

## Section 203.3 (120-Day Rule)

**203.3** *For a swimmer to represent a USA Swimming club in a competitive event, one hundred twenty (120) consecutive days must have elapsed without the swimmer having represented any other USA Swimming club in USA Swimming competition. This 120-day rule does not apply to representation in closed competition if it is sanctioned or approved by the LSC.*

Section 203.3 of the *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* is frequently referred to in the swimming community as the 120-day rule. Simply stated, the 120-day rule states that for a swimmer to represent a USA Swimming club in a competitive event, 120 consecutive days must have elapsed without the swimmer having represented any other USA Swimming club in competition.

Listed below are frequently asked questions and answers about section 203.3 and 203.4.

- Q** Club ABC has folded and swimmers must join another USA Swimming club. Must the swimmers wait 120 days?
- A** The *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* specifies that 120 consecutive days must have elapsed before a swimmer can represent any other USA Swimming club in competition. Even though the club disbanded, the swimmers must still wait 120 days to represent another USA Swimming club in competition.
- Q** USA Swimming club is changing it's club name from ABC to DEF. No other changes with exception of club name. Must swimmers wait 120 days?
- A** In this instance, the 120-day rule does not apply. The club has a name change only - in essence, it is not a different club. Club should report name change to LSC Membership Chair who in turn notifies National Headquarters.
- Q** Club ABC is merging with the DEF swim club and swimmers will swim as the DEF swim club. What swimmers must wait the 120 days?
- A** The swimmers coming from the ABC swim club must wait 120 consecutive days before representing the DEF swim club in competition.
- Q** ABC swim club and DEF swim club are merging to form the GHI swim club. Must all swimmers wait 120 days to represent the GHI swim club in competition?
- A** A new swim club (GHI) has been formed. Swimmers from the ABC swim club and the DEF swim club must all wait 120 consecutive days before representing the GHI swim club.
- Q** YMCA club (also USA Swimming club) holds a YMCA Invitational meet for YMCA athletes and teams only. Swimmer A represents the club in the meet and subsequently switches to another USA Swimming club. Does the 120-day rule apply?
- A** If the YMCA Invitational meet was in fact closed competition involving only YMCA teams and YMCA member athletes, it is not USA Swimming competition, and the 120-day rule would not apply (except as to last date of competition for prior USA Swimming club).

If additional information is needed, please contact the Member Services Department at National Headquarters.

## Section 203.4 (The School Rule)

*203.4 A swimmer registered with a USA Swimming non-school club who wishes to compete for a secondary school, college or university shall be automatically released without notice by his/her club upon commencement of his/her season to compete for that school in school competition, and upon termination of such school swimming season he/she shall be immediately eligible to represent the USA Swimming non-school club of his/her choice (subject to the 120-day rule in 203.3). It is the swimmer's responsibility to ascertain his/her compliance with scholastic governing bodies' rules and regulations.*

Section 203.4 of the *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* is often called the "school section". Questions are frequently asked about this section. Following is an article written several years ago by Barney Favaro when he was Chair of the Legislation Committee. The article has recently been updated.

### Question posed by an LSC:

**The Situation:** The University registers as a school club with USA Swimming. Their swimmers compete regularly in USA Swimming meets as a school club during the NCAA season. At the conclusion of the NCAA season, they wish to continue to compete in USA Swimming meets as a school club until the end of school and then swim attached for their local swim club during the summer.

**The Problem:** Section 203.4 states the swimmer may compete during the school swimming season commencement/termination dates as provided by the swimmer. This is vague and we are unsure whether these are the NCAA season dates, collegiate competition schedule dates as posted by the school or the dates the swimmer is enrolled as a student. Also, how does the swimmer verify the commencement/termination date? The school tells us there is no collegiate swimming beyond the NCAA championship. The swimmer and coach tell us that they swim together all year as a school club and are recognized as such. Thus, our problem.

**Additional Concern:** If a red-shirted swimmer competes with the club in the non-collegiate season, is this also another problem?

**Discussion:** The key is to try to keep separate and apart the concepts of the University swimming team as a "school team" engaged in school competition and as a "school club" engaged in USA Swimming competition.

Not all "school seasons" are the same for all schools, particularly in the secondary and junior college levels. At the University level, the school swimming season generally coincides with the NCAA season. But in actual fact, the school swimming season is what the coach or swimmer says it is.

Keep in mind that at the end of the "school season" each of the swimmers on the school team may immediately attach to the USA Swimming club of his choice.

1. NCAA season ends. School wishes to compete as school club in USA Swimming competition until end of school term. Can do so, so long as each swimmer is currently eligible to compete for the school in collegiate competition.
2. NCAA season ends. School wishes to compete as school club to end of term but coach brings in outside athletes to swim for the team. Team is then no longer a school club but becomes an independent USA Swimming club, and once having competed in a USA Swimming meet, each member becomes immediately subject to the 120-day rule.

## Section 203.4 (The School Rule), continued....

3. NCAA season ends. School wishes to compete as school club to the end of the school term. Coach decides to use a student swimmer who is academically ineligible for collegiate competition. The team immediately becomes an independent USA Swimming club on its first USA Swimming competition and all team members become immediately subject to the 120-day rule.

4. NCAA season ends. Swimmer "A" is member of school team. Coach decides to swim as school club to end of school term. Swimmer "A" decides he wants to swim for his home USA Swimming club. Can do so immediately. After having represented his home club in a meet, he decides he wants to go back to the school club. Cannot do so, at least without waiting 120 days.

5. Instead of swimming attached to his home club, Swimmer "A" swims unattached in USA Swimming competition under his old coach. Can do so, and, so long as currently eligible for collegiate competition, can go back to school club.

6. NCAA season ends. Coach decides he wants school to swim as school club all year long. Can do so, so long as he uses swimmers currently eligible to swim for his school at all times. Cannot use swimmers whose school eligibility terminated at the end of school term.

7. NCAA season ends. School wishes to compete as school club to end of term. Coach decides to use one of his red-shirted swimmers on team. The red-shirt is "eligible" for collegiate competition, but does he lose his year of school eligibility? The coach has, after all, chosen his "school swimming season". That's for the NCAA and the school officials to decide, and not USA Swimming. It doesn't change the conclusions above.

**To Summarize:** From the day Swimmer "A" enters school, he can swim for his school in school competition and swim for his school as a USA Swimming club in open USA Swimming competition, during the whole school season without regard to the 120-day rule. He can swim unattached in open USA Swimming competition anywhere he likes during the whole of the school season without regard to the 120-day rule. Once the school season is over, he can swim for any USA Swimming club of his choice without regard to the 120-day rule. But once he begins to play around with swimming for any USA Swimming club, other than his school club, during the school season, he then must comply with the 120-day rule.

The above discussion governs all schools at any level.