

**A** Referee's responsibilities are many and varied, but they are best summarized as:

***The Referee of the meet shall be the final authority  
for the conduct of competition.***

The Referee's principal function is to see that the swimming rules are enforced during the meet and to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that all swimmers have uniform and fair competitive conditions. Therefore, he/she, above all, must **know and understand** the rules under which the swim meet being conducted. It can be under the auspices of USA Swimming, NCAA, a High School Federation, a summer swim league, etc.

For USA Swimming meets, the Referee must know the current rules and their interpretation. He/she must have a copy of the current rule book, study it, and bring it to the meet. He/she must also attend clinics when available, consult with other knowledgeable officials, and learn all the nuances that prompted the rules.

The best way to stay out of trouble is to stick to the rules. Deviating from the rules, no matter how well intentioned, invites requests for more deviations and, most likely, protests and challenges to the referee's decisions.

Since the Referee is ultimately responsible for everything at a meet, he should feel free to reassign officials if they do not perform their duties properly. However, the referee must avoid overruling another official, unless confident that the other official's judgment or explanation cannot be supported. The Referee is the supreme arbiter of all problems or protests that involve judgmental matters concerning a swimmer's compliance with

the technical rules. Thus, his/her decisions must be correct and impartial. There is no substitute for knowing the rules, applying them correctly and using common sense in their application..

Many people take pride in demonstrating common sense when it comes to business or family matters, yet, fail to exercise common sense in the conduct of a sport. Sometimes the official's knowledge is inadequate; other times the official has become emotionally involved.

Officials who cannot control their emotions when their children are involved or when their team is in a close competition should be calmly advised to proceed to the cheering section, where they can cheer and "do their thing." An official should never display, or act on, his emotions while officiating. Some officials, usually timers, will ask to switch lanes or areas of responsibility to avoid the possibility of being thought to show preference to their favorites. Don't allow this. Doing so is a tacit admission that the person's judgment could be prejudiced or influenced. A person who isn't perceived to be honest should not be an official.

Finally, the Referee should make his decisions quickly and decisively, being confident that he is knowledgeable and is being completely fair to the individuals involved. The binding principle in rendering judgments is:

***Violations that clearly occurred should be called,  
but the benefit of any doubt must go to the competitor!***

**A** tip in making the tough decisions is to adopt a helpful rather than a punitive attitude towards rules enforcement. Officials are not on the deck to see how many competitors they can disqualify. They are simply there to ensure that the competition is completely fair and equitable.

#### **DUTIES AND AUTHORITY**

**T**he Referee shall have full authority over all officials including assigning and instruct-ing them. He shall enforce all applicable rules and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meet, the final settlement of which is not otherwise assigned by the rules. He can overrule any meet official on a point of rule interpretation. He can only overrule an official on a judgment decision pertaining to an action he has personally observed. He shall disqualify swimmers for any violations of the rules that he personally observes and shall, at the same time, raise one hand overhead with open palm. However, he must ensure that all portions of the pool are observed by the officials on an equitable basis. There shall be no violation if he does not make such a signal.

**H**e shall signal the Starter that all officials are in position, that the course is clear, and that the competition can begin, before each heat. He shall assign marshals with specific instructions.

**H**e shall give a decision on any point where the opinions of the judges differ, and shall have authority to intercede in a competition at any stage, to ensure that fair racing conditions are observed.

**I**f requested, he may assign three (3) additional official timers to record a record

attempt at an initial distance. An "initial distance" is the first portion of a race, for which an Official Time may be recorded, but which is not, in itself, a complete event. It can be the lead-off leg of a relay, or an initial distance within a longer individual event. NOTE: The swimmer to complete the **full distance** of the scheduled event

**W**hen an apparent malfunction occurs in automatic or semi-automatic electronic officiating equipment, the referee must have an investigation made to determine whether the swimmer finished in accordance with the rules and/or if there was an actual equipment malfunction.

**T**he Referee may prohibit the use of any bell, siren, horn or artificial noise-maker during the meet. He shall also prohibit flash photography and the use of laser pointing devices during all starts

**W**hen the meet sanction allows events to be conducted by starting them from both ends of a 50-meter course, he shall establish the necessary administrative and officiating procedures to conform to Part One of the USA Swimming Rules and Pacific Swimming Rules.

**N**o swimmer must ever be required to reswim a race due to equipment failure that results in unrecorded or inaccurate time or place results. The Meet Director is responsible for providing the proper timing systems so that swimmers can expect to achieve official times.

