

“THE WORLD OF GREY” SITUATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Below are the situations and resolutions that we discussed at our September 2019 Swimposium. With some of these the rules are clear, other require judgement at the pool. In 1982 William Lippman stated the following: *“Let’s not try to cover every possible situation in swimming rules. Let’s not write rules to cover these strange and rare possibilities. Leave something for the referee to decide. Let humans present consider the facts, and come to their own decision on how to handle it. It is impossible to make rules absolute for every instance. There must be room for human judgment to adapt to the intent of the rule and to the physical factors and make the final decision. That is my philosophy that is based on a belief that most adults involved in our sport are fundamentally honest and are willing to exercise their judgment for the best interest for all parties involved.”*

If you find yourself in one of these undefined or uncharted situations, the best advice is to discuss possible outcomes with other deck referees, coaches and even the LSC Officials Committee. If together we cannot provide an answer, we can always ask for counsel from the USA Swimming National Officials Committee.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

In a relay event, the timers fail to push plungers plus the pads failed to register a time. Their coach is concerned as there is no time on the scoreboard and he thinks his team broke the meet record, he was so excited he forgot to stop his watch.

RESOLUTION:

Article 104.2.1.A states that the official time must be established in accordance with Article 102.24 and is spelled out in 102.24.4.B.4. Also, VSI Policy and Procedures Section 21.2.

102.24.2 states “Every race in a swimming competition shall be timed with one or more of the following systems.., automatic (primary), semi-automatic (secondary) and manual back-up (tertiary).”

In this case, the pad failed and the timers failed to push the plungers. The only data points available are the lane timer watch times and order of finish. Since there is no pad or button time, you can use watches as the tertiary system to determine the official time. The order of finish should confirm their placement.

For a VSI record, the watch time (now official time) would only be valid for a record, provided the meet employed a primary timing system for all events that was automatic or semi-automatic. A meet timed solely with watches would not meet the VSI Policy and Procedures for a record(s).

For World, US Open and American records, manual watches used to determine an official time will **not** be accepted. Article 102.24.2c(1) specifically states “World, US Open, and American records, can only be established when timed by automatic timing, back-up camera system, or semi-automatic if the automatic timing system fails.”

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

The meet announcement has been sanctioned. Two and 1/2 months before the meet you hear coaches share their excitement that the time standards have been lowered. While discussing this with the

Sanctioning Chair he mentions the possibility/probability of going to a 2-pool course. There is no mention of 2 pools in the meet announcement. It refers only to “flighting”.

RESOLUTION:

The requirements and conditions for Sanctioned meets are in Article 202.2 and 202.3 of the USA Swimming Rulebook. All of the provisions listed must be followed by the hosting organization. If any of those need to be changed, then a new meet announcement must be submitted and approved for sanction. For instance, if the host team wants to change events (add or eliminate), add non-USA registered swimmers etc, then they must submit a new meet invite for sanctioning.

The term “flighting” means an equal division of swimmers usually based on their times. This could be set up by divisions, size of teams, or by entry times. Flighting can be set up for timed finals or a prelims/finals meet.

In the instance above, the meet could be flighted. The best practice with flighting is to segregate the five fastest heats in each of the events. The remaining athletes would swim the same events later on. Although everyone would need to know when they are swimming, that information will be promulgated once the flighting and seeding has occurred and would not require a new sanction.

In the end, flighting a meet, essentially creates two pools for swimming, (A Flight and B Flight), swimming the same events, however with different start times.

If the facility has the appropriate equipment, there are enough officials and the sanctioning chair agrees that a meet can run with two pools, then that can be applied as well. Prior to making the decision to change a meet to flighting, it is wise to consult with the sanctioning chair first.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

At championship meet during the relays, two Pom-Poms fall into Lane 3 from the observation deck up above. They hit the water when second swimmer in Lane 3 is nearby. Also, the Pom-Poms are the team colors for the team in Lane 4. What do you do?

RESOLUTION:

First and foremost, you need to find out if the 2nd swimmer in Lane 3 was affected during the swim by the pom-poms that landed in their lane. Have your DRs/CJs check with the S&T within that jurisdiction and ask “did the swimmer react to the pom-poms entering the water.” If the S&T reports that the swimmer reacted to the pom-pom, stopped altered stroke or maneuvered around the object, offering a re-swim to that relay team is appropriate.

After the race, talk to the coach for that team and ask the coach to talk to their 2nd swimmer and find out if the pom-poms affected their swim. If the Coach reports back that the 2nd swimmer was affected, regardless if the S&T did not see them alter or maneuver their swim, you still can grant a re-swim.

What about disqualifying the team in Lane 4 because they were the colors of their pom-poms? That would tough to enforce based on the information provided. Article 102.22.7 states “Obstructing or otherwise interfering with a swimmer shall disqualify the offender, subject to the discretion of the Referee.” The situation would have to include a purposeful action by another team member from Lane 4 to justify enforcing Article 102.22.7.

The other action item I would recommend is banning pom-poms from the upper deck for the remainder of the meet.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

There are 8 swimmers in the water competing in the 1650-yard freestyle. After the lead swimmer turns on lap 36, the entire facility loses power, no scoreboard, not lights, no pumps. What do you do?

RESOLUTION:

Swimmer safety is the first priority. If the pool is dark, and there is little to no lighting, you need to stop the race by whatever means necessary and have the swimmers exit the pool. Make sure they are all accounted for as well. The facility personnel should be assisting as well, to ensure everyone can exit to a safe area.

