

## **EXTRACTS FROM FINA MANUAL FOR OFFICIATING AT SWIMMING EVENTS**

Swimming rules exist for no other purpose than to regulate “fair play“. They are designed not only to keep the swimming styles pure and correct, but also to ensure that all swimmers in a race are subject to the same restrictions and limitations.

Officials are key to successful swimming competitions. The objectives are:

- To promote and improve swimming
- To develop interest and participation in swimming
- To encourage physical fitness and improve the quality of competitive swimming
- To provide competitive swimming opportunity for all persons and levels of ability.

Officials have the opportunity to contribute to consistent officiating throughout the world in the following ways:

- To promote positive attitudes
- To expand opportunities for training and experience
- To maintain honesty and integrity
- To encourage openness
- To acknowledge the use of good judgement
- To display decisiveness
- To demonstrate a willingness to admit mistakes

These behaviours reflect the actions of successful officials as well as provide a common foundation for the skills of officiating.

## **RULES**

The competent swimming official interprets the rules as written.

The swimming rules must always be followed. The official who has standards that differ from those in the FINA (ASA) Rule Book will be open to protest for every decision made. Following the rules insures that everyone concerned with the competition knows that decisions will be made in a fair and equitable manner. An official must always operate with the handbook in mind and observe that the competition is conducted according to the rules. The official's job is to uphold the rules by applying them intelligently and communicating what they mean effectively.

## **TIMING**

Other than winning a race, the most important part of a swimming event is the time the swimmers achieve during that event. The time for each swimmer is the measurement of how long it took that swimmer to cover the distance for that event. Although there is usually only one first place winner in a race, each swimmer who participates achieves an official time, which could reach time qualification standards for future competitions or set a record.

When automatic officiating equipment (AOE) is used, the time recorded determines both time and place. When manual timing and judging is used, the timekeeper provides the time for official placing provided that there are three digital watches per lane. The accurate timing and recording of each swimmer's performance is very important. The use of electronic timing equipment at all levels of swimming provides more accurate time and place information than is obtained from manual systems. All AOE requires backup (the timekeeper and finish judge). If automatic or semi automatic equipment is not available, manual timing and judging is used.

## **TIMING EQUIPMENT**

Responsibilities of timekeepers vary significantly with the amount and type of timing equipment in use. FINA rules and regulations present a number of different types of timing systems and their primary and secondary uses. An explanation of the terms used is as follows:

- **Manual Timing**

Requires the use of hand held digital stopwatches. (to an accuracy of 1/100 sec)  
Start and Stop actions are performed by the timekeepers.

- **Semi-Automatic Timing**

Is activated by a common start to all lanes. Finishes are recorded by buttons pushed by timekeepers when each finish touch of the swimmers is observed.

- **Automatic Timing**

Is started by the starter's signal (gun or horn) and is stopped at the finish by each swimmer's touch.

- **Secondary Timing System**

Must be put into place to provide backup times in case the primary system malfunctions. FINA rules require that AOE be backed up by a secondary timing system, so that the swimmer will be provided with a time.

- **Malfunction**

A malfunction is a mechanical or electronic failure. When using AOE, any occurrence which results in the loss of accurate and correct primary timing information for any competitor is considered to be a malfunction.

- **Timing Error**

A timing error is the difference in time between two separate methods of timing the same race. When there is a malfunction of the primary timing system and a backup timing system is used, it is necessary to adjust the swimmer's time to allow for any system timing error. The REFEREE must approve the use of a backup system time or system timing error adjustment.

- **Manual Timing**

In any race not timed with AOE or semi – AOE three timekeepers will determine the time for each swimmer. In any race timed with AOE or semi – AOE, there must be at least one manually operated watch per lane. When only manual timing is available, there should be three timekeepers to each lane and their times recorded to establish the official time on the lane. When AOE is available, the lane timekeepers shall provide backup times, which may be used as official times after any system timing error adjustments. Alternate or Chief Timekeepers may substitute lane timekeepers in the event of a watch failure. Lane timekeepers may be requested to operate a watch and a button of a semi – AOE system simultaneously, **but they shall not operate two watches or two buttons at the same time.**

It is most important that the lane timekeepers familiarise themselves with their duties and their equipment before the meet begins.