**R**eferees are also responsible for making sure other officials are properly instructed about

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rule changes, and assuring all rules are properly implemented.

### DISQUALIFICATIONS

#### General.

1. Only the official within whose assigned jurisdiction an infraction has been committed can make a disqualification. The Referee or designated official making a disqualification shall make every reasonable effort to seek out the swimmer or his coach and inform him as to the reason for the disqualification.

2. Any swimmer who acts in an unsportsmanlike or unsafe manner within the swimming venue may be considered for appropriate action by the Referee.

3. Swimmer must start and finish the race in their assigned lanes.

4 Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but he must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom. (NOTE: Only permitted in freestyle.)

5. Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across a lane, or otherwise interfering, shall disqualify the offender, subject to the Referee's discretion.

6. Any swimmer not entered in a race who enters the course or the area of the pool where the race is being conducted before all swimmers have completed the race shall be barred from his next individual event in that meet.

7. Dipping goggles in the water or splashing water on the competitor's face or body prior to his next event shall NOT be considered as

entering the pool unless such action interferes with the competition.

8. Should a foul endanger the chance of success of a swimmer, the Referee may allow him to swim in the next heat, or if in a final heat, the Referee may order it re-swum. In case of collusion to foul another swimmer, the Referee may, at his discretion, disqualify the swimmer for whose aid the foul was committed, as well as the swimmer doing the fouling.

9. No swimmer may wear or use any device or substance to help speed or buoyancy during a race. Goggles can be worn and rubdown oil may be applied if the Referee deems it not excessive.

10. Swimmers may not grasp the lane lines to assist their forward motion.

11. Any swimmer who delays the start by entering the water or by willfully or deliberately disobeying a Starter's command to step on the blocks or to take a starting position, or for any other misconduct taking place at the start, can be disqualified from the event by the Starter with the concurrence of the Referee. Charge such a disqualification to "delay of meet," not to a false start.

12. The Referee shall investigate all No-Shows from both finals and individual events. He shall determine if the swimmer should be barred from subsequent event(s) of the meet.

13. Starters can charge a swimmer with a false start only if the Referee, or a designated Deck Referee, has observed the violation and confirms it. The race will not be recalled. The Referee also can unilaterally call a false start or direct a recall of swimmers. But, the Referee should only unilaterally declare a false start

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(without independent confirmation) when a truly blatant violation occurs. Then, the Referee should take corrective action to ensure the Starter is properly observing all starts.

14. The Referee or Starter can recall and restart any race without charging a false start if, in their judgment, equitable conditions for all swimmers did not exist at the start.

15. A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the Starter's responsibility; he may impose the appropriate penalty before the starting signal is given.

16. The time and/or place of any swimmer or relay team disqualified either during or following an event shall not be recorded in the results of that event. If awards have been made prior to the disqualification, they shall be returned and awarded to the proper recipient(s) and, if points have been scored by those disqualified, the event shall be rescored.

17. The time and/or place officially recorded for a swimmer shall not be nullified for violations occurring subsequent to such a performance.

18. No flotation devices are permitted. The use of a full body suit, designed and marketed for competition, is permissible. However, suits of neoprene or other buoyant material, such as wet suits, are not permissible.

### **Relays.**

1. No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event.
2. Any relay team member and his relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team

member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg shall jump into or enter the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.

3. Each relay team member, except the last one, shall leave the water immediately upon finishing his leg.

4. The team shall be disqualified if the feet of a relay team member lose touch with the starting platform (ground/deck) before his preceding teammate touches the wall.

### **DISABLED SWIMMERS**

The Referee may modify any rule for a swimmer who has a disability based on USA Swimming Rules and Regulations, Article 105 "Guidelines for Officiating Swimmers with a Disability in USA Swimming Meets." It is the swimmer's responsibility, or his representative's, to notify the Referee about the disability prior to the competition.

The Referee may allow for a deck or in-the-water start and for certain modifications/interpretations of the rules, based on each disability's characteristics. It is the responsibility of the disabled swimmer to provide appropriate medical information to the meet management, to contact the Referee on arrival, and to bring someone to assist, if needed.

#### **Starts:**

1. **Deaf and Hearing Impaired:** A visual starting signal (a strobe light and/or Starter's arm signals) shall be provided. The Referee may reassign lanes within the swimmer's heat so the swimmer may more readily see the strobe light or arm signals.

