

The USA Swimming Open Water Swimming Referee Manual



USA Swimming Official's Committee

Open Water Development Committee

Photo of the finish of the 2011 USA Swimming National Open Water Swimming Championships

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1. Introduction

The objective of this training manual is to provide Officials with a basic understanding of the Open Water Swimming Referee's role in the conduct of an Open Water competition. With the inclusion of the Open Water Marathon Swim in the Olympic Games and the competition for 6 additional medals, it is expected that Open Water swimming events will continue to gain popularity among USA Swimming athletes and coaches.

The success of any open water swimming event is dependent on the careful planning, preparation and understanding of the sport and the local elements by the meet Organizing Committee and officials. Without diligent advanced planning, open water events can be difficult to manage and the inherent risks can lead to dangerous situations for the athletes, volunteers and those in the water.

An experienced and competent Open Water Swimming Referee is one key to the success of any open water event. The 10-kilometer swim is swimming's equivalent of the marathon run. In track, the event is moved out of the confined space of the track stadium and out onto the open road. In open water swimming, the event is moved from the controlled environment of the pool to the relatively uncontrolled open water venue. For the elite athletes, a 10-kilometer marathon swim and a 26.2-mile marathon run are roughly equivalent in time – approximately 2 hours.

All Officials, competitors, Local Organizing Committee and spectators look to the Open Water Referee for leadership, and guidance. The Referee's temperament, decisiveness, logic and responsiveness under stress, will be challenged during each open water event. It is imperative that the Referee reacts appropriately under stress in a calm, logical and positive manner. This ability will instil confidence to all other participants in the event. The Open Water Referee sets the standard of excellence that all other members of the officiating team strive to emulate. It is an awesome responsibility and one that should not be undertaken lightly.

1.1 Swimmer Safety - Paramount

There are significant potential risks to all participants in Open Water Swimming. Open Water Referees and event organizers need to be extremely vigilant to minimize these risks. By necessity all open water swimming events are subject to varying environmental elements. The pool environment affords an element of protection from climatic conditions and is a much more controlled environment. Open Water Swimming events do not have this luxury. Weather conditions can change rapidly and unexpectedly. The Referee and the staff and volunteers that report to his/her need to maintain a constant state of awareness as to all conditions that may affect the event. The Referee needs to use members of the officiating team and other event support staff to assist in keeping the event safe. This is not a one-man show – teamwork is paramount. The officiating team must place the safety of the swimmer before all else.

The Referee must be prepared to postpone, modify or cancel an event should the conditions warrant. There must be an Emergency Action Plan that can be rapidly activated should any emergent situation arise. These plans must be developed and agreed upon by all stakeholders well ahead of the event and in accordance with USA Swimming rules and procedures. The Referee must act decisively and always in the interest of the safety of the competitors, coaches, spectators and support staff. There certainly might be disappointment that an event is postponed or cancelled, but the loss or injury a single swimmer is an absolutely unacceptable outcome. The Referee should use input from the Independent Safety Monitor, Safety Officer, Medical Officer, Course Officer and Meet Director in making decisions that affect the safety of the event. A voice or note of concern from anyone involved with the event should lead to an immediate examination risks. If an error is to be made....make it on the side of SAFETY!

1.1.1 Inclusion of swimmers with a disability

Swimmers with a disability (physical or intellectual) are welcome to participate in Open Water competitions. Careful consideration of each individual's disabilities and potential special support needs should be given prior to allowing the competitor on course in marginal conditions. Just as able-bodied athletes need additional support under marginal conditions, so too will the disabled athlete. Do not allow participants to begin a race unless appropriate support can be provided.

1.2 Meet Planning - The Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

The Local Organizing Committee consists of the individuals (volunteers or paid staff) who are responsible for developing and executing an event. The LOC will probably have an organized structure which may include Chairman and sub-committee Chairs. The Referee should be included in the general organization structure of the LOC. The LOC is responsible for developing an Event Plan.

1.2.1 The Event Plan

Every Open Water event must include detail planning. The Event Plan is the comprehensive document which covers all aspects of a given Open Water event. USA Swimming has published detailed requirements for items that must be included in an event plan. Refer to the most up-to-date sanction requirements for exact details.

1. Event Plan
 - a. Venue Plan
 - i. Parking
 - ii. Registration/Check-in
 - iii. Changing/Rest Rooms
 - iv. Warm-up Area
 - v. Spectator Viewing
 - vi. Vendor Area
 - vii. Recovery Area
 - viii. Awards Area
 - b. Race Plan
 - c. Safety Plan
 - d. Emergency Action Plan
 - e. Contingency Plans

1.2.2 Long Range Planning

The Meet Director is part of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC). The LOC is responsible for the long range planning leading up to the event. It is very important that the Referee develop a good working relationship with the LOC as early as possible during the event planning process.

This is particularly important when a new event is developed and conducted for the first time. What is a "New" event? A new event would be an event being promoted for the first time. New events contrast with established events. Established events have been run over many years with established courses and, in many cases, a consistent volunteer organization. This is not to say that significant obstacles cannot happen at both a new or established event, but the LOC of established events tend to have seen and overcome significant challenges over the years and know how to react to unusual situations.

The Referee should meet with the LOC and in particular, the Meet Director, at least two months in advance of the event. In the initial meetings, the Referee should listen to the vision that the LOC has for the event. In this initial meeting, the Referee should listen, question and investigate the plans of the LOC regarding course layout, safety and emergency action plan, anticipated event size, support craft availability, volunteer availability, etc. The Referee should take notes, collect written course plan documents and carefully evaluate the LOC plans.

After evaluating the LOC event plans, the Referee should discuss and document any concerns that might arise regarding the LOC vision regarding the event. The Referee should use his experience to try and make the event work within the vision of the Organizing Committee. The Referee should be careful not to overrun the LOC with demands for the event. Rather the Referee should gently suggest ideas and solution for concerns that may arise during the planning meeting. The Referee can share experiences from other open water events with the LOC that might help them overcome potential or actual problematic areas.

After concerns from both sides have been heard and appropriate modifications to the event have been made, the Referee and the LOC should agree upon milestones to be reached along the timeline leading to the event. Whether an event is large or small, simple or complex, a written event milestone/responsibilities document should be created and distributed to key personnel leading up to the execution of the event.

Up to this point, a Referee new to Open Water officiating might be asking the question, “Why am I involved in the planning of the event? Isn’t this the responsibility of the Meet Director?” In a pool event, a Referee can expect to show up to the event and have the lane lines in place, the starting blocks installed, timing system ready, bathrooms available, etc. In an open water event, virtually every aspect of each event must be created from scratch. The course must be created, there likely will not be any start or finish structure present. There will be a significant number of variables that must be considered regarding the course. It is not uncommon to have two or more course possibilities available to be implemented the day of the event depending on the actual water and weather conditions that may be experienced on race day.

The Referee becomes a significant part of the safety team for the event. The Referee, the Independent Safety Monitor and the Safety Officer work closely with the Meet Director to ensure that each race is as safe as possible. The Referee should always respect the safety recommendations of other members of the local safety team, officiating team, and the Local Organizing Committee, especially because they are more familiar with the venue and its expected conditions. Each safety concern must be addressed to the collective satisfaction of all stakeholders.

When a new Referee meets with a LOC that runs an established event, the Referee can expect to hear a thorough briefing that covers all of the critical elements which make an open water event successful. The Referee should take careful notes so that their participation in the event ensures event-to-event consistency. There can be a great deal of increased safety gained by keeping procedures consistent event-to-event. The LOC and athletes who have participated in earlier events know what to expect and become natural leaders to the less-experienced participants at the event. It helps existing events if the Referee has participated in some lower capacity at the event in previous years. When joining as a member of the team in an event that has existed for a long time, the Referee should NEVER assume that all safety issues are addressed. The Referee must ALWAYS ensure that every safety consideration is addressed to his level of comfort regardless as to how many years “it has been done this way”.

1.2.2.1 Recommendations for Referees – New Events

1. Consider the length of the events. If multiple events are being planned to overlap on a multiple loop course, carefully consider where athletes and safety personnel are when new waves or events are being started.
2. Consider what type and the location of the start. Consider using existing structures or landmarks as starting positions.

3. Carefully consider what type of finish that will be used. Use existing structures or landmarks when possible for positioning of Finish Judges, Timing Judges, and Timing System equipment.
4. When laying out a course, try to design a course that will be easily monitored by safety personnel. Depending on the number of safety personnel and the availability of watercraft, narrow courses (less than 50 meters wide) can be much easier to monitor from a safety perspective than point-to-point or geometrically-shaped courses.
5. Consider the navigation talents of your participants. Novice OW swimmers often demonstrate a virtual complete lack of navigation skills. Navigation ineptitude of potentially hundreds of swimmers must be taken into consideration when planning a course.

2. Being the Referee

The Race Referees must position themselves from the start to the finish of the last swimmer on the water. Very much like pool officiating, the eyes of the Referee should be on the swimmers from the start to the finish of the race. The Referee should never leave his position unless an emergency situation arises that requires their immediate attention. If there are no Assistant Referees assigned, the Race Referee will have to remain on the water unless there is another official that can be appointed to act in the capacity of Referee. Once the situation is resolved, the Referee must return to the role as Referee and return to the water. Having Assistant Referees assigned and available helps resolve these issues.

Personal observation of each and every swimmer throughout the Race in Open Water Swimming events is practically impossible. The Referee must rely on the integrity and experience of the other assigned Officials and water safety personnel to report swimmers who violate the rules or may be having difficulty during the race.

The Referee communicates with many Officials and volunteers on race day on all aspects of the event. These include beach side support, water safety personnel, First Aid, and other volunteers who may not have been previously involved in Open Water Swimming events. Clear and concise communication is very important. Assume nothing....however; let those with responsibilities do their jobs.

The Referee must always be receptive to questions no matter who asks the question, or how often it is asked. The Referee might not always know the answer but should at least provide a response. "I'm not sure, but I'll find out and let you know" is acceptable (as long as it's not the answer to all questions). Seek out expertise amongst the Meet Director and fellow officials.

Exercise and maintain control of the event while acting in a calm and dignified manner. A Referee who is constantly darting around the venue exudes an air of tension. Be prepared for the unexpected. Assign experienced officials to work with officials who are new to open water officiating. The Referee is the leader of the team of officials who is responsible for the Safety and success of the event. Build the team; use the expertise that is available to its maximum potential. Treat all other officials with respect and all involved will have a positive learning experience. Command respect and be respectful of others.

2.1 Guiding Principles – Enforcing the Rules

What is the primary purpose of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations? To ensure that all swimmers receive an equal and fair opportunity to compete no matter what the level of competition.

In the pre-ambule to Section 7 of the USA Swimming Rules it states "USA Swimming Rules and Regulations apply to open water competition unless specifically indicated otherwise in part 7." In practice, this means that all rules and regulations that the Referee is already familiar with from the pool-side also apply to Open Water events.

The Referee must be consistent and fair in the application of the Rules. The Referee must apply the Rules as written. Swimmers can only be disqualified for Rule infractions that are personally observed by the Referee or reported by Officials so authorized by the Rules. Where there is any doubt as to the infraction – the benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer.

2.2 Preparation for an Event

Realize that each event is different. Each venue is unique. One of the largest differences between being the Referee at a pool event and an Open Water event is the venue. Even if a Referee has never been at a given pool, there are certain constants....or near constants – water quality, course length, mechanical equipment (blocks, lane lines, backstroke flags, timing equipment) that are expected. That simply is not the case in Open Water swimming events. Even events that are run consecutively at the same venue year after year can be affected by different weather conditions, different numbers of entered athletes, and different composition of support personnel.

As Open Water Referees build experience through participation in a number of events, they can develop the ability to quickly analyze and develop possible solutions during the planning and preparation of an event.

After being assigned or volunteering to work an event, the Referee should request a meeting with the Organizing Committee's Meet Director, the Course Officer and Safety Officer at the venue. This will enable the group to inspect the venue noting any possible observable hazards and determine/confirm the layout of the course.

The Referee should confirm that the following key milestones have been completed:

2.2.1 Course

1. Obtain written approval for the use of the venue from the owner or the responsible governmental agency.
2. Obtain all necessary permits to stage the event (i.e., Coast Guard, County, State or private property owner's permission).
3. Notify the commercial operators of the event if the venue has commercial operations on the water.
4. Give prior notification to the local Lifeguard, rescue service, police, fire, etc. Ensure that these organizations know the date and time of the event and the anticipated start and finish time.
5. Ensure that the prospective course layout measurement conforms to what is required for the events.
6. Confirm the course set up with the Course Officer the logistics for the course to be set.
7. Confirm use of a GPS device (if available) for accurate course measurement.
8. Confirm availability of buoys or course turn-point indicators with appropriate lines and anchors.
9. Confirm availability of a pump for buoy inflation and reinflation.
10. Confirm availability of a thermometer
11. Confirm provisions for a Finish structure or identification of the finish point.
12. Confirm availability of Red and Yellow hand held flags and whiteboard and markers.
13. Confirm availability of sufficient non-powered safety escort craft with paddlers.
14. Confirm availability of a sufficient number of powered water craft for safety personnel.
15. Confirm the availability of number of a sufficient powered water craft for officials and other event support personnel.

