

Subject: Officials Newsletter: New Rules Effective May 1

From: USA Swimming <officials@usaswimming.org>

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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter | April 2018



OFFICIALS NEWSLETTER

Thoughts from the Chair

Jim Holcomb, Chair, National Officials Committee

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

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

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

New Rules Effective May 1, 2018

Jay Thomas, Rules and Regulations Committee

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

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

The “why” behind the change – Our rules set a maximum height above the water of the

front of the starting block. This distance is 2'5 ½" for Long Course pools and 2'6" for short course pools. Allowing the swimmer to depart from the top of the back plate effectively increases this distance far more than the permitted starting block slope.

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

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

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

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

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

The "why" behind this change – this language was to provide clearer direction to Administrative Officials when determining official time where only one button or watch time (pad missing or invalid) is available. If the available backup time conflicts with available other information such as order of finish, the Administrative Official will use his/her training and depth of experience to determine the time for the swimmer.

As always, should questions arise regarding the application of a rules change – please contact your LSC Official's Committee Chair.

Online Testing Down April 15-30

As happens every year, the officials' online tests will be unavailable from April 15-30, 2018. These tests are being updated to allow for the May 1st rule changes and to align with the 2018 Rulebook. Tests will be back online on May 1.

If any test-takers have not completed their tests by April 14th, the **UNCOMPLETED** tests will be deleted on April 15th and they will have to be taken over from the beginning on May 1st. **COMPLETED** tests will not be deleted.

Test-takers can see all their online tests (completed and incomplete) by logging in to their account, navigating to the online testing page and then clicking on "start an online test". From there, they will see a screen with all prior tests listed.

Note this affects officiating tests only, not athlete protection training.

APPLY TO WORK FUTURES MEETS

National championship meet officiating applications are posted on the website 6 months prior to the meet and close no earlier than 4 months prior to the meet. If, at the four month mark, there are not enough applications received to properly staff the meet, then the application will remain open until enough applications are received.

The Futures series of meets is scheduled for August 2-5 in either Richmond, VA; Santa Clara, CA; Cary, NC; or Rochester, MN. **Officials are still needed for all of the Futures meets.** Please submit your application at: www.usaswimming.org/NatlMeetApp.

The Winter Nationals and Junior Nationals applications will be posted on or about May 29.

Official's Excellence Award Winner

Wayne Mastel, North Dakota Swimming

Each LSC may submit a candidate that is deserving of recognition, and the winning officials are selected by the National Officials Committee to be recognized in Swimming World Magazine every two months. This month's recognition goes to Wayne Mastel of North Dakota Swimming.

Wayne has been an official for over 15 years and has been instrumental in helping bring all of North Dakota's officials and meets to a higher level. He has done this by helping train new officials, mentoring current officials, and introducing OQMs to the LSC.

Wayne is always willing to work any position on deck and is happy doing so. He is one of a handful of officials in the LSC who have been involved for more than 10 years, and aims to keep officials involved once their children have finished swimming and to bring more officials in the LSC to the national level.

While Wayne officiates several sports, swimming is the only sport that he is not paid to officiate. He contributes a significant amount of volunteer time to swimming, whether it be through traveling to work a zone meet, stopping by a meet while on vacation just to see if they need any help, or helping with meets in the area just for joy of officiating.



Congratulations Wayne!

Gina Mensay | USA Swimming | Member Services Program Manager | 719-866-3574 | gmensay@usaswimming.org | www.usaswimming.org/officials

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USA Swimming | 1 Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909

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