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**2. Blind and Visually Impaired** The audible starting system is appropriate; however, these swimmers may need assistance getting to, and on, the blocks.

**Turns:** An assistant may touch their head or shoulder with a "bonker" (pole with soft ball at the end) when the swimmer is approximately two strokes away from the wall. Audible devices shall not be used.

**3. Mentally Impaired:** A deck or in-the-water start is allowable, and the swimmer may have an assistant on the deck when necessary.

**4. Physically impaired.** For swimmers missing all or part of a limb, the stroke and turn should be judged based on the arm or leg (or portion) that is performing the action. Judgments should be based on the actual rule, not the swimmer's technique.

For relays, an assistant may signal visually impaired swimmers when to enter the water on exchanges with a "go" command and a light touch (but NO push). Relay swimmers with physical disabilities who cannot exit the water immediately may remain in the water until all relays have finished so long as they do not interfere with the other swimmers or the timing equipment.

## GUIDELINES FOR PLACING OFFICIALS

The Referee is responsible for assigning and instructing all officials. The Referee must establish fair and equitable conditions for the competition by the consistent placement of Stroke and Turn Judges. If the judges cannot walk the full length of the pool due to either pool design or insufficient personnel, the Referee should assign them so as to ensure that all swimmers are observed as equally as possible.

The requirement that swimmers surface by 15 meters in freestyle, backstroke and butterfly makes it important that officials be in a position to observe possible violations. When there are sufficient officials to be assigned as stroke judges, observing the 15-meter mark becomes their responsibility. That duty could also be assigned to a Chief Judge. The level of competition may dictate how important it is to cover this position versus having more officials watch the turns. The 15-meter mark is unlikely to be violated at a mini meet or a younger age B-C meet.

There is now a requirement to use a recall rope in all USA Swimming competition. The meet venue or meet host/sponsor should provide it. Whenever it is available, the Referee should assure it is staffed, usually by the person watching the 15-meter mark.

The diagrams at the bottom of the next page illustrate possible stroke and turn placements using four or more judges:

## PROTESTS

Until final action is determined, the results of any race conducted under protest, or of any protested race, shall not be announced, and no prizes for that race shall be awarded or scoring points allowed unless the protest is officially withdrawn.

Protests regarding the eligibility of any swimmer to compete or to represent an organization in any race shall be made in writing to the Referee, before the race is held, and if the matter cannot be immediately resolved, the swimmer may compete under protest. If this occurs, it will be announced before the race.

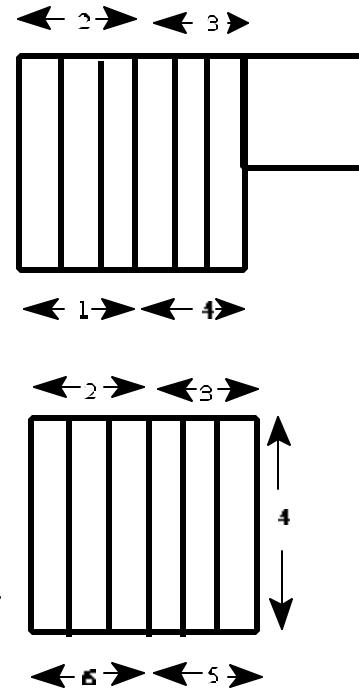
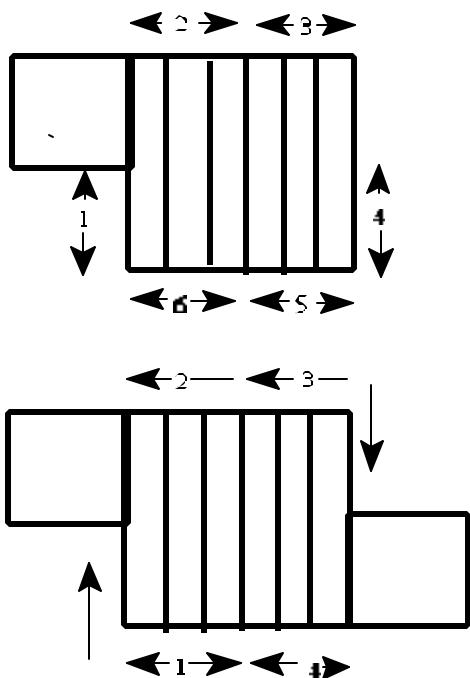
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The meet committee or the Meet Referee shall immediately refer such protest to the Pacific Swimming Board of Review at the earliest possible time.