2.2.2 Landside Support

1. Confirm attendance of medical support in accordance with the sanction requirements. (Ocean Rescue, Lifeguard, EMT).
2. Confirm availability of a sufficient number of powered watercraft for use by the Referee, Assistant Referees and Emergency Personnel.
3. Secure arrangements for Boat Captains for each watercraft.
4. Secure arrangements for lead craft (if required) – depending on course configuration.
5. Confirm provisions for Safety Escort Craft and Officials boats – water, food, horns, white boards etc.
6. Confirm if personal escort craft are required (required for most events greater than 10km) on escorted swim.
7. Confirm location and sufficient space for registration area, swimmers/handlers briefing area, awards presentation area.
8. Check the security plan for Officials/Volunteers' possessions before/during/after competition.
9. Check the security plan for athletes' possessions (if this service is offered).
10. Confirm availability, type and need for restricted areas for Timers, Finish Judges, and Recorders.
11. Confirm availability of a restricted Medical Support area. Ensure that there is unimpeded access for emergency support personnel to this area. Ensure that the host provides spare blankets, space blankets, heaters and fluids if anticipated due to the conditions expected on race day.
12. Confirm availability of electrical power or a generator as needed for computers, printers, pumps, heaters etc.
13. Ensure availability of and a suitable location for all Meet Management Equipment during the event.
14. Confirm availability of a work area for the Administrative Referee and Assistants. Ensure that appropriate supplies (as needed) are available (i.e., copy paper, staples, paper weights, spikes, tape, pencils, large black waterproof markers or other numbering devices, stopwatches with built-in printers, spare batteries and printer paper).
15. Confirm an appropriate number of medals/awards/trophies.
16. Confirm availability of programs and Start Lists (issue to the Officials and Volunteers before start time).
17. Confirm availability of tables and chairs for the Officials and other volunteers.
18. Confirm availability of an adequate number of communication devices for Referees, Safety Personnel, Administrative Referee, Meet Director, and Medical Personnel.
19. Confirm availability of suitable post-race refreshments for all volunteers and swimmers.

2.2.3 The Venue - Race Day

On the race day, well before the start of the race, perform a general walk through to ensure that the meet host has complied with the agreed upon setup. The Referee should specifically ask the Meet Director if the event plan has changed. If there are changes, the Meet Manager should explain and the Referee should judge if these changes are acceptable. The Referee should also determine if any pre-planned items need to be changed due to changes in the actual conditions (course modification, shortening, etc.) The following should be checked and verified:

1. Check the course layout. Pay careful attention to buoy placement and anchoring at turn points, start and finish areas. Look for hazards such as shallow water, weeds and reeds, submerged trees and other obstructions, ingress and egress points for water flow, waves or surf, etc.
2. Check for obvious wildlife hazards. This would include jellyfish, Portuguese man o war or sharks.
3. Check designated areas for registration, briefings, first aid/medical, recorders, timers and finish judges.
4. Check the finish apparatus.
5. Check ingress and egress for swimmers (start and finish areas).
6. Check the security plan for Officials/Volunteers' possessions.
7. Check the security plan for athlete's possessions (if that service is offered)
8. Check the Course Plan based the actual observations of the course. If possible, go on a boat along the entire course. Is the course easy to understand for the perspective of the swimmer? There should be a large view general course display (a white board might be used for this purpose) and there should be small (single page) course plans for swimmers, Handlers and all volunteers.
9. Check communication equipment.
10. Check emergency evacuation procedure and emergency support contact.
11. Confirm jurisdictional responsibilities. The Referee is one person responsible for swimmer safety and the successful conduct of the meet.

Many items may change due to the dynamic conditions that frequently occur in open water events. The Referee should plan on being at the venue early in order to observe the course setup. There are many instances where something looks acceptable on paper, but may be unacceptable on race day. Frequently, there are situations where adjustments to the race plan will have to be made the day of the event due to water conditions, weather conditions or equipment availability. The open water Referee should be flexible and prepared to execute alternate plans. It is essential that the athletes, coaches, officials and other volunteers are notified of all pertinent changes to the Event Plan through pre-race briefings.

2.3 Supporting Officials and Other Volunteers

2.3.1 Required Officials

The following Officials should be assigned to all Open Water events:

Referee	Assistant Referee(s)
Chief Timer and additional Timers	Chief Finish Judge and additional Finish Judges
Chief Recorder plus Recorders	Starter
Clerk of the Course	Race Judges
Turn Judges (1 per alteration of course)	Course Officer
Medical Officer	Safety Officer
Announcer	Administrative Referee
Independent Safety Monitor #	

The Independent Safety Monitor is not an official, but it is a required position in order to obtain a USA Swimming sanction. In Open Water events, some officials frequently serve in multiple non-overlapping positions. However some officials assigned certain key safety related positions may not be assigned or accept additional responsibilities beyond their assigned position.

Examples of allowable overlapping official's assignments:

1. Starter - During the pre-race the Starter may be assigned to work with registration and check-in. After the race start the starter may work as an Assistant Referee or be assigned to work as a Finish Judge, Timing Judge or Turn Judge.
2. Turn Judges – Pre-Race – Assist with registration and check in or course setup.

The Referee should work to ensure that all volunteers are fully utilized in event preparation – delegate.

2.3.2 Official's Preparation

All Officials should be prepared for all anticipated and unanticipated weather. Suitable clothing/gear that provides protection from the elements should be worn. Officials should plan on being self-sufficient at the venue. All officials should plan on getting wet. Sun screen should also be brought by Officials. Consider bringing food and water, beach chairs, umbrellas or any other gear which might be appropriate depending the venue and on assigned position.

3. Referee - Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and powers of the Referee are set out in USA Swimming Rules 102 and 701. It is important for the Referee to understand the meaning and application of these rules as it applies to the mission of ensuring a safe, fair event for all participants.

3.1 Referee – an All-encompassing Responsibility

The responsibilities of the Referee should sound familiar as they are similar in scope to the Referee's responsibilities in pool events.

The Referee "Shall have full control and authority over all officials and shall assign and instruct the other officials; of which is not otherwise assigned by said rules; can overrule any meet official on a point of rule interpretation; or on a judgement decision pertaining to an action which the Referee personally observed."

The rule is very specific - it says "*shall enforce...*" The Referee must take decisive action where infractions are reported by other officials or those infractions which are personally observed by the Referee. With that said, the Referee must be extremely vigilant in the understanding and application of the rules. In open water events, the penalty for violations of the rules may include immediate disqualification from an event (i.e., the athlete is immediately pulled from the water or asked to leave the field of play as soon as possible). In open water swimming, disqualified swimmers must immediately leave the course upon receiving a red card. In most cases (the exception being disqualifiable infractions which occur immediately prior to the finish of a race) the swimmers never finish the race. Unlike pool events where an incorrect call can be overturned and the swimmers achieved time reinstated, once open water swimmers are disqualified, they no longer have the opportunity to finish the race. **CONSISTENT WITH POOL SWIMMING EVENT OFFICIATING – THE SWIMMER SHOULD ALWAYS BE GIVEN THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.** With that said, it is the Referee's duty and obligation to apply the rules as written. It would be unfair to all competitors who are swimming an event legally, to not enforce the rules.

The open water Referee must take additional care during the preparation phase of the open water event to ensure that the venue, course and meet processes and procedures are in compliance with the rules. The preparation phase may begin months before the event. Close coordination with the meet's Local Organizing Committee and Meet Director will ensure that there are no last-minute "show stopping" issues arise that could have been preventable with sufficient prior planning.

3.1.2 Race Day

With the pre-event planning completed, the Referee should concentrate on the race-day execution of the event. The Referee should arrive at the venue a sufficient time prior to the start of the race. What is sufficient time? Two hours should be sufficient, although the earlier is generally the better especially if the turn buoys are set on race day. The Referee needs to be on site as a resource for the meet host and other officials as final preparations are completed prior to the start of the race.

3.1.3 Race Day Decisions

What kinds of decisions might the Referee have to make?

1. Course layout modification due to rough water conditions, climatic conditions, extreme water temperatures or marine life
2. Course distance changes due to water or weather conditions, pollution, marine life or extreme water temperatures.
3. Start/Finish/Feed Station position modification due to surf or other conditions.
4. Start time postponement due to weather or water conditions or marine life.
5. Race cancellation due to unforeseen weather, water, course considerations or marine life.

All of the decisions above can be difficult to make and even more difficult to execute. Local experts and your fellow officials should be consulted when evaluating changes to an event that may be required on race-day. As with pool events, the fewer changes made to an event – the better – but make ALL changes dictated by safety.

3.2 Open Water Support Craft

In most Open Water races, the Referees, Turn Judges, Safety Officer, Course Officer, etc. will be transported around the race course on some sort of vessel. The size and style of the boat may vary due to factors such as vessel availability, number of passengers, manoeuvrability requirements and capabilities, etc. It is very important that the passengers (including Referees) understand the characteristics of the boat as well as the abilities of the Captain.

The Referee should work with the LOC to identify the support craft requirements for the race. An agreement should be reached as to how many vessels will be allocated to each requirement. Prior to the race, the LOC and Referee should conduct a mandatory pre-race briefing with all boat Captains. If possible, a pre-race briefing should also be conducted for all safety personnel and volunteers on the water. An example of the pre-race briefing is included in the Appendix of this manual. It is very important that each Captain understands that they are responsible for the safe operation of their boat. The occupants of the craft should make requests of the Captain for maneuvers, and the Captain should comply provided the manoeuvre can be completed safely.

3.2.1 General Characteristics of Open Water Support Craft

1. **Referee / Assistant Referee Boat** – Good manoeuvrability. Enough speed to be able to move between packs during the race. Clean running engine that does not produce excessive unburned exhaust gasses. The boat should be capable of carrying the Captain, Referee, Assistant to the Referee and any other personnel assigned to the boat.

2. **Turn Judge Boat** – Depending on the course, Turn Judge Boats may either be anchored or moving on the course. If the boat will be moving, the boat should have good manoeuvrability. If it will be a moving boat, it should have a clean running engine that does not produce excessive unburned exhaust gas. There may be situations where Turn Judge Boats are towed into position and anchored. In this case a Captain may not be required. The boat should be capable of carrying the Captain (if one is used) and one or more Turn Judges.
3. **Course Officer Boat** – This boat should be fast and manoeuvrable. It should be capable of carrying turn buoys, anchors and any other equipment required for the maintenance of the race course. It should be fast enough to be able to respond to course related issues (buoys that break free, unwanted vessels straying into the course, debris removal) should they arise during a race.
4. **Safety Support Boats** – The number and type of safety support craft will vary with the body of water, the condition of the water, size of the course, etc. Often a “mix” of vessels is appropriate. Examples of vessels are: Paddle boards, Kayaks, John Boats, Jet Skis, other miscellaneous boats. In all cases there should be at least one boat identified as a fast reaction safety boat for emergencies and another boat identified as its backup. NOTE: Each and every on-course support vessel should be prepared to act as a first responder in the event of an emergency. This includes the Referee, Turn Judge and Course Officer boats.
5. **Lead Craft:** On courses where there are a significant distance between turn buoys and there are not sufficient intermediate or guide buoys to provide constant sighting for the swimmers, a lead craft may be assigned. The lead craft should be positioned twenty to thirty meters ahead of the leading swimmer to provide a visible guide for the swimmers on the most direct line between the buoys on the course. Small motorized craft or stand-up paddlers are examples of suitable lead craft. Kayaks and canoes may also be used. Be aware that it may be difficult for a kayaker to judge the distance of the swimmers directly behind them. It can also be difficult for a kayak to keep the direct course between two buoys. The Referee should be prepared to give direction to the lead craft regarding their positioning and navigation. If there are multiple events being conducted on the same course, multiple lead craft should be used.

3.3 Briefings to Swimmers, Coaches and Handlers

There are two main types of briefings for athletes, coaches, officials and handlers.

1. Technical Meeting
2. Referees Final Race Instructions

The content of both meetings is generally the same. The difference in the briefings is that the Referees final instructions specifically highlights changes to the event plan as well as changes to what has been previously briefed.

3.3.1 Technical Meeting

The Technical Meeting may be held the day prior to the event or on race day. If the technical meeting is held race day, it should be held early on in the race day time line so that the event participants are familiar with the processes and procedures that will be used for the event. The Technical Meeting does not need to be long. The Technical Meeting should include:

Normal Event Procedures

1. **Introduction of Key Personnel**
2. **Timeline for the start**
3. **Condition Report – Water Temperature, Air Temperature, Surf, Chop, Current, Tides, Water Quality, known sea-life. Known hazards and their marking. Possible additional hazards**
4. **Course Description** – Start, Turn Buoys, Guide Buoys, Feed Station, Finish Chute, Finish Line.
5. **Start Line, Start Signal, Start Procedure**

6. **Finish Line, Finish Procedure, Post Event Procedure**
7. **Rules and Infractions** – Whistles, Yellow Flag, Red Flag. Event Time Cutoff.
8. **Summary of Normal Procedure Event Plan Changes** – Review all changes made to the event plan.
9. Awards Location and Time
10. **Questions on Normal Event Procedures**

Non-Normal Event Procedures

1. **Withdrawal Procedures for individual swimmers.** Swimmer's name, number and reason for withdrawal must be communicated to the Clerk of Course upon withdrawal.
2. **Emergency Event Abandonment Signal and Procedures** - 5 Blasts on an air horn or whistle - followed by one long blast - repeated. Followed by an explanation on radio to all safety personnel.
3. **Water Safety Coordinator Briefing** – Location, number, identification of water safety personnel and craft. Signals – Athlete to safety personnel, between safety personnel.
 - a. **Response Actions** – Swimmer in distress – immediate action.
 - b. **Response Actions** – Swimmer evacuation from course.
 - c. **Response Actions** – Swimmer evacuation from venue.
 - d. **Response Actions** – Missing swimmer – search and recovery.
4. **Summary of Non-Normal Procedure Event Plan Changes** – Review all changes made to the event plan.
5. **Questions on Non-Normal Event Procedures.**

3.4 Registration

Registration of swimmers usually starts one hour or more prior to the start of the first race. The registration process includes the swimmers presenting themselves to the Clerk of Course, ensuring all required waivers and other documentation are in order, receiving a race number and having that race number applied to the swimmer body.



