

## **Recent Rules Changes / Interpretation Clarifications**

### ***USA-S Announces Rule Clarification effective 4/24/18: Thoughts from the Chair***

*Jim Holcomb, Chair National Officials Committee*

Recently, I have received a number of emails, and even a few telephone calls, about the underwater recovery in the butterfly and how we officiate the call.

First the rule (101.3.2), “Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.” The recovery portion of the butterfly is the “brought forward simultaneously over the water” portion. The questions have been about the entry of the hands during the recovery to start the pull portion of the arm stroke.

Mostly the question has been, “Can the hands enter the water prior to full arm extension?” That is, can the hands enter the water and extend any distance forward while under the water?

The answer is “probably.” If we are talking about entering the water a few inches short of full arm extension, then the answer is yes. The hands entering the water just short of full arm extension is legal. Of course, it is possible for the hands to re-enter far too soon, which would constitute a disqualification. It is a judgement call (we are called judges after all). However, one of our overarching tenets as swimming officials is that the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer, which we must always keep in mind.

## **Underwater Recovery in Butterfly – Prior to the Touch** *Jay Thomas, Chair, Rules and Regulations Committee*

Questions sometimes arise regarding what constitutes an underwater recovery in butterfly prior to the touch at the turn and finish. The last sentence of USA Swimming Rule 101.3.2, “Stroke,” governs. **“Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.”** The Official Glossary is also relevant to the discussion regarding the definition of the **“ARM – That part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist.”**

With the above language, the official can determine the legality of the following observations.

- 1 Just prior to the touch, a swimmer with outstretched arms moves the hands down and back up, and then touches the wall. The rule requires that if the arms are pulled back, they must be recovered over the water. In this case only the hands moved, and not the arm – so this would not be a violation.
- 2 Just prior to the touch, a swimmer separates their arms and then moves them back together, and then touches the wall. This swimmer’s arm movements did not constitute a pull and therefore this would not be a violation.
- 3 Just prior to the touch, the swimmer’s arms move backwards as if they were beginning a stroke, and are then pushed forward – under the water— and then followed by the touch. Since the swimmer pulled the arms back, by rule, they must then be recovered over the water. This swimmer pushed the arms forward under the water after pulling – that is a violation. The judge should recommend to the Referee that the swimmer be disqualified for performing an underwater recovery.

The key to making the determination that what was observed was an underwater recovery is to understand that the arm being pulled back is what drives the requirement to recover over the water. Judges should consciously think – arms pulled back require arm recovery over the water. As always – if there is any doubt as to what was observed – give the benefit of the doubt to the swimmer.

## ***USA-S Announces Rule Changes effective 5/1/18:***

New Rules Effective May 1, 2018

Jay Thomas, Rules and Regulations Committee

At the 2017 USA Swimming House of Delegates Meeting in Dallas, Texas, the House adopted several rules which become effective on May 1, 2018.

- Rule 101.7.4H – Rules pertaining to Relay Races - “On relays, the second, third and fourth swimmers are prohibited from starting from the top of the adjustable back plate. A swimmer must have at least part of one foot in contact with the starting platform in front of the adjustable back plate during a relay exchange.”

The “why” behind the change – Our rules set a maximum height above the water of the front of the starting block. This distance is 2’5 ½” for Long Course pools and 2’6” for short course pools. Allowing the swimmer to depart from the top of the back plate effectively increases this distance far more than the permitted starting block slope.

The swimmer may have both feet on top of the back plate while preparing for the exchange provided that the last part of the foot to leave the block during the exchange departs from the actual block top in front of the adjustable back plate.

- Rule 103.14.3 – Starting Platforms - “The top surface of the starting platform shall be not less than 0.50 by 0.50 meters (1 foot 8 inches square) and shall slope not more than 10 degrees from the horizontal. It may have an adjustable setting back plate. The entire surface of the platform shall be faced with permanent non-slip material. Handgrips for the forward start may be installed on the sides of the starting platforms.”

The “why” behind this change – Our rules set the specifications for backstroke starting grips in 103.14.4. The FINA Facility Rules also specify permitted (but not required) grips for forward starts located on the sides of the block top. There are some domestic facilities that are equipped with forward start grips on the block top. Since our rules were silent on these grips, there were occasions where backstroke swimmers used these grips for starts.

This rule change clarifies that the block top grips are for forward starts. Block top grips may not be used for backstroke starts.

- Rule 102.24.4.B(4) – Semi Automatic and Manual Timing – “If only one button or watch time is available, the time of that button or watch shall be the time for that timing system unless that time conflicts with other information. If such a conflict exists, the Administrative Official shall gather as much data as possible and determine the time.” (Note: new language is shown for clarity.)

The “why” behind this change – this language was to provide clearer direction to Administrative Officials when determining official time where only one button or watch time (pad missing or invalid) is available. If the available backup time conflicts with available other information such as order of finish, the Administrative Official will use his/her training and depth of experience to determine the time for the swimmer. As always, should questions arise regarding the application of a rules change – please contact your LSC Official’s Committee Chair.