The following suggestions are provided for lane timekeepers:

**Know the watch** – There are various types of watches and each one operates a little differently. Digital watches should be used as all times must be recorded to 1/100 sec. i.e. 1.01.12 not 1.01.1. Know how to start, stop and return from split mode. Practise before the meet begins. Fading numbers, blinking numbers or decimal points usually indicate the watch needs new batteries.

There is no rule that says which finger to use in starting and stopping a watch, but the recommendation is to use the forefinger of your good hand.

**Reading the watch** – when using a digital watch it should be held so that it can be accurately read.

**Check to see if watch is working** – The Chief Timekeeper will often conduct a watch check prior to the start of a competition – this is to see if all watches are working correct i.e. that they start and that they stop when the relevant buttons are pressed.

### **Determining Official Times**

- When the times from only two watches are available, the average time shall be the official time
- When the times from only two watches are available for any lane, the arithmetic average time to the slowest 1/100 shall be the official time.

### **Stand for the Start**

Timekeepers should stand for the start (this indicates to the Chief Timekeeper and Referee that you are ready) start your watch on the starting signal - return to your seat after the start. Stand at the end of the lane for the finish – looking straight down – stop your watch when the swimmer has completed the race – after the finish record your time. In case of problems, a timekeeper should stand and signal the Chief Timekeeper for assistance.

### **Stay Alert**

Timekeepers should listen to the starter's instructions.

### **Look at the Starter**

Timekeepers should hold their watches in front of them so their attention is focused on the starter. If the timing is inaccurate, it is usually caused by the timekeepers' lack of concentration at the start.

### **Listen to the Start**

When the starter gives the command "take your marks" timekeepers should focus on the sound or flash of the strobe signal.

### **Verify that the watch is running once the race begins**

If the watch is not running or if the timekeeper was late to start it, the timekeeper should signal for an alternate timekeeper.

### **Split Times**

Split times should be taken only by the designated lane timekeeper for events of 200m or longer unless instructed otherwise. The split function button should never be used to time the finish of the race. Split times should be marked on the back of the time card.

Split times, which have been requested to be official times for an intermediate distance, should be taken by special designated timekeepers. Three times are required for official times. If asked to take a split time, the timekeeper should stop the

watch on the split function, when any part of the swimmer's body touches the end of the pool.

The timekeepers' position is at the finish end of the lane. The timekeepers should remain far enough back at the start and during the race so as not to obstruct the actions of other officials. When the swimmer approaches the end of the pool on the final length, the timekeeper should move to the end of the designated lane and look straight down over the edge of the pool to accurately see the touch at the finish, **being careful not to touch the top of the automatic timing pad.**

The timekeeper should stop the watch when a hand or any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall at the end of the pool. The timekeeper should stop the watch even if the touch is illegal (**it is not for the timekeeper to decide if the finish is legal or not**) and regardless of whether the touch is above, at or below the water level. The timekeeper should be alert for a possible underwater touch. The touch can only be detected if the timekeeper is watching carefully. (**Do not step back at the finish for fear of getting wet**). The timekeeper should be aware of a false finish. Some swimmers will rush toward the wall, raise their heads and stop stroking before actually touching the wall, hoping that the splash will obscure the finish. If a timekeeper thinks it is a false finish, the watch should not be stopped until the swimmer touches.

The timekeepers should return to their chairs after the finish to record the watch time on the time card and as a backup, on their program.

The timekeeper should be prepared to have the watch inspected if requested. The watch should not be reset until the "clear watches" signal is given. This is usually done when the Referee blows the whistle to prepare for the next race.