While in the Clerk of Course area, the swimwear will be checked and the swimmers will also be inspected for long or sharp fingernails and toenails, jewellery, etc.

At check in, the swimmers should be reminded not to apply sunscreen or grease to the areas which will receive a competitor number. If the swimmer has already applied sunscreen or grease, it must be cleaned off with alcohol swabs prior to numbering. There are a various techniques to remove the sunscreen including use of rubbing alcohol or rubbing the skin with a tennis ball. The race announcer should frequently alert the swimmers not to apply sunscreen or grease before getting their numbers.

By rule, the swimmers competitor number will be applied as follows:


1. Vertically down each arm.
2. Horizontally across each shoulder
3. Horizontally across the back each hand (optional – recommended if a hand touch is being used for finish and video cameras are being used for backup timing.)
4. Additional location (s) as directed by the Referee. An example of an additional location could be the front of the thighs if an out of water finish is planned or on a swim cap if swim caps are provided. Notation of a number of the swim cap is the easiest to see

If electronic timing systems (microchips or transponders) are used, the swimmers will have the chips affixed to their wrists or ankles. The chips are normally attached using a plastic wristband or Velcro that allows for the swimmer to choose how tightly they wish the wristband to be attached. Depending on the type of wristband used, swimmers may use tape to ensure it remains affixed to the wrist.

3.5 – Athlete Final Check and Inventory

In each open water event, it is imperative that each swimmer is accounted for from the time they enter the water until each swimmer has completed the event and is safe on shore. In small events, this can be done by manually checking off each swimmer by competitor number as they enter the water. In larger events, this can be accomplished by issuing each swimmer a “Race Ticket” during the registration process or be walking through a corral where each swimmer’s microchip can be registered automatically via a race timing system.

This ticket is then turned in to the administrative staff as each athlete enters the water. No swimmer enters the water unless they turn in a race ticket. Race tickets can be made quickly and efficiently by using a mail merge program. Example of a Race Ticket:

 OPEN WATER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011	ROBERT SMITH M 26 Clovis Swim Club-CC	<u>18</u>
10K National Championships & National Team Trials		

As an additional level of athlete accountability, swimmers should be video-taped prior to entering the water by a volunteer. This video record of each swimmer can be useful in a number of ways.

1. If a swimmer is missing in an event, this is a backup method to verify that the swimmer actually entered the water at the start of the competition.

2. Documents the swimwear that the swimmer was wearing when the race began. Occasionally, this video has been helpful determining the order of finish at the end of a race. There are times when the electronic timing or microchip fails and the finish judges may be unsure or miss a race number or athlete's time at the finish. Sometimes that missing swimmer can be found in the finish video and matched with the pre-start video as well as assign an official time.

4 The Race

4.1 The Start

The Referee and the Starter control the start of the race. Open water rules provide that races may be started from within the water, from the beach, or from a fixed platform.

While race preparations are continuing, the announcer gives periodic announcements regarding the time remaining to key milestones running up to the start (See Appendix). During the last five minutes prior to the start, warnings at one-minute intervals should be given. For in-water start scenarios, swimmers may have to swim out to the start area and will be in the water during the final minutes prior to a race. If the swimmers cannot hear the count-down announcements, the Starter can display signage indicating the number of minutes left prior to the start.

Open Water events can start with swimmers treading water, standing on the bottom, running from a beach, or diving from a fixed or floating platform. Beach starts are permissible in non-National Championship events.

When the number of swimmers dictates (Groups of @40-60 swimmers) the start may be segregated into the Men's and Women's competition or by age group. The Men's event always starts before the Women's event with a stagger in the start time that is appropriate for the course configuration. Events may also be segregated by age group. It is also recommended that the age groups be swum fastest to slowest – normally oldest to youngest.

The start line shall be clearly defined by either overhead apparatus or by removable equipment at water level (normally a rope) or an imaginary line between two buoys or the shore and a buoy or other fixed object.

The use of a rope has become a popular start line option as it ensures that all swimmers start from a given straight line. Usually the line is stretched between two points and the swimmer line up on the "swimming side" of the line. The swimmers must hold the line with one hand. When the start signal is given, the swimmer let go of the line and begin the race. Careful consideration must be given to ensure that the angle of the start line is perpendicular to the course line to the first turn buoy – there should not be any "favoured" end of the start line. One end of a line would be considered favoured if it is closer to the first turn buoy than the other end of the line.

When all swimmers are in the starting area (in the water or on land) and at the scheduled start time, the referee alerts the swimmers that the Start is imminent by a series of short whistle blasts and holds a red hand held flag vertically overhead. When the Referee feels that the field is ready for the start, he points his red flag to the Starter. Depending on the conditions (e.g., high surf, strong currents), the Referee may start sooner – or later – than the scheduled time.

The Starter must be positioned to be clearly visible to all swimmers. In the morning or afternoon, consideration should be given as to the location of the sun. The starter should be positioned so that the sun is behind the swimmers – not the starter. The Starter uses a Yellow or White flag and an audible sounding device (air horn, starting pistol, etc.) to start the race. When the Referee signals that he is ready for the Starter to start the race, he points his red flag towards the Starter. The Starter raises his flag overhead and if the field is stationary, the Starter simultaneously brings down the flag and sounds the starting device.

Normally no voice commands are given to the swimmers. However, if the swimmers are being started from a fixed platform, standard pool whistle commands and verbal start commands are used.

Starters in open water events work with much larger fields than in pool swimming. There will be much more motion by the swimmers immediately prior to the start of the race, particularly if there are waves or surface chop or currents. The Starter must distinguish this motion due to wind, waves, platform movement from swimmers trying to gain a tactical advantage or actually starting before the start signal.

In the event of a false start on the entire field, whistles and air horns should be blown until all swimmers have stopped swimming. The maneuvering any type of vessel in front of swimmer should NEVER be attempted due to the possibility of serious injury of the swimmer. This method of start and recall should be covered by the Referee in the pre-race briefing.

4.1.1 False Starts

Open water swimming rules provide that a swimmer may either be given a Yellow Flag or Red Flag for a false start infraction. In practice, how is this rule applied? In practical application, it would be very difficult and disruptive to the other competitors to recall an open water event.

1. If the Starter observes a swimmer starting before the signal, the race should not be started. The swimmer should be approached and told to return to the start and should be assessed a Yellow Flag for a false start. If the swimmer refuses to return to the start, the swimmer should be assessed a Red Flag disqualification for a False Start.
2. If the Starter and Referee observe a swimmer starting before the signal and the race is subsequently started, they should independently record their observations. If their observations of a false start agree, the Referee should assess a Yellow Flag infraction to the swimmer (s) who committed the false start.
3. Note: In many cases, all the swimmers will not start exactly at the same time. Some swimmers may start swimming slightly before the others. Unless there is a significantly unfair advantage, there is no need to call back the field.

4.2 After the Start - Working the Pack(s)

The Referee should position his craft so as to observe the swimmers from a reasonably close distance. How close? – The answer to that question depends on many factors including:

1. Manoeuvrability of the craft and competency of the Captain of that craft. The Referee should determine the positioning of the craft based on his desires – balanced by the responsibility of the Captain to operate the vessel safely. Always keep the safety of the swimmers paramount. Consultation with the Captain is important
2. Activity within the pack of swimmers. If the swimmers are not swimming in close proximity to each other, there is no benefit to the Referee to having the craft right on top of the swimmers. Standing off from the swimmers can indirectly signal them that the Referee is satisfied with their relative positioning. Conversely, bringing the craft closer to a pack of swimmers indirectly signals them that the Referee is watching very closely for possible contact infractions.

4.2.1 Referee Boat Positioning

Where should the Referee position the craft around the pack of swimmers? The answer to this question is dependent on a number of factors.

1. The number of other Assistant Referee boats on course.

2. The composition and structure of the pack of swimmers.
3. Wind, wave and weather conditions.
4. Lighting conditions – glare and sun position.
5. Boat exhaust considerations.

Refer to the appendix for a visual description of recommended Referee boat positioning.

In a large, well-staffed open water event, it is not uncommon for 4 Referees to be assigned to a race depending on course configuration. Each Referee will be assigned to an individual boat and will be normally be identified as R1, R2, R3, R4. The Meet Referee usually occupies position R1. Typically, a Head Referee will make general jurisdictional assignments such as:

1. At the start of the race the Head Referee (R1) will work with the Starter to start the race. Immediately after the start, R1 will be positioned on one side of the lead portion of the pack of swimmers. The second Referee (R2) will be positioned opposite R1 at the lead portion of the pack of swimmers. The third Referee (R3) will be positioned behind R1 and the fourth Referee (R4) will be positioned behind R2.
2. R3 and R4 trail the main pack until secondary packs form. When those packs form, R3 and R4 take up positions on opposite sides of those secondary packs.
3. As additional packs form, either towards the front or towards the back, the Referees decide how to position themselves in order to monitor all the packs.
4. If a small group (2-4) of swimmers breaks away from the front of the lead pack, R1 will usually monitor that lead group and R2 will monitor the second pack.
5. If a solo swimmer breaks away from the front of the pack, that swimmer will be monitored by R1. R2 will monitor following packs.
6. If small numbers of swimmers (1-3) are dropped from tertiary packs, they are usually monitored from a distance. Water safety personnel can be notified to monitor the separated groups if the Referees cannot closely monitor all the packs/swimmers. Individual water safety boats or kayaks may be assigned to monitor "Tail End Charlie".
7. If a swimmer attempts to cross the gap from one pack to another, the appropriate Referee should notify the gaining packs Referee of the swimmer approaching the new pack.

The Referee should request the Captain to station the boat so as to view the assigned swimmers from a relatively close range. The boat should not be so closely positioned so as to be distracting or even interfering with the swimmers. The boat should also not be so close as to be a danger to the swimmers should they change directions quickly or water conditions unexpectedly or suddenly move the swimmers or boat.

Other considerations regarding on-course vessel operation:

1. Avoid crossing in front of individual or packs of swimmers.
2. Boats with excessive exhaust plumes should be swapped out with other course vessels whenever possible. Should that not be an option, vessels with offensive exhaust plumes should be operated down-wind of the athletes at all times.
3. Captains and Referees should be in constant communications regarding vessel positioning. They should plan for course changes well in advance of needed manoeuvres so that they can be safely accomplished.
4. Mechanical breakdowns occur. The Meet Referee should plan in advance for contingencies prior to and during the race.

4.3 Preventative Officiating

Just as in pool officiating, the Referee is observing the swimmers rather than closely inspecting the swimmers. With that said, the Referee can give subtle signals to the swimmers by the positioning of the boat and his demeanour during the race.

Example: If swimmers are not swimming in very close proximity, more than a body length, and there is little chance of illegal contact between the swimmers, then the Referee's positioning does not need to be very close to the group of swimmers. In fact, standing off from the swimmers a bit can signal to the swimmers that the Referee is happy with the current conduct of the race.

Conversely, if the Referee observes these same swimmers starting to close the distance to a point where they start coming into unintentional contact with each other, the Referee may move to closer to the group of swimmers. This movement closer to the swimmers sends a signal that the Referee is more closely observing the activities of the pack, especially as the Referee stands and points at some swimmers. The swimmers know when they are getting close to an interference situation. The Referee can also signal concern with activity in the pack by body language – placing his whistle in the mouth – perhaps pointing and or signalling with his arms for a specific area of a pack to move apart. The goal should be preventative officiating. Attempt to keep swimmers from being in a position where they may need to be given a Yellow Flag or Red Flag.

Swimming in close proximity is an integral part of open water swimming. It is not uncommon for swimmers to be in occasional contact with other swimmers. When it is observed that swimmers are in almost constant contact – virtually every stroke, some action should be taken.

If two or more swimmers are in near constant contact, or one or more swimmers are in danger of being interfered with by the actions of other swimmers, those swimmers should be signalled to move apart. The Referee should have his boat positioned so that the swimmers being signalled can see the visual signals. This position should be about a 60 degree angle behind the swimmers in question. The Referee may need to move down to the water level so that the swimmers can observe the signal. The Referee should blow a series of short, crisp whistles while signalling with his arms to move apart. The Referee should repeat the signals so that the swimmers have the opportunity to understand the signal. Swimmers who are breathing to the opposite side may be signalled by another Referee boat if necessary or possible. However, it is the responsibility of the swimmers to acknowledge the Referee's actions, it is not the responsibility of the Referee to move the boat in a different position to give warnings or a Yellow/Red Flag to the swimmer committing the infraction. If the swimmers do not respond to the signal, and continue actions that cause interference then a Yellow Flag or Red Flag infraction may need to be signalled.