**The DQ Slip Error (AKA "scrivener error").....**  
**Below is our "Official" protocol for handling a DQ Slip Error;**  
**though our goal must be to get it right the first time:**

## **Thoughts from the Chair**

*Jim Holcomb, Chair, National Officials Committee*

I'm going to recycle a note from an earlier newsletter, because at the last three meets I worked, this issue came up at each one. The issue—error filling out the DQ slip—aka “scrivener’s error.” A scrivener’s error (aka clerical error) is a typographical error or the unintentional addition or omission of a word, phrase, or figure in writing or copying something on a record. Such an error is made by mistake and should be readily corrected without objection.

At each of these three meets, either a coach or an official (gasp!), brought up the idea that a mistake in filling out the disqualification form should result in the DQ being overturned. The simple answer to that idea is “No.” Clerical errors should be corrected. The DQ slip is informational and is not a binding legal document meant to be filed in the county clerk’s office. If, after vetting the call, the referee determines the DQ call is valid, the swimmer is disqualified. After the vetting process, the slip is filled out to provide information to the swimmer and/or coach. The rulebook gives only slight mention to the DQ slips, saying only “shall report any violations to the Referee on signed slips detailing the event, the heat number, the lane number and the infraction (102.13.3).”

If the slip is filled out incorrectly due to a scrivener’s error, correct the slip. A mistake in filling out the slip does not fall into the “benefit of doubt goes to the swimmer” category. Make the slip correct; the DQ stands.



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Re: USA Swimming Rule 101.6 – 101.7 – Medley Swimming

1. During the July 21<sup>st</sup> FINA Swimming Technical Congress in Budapest, Hungary, the Congress adopted a change to medley swimming rules regarding required body position. For the freestyle distance, the change permits the swimmer to be past vertical towards the back when executing a turn - including after the feet have left the wall. The rule requires that the swimmer's body must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

2. Effective September 21, USA Swimming will modify USA Swimming rules as follows:

**101.6 INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY** — The swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance in the following order: the first one-fourth, butterfly; the second one-fourth, backstroke; the third one-fourth, breaststroke; and the last one-fourth, freestyle.

.1 **Start** — The forward start shall be used.

.2 **Stroke** — The stroke for each one-fourth of the designated distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke, except in the freestyle, the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn.

.3 **Turns**

A Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke, except that in the freestyle turn, the swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

B The turns when changing from one stroke to another shall conform to the finish rules for the stroke just completed, and shall be as follows:

(1) **Butterfly to Backstroke** — The swimmer must touch as described in 101.3.5. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner, but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.

(2) **Backstroke to Breaststroke** — The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.

(3) **Breaststroke to Freestyle** — The swimmer must touch as described in 101.2.4. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner and must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

.4 **Finish** — The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his/her person touches the wall after the prescribed distance

**101.7 RELAYS**

.1 **Freestyle Relay** — Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance using any desired stroke(s). Freestyle finish rules apply.

.2 **Medley Relay** — Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance in the following order: first, backstroke; second, breaststroke; third, butterfly; and fourth, freestyle. Rules pertaining to each stroke used as described in 101.6 (Individual Medley) shall govern where applicable. At the end of each leg, the finish rule for each stroke applies in each case.

.3-.4 [no changes]

***FINA Announces Adjustment to Butterfly Kick Rule 7/17***

Precision on the butterfly rules. From now on, underwater kicking on the side is not allowed;

[\*Click here for details\*](#)

***New Rule for 102.24.4D Adjustment for Malfunction on a Lane***

[\*Click here for details\*](#)

***Definition of 202.2.9.I Deck Changing***

[\*Click here for details\*](#)

***Rule Interpretation for 102.8.1E The Use of Tape***

[\*Click here for details\*](#)

***FINA Rules Lochte's new underwater Technique Illegal in IM***

[\*Click here for details\*](#)

***Rule Interpretation for 101.3 The Butterfly Kick***

**Rule: 101.3 Kick — All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.**

### ***Interpretation from USA swimming:***

1. During the butterfly kick, the observation of the ankles crossing may or may not indicate an alternating kick.

2. If both legs are moving in the same direction (both upward - or both downward) and the ankles pass each other because of a difference in the amplitude of the leg movement - that would not be an alternating kick and there would be no disqualification.

3. An alternating kick requires that the legs move in opposite direction - one upward while the other is moving downward. If the ankles cross while one leg is moving upward and the other downward - that would be an alternating kick and that would be a violation.

## **NEW TIMING ADJUSTMENTS RULE**

Effective May 1 2016, anyone working in meet manager using USA-S rules should be choosing the FINA rules for timing adjustments bottom right hand corner of set up screen

Click the following for an explanation:

**[Timing Adjustment Rule Change effective 5/1/2016](#)**

***Updated DQ Slips as of 9/13/2016***

**[Click here to download](#)**