



Recommended Pre-Meet Briefing Notes for Referees at USMS Sanctioned Meets

General Items of Interest

- **Officials Check-In and Introductions.** Make sure everyone is present. Welcome officials to the meet and thank them for volunteering.
- **Ask deck officials to carry/display only USMS Rule Books.** Point out the explanations of rules differences in Appendix B.
- **Make final position assignments.** (Delegate to Chief Judge or Head Starter if available.)
 - **Assign trainees if there are any.** (Note that trainees are not permitted at Championship meets.)
- **Instructions to leadership team and deck protocols.**
 - **Jurisdictions, rotation, coverage during relays/distance events.**
 - **Instructions on Championship Deck protocols if being used.**
 - **DQ Processing.** Role of Chief Judges (if assigned), DQ forms (writing, discussing, approving).
 - **How will you inform swimmers of DQs?**
 - **Discuss radio protocols, if used.**
- **Provide session overview note time line.**
 - **For smaller meets, consider placing short breaks during the meet to avoid back-to-back swims.**
 - **Referee and Starter should agree on interval between heats and communicate to timing system operator.**
 - **For larger meets, cover start protocols which may be needed to run the session efficiently. When to begin the start sequence? Use of overhead or chase starts?**
 - **What is the protocol for event/heat announcements during the start sequence?**
- **Advise officials of any special considerations for swimmers with disabilities.**
- **Know what protocols will be followed in the event of an emergency.**
- **Point out continuous warm-up area and procedures.** (Continuous warm-up lanes are mandatory in masters meets). Make officials aware if lanes adjacent to the competition lanes will be used for warm-ups.

Pertinent USMS Rules Differences

- The forward start requires that at least one foot at the front of the block or edge of the deck prior to “Take Your Mark”. Swimmers are permitted to start from the deck or in the water. A backstroke start is permitted in freestyle events.
- Swimmers are permitted to use a breaststroke kick in butterfly events. The breaststroke kick may be used interchangeably with butterfly kick any time throughout the race (e.g., a swimmer could use a breaststroke kick and a butterfly kick with every arm pull).
 - Only a single breaststroke kick is permitted after the start and each turn prior to the first stroke. Any number of butterfly kicks are permitted prior to the first pull. (15M rule still applies.)
 - A breaststroke kick may be taken before the touch at the turn or finish without being followed by a pull.
 - Any number of butterfly kicks per stroke cycle is permitted, but only one breaststroke kick may be taken per stroke cycle. A downward butterfly kick following a breaststroke kick is not an infraction in butterfly events.
- Relay swimmers are permitted to remain in the water following conclusion of their leg of the relay. Advise timing equipment operators. Ensure that swimmers do not cross lanes to exit the pool until swimmers in all lanes have finished the race.

Administrative Considerations

- Include Timing Judges, Recorders, and Timing System Operators in the pre-meet briefing or meet with them before the meet.
- Ensure that the timing system configuration being used meets requirements (fully automatic, semi-automatic, or two/three watches).
 - Is there a need to put extra buttons or watches on lanes for record attempts?
 - Make arrangements to brief timers prior to the session.
- Establish timing adjustments protocol (for malfunctions) and communicate to timing judges and recorders.
- Ensure that USMS record applications and pool measurement forms (bulkhead meets) are available. (Check heat sheet for potential USMS or world record swims prior to the session.)
 - Establish process to check for record swims.
 - Referee must sign record application and the timing system printout must be included as documentation.
 - If three watches are used, all three timers must sign the timer card.
 - A swimmer does not need to win the heat to establish a record.

- Referee should check that the pool measurement requirements have been satisfied. Ensure that bulkhead pools are measured prior to and after the session. Pool measurement form must be completed for post-session measurement of bulkhead pools.
- Split notification forms and process.
 - Swimmers must notify the Referee in writing prior to backstroke or relay events for their initial splits to count for records and Top Ten.
 - Ensure that officials are in place to judge finishes for backstroke lead-off splits and that the second swimmer does not start in the water for relays.
 - Initial splits in other individual events may be recorded if the swimmer notifies the Referee in writing prior to the end of the meet.
 - Initial splits and relay lead-off splits for USMS official times may only be used if recorded using fully automatic timing.
 - FINA permits world records from initial or lead-off splits if recorded with 3-button semi-automatic times or 3 watches. Make arrangements for additional timers if necessary for world record attempts.
- Is the meet approved for observation of swims by USA-Swimming?
 - Process for swimmers to request observation or blanket observation of swims?
 - Make arrangements for placement of officials for butterfly and IM swims.
- Seeding and check-in procedures. Deck-seeded vs. pre-seeded? Positive check-in? Need to combine events or re-seed due to scratches? Process for relay entries and seeding?

General Points

- Officials are there to ensure fair and consistent officiating and that swimmers receive proper recognition for their swims. Philosophy of judging is no different than other meets. The officials are there to observe and record. If there is a clear and definitive observation of an infraction, it should be called regardless of age, ability level, or perceived advantage. Any swimmer could establish a national or world record or achieve a Top Ten ranking, so all swims need to be judged accurately and fairly.
- All masters meets typically have a wide range of ability levels from elite swimmers to beginners. We want everyone to have a good experience. Consider that some swimmers may be unfamiliar with the rules, need a little extra time getting to blocks, assistance stepping up or down, extra time entering or getting out of the water, some explanation on “meet basics”, etc. Be patient!
- Have Fun!

Additional Facility or Equipment Checklist Items for Referees

- **Have the starting and timing systems been tested prior to the session?**
- **Are the lane lines in place and tightened sufficiently? Are the 15-meter points marked on the lane lines?**
- **Are the backstroke flags in the proper position?**
- **Are the starting blocks numbered correctly? Are they stable? Do they meet height requirements for pool depth?**
- **Are the continuous warm-up lanes sufficiently identified and is there a way to ensure that swimmers warming up will not interfere with the competition?**
- **Is there sufficient deck space and ingress/egress for swimmers, officials, coaches, and spectators? Is crowd and noise control going to be an issue? Are Marshals needed and, if so, have they been properly positioned and instructed?**