4.4 Infractions

Any infraction of the rules will be signalled with a Yellow Flag or a Red Flag.

4.4.1 Yellow Flag

The Yellow Flag is used for signalling minor infractions including:

1. **False Start** – A swimmer who gains an unfair advantage at the start will be assessed a yellow flag infraction. The rules also provide for the Referee to assess a red flag disqualification if the situation warrants. Refer to the section on starts for discussion of this subject.
2. **Intentional contact:** with another swimmer that is unsporting in nature – first offense. This would include intentionally pulling on ankles, shoulders, etc. This can also include intentionally altering course to contact another swimmer or pushing down on a swimmer's shoulders, back or legs. Generally speaking, the swimmer in the lead or in front has the right of way. Swimmers who wish to overtake another swimmer must remain clear of the swimmer being overtaken. With that said, swimmers who abruptly change course to interfere with an overtaking swimmer can be charged with a yellow flag infraction.

4.4.2 Red Flag

The Red Flag signals the immediate disqualification of the swimmer. The swimmer must leave the course immediately. The Red Flag is given for the following infractions.

1. A swimmer who accumulates any two Yellow Flag infractions will be assessed a Red Flag, a disqualification.
2. Failing to swim the prescribed course. Swimmers who miss a buoy and fail to return and re-round that buoy shall be disqualified. In the pre-race instructions, it is extremely important that all competitors know which buoys are designated at turn buoys (have a required direction of passage) and which are guide buoys (no required direction of passage.)
3. Unsporting Conduct - Unsporting conduct may include striking another swimmer with a hand, fist, elbow, knee or foot, or retaliating for intentional or unintentional contact. It can also include pulling back another swimmer by grabbing a foot, ankle, leg, hand, arm or swimsuit. Intentional contact which interferes with another swimmer as they approach a feeding station or the finish of a race can be deemed unsporting conduct.
4. Springing from or walking on the bottom – Open water events are freestyle events. Freestyle rules permit swimmers to stand on the bottom unless it is a beach or onshore finish; however they may not walk on the bottom or spring from the bottom when they resume swimming.
5. Pulling on the cables - Contact with buoy cables while turning is not grounds for disqualification. Grabbing cables and moving the cable out of the way so as to receive a competitive advantage may be grounds for disqualification. Pulling on underwater buoy cables as a method of propulsion is grounds for disqualification.
6. Taking support from a fixed or floating object. Swimmers who intentionally use a buoy, support craft, dock, feed station, feed pole, debris or other object for support during the races should be disqualified. Unintentional contact with an object or contact with an object to prevent an unsafe condition is never grounds for disqualification.
7. Intentional contact with a support craft or support craft personnel or intentional contact with feed station personnel. Incidental and unintentional contact with a support craft or crew is never grounds for disqualification.

In all Yellow Flag and Red Flag infraction situations, the Referee should instruct his assistant to carefully document the details of the infraction in writing. While continuing to observe the race, the Referee should instruct the assistant to prepare a white board with the swimmers number clearly written and to prepare the appropriate flag for display. When ready, the Referee should signal the swimmer with a series of short-crisp whistles and display the signage and flag to the swimmer. The Referee should direct the boat be positioned at approximately a 60 degree angle to the side and behind the offending swimmer. The signage and flag should be displayed a relatively close to water level so the swimmer has the opportunity to see the signage. The flag and signage should remain displayed for a sufficient time (at least 1 minute) or until the swimmer has the opportunity to observe the Yellow or Red Flag. For a Yellow Flag infraction, there is no requirement for the swimmer to acknowledge the infraction. If a swimmer stops swimming to question the infraction, the Referee may tell the swimmer what rule was violated, but swimmers rarely stop and ask for clarification.

Once the infraction has been signalled to the swimmer, the Referee or the Assistant to the Referee should relay the following details of the infraction to the Administrative Referee or Clerk of Course via radio or mobile communications.

1. Competitor's Number
2. Type of Infraction (yellow or red)
3. Time of Infraction (e.g., either time of day or elapsed time from start)
4. Location of the Infraction (e.g., at the 1-mile mark or around turn buoy #2)

5. Description of Infraction (e.g., pulling back on legs, repeated hitting of feet)

4.3 Judging Contact

One of the most difficult judgement decisions that a Referee has to make is regarding contact between swimmers. Due to the nature of open water swimming, many swimmers will purposefully swim in close proximity to each other. Swimmers swim closely for several reasons. 1. To maintain “contact” with individuals or groups of swimmers they wish to keep track of during the event. 2. To counter surges or attacks made by leading or trailing swimmers. 3. To take advantage of drafting the lead swimmers and movement of the water created by leading swimmers.

Due to the dynamic nature of the venue, swimmers may be forced into contact by oncoming waves or lateral currents or, frankly, just plain old swimming crookedly. In some cases, swimmers may intentionally or unintentionally swim so closely to another swimmer that contact situations are created. Whether the contact was initiated intentionally or unintentionally, these situations dictate the Open Water Referee must take decisive action.

4.4 Right of Way

In general terms, the leading swimmer has the right of way. Trailing swimmers must not interfere with the leading swimmer when attempting any manoeuvre to overtake the leader. Interference can range from the hand frequently coming into contact with some part of the other swimmer’s body (e.g., feet, legs, hips, lower back, shoulders, arms or hands), to the trailing swimmer grabbing some part of the lead swimmers body or swimwear. Although the leading swimmer has the right of way, it would not be appropriate to allow the leading swimmer to abruptly change course to keep a swimmer attempting to pass. This veering is intentional interference. The Referee must discern between unintentional contact, and intentional contact.

4.5 Where Contact Becomes Illegal

During the race, the Referee may observe two or more swimmers swimming in unusually close proximity. What the Referee observes at that moment may be totally legal; however the Referee should consider signalling the swimmers to move apart to create some separation as a form of preventative officiating. Swimming in extremely close proximity can quickly evolve into two or more swimmers becoming slightly or severely tangled up. These swimmers can significantly slow up which in turn can cause a pile-up of trailing swimmers or it can escalate into something more dramatic. In addition, illegal contact may ensue as the swimmers untangle and resume swimming. These swimmers may interfere with those swimmers trailing behind them. Swimmers who get severely tangled up (to the point that they almost come to a stop) should be permitted to untangle and resume swimming. No infraction should be assessed PROVIDED that no additional contact occurred during the separation. Example: Two swimmers were swimming in close proximity and their strokes were synchronized without interference. At some later point their arms lose synchronization and became entangled (to this point no infraction occurred). As the swimmers untangled themselves, one swimmer placed a hand on the other swimmers shoulder and pushes off to create separation. The swimmer who pushed off has committed contact and should be penalized with a Yellow Flag infraction.

Occasionally, swimmers in a pack choose to change their position within the pack. One of the more dramatic moves is called a crossover move. This crossover occurs when a swimmer trailing another on one side of the leading swimmer chooses to change their position to the other side of the swimmer. One option this swimmer would have would be to slow down, drop behind and speed up to reposition by passing behind the leading swimmer. There are times when there is insufficient space due to other trailing swimmers to pass behind. The most basic crossover move is initiated by the trailing swimmer who swims across and over the legs of the leading swimmer, which often results in disturbing the stroke of the leading swimmer. A more elegant crossover manoeuvre is initiated by the trailing swimmer by performing a continuous roll over the legs or of the leading swimmer and resuming swimming on the other side. If performed skilfully, this manoeuvre can be performed

without interfering with the leading swimmer. There are several conditions which may cause illegal interference by the trailing swimmer. These include: 1. The body positioning and momentum that the trailing swimmer carries through the manoeuvre – if the swimmer slows down or performs the manoeuvre slowly, their body position may start to become more vertical which will cause excessive contact with the leading swimmer. 2. The relative position of the trailing swimmer relative to the lead swimmer. Generally speaking, if the shoulder position of the trailing swimmer is forward of the leading swimmers hips, excessive contact is likely to occur. As the relative position of the shoulders moves further down the body of the lead swimmer, the chances of a crossover being performed legally improves – especially if the crossover move is performed by the trailing swimmer rolling over on his/her back while crossing over the legs of the leading swimmer.

Often times, the Referee may observe the aftermath of physical contact without observing the contact itself. The Referee may hear grunts, groans and muffled shouts from athletes who have been victims of unseen contact. The Referee may also visually witness the post contact injuries – bloody noses, scratches, lost caps and goggles, etc. Unless the Referee actually observes the contact and determines that the contact impeded the progress of other athletes, the Referee should not penalize a swimmer.

4.6 Unsporting Conduct

There are rare occasions where a swimmer may commit an unsporting conduct infraction. Unsporting conduct can range from intentional and exceptionally severe physical contact such as intentionally striking, elbowing or kicking another swimmer to an unintentional impeding that is unfair to other swimmers. Unsporting conduct may also include interference with other swimmers approaching the finish. Swimmers who are charged with unsporting conduct are assessed a Red Flag infraction and are disqualified from the competition and must leave the course immediately.

5 Specific Rules for OW Swimming

5.1 Escorted and Unescorted Swims

There are two broad categories of open water swimming events: Escorted and Unescorted. Escorted swims are when the swimmers are accompanied by support craft that are dedicated to their coaching, care, feeding and safety. Unescorted swims are when the swimmers swim the assigned course without dedicated aide and rely on mutual support from host provided safety. In an unescorted swim, feeding of athletes may be accomplished by a “feed station” where their coaches and handlers pass liquid and food. Some events rely on mutual support feed stations where volunteers pass hydration or food to the swimmers.

USA-Swimming rules require that the status of the race – Escorted or Unescorted – be declared in the meet announcement. The reasons for this requirement are obvious. Significant planning goes into swimmer’s preparation for a race. The coach and swimmer must plan for feeding during the race. If the race is designated as escorted, the coach must secure an appropriate escort craft to support the swimmer. If it is unescorted and a feed station is used, the coach or handler must be prepared with the appropriate apparatus (normally a feed pole) to feed the swimmer.

5.2 Turning or Rounding Buoys/Objects

All swimmers must complete the designated course to finish the race. At each turn point or alteration in the course a Turn Judge will be positioned to ensure that all swimmers complete the course as described in the meet information and as described in the pre-race briefing. The Turn Judge will ensure that his craft or platform does not obstruct a swimmer’s visibility of the turn and that it is securely fixed in a position and not subject to tidal, wind or other movements.

If a swimmer fails to swim the designated course by not executing a turn in the prescribed manner, then that swimmer has failed to finish the prescribed course. Unless the swimmer returns to the

missed turn buoy, that swimmer will be disqualified (Red Flag) for failing to complete the prescribed course.

There are limitless possibilities in potential course layouts. Buoys are usually described as “Turn Buoys” – ones that must be rounded in a specific direction, or “Intermediate” or “Guide Buoys” – ones that may be passed on either side.

When a course is described, each turn buoy would be described by which shoulder the buoys must be passed. Example – on a rectangular course: “After the start swimmers will proceed 1100m down course to the first orange turn buoy. Pass that buoy and all subsequent turn buoys using right shoulder turns. Intermediate buoys may be passed on either side.”

A straightaway course might be described as follows. “There will be a beach start and beach finish. All swimmers will line up behind a line in the sand. At the start signal, they will run to the water and commence swimming to the first orange buoy @ 50m from shore. Pass that buoy using a right shoulder turn. Swim parallel to the beach for 1 mile until reaching a second orange buoy. Pass that buoy using a right shoulder turn. Swim to the beach. Run up the beach to the finish chute. The race is over when a swimmer crosses the line at the end of the chute.”



Swimmers rounding a set of turn buoys

5.3 Feeding, Standing, Walking

It is common for swimmers to drink liquids or eat food during the race. In unescorted races 10K and greater, the host should provide feeding locations or “Stations” at suitable intervals along the course. The feed station locations should be planned such that the swimmers can be fed approximately every

15-25 minutes. In escorted swims, the swimmer's support craft is responsible for providing sustenance for their swimmer.

Since open water races are Freestyle events, the swimmer can stand on the bottom during the race. This includes the feed station if the water depth conditions permit. If the swimmer stands, they may not walk, jump or push off the bottom when they resume swimming. Violations of this rule should result in a Red Flag disqualification.

5.4 Use of devices to assist/support swimmers.

Open water rules prohibit receiving propulsive aid from anyone in boats or escort craft. The rules also prohibit intentionally taking support from a fixed or floating object.

The practical applications of this rule include:

- A swimmer who reaches up to an escort craft and holds on during a feeding should be disqualified (Red Flag).
- A swimmer who comes across a floating log and holds on to rest should be disqualified (Red Flag).
- A swimmer who takes support from the feed station during a feeding should be disqualified (Red Flag).
- A swimmer who reaches out to fend off an escort craft that has come too close due to safety considerations should NOT be penalized.
- A swimmer who reaches out to keep from impacting a floating piece of debris should NOT be penalized.
- A swimmer who reaches out and touches the feed station to protect themselves from being pushed or washed into the station should NOT be penalized.

