

VSI Officials' Guidelines for Observed Swims

For times achieved at meets conducted under other than USA-S technical rules (eg. NFHS, NCAA, YMCA) to count as official USA-S times:

- A request for observation must be made and the meet must be approved for observation (details available on the [High School](#) section of the VSI website)
- The swims must be observed by USA-S certified officials (observers) who ensure that the swim was in compliance with USA-S technical rules

Observation may occur in one of two formats:

- Swimmers are required to request observation: under this format only those swimmers requesting observation are observed (USA-S athletes not requesting observation are not observed)
- The entire meet is observed ("blanket" observation): under this format, all swimmers are observed, whether requested or not

Staffing (under all circumstances there must be a minimum of two NFHS/NCAA/YMCA Stroke and Turn officials at each end of the pool to ensure adequate coverage of the rules governing the conduct of the meet):

- If all of the Stroke and Turn officials are also USA-S certified, those officials may also serve as the observers and no additional observers are necessary, although the Meet Referee may choose to use separate observers if he/she chooses (if this latter approach is taken then staffing should follow the guidelines for separate observers as indicated below)
- If none or only some of the meet Stroke and Turn officials are USA-S certified, then separate observers are required (USA-S rules require a minimum of two USA-S Stroke and Turn certified officials, one at each end of the pool)
 - If only requested observations are being done and it is feasible for two observers to observe all those swims, then the minimum of two observers may be used
 - If there are a large number of requested observations (with multiple swimmers in the same heat) or blanket observation is being conducted, then four observers must be used
 - Observers are positioned at the ends of the pool to observe as unobtrusively as possible (this must be coordinated with the Referee running the meet)

Disqualifications

- Stroke and Turn officials working in the dual capacity of being both a meet official and an observer:
 - Are responsible for ensuring compliance with the rules under which the meet is being swum and with USA-S rules
 - Should only raise their hand to signal a disqualification when there is an infraction of the rules under which the meet is being conducted
 - Should not raise their hand to signal a disqualification that would occur only under USA-S rules
 - Should mark a disqualification of the appropriate swimmer on their heat sheet when there is a violation of a rule that is unique to USA-S (the specific violation should be noted; the current "Swimming Rules: Common Elements and Differences" provides a good summary)
- Stroke and Turn officials working only in an observer capacity:
 - Are responsible for ensuring compliance with those rules that are unique to USA-S
 - Are not responsible for ensuring compliance with those rules that are the same between USA-S and those of the governing body under which the meet is being run (if the meet official and observer differ in their opinion as to whether or not a violation has occurred)

- for these rules, the call of the meet official is to prevail as per Bruce Stratton, Chair of the USA-S Rules & Regulations Committee)
- Should not raise their hand upon observing an infraction
 - Should mark a disqualification of the appropriate swimmer on their heat sheet when there is a violation of a rule that is unique to USA-S (the specific violation should be noted)
 - What to do when the technical rules under which the meet is being swum are more stringent than the USA-S rules (eg. dolphin kick not permitted in NFHS at start and turn in breaststroke; sculling at the end of the first arm stroke at the start and turn of breaststroke not permitted in NFHS)
 - As long as the swimmer was in compliance with USA-S rules (the swimmer wasn't disqualified for another infraction common to both sets of rules) the time counts for USA-S purposes (as per ruling of Bruce Stratton)
 - A swimmer (or his/her coach/representative) that has been disqualified for such an infraction must come to an observer prior to the end of the session and request that the time be documented for USA-S purposes
 - In conjunction with meet personnel (Referee, Administrative Referee, Recorder), the observer should then determine if the swimmer had any additional violations in the swim in question
 - If the swimmer was disqualified for a violation in addition to the more stringent violation, the disqualification stands for USA-S purposes and the time does not count
 - If the swimmer was only disqualified for an infraction that is not also an infraction under USA-S rules, the time achieved can be counted for USA-S purposes
 - If the time can be counted for USA-S purposes, the observer should obtain the official time, note that the swimmer was in compliance with USA-S rules, and this information should be collated and forwarded with the USA-S DQ report for the meet
 - Other meet procedures and follow-up:
 - Communicate to swimmers (HS coach at meet / USA-S coach prior to meet)
 - Whether blanket or individual observation is being done, and what the swimmers must do to be observed if the latter procedure is being used (when individual observation is done a listing of who was observed must also be prepared and submitted following the meet)
 - What to do when disqualified for an infraction that is not a USA-S infraction
 - Need for the swimmer's legal name and birthday be in the database in order for the times to be entered into the SWIMS database (a log should be provided at the meet to obtain this information and it should be submitted following the meet)
 - USA-S Disqualification Reports
 - At the end of each session one of the observers should collect all the heat sheets with the marked USA-S disqualifications
 - Optional - This information can be collated into a single "USA-S DQ Report"
 - Swims in compliance with USA-S rules but not meet specific rules
 - Document these occurrences and obtain official time in case overwritten by "DQ" in the meet database
 - Forward the following information to the LSC Top16-NTV Chair (currently Terry Randolph)
 - The Meet Manager backup file of the meet
 - Any log sheets with swimmer names and birthdates
 - Heat sheets with USA-S disqualifications noted
 - Documentation of any swims in compliance with USA-S rules but not meet specific rules
 - USA-S DQ report, if done