**Only the Meet Referee** can consider protests against judgment decisions of Deck Referees, Starters, Stroke and Turn, or Relay Take-off Judges. The Referee should not overrule any such decision unless he has personally observed the alleged violation or unless the official making the decision provides a rationale that is clearly incorrect under the current rules or the violation cannot be clearly and/or consistently explained.

A protest not involving eligibility or a judgment call must also be made within 30 minutes after the race in which the alleged infraction took place. If the protest is not resolved immediately, the protestor shall, at that time, file a written protest with the Pacific Board Review or Referee, having jurisdiction over the meet. If the Board of Review does not satisfactorily resolve the protest within ten (10) days, the protestor may appeal, in writing, to the National Rules Chairman, within the next five (5) days, for final adjudication, which shall then be binding on all parties.

## Officials' Placement Guidelines for Various Shape Pools



## PACIFIC SWIMMING

### REFEREE'S PRE-MEET CHECKLIST

#### **PREPARATION**

- ! Review rules, particularly any recent USA Swimming changes or interpretations.
- ! Wear white tops, navy blue bottoms, and white shoes to officiate.
- ! Don't forget your whistle, USA Swimming registration card.
- ! Bring a copy of current year's *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations*. You may also bring a copy of checklists and summary notes from the various clinics.

#### **UPON ARRIVAL AT THE MEET SITE**

- ! Check in at the Officials' Table and with the Meet Director
  - Check list of officials to ensure all key positions are filled and, if not, take action to get them filled.
  - Check with Meet Director about any problems, and pass-down sheets from prior sessions. Are you using radio or runner system? Anything to make meet smoother. Where will Meet Director be during meet?
- ! Check the swimming facility:
  - Movable bulkheads in proper position and secured into place.
  - Ladders and obstructions removed
  - Lane numbering (right to left)—check blocks, wall, backstroke flags and any other markings to make sure correct and consistent
  - Diving board(s) moved so they will not affect competition or ability to officiate.
  - Lane floats installed tightly
  - Backstroke flags installed (5 yards for short course yards and 5 meters for all meter courses). Flags 5' 11" to 8' 2" above water surface for long course and 7' above water surface for short course      Lane markings at 15 meters
  - PA system tested after set-up
  - Pool filled to highest level
  - Water temperature checked. Desired temperature is 78 to 80 degrees.
  - Spectator area roped off; marshals appointed
  - Recall rope (false start line) at least 4' above water and approximately 15 meters from the starting blocks.
  - Lane line markers at 15 meters (16' 4")
  - Starting system available and tested    Determine what back-up systems are available.
  - Automatic timing system and computer program (SAMMS/Hy-Tek)are ready
  - Stop watches, pencils, forms, and other necessary items are available.
  - Procedures for handling positive check-in, including closing times, procedures for making heat and lane assignments known to athletes, coaches and officials.
- ! Discuss with:
  - **Starter:** system for dual confirmation.
  - **Stroke and Turn Judges:**
    - Q Areas of responsibility & rotation (including scheduling relief if possible.)
    - Q New stroke and turn rules and interpretations.
    - Q Method of disqualifying:
      - Q Spontaneous raising of hand
      - Q What you expect on DQ slips
      - Q How protests handled
      - Q Notifying swimmers/coaches of DQs
  - **Marshals:** Warm-ups; general safety measures
  - **Timers:**
    - Q Over pool edge at finish
    - Q Backups (lanes w/o swimmers time anyway)
    - Q On job for meet's duration unless rotation or relief set up
  - **Coaches:** Handling of DQs; keep out of starting area

## **REFEREE CHECKLIST**

### **Referee's responsibility and authority:**

*Ensure meet is conducted in accordance with the rules. Ensure fair and equitable competitive conditions exist for all swimmers. Resolve all disputes and protests.*

### **Preparation:**

- ! Check meet announcement for specific provisions pertaining to the meet.
- ! Dress properly—look official—white shirt or blouses and navy blue trousers, shorts or skirts are normally the proper attire in Pacific Swimming .
- ! Know the rules—attend clinics and know the responsibilities of all officiating categories.
- ! Display confidence—officiating regularly builds confidence.