No swimmer is permitted to use or wear any device which may be an aid to their speed, endurance or buoyancy. Open water swimmers must comply with the swimwear rules that are currently in effect. Section 7 of the USA-S Rules allow for Wet Suit classifications in any non-championship event provided that the classification was described in the meet information. Goggles, a maximum of two (2) caps, nose clip and earplugs may also be used.

5.5 Withdrawal / Leaving the Water

During the course of the race, there may be swimmers who make the decision to withdraw from the race. There are many factors that may cause a swimmer to withdraw including hypothermia, hyperthermia, fatigue, injury, or simple unwillingness to continue. The pre-race instructions must include directions to the swimmers and coaches regarding the withdrawal procedures.

All swimmers who withdraw from a race MUST immediately inform the Referee, Assistant Referee, Clerk of Course, Administrative Referee or other staff when leaving the water. The Administrative Referee should log the time and reason for the withdrawal. Race officials should ensure that all swimmers withdrawing from a race receive appropriate care prior to being released from the event. The Administrative Referee must always maintain an accurate count of the athletes on the course. Keeping an accurate tally of withdrawals is an essential element of this task.

6 The Finish

As the swimmers approach the finish, the timing judges and finish judges should assume their assigned positions.

The Referee must carefully watch for contact or interference as the swimmers approach the finish. Swimmers intentionally or unintentionally interfering with another swimmer approaching the finish should be disqualified (Red Flag) for unsporting conduct. All swimmers have the right to an unobstructed approach to the finish structure provided they comply with the concept of the “right of way”.

The Referee should also watch the actual finish touches (where hand touches are used to finish the race) being careful to note possible missed touches or other situations where review of finish video should be conducted. If there is any possible dispute as to the order of finish, the Referee should ensure that the results are not announced. The Referee should verbalize his finish observations to the assistant who shall make a record of the observations. The Referee is ultimately responsible for determining the order of finish using all available data – including personal observations.

7 Protests

In accordance with USA Swimming rules, a swimmer who receives a Red Flag (or Disqualification) must immediately leave the course. For this swimmer, the race is over. For this reason, a Referee must be ABSOLUTELY SURE that the swimmer committed an infraction, or a series of infractions that meet the threshold to be Red Flagged from a race. Unlike pool races where swimmers who commit infractions finish the race while being disqualified, and who subsequently have the right to appeal the disqualification, in Open Water races an appeal is not possible because the swimmer never gets the opportunity to finish the race.

Why is a Red Flagged swimmer required to leave the course immediately? The primary reason for a swimmer being required to leave the course is that in Open Water races, the swimmers are competing in a dynamic environment where close interaction and contact with each other is frequent and expected. A Red Flagged swimmer could have significant and serious impact on the final results of a race from which they have been disqualified. They can influence the result by subsequent interference, drafting, or inflicting injury on another swimmer. It is imperative that they leave the course immediately after being Red Flagged.

Protests are most frequently encountered prior to a race or post-race. Prior to a race, the protest may be logged regarding:

- Eligibility of a swimmer to compete.
- Eligibility of a swimmer to represent an organization or team.
- Course setup
- Race procedures
- Etc.

After a race, protest may be logged regarding:

- Results, times, placements
- Interference or unsporting conduct during the race

Just as in pool events, the Head Referee should investigate the protest, make a ruling, and then be prepared to convene an Eligibility Jury or Technical Jury should the protest resolution not be

accepted by the petitioner. Rules regarding protests in Open Water events are identical to pool events. Refer to the appropriate rule in Part 1 of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.

8 Duties of Assistant Referees (Water and Land Based)

On-Water Assistant Referees may be assigned to monitor specific groups of swimmers. When Assistant Referees are assigned, they have full authority to enforce the rules to include giving warning whistles, warning signals, Yellow Flags or Red Flags. The Head Referee will assign jurisdiction to Assistant Referees at the beginning of a race and may adjust that jurisdiction as racing conditions change during the event.

8.1 Briefings/Instructions to Officials

Prior to the each Open Water event the Referee should make officiating team assignments that best utilize all officials available. The Referee should be cognizant of the responsibility to help the professional development of each official. Each official should be consulted to determine qualifications, experience, and requested assignment.

Prior to the event, each official should be briefed as to their assignment. The Referee should clearly delineate the official's responsibilities and brief the official of any unique requirements for the event.

On the day of the event, the Referee should hold a formal briefing for all officials to review the rules and procedures that will be used for the races. Sufficient time should be allocated so that all officials can then accomplish their pre-race responsibilities.

There will be occasions where pool officials with no open water experience are assigned to work an event. Experienced pool officials can usually make a rapid transition to open water officiating if they are briefed thoroughly on their new duties and responsibilities. Registration, Clerk of Course duties, Timing Judge, Finish Judge, Turn Judges, Starters and Assistants to Referees are all appropriate duties for pool officials transitioning to open water officiating.

8.2 Other officials and their roles during the competition.



Small sailboat used as a lead craft – NOTE the distinctive flags signifying its status of a lead craft.

8.3 Escort Safety Craft

Escort Safety Craft should be utilized in almost all open water races. Events of 10K and less are usually designated unescorted swims, however there are usually multiple dedicated escort safety craft ready to provide rapid support should it be required by a swimmer or any individual on the water.

Every vessel on the course is a First Responder vessel in the event of an emergency. With that said, the Referee boats are not considered primary safety vessels. A minimum of two dedicated safety vessels should be assigned for every event. One is the primary vessel available to respond if necessary. The second vessel is a backup should the primary vessel responds to an emergency or breaks down of the primary safety vessel.

For unescorted swims, an appropriate number of safety craft must be available. The number of safety craft should be determined by taking into consideration of:

- Course Configuration – distance from shore, length and shape of course
- Environmental considerations – water temperature, water conditions (smooth/rough) weather conditions.
- Number of participants

Note: The number of safety craft required can vary day to day - hour to hour on the same course. It is prudent to over-estimate the number of safety craft needed for a given race. If a shortage of safety craft is noted for the given conditions, consideration should be given to modifying the number of allowable swimmers on course to maintain an appropriate ratio of swimmers/safety vessels for the given conditions.

During races longer than 10K, individual swimmers will be escorted by their own boat. This escort craft is given the responsibility to monitor the care and safety of their assigned swimmer. In an escorted race, there may be mutual support craft assigned to the course. These vessels are there to provide assistance to escort safety craft should their assigned swimmer need assistance exceeding the capability of that craft.

Captains of all escort craft must be extremely vigilant when operating in close proximity to swimmers. They must not only be aware of their swimmer, but also of other swimmers and vessels on the course. Safety is paramount at all times.

If the meet host fails to provide the agreed upon number of safety vessels, OR if conditions are such that more than the originally planned safety vessels are required, the competition should not be started or shall be modified

8.4 Turn Judges

At each alteration of the course there should be a Turn Judge. The Turn Judge will ensure that his craft or platform does not obstruct a swimmer's visibility of the turn buoy. The Turn Judge will personally observe that each swimmer executes a turn in the prescribed manner and reports any infractions to the Referee by radio.



Where possible, the Turn Judge should record each swimmer by number who legally passes the assigned turn. If a swimmer misses a turn buoy, that swimmer's number must be forwarded to the Referee. If the competitor number cannot be identified, but the swimmer is wearing a unique cap/swimwear combination (example: bright orange cap and royal blue suit – and there are no other swimmers in that group so attired), forward that exact information to the Referee along with the violation observed. The Referee will use that description to identify the offending swimmer. If the swimmer can be positively identified and the Referee is in position to inform the swimmer of the infraction, then the swimmer can re-round the missed buoy. If not, the Referee shall disqualify the swimmer. However, it is not the responsibility of the Referee to immediately inform the swimmer of the missed buoy, especially if the Referee has other concerns or responsibilities at that time.

The Turn Judge has to ensure that their craft or observation platform does not obstruct the swimmer's view of the turn point. Particular care must be taken to prevent their craft from drifting into the swimmer's course due to wind or currents.

8.5 Race Judges

During long-distance escorted swims, Race Judges may be assigned to each escort boat. These race judges monitor the conduct of the swimmer continuously during the event. Assignment as a Race Judge is made by random draw before the race. The Race Judge is assigned to a swimmer's craft as an "Observer". The Race Judge is not there to be part of the crew or to assist the swimmer's support team in any way.

Race Judges perform the following tasks:

Personally observe the swimmer at all times during the race;

- Ensure that the Rules of the competition are complied with and any violations are recorded in writing and are reported to the Referee at the earliest opportunity;
- Keep a complete record of any violations observed;
- Ensure that the swimmer or the escort craft does not interfere with another swimmer. The Race Judge may advise the swimmer or the swimmer's support staff to move away from another competitor or another competitor's craft. (any such intervention must be recorded and Referee informed at the earliest possible time); and
- Have the power to order a swimmer from the water upon the expiration of any time limit or if the swimmer is in danger or risk of involuntarily sinking or entering into severe cases of hypothermia or hyperthermia if so ordered by the Referee or requested by his/her coach.
- Race Judges should be aware that many escort safety craft are small and have no toilet facilities, so care should be taken with the quantities of fluids ingested prior to and during a race.

9 Timing

There are many different methods that are acceptable for timing an Open Water race.

- Chip timing – one or more computer chips are worn by each swimmer.
- Manual Timing – three manual watches using the watch split function.
- Video Timing – sophisticated high-speed camera.

Sufficient Timers shall be assigned to time the race. One of the Timers shall be designated the Chief Timer. Normally, a minimum of three Timers will be assigned. All watches (with or without built-in printers) are started at the starting signal. As the swimmers complete the race, each timer uses the split function of the watch to record finish times. The official time is determined using the same process as manual timing in pool events.

The main differences between timing of an Open Water Swimming Event and a Pool Event are:

- Timers are not assigned to a lane;
- Timers may be required to time more than one swimmer – in most cases, every competitor in the race;
- the "lap split" function of the stopwatch is extensively used;

- the stopwatch is **not stopped** the instant that any part of the swimmer's body touches the finish. It is kept running to time other swimmers and is not turned off until instructed by the Referee or the Chief Timer on instruction by the Referee;
- the finish may be a fixed vertical pad, a line suspended above the water surface, or a projected or virtual plane between the shore and a buoy or any two points;
- times are not provided to the swimmers or their representatives until after the Recorders have completed their duties and the Referee has checked and confirmed the results; and

Depending on the race, split times may be recorded as swimmers pass a specific point in the race. In large races it is only practical to record split times using electronic chip timing. In very long races with small entry fields, taking splits is much easier.



An official assists in attaching a "Chip" to a swimmers wrist.

10 Finish Judging

Open Water Swimming events always use Finish Judges.

A minimum of three (3) Finish Judges should be assigned, one of whom shall be appointed Chief Finish Judge.

As at the pool, the most important duty of the Finish Judge is to place all swimmers in their order of finish. The difference between the “Pool” and Open Water Swimming swimmers are placed by their competitor number as opposed to lane numbers.

Finish Judges are **NOT PERMITTED** to act as Timers in the same event.

The best method for judging is for a judge to independently and silently record the finish results they observe. It is acceptable for a Referee or Assistant Referee to radio ahead the numbers and characteristics of swimmers approaching the finish. Example call from Referee to Finish Judges “In the lead pack of five swimmers, swimmer #14 – Red Cap, #19 – Green Cap, #2 – No Cap – Blue Suit, #3 Black Cap –Silver Stripe, #22 –Solid Back Cap”. The Referee is not calling the finish but rather assisting the Finish Judges in the identification of the swimmers approaching the finish. The Finish Judge will determine the actual placing of those swimmers.

In multiple lap races, it is recommended that the Finish Judges track the athletes as they complete each lap. This provides for a cross check should there be a dispute as to whether a swimmer completed all laps of the race.

11 Determining the Final Result

It is possible for a significant amount of time to elapse between first and last place in Open Water Swimming events. Most Meet Announcements have a cut off time for swimmers after the first place finisher in the particular event has completed the race. The Rule Book sets standard cut-off times for 25k events is 2 hours, for 10k events it is 30 minutes. The Organizing Committee may modify these cut-off times if so stated in the Meet Announcement.

It is permissible for the Referee’s staff to begin working out the results of the race well before all competitors have completed the race. Awards presentations can begin prior to the last swimmer finishing.

Depending on the configuration of the course, Recorders receive lap times or buoy times (or course positional times at a pre-determined point.) at various times throughout the race. At the finish, of course, Recorders will receive the final time for each swimmer. This may be a print out from a stopwatch with a built-in printer or a time sheet with elapsed times recorded by a volunteer who is working with a Timekeeper. Judges (either Race or Finish) supply the swimmers number either by position in the field at a given point during the race or at the finish.

The following description of determining the Final Results is based on the presumption that you have stopwatches with built-in printer functionality.

The Chief Timer will provide the times for each the placement of each swimmer as they finished the race 1st – xx place. This will be in the form of a printout tape from the stopwatch. The Chief Finish Judge will provide the competitor numbers in place order 1st – xx place. These records are passed to the Chief Recorder who will match the times recorded to the relative order of finish. Disputes in placing and times may be resolved using video replay if available. The Chief Recorder and Administrative Referee will ensure that withdrawals and Disqualifications are appropriately included in the result.

