee / Starter Team cont'd

The Starter Shall:

- Stand within ten feet of the start end of the pool at the point where he/she will have a clear view of the pool
- Ensure that strobe flash is clearly visible to the timers
- Assume full control of the swimmers upon signal from the Referee (outstretched arm following the long whistle) and maintain control until a fair start has been achieved (and Referee drops his / her arm)
 - On occasion, the Referee may drop his / her arm to stop the start from proceeding
- Starter retains control of the heat until the last swimmer surfaces



Referee / Starter Team cont'd

- Use minimal commands necessary so that swimmers always experience standard, predictable starting commands
- Mark off the heats as they are swum
- Note empty lanes
- Mark no shows and DQ's
- Take order of finish
- Follow Referee directions
- Check with Referee if in doubt



Forward Start

- The Referee will blow 4 or more short whistle blasts signaling swimmers in the next heat that their start is imminent and they should be ready and behind the blocks
- One long whistle blast by the Referee signals the swimmers to step up on the blocks
- When the swimmers are ready, the Referee will signal with an outstretched arm that the swimmers are in the Starter's control and the heat is closed
 - Do not ask swimmers to step up, call for missing swimmers unless directed to do so by the Referee
 - Act as a second set of eyes for the Referee; if there are problems behind the blocks, let the Referee know
 - Ensure you can see the whole field simultaneously, without focusing unduly on individual swimmers



Forward Start cont'd

- Pause until you feel you have control and the swimmers are ready
- Prior to the “take your mark” command the swimmer’s feet may be placed anywhere on the starting platform
- In a flat, descending tone say “take your mark” as in “close the door, “walk the dog”, etc
- After the “take your mark” command the swimmer must have at least one foot forward on the starting platform
- Allow swimmers time to assume a stationary position
 - Some swimmers will remain standing, while other swimmers will achieve a set position before the “take your mark” command
- Stationary is a relative term when used with younger swimmers



Forward Start cont'd

- When all the swimmers are stationary, the Starter gives the Starting signal
 - The rule states that the swimmer must “immediately assume their starting position”, it does not state that the swimmers must “come down together”
 - Making sure that there is no motion can be difficult as some swimmers continue to change position after a point at which you might have thought they would have stopped



Backstroke Start

- Swimmers enter the water on the Referee's long whistle
- Upon the second long whistle blast, swimmers place their feet on the wall with both hands placed on the gutter or starting grips
- Standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited
 - Enforcement of the correct starting position is the Starter's responsibility. If not corrected before the start signal, no penalty may be imposed.
- All other aspects of the start are the same as the forward start



Starting Disabled Swimmers

- Starter should be familiar with specific guidelines in Article 105 in the USA Swimming Rule Book
- It is the athlete's responsibility (or his / her coach) to request modifications
- Before a meet always review the procedures for hand signals
- Remember, a swimmer with a disability may need extra time to assume a starting position and to exit the pool



False Start Protocol

No Recall False Start:

- The swimmer's best effort is generally on their first start. They should not be penalized for a good start by having a race recalled due to someone else false starting. The penalty for the false start will be imposed to the offender after the race.
- Upon observing a false start, both the Starter and the Referee should independently record the offending lane(s). The Starter shall state to the Referee, "I have a potential false start." If the Referee confirms seeing a false start the Starter will show the Referee his / her false start recorded on the heat sheet.
- If the Referee's recorded observation agrees with the Starters this is a Dual Confirmed False Start and the Referee will then make the call
- **If the Referee has no record, there is no false start call**



False Start Protocol cont'd

- A recall by the Starter for unusual circumstances that affect the race is appropriate:
 - Starter error, flash photography at the start, etc.
- If the recall signal is activated, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start and the Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee
- A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed



False Start Protocol cont'd

- Any swimmer starting before the starting signal shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starters observation of a violation. Swimmers remaining on the blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with a command of “Stand Please” from the Starter.
- A swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relived of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer’s reaction to the “Stand Please” command
- The “stand please” command may not be used to save a swimmer from a False Start



Dealing with a loud venue

Do

(with concurrence of the Referee)

- Wait for the noise level to drop, often the crowd will quiet if you wait
- Have the Announcer request “Quiet for the start, please”
- If no Announcer, Starter announces “Quiet for the start, please”
- Step swimmers off the blocks

Don't

- Do not attempt to talk over the noise
- Do not raise your voice or shout, it is generally ineffective and makes you look unprofessional
- Do not proceed with “take your mark” hoping the swimmers will hear you



“Good to Great”

- Knowing the rules and regulations
- Read the rulebook prior to each meet
- Read Deck Referee Starter Guidelines
- Read the “Philosophy of Starting”
- Work meets regularly
- Be a team player on and off deck



THANK YOU!!!!

See you on deck