The timekeeper should never change the time because it differs from another lane timekeeper's time. The scoreboard should not be copied. It may be incorrect. The timekeeper's watch time may provide the only correct time.

The timekeeper should write the times in the correct sections of the swimmer's cards for each race. Unless the timekeeper is instructed to do so, the official time should not be determined.

Timekeepers should not cheer or coach swimmers during a race. They should avoid telling the swimmers their time and place in the event or whether they are disqualified.

## **AUTOMATIC TIMING - AOE**

Stantonbury – Colorado System 5 ( 6 lane display )

Temple Cowley ( Oxford ) Colorado System 5 ( 8 lane display )

Aqua Vale ( Aylesbury ) Omega Ares 21 ( with matrix display )

AOE provides accurate times and places. AOE is required as the timing method for records and qualifying time standards. Various AOE systems are in use today, therefore, none of the systems will be described in detail. It is recommended that timekeepers be familiar with the basic fundamentals only.

AOE uses pressure – sensitive panels or touch pads installed at the end of each lane. The pads are connected to an electronic time and place recording device. The starter's pistol or electronic horn is also connected to the instrument and, when fired or activated, starts the timing action. When the swimmer touches the pad, the timing action stops or, in longer races, records the split time at any intermediate distance. Electronic equipment records time accurately (1/1000 sec) and also indicates the order of finish.

Semi – AOE is activated by the starter's signal or by a manually operated button, and stops when timekeepers in each lane press buttons when the swimmer touches the wall.

**Note** – If the system is manually started after the starter's signal – cannot be used for times but may be used for placing.

When an AOE system is used in meets for novices or very young swimmers, numerous pad malfunctions can occur. Semi – AOE is easier to use with less experienced swimmers.

The greatest problem with AOE is in how to deal with malfunctions, how to obtain backup data, how to adjust for timing errors and how to integrate backup times into the remaining non – malfunctioning times and places.

A proper backup timing system should be in place to assure swimmers that they will meet their requirements for official times. Additionally, there should be at least one timekeeper with a manual watch for each lane. It is good practice to have two additional timekeepers. The Chief Timekeeper may provide an extra watch.

## **AOE MALFUNCTIONS**

To determine whether a malfunction has occurred, the primary and secondary times and places should be compared to establish the validity of the swimmer's primary time. When AOE incorporates semi – AOE button backup timing, a direct comparison can usually be made. If the difference between primary and secondary times

exceeds 0.30 sec (three tenth's of a sec), check to see where and if the swimmer touched the pad, the operability of the pad, the manual watch time or the visual estimate of relative placement of the swimmer in the heat. If a malfunction did occur, the swimmer's time becomes the one which was recorded by the semi – AOE.

It is the Referees' decision if the AOE operated correctly (no one else)

### **WHY A LOT IS REFERED TO THE REFEREE**

The Referee is responsible for all aspects of the competition including control and continuity with the emphasis on judging all protests related to the competition in progress and proper procedures for the commencement of an event. The Referee is also responsible for the safe conduct of all activities in those parts of the premises essential for the running of the competition. The Referee shall stop a competition proceeding at any stage if any of the required facilities, equipment, personnel and procedures become deficient and report it to the Meet Director / Promoter. Any official or steward shall be under the control of the Referee at all times. The Referee shall be responsible for the receipt of, and dealing with protests. (subject to a Jury of Appeal being appointed). **The Promoter has no power to deal with a protest; it can only be dealt with by the Referee or Jury of Appeal.**

### **THE REFEREE**

- Shall have full authority over all officials and shall assign and instruct them; shall enforce all applicable rules and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meet, the final settlement of all decisions not covered by the rules; can overrule any meet official on a point of rule interpretation, or on a judgement decision pertaining to an action personally observed; shall also disqualify a swimmer(s) for any violation of the rules that are personally observed.
- Shall signal the starter that before each race all officials are in position, that the course is clear, and that the competition can begin.
- When the swimmers are prepared for the start, the Referee shall gesture to the starter with a stretched out arm indicating that the swimmer's are under the starter's control. The arm shall remain up and outstretched until the starting signal but dropped if the Referee wishes to abort the start.
- Shall give a decision on any point where the opinions of the judges differ and shall have the authority to intercede in a competition at any stage, to ensure that all conditions are observed
- When AOE equipment is used and an apparent malfunction occurs it shall be the Referee's responsibility to make an immediate investigation to determine whether the swimmer finished in accordance with the rules and/if there was an actual

equipment malfunction. The Referee has the authority to have the electronic display board turned off and can overrule information displayed on it.