If the race was started in waves, the Administrative Referee and the Chief Recorder will apply any time differential corrections to the raw split and finish times. When a meet management software program is used, this process is quick and accurate.

If the race has different age categories of swimmers competing together, the results must be calculated manually as a subset of the final order of finish, or by using a meet management software product.

The use of meet management computer programs helps with the tasks of preparing an official result that is available for display. The Meet Manager program will sort by age group and gender, and place the swimmers in their correct order of finish based on the times recorded and the data entered. The swimmer's number is most important when using the meet manager program.

The Referee is ultimately responsible for accurate results. Adequate advanced planning and strict attention to details should ensure that accurate results will be available in a reasonable amount of time.

12 Conclusion

Serving in the capacity of Open Water Referee can be extremely rewarding. Open water events are dynamic - no two races are ever the same. As the new Referee gains experience, they come to better anticipate evolving scenarios and develop courses of action to deal with issues which ensure positive outcomes to the events. Like pool referees – the open water Referee must be a leader – the job is immensely comprehensive with a wide-range of responsibilities. It is not a one-person show. The open water Referee learns something from every race – they learn from post-race reflection of the decisions they and others made.

Appendix A - Swimmers/Coaches Pre-Race Briefing Guide

The Briefing should be held in a designated area where all the swimmers and coaches are able to clearly see and hear the Referee. This briefing guide may be used at the General Meeting (if held) as well as the final race instructions meeting approximately 20 minutes prior to the race.

Attendees:

Swimmers

Coaches

Referee, Assistant Referees, Admin. Referees

Safety Officer

Independent Safety Monitor

Medical Officer

Course Officer

PRE-RACE BRIEFING GUIDE – EXPANDED VERSION

Normal Procedures

1. **Introduction of Key Personnel** (Be as brief as applicable when introducing the Event Director, Head Referee, Assistant Referees, Safety Officer, Water Safety Coordinator, Course Officer, Medical Officer, etc.). Indicate if there is a difference in Referees between the male and female heats.
2. **Timeline for the competition** (What timeline milestones are applicable for the athletes? How will the timeline be communicated on event day? How are changes to the timeline communicated to the athletes? Where applicable, a timeline should be made available to the coaches and athletes.)
3. **Course Condition Report – Water Temperature, Air Temperature, Surf, Chop, Currents, Tides, Water Quality, known sea life, Known hazards and their markings, Possible additional hazards.** (Provide athletes and coaches with as much detailed information on conditions as possible. Explain where the existing conditions are and their impact on the race regarding the approved conditions in the Event Plan. If any parameters are outside the Event Plan parameters, what has been done to address those exceptions? Will there be a change of course? or a change of start time? or a change of location?)
4. **Course Description** – Start, Turn Buoys, Guide Buoys, Feed Station, Finish Chute, Finish Line. (Consideration should be given to providing a printed handout of the course layout. Laying out the course “on the sand” or on a white board or with a PowerPoint presentation is a very effective way to help the athletes visualize the course. Course description should include standard terminology for buoys “Guide Buoy” or “Turn Buoy”. Turn Buoys should be designated as a Left or Right Shoulder turn. Number and size of buoys. Status of the finish chute buoys – are they turn or guide buoys? Is there a feed station? If so, does it have a required passing direction or are there any restrictions?)

5. **Start Line, Start Signal, and Start Procedure** (Details regarding the location of the start line. Describe which signals will be used for the start. What signals will be used for a recalled start.)
6. **Finish Line, Finish Procedure, Post Even Procedure** (Location of the finish line, describe what constitutes a finish, how will the official finish order be determined.)
7. **Rules and Infractions** –Yellow Flag and Red Flag Including the Event time cut-off
8. **Summary of Normal Procedure Event Plan Changes** – Review all changes made to the event plan.
9. **Questions on Normal Event Procedures**

Non-Normal Procedures

1. **Withdrawal Procedures** (How does an athlete withdraw? After check-in, but pre-start? After check-in or after the start? After withdrawing, where does the athlete report and how do they get there if they are physically able to do so? How do they inform their withdrawal if they are not physically able? How does the athlete signal that they need transportation from the point of abandonment to the shore? Stress to all athletes and coaches the importance of immediate communication to event operations personnel that an athlete is/has withdrawn. An in-person report of “safe on shore” is required of all athletes withdrawing from an event.)
2. **Emergency Event Abandonment Signal and Procedures** – is designated by 3 Blasts on an air horn or whistle,, followed by one long blast, and then repeated. (Explain possible reasons for event abandonment and the actions that are expected of the athletes and other on course personnel in that eventuality. There may be different actions for different emergency situations and that should be explained in detail. Example: If a thunderstorm is threatening or a shark appears, the procedure may be that athletes exit the course at the closest of three pre-determined locations where they will be accounted for. Under a different situation with a less immediate threat, the athletes may be instructed to proceed from the present position directly to the finish area where they will be accounted for. Procedures for boarding vessels should they be available to transport some or all of the athletes back to shore.)
3. **Water Safety Coordinator Brief** – Location, number, identification of water safety personnel and craft. Signals – Athlete to safety personnel and between safety personnel.
 - a. **Response Actions** – Swimmer in distress requires immediate action.
 - b. **Response Actions** – Swimmer evacuation from course.
 - c. **Response Actions** – Swimmer evacuation from venue.
 - d. **Response Actions** – Missing swimmer that leads to a search and recovery.
4. **Summary of Non-Normal Procedure Event Plan Changes** – Review all changes made to the event plan.
5. **Questions on Non-Normal Event Procedures.**

PRE-RACE BRIEFING GUIDE - CONDENSED

Normal Procedures

1. **Introduction of Key Personnel**
2. **Timeline for the competition Course**
3. **Condition Report – Water Temperature, Air Temperatures, Surf, Chop, Currents, Tides, Water Quality, known sea life, Known hazards and their marking. Possible additional hazards**
4. **Course Description – Start, Turn Buoys, Guide Buoys, Feed Station, Finish Chute, Finish Line.**
5. **Start Line, Start Signal, Start Procedure**
6. **Finish Line, Finish Procedure, Post Event Procedure**
7. **Rules and Infractions – Yellow Flag, Red Flag. Event Cutoff.**
8. **Summary of Normal Procedure Event Plan Changes – Review all changes made to the event plan.**
9. **Questions on Normal Event Procedures**

Non-Normal Procedures

1. **Withdrawal Procedures**
2. **Emergency Event Abandonment Signal and Procedures - 3 Blasts on an air horn or whistle - followed by one long blast, then repeated.**
3. **Water Safety Coordinator Brief – Location, number, identification of water safety personnel and craft. Signals – Athlete to safety personnel, between safety personnel.**
 - a. **Response Actions – Swimmer in distress – immediate action.**
 - b. **Response Actions – Swimmer evacuation from course.**
 - c. **Response Actions – Swimmer evacuation from venue.**
 - d. **Response Actions – Missing swimmer – search and recovery.**
4. **Summary of Non-Normal Procedure Event Plan Changes – Review all changes made to the event plan.**
5. **Questions on Non-Normal Event Procedures.**

Appendix B - OWS Infraction Report

Open Water Swimming Infraction Report

Event No.:	Date:	Time:	am/pm	
Competitor Number:		Event – Age Group		Sex M F
Distance	km	Freestyle		
Infraction incurred at:	Start	Turn Buoy	Other	Finish

Circle or delete as required

Infraction Details:

Reported by:	Starter	Turn Judge	Assistant Referee	Referee
Name (please print):		Signature:		
Action taken:	Disqualification		None	
Name of Referee (please print):		Signature:		

Announcer's Message:	
Event No.	Competitor Number:
was given a Yellow Flag or Red Flag for:	

Appendix C - Sample Announcer Time Line

These are the required PA announcements for the 2007 – USA Swimming World Championship Trials – Feel free to make any other announcements and color commentary as long as these time checkpoints are covered.

NOTE: Cell phone time is race time.

0715 – PA Operational

0730 – Announce “CHECK-IN IS NOW AVAILABLE. THERE IS ONE HOUR AND THIRTY MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE.

0800 – Announce “ONE HOUR UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE. ”

0815 – Announce “45 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE”.

0825 – Announce “35 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE. THE PRE-RACE MEETING WILL BEGIN IN 15 MINUTES – ALL ATHLETES MUST ATTEND.

0835 – Announce “5 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE PRE-RACE MEETING. ALL ATHLETES MUST BE PRESENT FOR INSPECTION AND BRIEFING. AGAIN 5 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE PRE-RACE MEETING.

0840 - Announce “ATTENTION COACHES – THE FEED STATION VESSELS WILL DEPART THE DOCK IN 10 MINUTES.”

0840 – Announce “THE PRE RACE MEETING WILL BEGIN SHORTLY- 20 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE MEN’S RACE.

0845 – Announce “ATTENTION COACHES – THE FEED STATION BOATS WILL DEPART THE DOCK IN 5 MINUTES. PLEASE REPORT TO THE DOCKS IMMEDIATELY.”

0845 – Announce “ATHLETE INTRODUCTIONS”

0850 – Announce “10 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE MEN’S RACE. LAST CALL FOR COACHES TO REPORT TO THE DOCKS TO BOARD THE FEED STATION VESSELS.”

0855 – Announce “5 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE.

0856 –Announce “4 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE.

0857– Announce “3 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE.

0858– Announce “2 MINUTES UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE.


0859– Announce “1 MINUTE UNTIL THE START OF THE RACE.


Appendix D – Examples of Referee Positioning

The diagrams listed below give examples of Referee positioning during different phases of an open water race. The depicted positioning is guideline only and course layout, actual swimmer orientation, and vessel maneuverability / availability may affect the most desirable on course officiating configuration.

In these diagrams the following race officials and volunteers are depicted.

 R1 – The Head Race Referee

 R2 – R4 – Assistant Race Referees who officiate the race under the direction of R1.

 - This kayak symbol is used to show the positioning of on water safety personnel. These personnel may be embarked on boats, kayaks, paddle boards or vessels suitable for the existing conditions. This symbol is also used to identify a lead vessel when it is used.

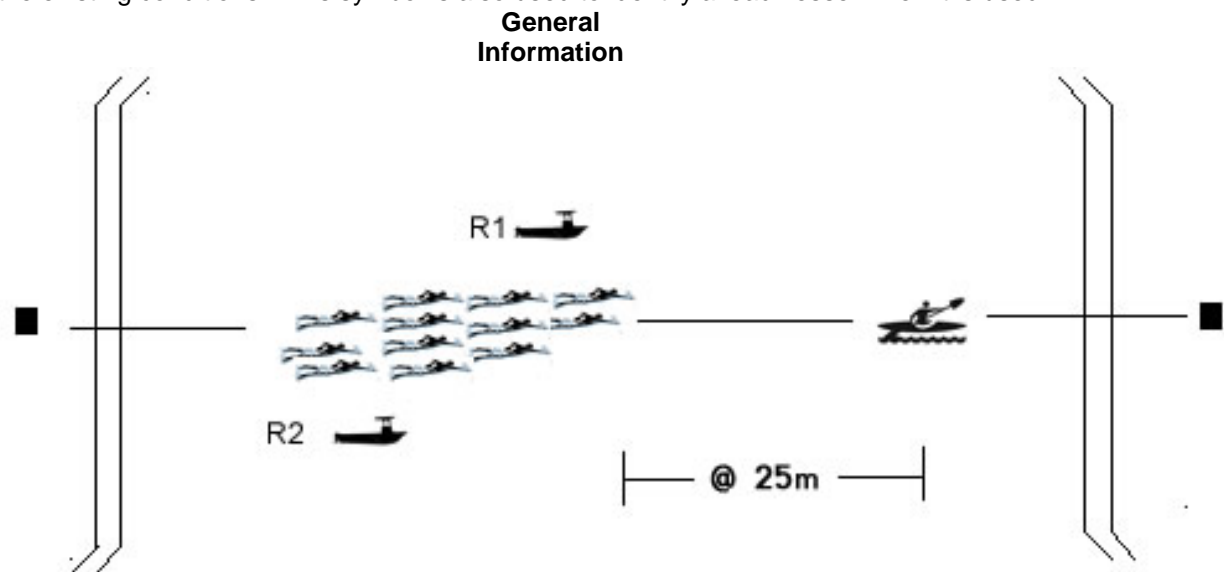


Figure 1. Lead Vessel Positioning

Figure 1 - Depending on the course configuration, a lead kayak or other vessel may be employed. This lead vessel must be identified with a flag or some other significant marking so that it is easily identifiable by the swimmers.

When deciding whether to use a lead boat or not, the course size, course marking, existing water and sky conditions, etc. must be taken into consideration. If a lead vessel is used, the Captain of that vessel must be briefed that they must take the "Rhumb Line" (direct compass heading) course from buoy-to-buoy. The swimmers must be briefed that regardless of the positioning of the lead vessel, that the swimmers are ultimately responsible for navigation on course. The lead vessel should maintain a constant position approximately 25m in front of the lead swimmer. If individual swimmers or packs move off the direct course between the buoys, the lead vessel should **NOT** alter course such as to position the vessel in front of the swimmers.

Positioning examples when four on-course Race Referees are used.