### **Dominant principles—a Referee must:**

- ! Assume full control of the meet. Take responsibility seriously—remember that the swimmers worked hard to get where they are; therefore, officials have an obligation to do a good job.
- ! Be fair and impartial to all competitors, exercise good judgment and common sense. Control emotions and disregard club affiliation.
- ! Call violations as actually seen—never guessing or anticipating. Think about protecting the swimmers, not penalizing them. Give swimmer the "benefit of the doubt" if there is a significant question about violation.
- ! Admit a mistake, if you discover you are wrong.

### **Prior to meet:**

- ! Review current ***USA Swimming Rules and Regulations***. Check whistle and uniform.
- ! Discuss meet program with the Meet Director to identify and resolve any potential problems. It is important you give consistent answers. Read meet announcement.

### **Upon arrival at meet:**

- ! Be there at least 20 minutes prior to the beginning of warm-ups. Check with the Meet Director—discuss program and any potential problems—review the list of meet officials. Review pass-down sheets from prior sessions.
- ! Inspect physical setup—starting blocks secure, check lane numbering (right to left as the swimmers face the course) on starting blocks, lane lines, height and distance of backstroke flags, deck and lane line markings needed to judge the 15 meters mark, water depth, the recall rope—ensure interfering diving boards and ladders are removed and deck is clear of obstructions—inspect swimmer and spectator areas.
- ! Coordinate with Announcer (if one is assigned)—discuss procedures. For finals, decides whether swimmers will be introduced prior to start or while in the water.
- ! Instruct marshals before warm-ups and ensure the entire warm-up will be marshaled. Ensure sprint and pace lanes are opened at the proper time.
- ! Meet officials—Start meetings early enough that they will be over at least 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the session.
  1. Welcome officials—introduce key officials. Explain expectations (no emotions, undivided attention to responsibilities, etc.) Discuss specific responsibilities and areas of jurisdiction of all officials.
  2. Ensure key officials properly instruct other officials—Referee or Chief Judge should give stroke briefing.

- On deck— no smoking - all emotions must be controlled.
- no open discussions of disqualifications with others —no coaching.
- Judges should never warn swimmers about being "close" to disqualification, since being "close" is perfectly legal.
- ! Get the meet started on time—a prompt start creates a good impression..

### ***During meet:***

- ! Signal Starter that you are ready for the start when timers are ready, judges are in position, you are ready to observe the start and the competitive course is clear for the next race.
- ! Watch start and entire race—Referee can call infractions, and **must** confirm false start calls.
- ! Referee's position is based on the best place to observe the start, the competition and the finish. It is often on the side next to the Starter;
- ! Watch the officials. Remember you must guide new officials to help them learn.
- ! Check and initial DQ slips—slips should fully describe disqualification and be written in accordance with the rule. Check the event number, heat and lane to make sure it is correct.
- ! Referee can interject into the competition at any time—can rerun an event if racing conditions not maintained. (NOTE: attempt to stop the race in progress.)
- ! Don't start the following heat until all questions concerning the previous heat are resolved or a process has been started for doing so.
- ! Control swimmers and spectators—don't allow them to crowd the pool.
- ! Control noise level during the start—don't allow sirens, horns, photo flashes, etc.
- ! Allow coach to question decisions, but don't get involved in long arguments—gather the information from the official who made the call and respond back to the coach in a timely manner.
- ! Avoid overruling an official when possible, but overrule a call if a clear error has been made or an official cannot adequately explain a call.
- ! Stick to the rules and apply them uniformly—doing so avoids controversy.
- ! Some calls are based on visual judgment and are not subject to reversal unless personally observed by the Referee or if an interpretation, rule applicability or jurisdiction is involved.
- ! Infraction signal—Referees, Stroke and Turn Judges, and Relay Take-off Judges (when dual confirmation of relay take-offs is not being used) must immediately raise the hand upon observing a violation. (NOTE: There is NO requirement to keep the hand up until the Referee or anyone else specifically sees it!) If the official did not raise a hand, the disqualification should not be upheld.
- ! Interference (obstructing another swimmer) is a discretionary call by the Referee.
- ! Entry by a swimmer into the pool before all swimmers have completed a race shall bar him from competing in his next individual event in that meet. A relay swimmer who enters the pool under such conditions will disqualify his relay team.
- ! Coaches or their designee may signal intermediate times to swimmers during competition.
- ! Verify all timing decisions made either the Colorado Operator/Intermediary or Deck Referee to validate that the times correct.
- ! Protests: (1) Against judgment decisions: considered only by the Referee/ (2) Protests arising from the competition itself shall be made to the Referee, in writing, by the swimmer or coach within 30 minutes after the race in which the violation took place.