- May prohibit the use of any bell, siren, horn or other artificial noisemaker during the meet.
- Protests against judgement decisions of officials can only be considered by the Referee.
- The Referee should have mastered everything concerning officiating swimming meets and should have served in all official capacities. The Referee will be familiar with
  1. Timing procedures, equipment and specific rule, which apply to each type of equipment used.
  2. Place judging procedures
  3. Check in and seeding procedures
  4. Starting procedures and instructions
  5. Recording procedures
- Most importantly, the Referee must be proficient in stroke and turn judging. The Referee is the **final** authority on judgement calls. If the Referee, either through observation or rule interpretation, believes a swimmer has been unfairly recommended for disqualification the recommendation shall be overruled.

## **Swimming Judgement**

Swimming judgement is based on a thorough knowledge of the rules and the reason for the rules, which is to ensure fair and equitable conditions of competition and uniformity in the sport. The Referee must not only support or overrule the decisions of every other official, but also judge every phase of the competition.

## **Attitude**

The Referee's understanding of the swimming rules, respect for the other officials and understanding for those who are still gaining knowledge of the sport, contributes to a positive swimming attitude.

## **Administrative Skills**

Before the competition the Referee should make contact with the Meet Director / Promoter and co-ordinate any requirements for the meet in advance of the competition. On the day of the competition, the Referee should arrive in time to adequately perform pre-meet responsibilities: confer with the meet management; obtain a list of officials invited; review the facilities, seeding and administrative procedures; conduct a technical meeting with team managers and coaches if required. Conduct a meeting to assign and instruct technical officials. The Referee's

actions during the technical meeting can establish a tone for the competition. The Referee should assume complete control in a pleasant, confident manner. (For bigger competitions e.g. Licensed Open Meets – County Championships – District / Regional Championships and National Championships there is likely to be more than one Referee, if this is the case one of them will be the Lead Referee with overall responsibility). Prior to the competition, the Referee should approve all officials.

### **During the Competition**

The Referee's full attention must be given to every start, including close observation and concurrence with the starter in false starts and disqualification. Between the starts, the Referee should oversee the competition and evaluate how the competition is running (to slow – to fast - any problem areas etc.). If a rule is misunderstood, the Referee should correct the misunderstanding. The Referee should call any infraction observed and determine why the assigned officials did not do so. The Referee should reassign or substitute officials who are incapable of acting or found to be inefficient, as well as answer questions, protests and appeals of the other officials' decisions. It is ineffective for the Referee to be impatient with a distraught swimmer, coach or parent.

### **Seeding**

Seeding is the assignment of a heat and lane to each swimmer entered according to the submitted entry time. Entry cards usually have to be posted by a certain time. The Clerk of the Course will inform the Referee when the card boxes are closed, and no extra swimmers may check in. After the boxes have closed a swimmer wanting to check in must be referred to the Referee. Likewise with any swimmer who withdraws or fails to report, the Referee must be informed.

### **Finally**

All licensed competitions now have to be signed off, that everything was in order, by the Lead Referee - it's his name on the form – so it would be a foolish person who signed something as being correct when it wasn't. You never know who is seating in the balcony or who may submit a complaint as to how an event was run. You never, knowingly, leave yourself open to be shot at. ! ! ! (A lot of Team Managers with County Teams or the bigger clubs are qualified Referee's – just in case there are any problems)