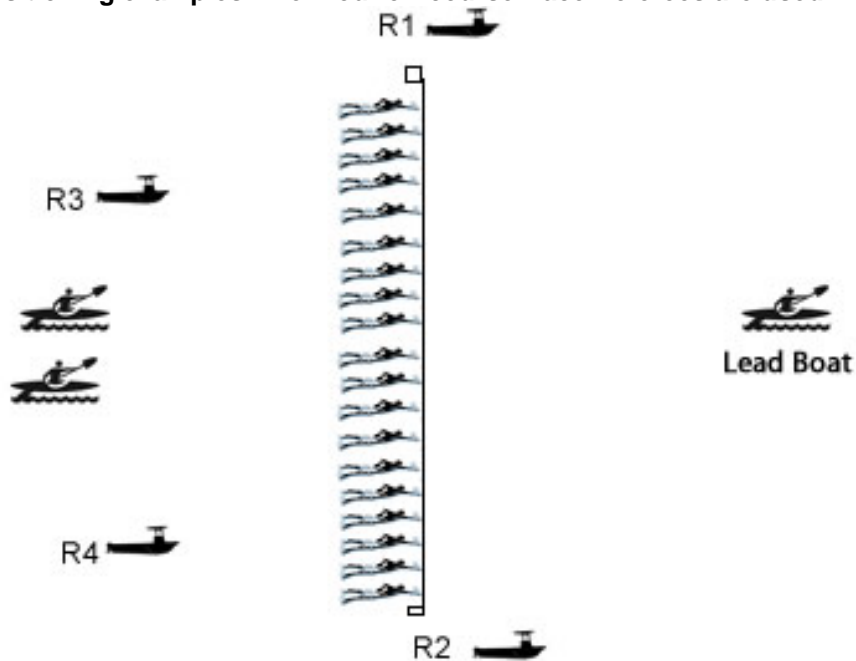


Figure 2. Start Positioning

Figure 2 - At the start, one Referee boat should be positioned on either end of the start line. The Starter may be embarked on one of the other Referee boats. In most cases, it is desirable to have the Starter and Head Referee on the same side of the start line – that way, the swimmers do not have to look to the other end of the start line for the visual start signal. Additional Referee boats, safety support craft (kayakers, paddle boards, etc.) can be positioned behind or off to the side of the starting line.

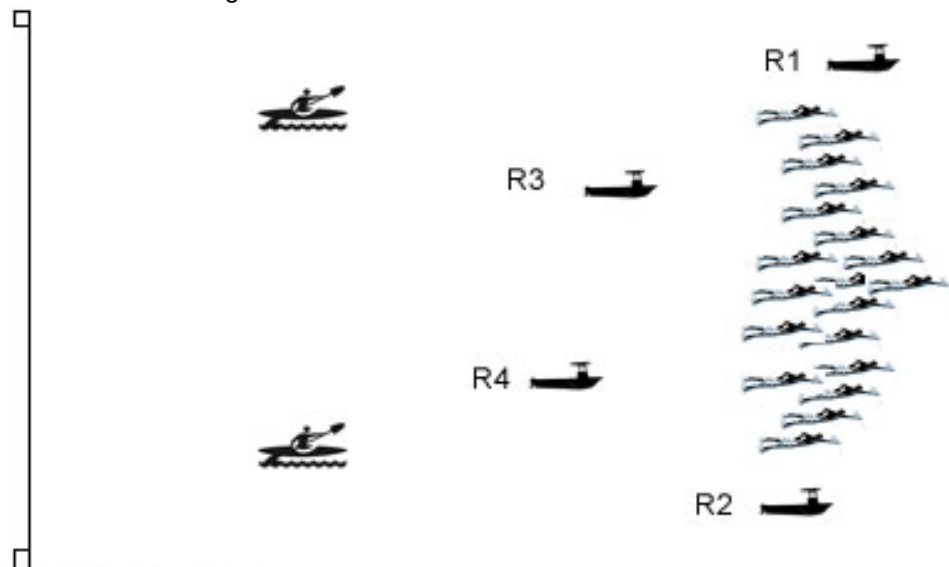


Figure 3. Post Start Boat Positioning

Figure 3 - After the start, the R1 and R2 monitor the swimmers as they leave the starting line. R3 and R4 take positions behind the swimmers waiting for the pack to develop.

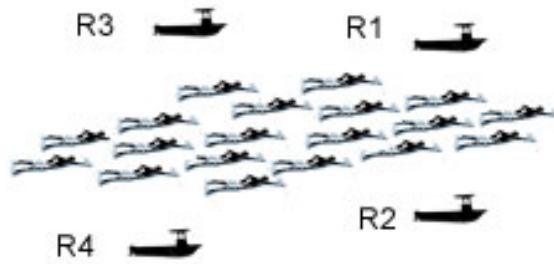


Figure 4. Single Pack Boat Positioning

Figure 4 - As the pack develops, R1 and R2 continue to monitor the lead portion of the pack as R3 and R4 move in to monitor the trailing portion of the pack.

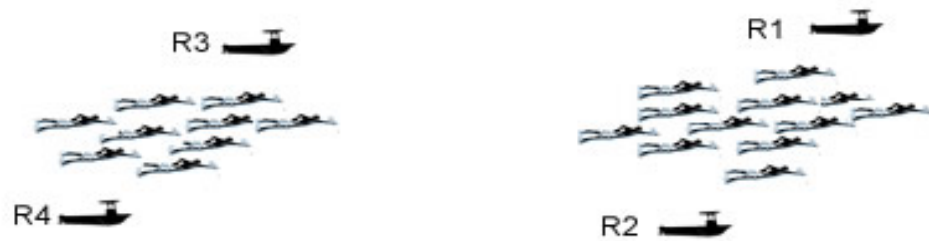


Figure 5 - Two Pack Boat Positioning

Figure 5 - Sometimes the pack will split into two. Depending on the size and relative positioning of the second pack, R1 may send one or two Referees to monitor that pack.

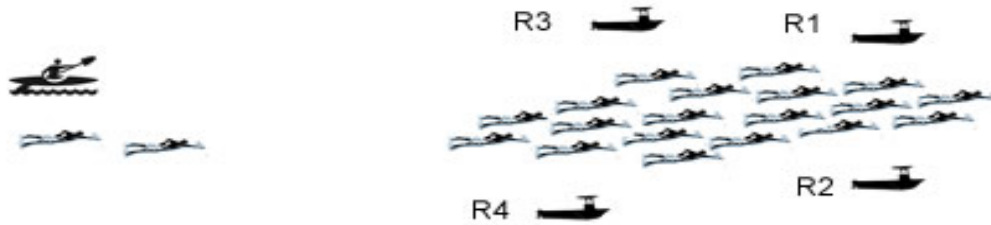


Figure 6 - Pack with Dropped Swimmers

Figure 6 - Occasionally swimmers will fall significantly behind a Referee monitored pack. In these cases a safety vessel will be assigned to monitor the swimmer(s).

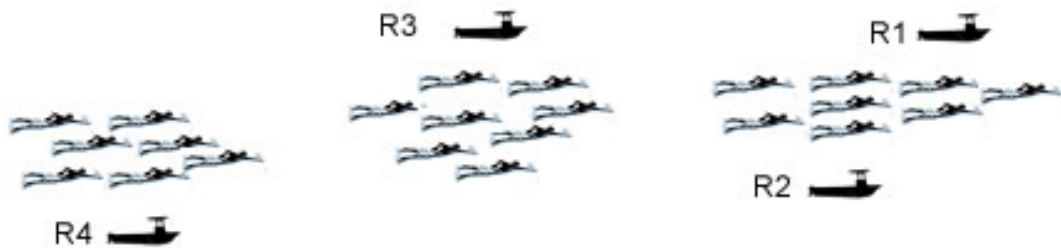


Figure 7 - .Multiple Packs Boat Positioning

Figure 7 - If a tertiary pack develops, R1 may direct one of the Referees to monitor that pack. If a pack falls significantly behind the primary packs, R1 may call the Referees monitoring that pack forward and direct water safety personnel to monitor those swimmers.



Figure 8 - Multiple Packs with Dropped Swimmers - Breakaway

Figure 8 - If a single swimmer breaks away from the lead pack, R1 will normally monitor that swimmer from their position by the main pack. Dropped swimmers will be monitored by water safety vessels.

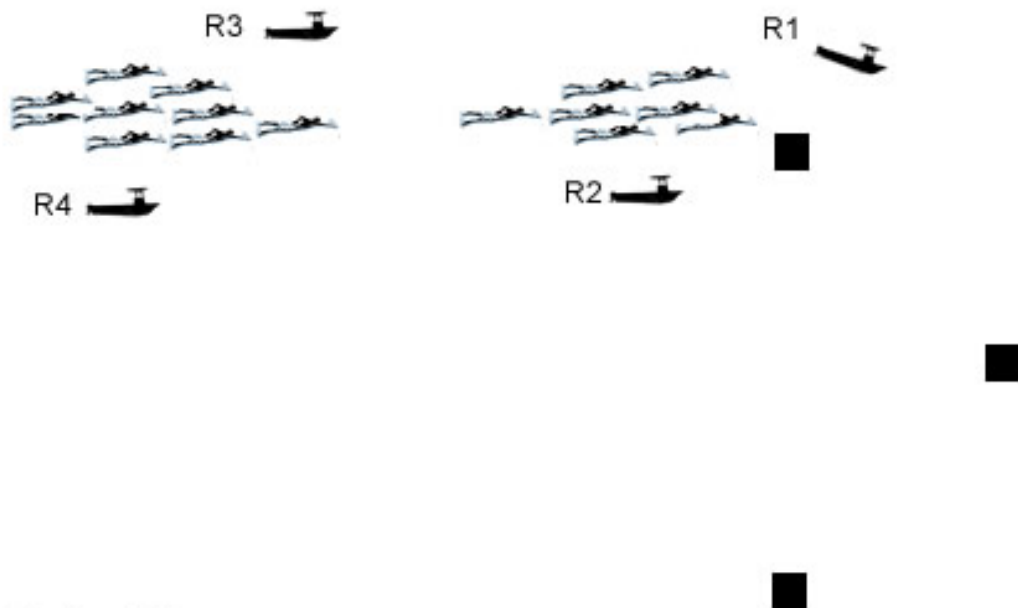


Figure 9 - Turn Entry

Figure 9 – When approaching turn buoys, R1 must put his vessel in a position to carefully monitor the first turn in a multi-buoy change of course. It is common for swimmers to be very aggressive approaching a turn, sometimes swimming 3 or 4 wide. In these cases, some swimmers are forced inside the buoy and some are forced wide. R1 should consider moving slightly ahead of the swimmers as they approach the turn. Due to being outside the turn radius of the swimmers, it the Referee can find himself falling behind and being out of position. Careful speed control is important at all turns.

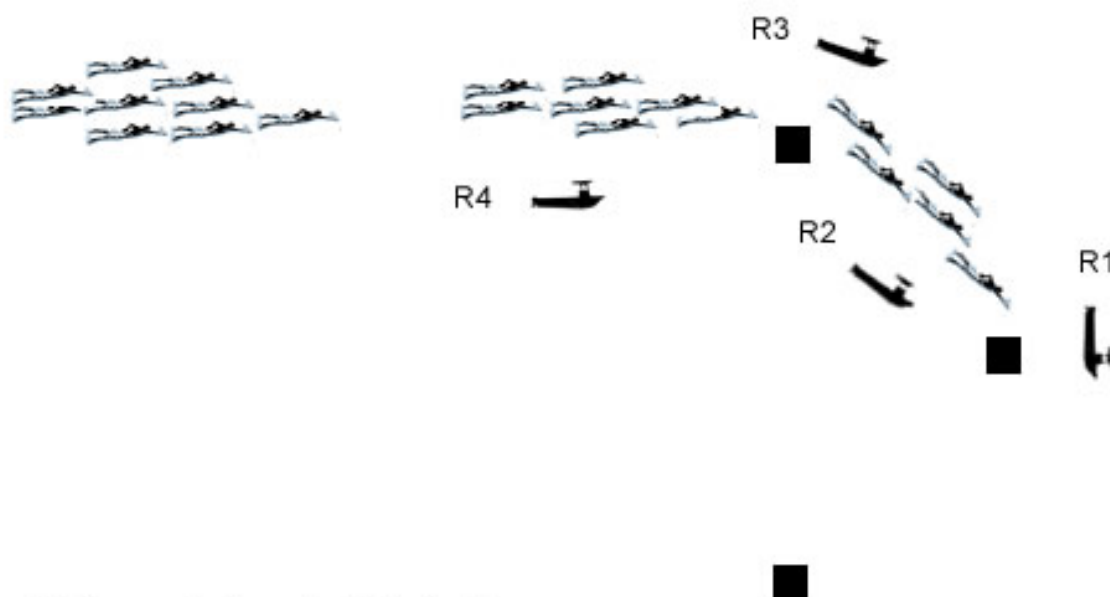


Figure 10 - Turns - Referee Boat Positioning

Figure 10 – R2 may take up a position on the inside of the turn. The inside of the turn is a good position to observe swimmers who may cut to the inside of the turn buoys. This also puts R2 in good position on the exit of the change of course to be opposite R1. R3 should stay near the outside of the first turn buoy to monitor that all important first change in course for the second pack. R4 takes up the inside of the course to monitor swimmers entering and exiting the turns.