### ***After meet:***

- ! Remain 30 minutes to be sure no protest is being made. Critique meet with the Meet Director (both positives and negatives.) Initial time cards or other appropriate documents for records, etc. Verify final score of the meet.
- ! Welcome input from the coaches regarding how they felt the session went, possible improvements, etc. Ensure all disputes or questions are clearly resolved.

## DECK REFEREE & STARTER GUIDELINES

1. Starters should find their respective positions on deck for both forward and backstroke starts.
2. Deck Referee's then position himself or herself on either the right or left of the Starter, but always where the Starter has visual contact with the Deck Referee.
3. The starting cadence is a series of short crisp whistles to signal the next event or heat is about to start. A long whistle follows this, which is the signal for the swimmers to step up on the block or into the water.
4. When the Referee is comfortable that the heat or race is ready to begin, they will extend an arm to turn the swimmers over to the starter. It is at this point and this point only that the heat is closed.
5. The Starter should raise the mic when that first hear the long whistle and be ready for the extended arm.
6. The Starter and Deck Referee need to develop a working natural rhythm and pace as a team.
7. When the swimmers are turned over to the Starter and when the Starter is ready, the Starter simply says, "take your mark" in a calm, collected and conversational tone.
8. With the start of the race the Deck Referee should step away from the Starter and direct themselves towards the swimmers in the water and so that they observe the entire pool. The Starter should follow the swimmers in the water until their heads come up or until they are comfortable that all received a good start and a fair race has begun.
9. With the start of the race, the Starter should slowly begin to lower the mic.
10. No heat of swimmers should be left on the blocks or in the water for any extended length of time due to circumstances beyond their control.
11. If there is a need for the "stand" command the Starter should use the terms "stand please". If the stand command is used twice, the heat should be asked to step down by saying "ladies or gentlemen step down please". Then there should be a simple silent pause and then the Starter should say, " ladies or gentlemen step up please". Remember, once the Deck Referee has extended their arm to the Starter, the swimmers are in the Starters jurisdiction and remain there until the race is started. There may be circumstances where the Deck Referee will need to use the 1 long whistle again to signal for the swimmers to step back up on the block.
12. No commands should be given to single out a swimmer or to address movement on the starting platform. If an athlete needs to be spoken with the Starter addresses the Deck Referee who in turn goes to the block and speaks with the swimmer
13. If the Starter observes anything that may impact the start of a race such as a loud noise or flash, the swimmers should be stepped down and the Deck Referee addressed as to the reason. If something occurs after the starting signal that impacts the race, the heat or the swimmers, the Starter may recall the race and the second attempt starts again with the 1 long whistle.
14. If a Starter or Deck Referee observes a false start, they MUST write down the lane number and circle it independently and not converse with anyone. The Starter should then approach the Deck Referee with the words " I have a potential". If the Deck Referee has something they simply show the Starter what they have written down and circled. No words should be spoken during this process. If they agree, the Deck Referee will state they have a confirmed false start on lane \_\_\_ and proceed with the write-up and communications process. The Deck Referee should notify the swimmer of a false start.
15. Across the board finishes will be taken by the off duty Starter. The finishes must be written down in either programs or heats sheets or finish forms that will be passed on from off duty Starter to off duty Starter. At the end of each session these forms are turned in to the Administrative Referees. The off going deck referee will be responsible to no shows, DFS and other administrative duties in the starting area.
16. The first starter and the first Deck Referee of each session are to make sure that all is ready to start the races for that session. This includes running the timers meeting and making sure that the blocks are tight, the pads are in, the volume of starting speakers is checked and that a test start is conducted prior to the beginning of all sessions. This is all BEFORE and in time to start the events of the session ON TIME. NOT early, not late, but ON TIME.
17. Starters and Deck Referee's need to be ready to step in as next in rotation, if the need should arise, no matter what the reason.
18. Off Duty Starters and Deck Referee's should not congregate around the starting HOT BOX. Too many officials in one place will self-destruct.
19. Starters and Deck Referees must stay focused on their role and their role only! They should not try to wear all hats at the meet. Let the Meet Referee, Chief Judges and pool staff do their jobs. If you are paying attention to everyone else the you are not adequately focused on Starting or the running of the deck.
20. Starters should practice PATIENCE, PATIENCE AND MORE PATIENCE when starting and should never rush a start or feel rushed by the Deck Referee, or Meet Referee. Yes, you must keep a time line, but you never, ever rush a start for anyone.