Figure11 - Finish

Figure 11 - Approaching the finish: It is important for R1 and R2 to closely monitor the activity approaching the finish. Breakaway swimmers can be left to an occasional glance – their finish touch will be recorded by the finish judges. Groups of swimmers approaching the finish structure often swim very aggressively and may use contact and gain an advantage at the finish. Interference near the finish is “Unsporting Conduct” and may result in disqualification. R1 should be in position to monitor the finish. R1 is ultimately responsible for determining the order of finish. R1 may note swimmers or groups of swimmers that will need video replay to determine placing.

Positioning examples when two on course Race Referees are used.

Officiating a race with two Referee boats is possible with certain modifications from 4 Referee recommended positioning. Prior to the race, the Meet Referee should determine the priorities for swimmer observation. In most cases, the lead pack and certainly any swimmer who is within striking distance of that lead pack should be most closely monitored for compliance with the rules. It is understood that swimmers that are out of touch with the lead group will be monitored by the Turn Judges, Feed Station Judges and other on course safety personnel.

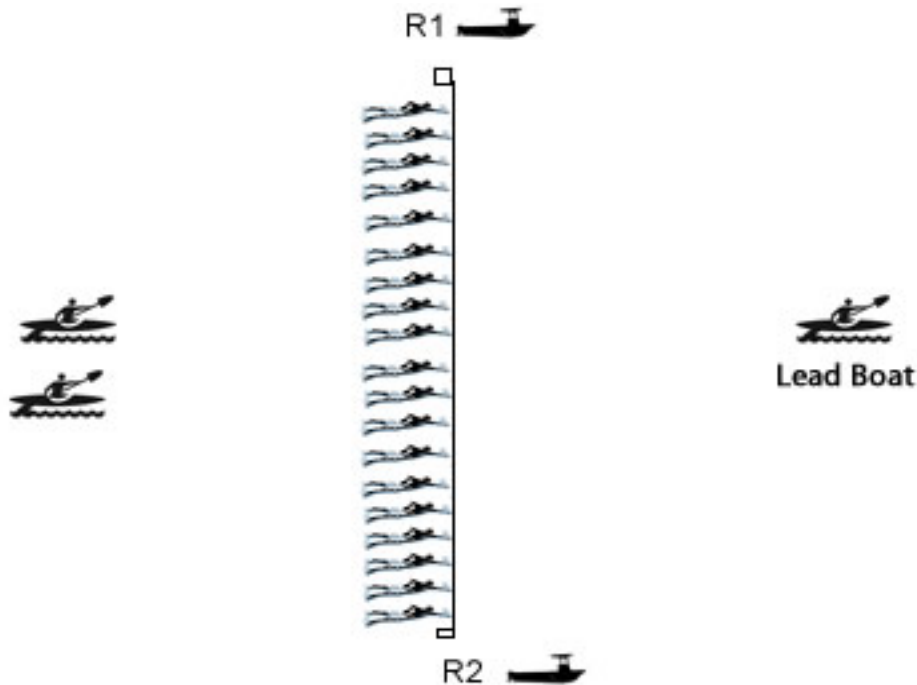


Figure 12-. Pre-Start/Start

Figure 12 – (Preferred) R1 and R2 take up positions on opposite ends of the starting line. The Start and R1 may be on one boat or the Starter may be on a separate vessel. R1 and R2 may be located on the same end of the starting line with the Starter embarked on either vessel or a separate vessel.

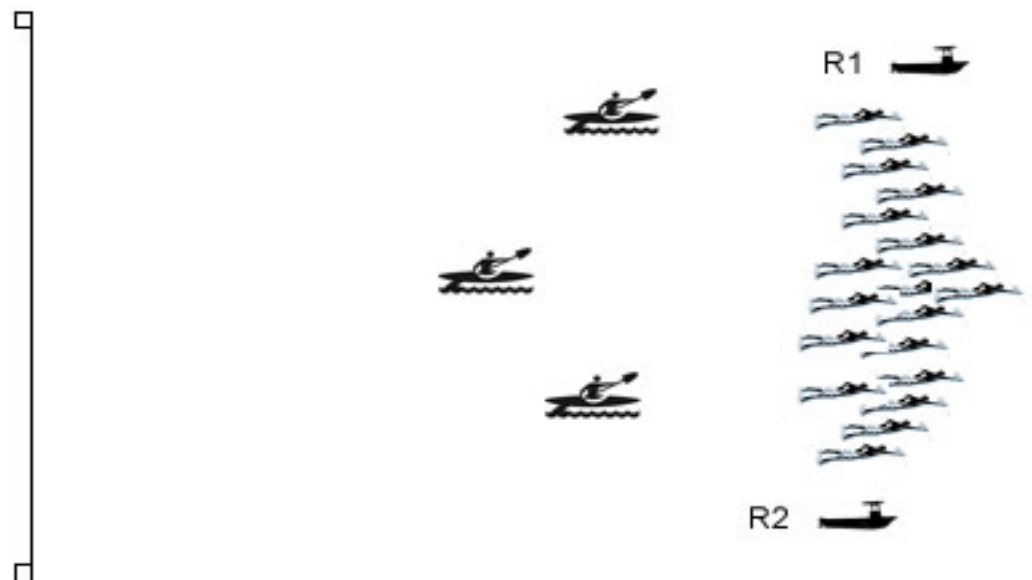


Figure 13 - Post Start Boat Positioning

Figure 13 – R1 and R2 maneuver so as to take positions on each side of the swimmers and prepare for the formation of a pack.

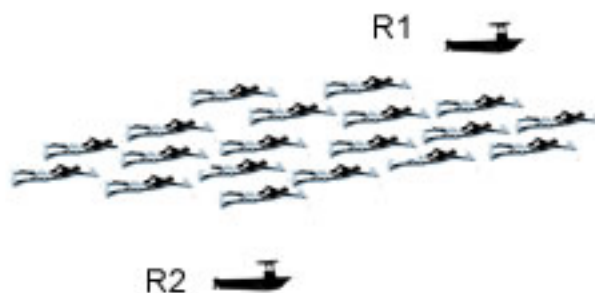


Figure 14. Single Pack 2 Referee Positioning

Figure 14 – R1 would normally monitor the front part of the pack and R2 would monitor the back half of the pack. R1 may order R2 to move to the front so that R1 can do some observation of the rear of the pack so as to get an overall feel for the temperament of the swimmers.



Figure 15 - Two Pack Boat Positioning

Figure 15 – When a second pack develops, R1 would monitor the lead pack and R2 would monitor the trailing pack. Depending on the size of the lead pack, as long as the second pack remains within striking distance of the main pack, the second pack should be monitored by a Referee. If the main pack is small (3-5) R1 may decide to have R2 monitor the secondary pack regardless of their position. Similarly, if there is a large lead pack and the second pack falls significantly behind, R1 may call R2 forward to help monitor the lead pack.

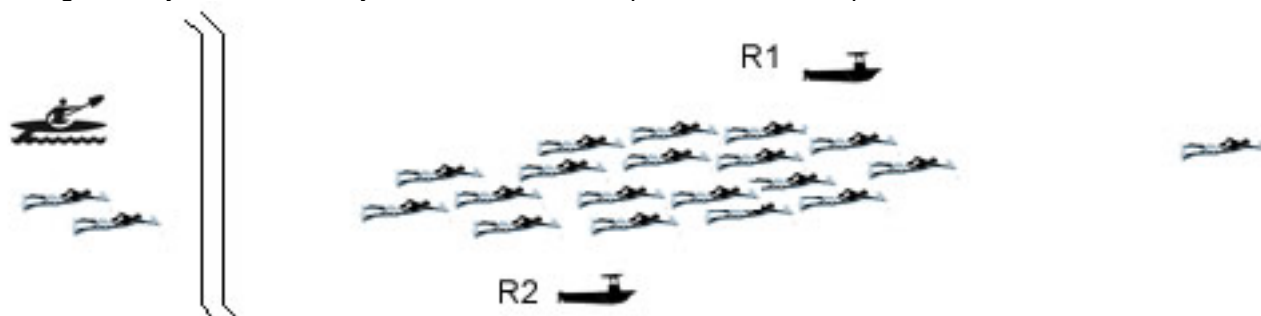


Figure 16 - Breakaway and Trailing Swimmers - 2 Boat Coverage

Figure 16 – Leading and trailing swimmers. If a single swimmer breaks away, R1 will normally allow that swimmer to be monitored from a distance. R1 will stay back with the main pack until approaching the finish. If one or more swimmers fall significantly behind the main or secondary pack, R1 or R2 may call for a support vessel to monitor their progress for safety purposes.

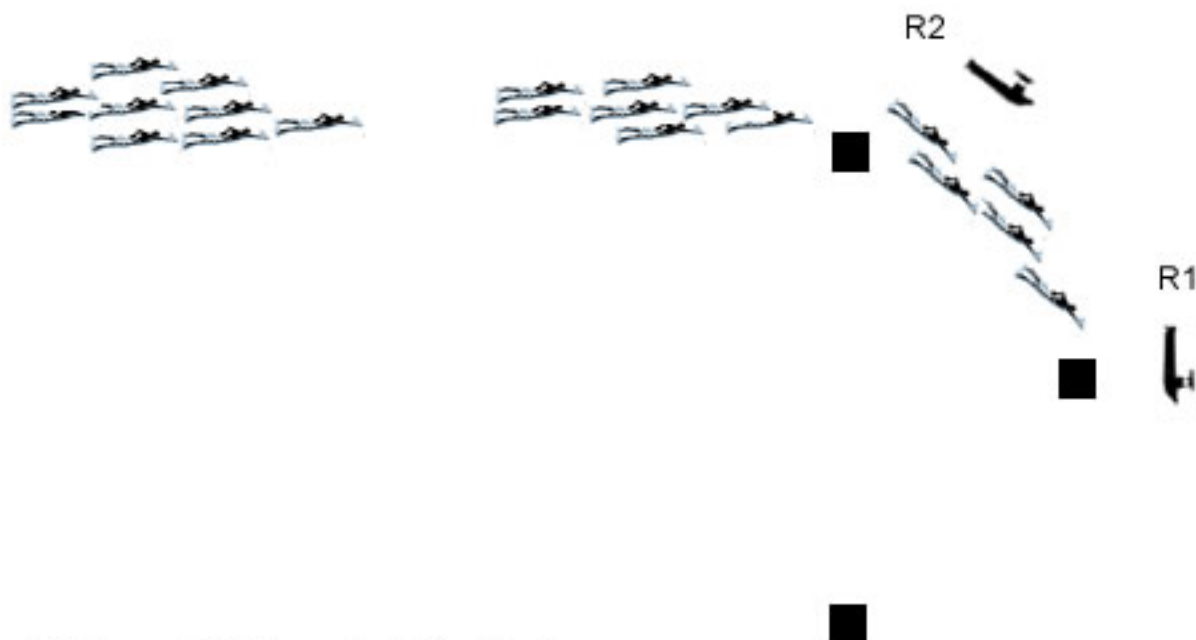


Figure 17. Turns - 2 Referee Boat Positioning

Figure 17 – Turn Approach and Entry – The approach to a turn and judging of a turn by R1 is identical with the guidelines for 4 boat officiating. Approaching the turn, R2 should consider changing position so as to judge the outside of the turn like R1. As the second half of the lead pack passes the first buoy, R2 should follow the swimmers around the subsequent buoys. The spacing of the swimmers and the size of the packs, will dictate how long R2 stays in the vicinity of the turn.



Figure 18. Finish - 2 Referee Boat Positioning

Figure 18 – Approaching Finish/Finish – Depending on the layout of the swimmers approaching the finish, R1 should observe the lead swimmers as the approach the finish. R1 should be in position to observe the final touches of all of the swimmers. R2 should be in a position to observe swimmers as the approach the finish chute and assist R1 observing swimmers as they approach the touch. Water safety personnel should observe the trailing swimmers to ensure they all safely complete the course and are accounted for.

Appendix D – Pre-Race Captains Briefing

SAMPLE - Pre-Race Captains Briefing

- 1. Introduction**
 - a. Referee, Local Organizing Committee, Vessel Coordinator
 - b. Safety is Everyone's Responsibility.
 - c. Individual Captains and vessel capabilities: The Captain of each vessel is responsible for its safe operation in accordance with all local, state and federal laws and procedures.
 - d. Required Safety Gear Review: Life preservers, Horn, signal equipment, etc.
 - e. Provisions for crew and passengers: water, food, etc.
- 2. Vessel Duty Assignments**
- 3. Participating Vessel Visual Identification**
- 4. Description of Event**
 - a. Event Timeline
 - b. Vessel Timeline
 - c. Launch Point – Pickup / Drop-off point for passengers
 - d. Course Layout Orientation
- 5. Communication Plan**
 - a. Vessel Call-signs
 - b. Primary – Radio
 - c. Secondary – Cell Phone (collect and distribute numbers)
 - d. Tertiary – Visual Signals
- 6. Vessel Breakdown Contingencies**
 - a. Passenger Transfer Procedures
 - b. Recovery of Vessel
- 7. Emergency Abandonment Signal**
- 8. Emergency Abandonment Duties**
- 9. Emergency Action Plan**
- 10. Final Review and Questions**