Once everyone is safe & power has been restored and the facility operating normally, you have a couple of options:

1st you can offer a re-swim for all of the affected swimmers of that heat. This can be at any agreeable time, to include the next day.

2nd those who decline, and if you have the data, you could offer 500-yd split times.

If power cannot be restored, an option is to cancel the remaining events. Have a meeting with the coaches and find out if they have a preference of events they want to swim. If power can be restored by the next day, you can offer to swim those events. I suggest using positive check-in and deck seeding to make this a little easier.

This is one of those situations, that is beyond the control of the meet announcement, therefore the event(s) can be moved to facilitate the swimmers without a new sanction or violating the current meet announcement.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

P/F meet & halfway through the prelim session you hear results announced, but the announcer does not state current time or when "scratch or intent to scratch deadline is"

RESOLUTION:

Per Article 102, the announcer is an official. Furthermore, Article 102.21 states, "The announcer shall make announcements requested by the Referee, clerk of the course or meet management."

With prelims and finals, the meet announcement is most likely following Article 207.11 that may include some minor modifications. However, 207.11.6 discusses scratch procedures whereby scratches from events shall be 30 minutes after the time established for the start of finals sessions.

Additionally, Article 207.11.6E(2) " A swimmer qualifying for C,B,A (bonus, consolation, finals or) final race based upon the results of preliminaries notifies the Referee within thirty (30) minutes after announcement of qualifiers for a race that they may not intend to compete and further declares their final intentions within 30 minutes following their final individual preliminary event."

This administrative rule requires that the qualifiers must be announced. Therefore, all events where qualifiers have not been announced are still open, regardless if 30 minutes have passed. That is because the announcer failed to include the required information with their initial announcement.

The meet director and/or Meet Referee should ensure that the announcer understands their role and the required announcements regarding prelim/finals and general announcements. The verbiage is posted on VS website at <http://www.virginiawimming.com/vsi/Official/FormsusedatMeet/FormsatMeet.html>.

Summary: All results from prelims must be announced noting the qualifiers for the number of finals C, B, and A. Once announced, the time must be placed on the results and that action opens the event for scratches. That same sheet is posted at the scratch table and a second copy posted for all to review. Upon completion of 30 minutes, the scratches are closed. If a swimmer chooses to submit an intent to scratch, that event is not "officially" closed until the 30 minutes after their final preliminary event has expired.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

A swimmer marked as a penalty NS (PNS) enters the pool in a backstroke event. The DR asks the swimmer to exit the pool. The swimmer states they are "unaware of a NS or PNS" and exits the pool as requested. After the heat the coach wants to know why his swimmer was not allowed to race. Preliminary investigation reveals the wrong swimmers were marked DFS and NS by Admin. The swimmer that was made to exit was actually NOT a PNS.

RESOLUTION:

For our championship meets, especially our Senior Championship meets we follow the Article 207 USA Swimming Championships. Article 207.11.6 discussed the scratch rules and Article 207.11.6C states, "In all events where preliminary heats are necessary or in any timed final event for which the swimmer has been positively checked in, after the heats have been seeded, any swimmer who fails to compete in an individual event heat in which such swimmer entered and has not been scratched in accordance with sub-paragraphs A and B above will be barred from all further individual and relay events of that day. The application of 207.11 pertains to the order in which the event/heats are swum, not the numerical order of the events. Additionally, that swimmer shall not be seeded in any individual events on succeeding days unless that swimmer declares an intent to swim prior to the close of the scratch box for that day's events.

Therefore, a swimmer that misses an individual event is considered a no-show (NS) and will be barred from all remaining preliminary events for that day. This is called a penalty no-show (PNS). If this occurs, a copy of the PNS is given to the swimmer's coach. Admin will list any remaining individual events that swimmer is entered for that day.

In this case, the wrong swimmer was marked as a penalty no-show and was removed from the pool. What should have happened when the swimmer stated they were not aware of a NS and PNS, the referee should have allowed them to swim and let the Admin team figure out if there was an error.

Once the investigation is complete and if an error was made, the swimmer will still have a time. If the investigation found that the swimmer was in fact a NS, then the time can be removed.

If this was an error and the swimmer was removed from the pool, then the only option is to grant a re-swim.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

A coach complains to the Referee that the Starter is “holding the swimmers too long” and asks that he be replaced. The Referee has been closely monitoring the starts, and considers the starts to be patient and fair. How should the situation be handled?

RESOLUTION:

Whether to remove a starter or any official on deck is up to the discretion of the Deck Referee and Meet Referee, and is a rare occasion. A coach is not involved in this process. If the Deck Referee feels the starts have been patient and fair, let the coach know of the same. If the Coach disagrees, send them to the Meet Referee where they will be reassured, we are closely monitoring the starts.

SITUATION FOR MRs & DRs

At a meet, the starter is periodically chit-chatting with the DR about S&T officials missing calls while the heats are in the water. Also, in hospitality, other S&T Officials are discussing calls that occurred on deck.

RESOLUTION:

This should be squashed before it even happens and it should never occur. Our VSI Swim Officiating Standards of Conduct expressively prohibit this activity.

[http://www.virginiaswimming.com/vsi/Official/Resource/Swim%20Officiating%20Standards%20of%20Conduct%20\(VSI\).pdf](http://www.virginiaswimming.com/vsi/Official/Resource/Swim%20Officiating%20Standards%20of%20Conduct%20(VSI).pdf)

Furthermore, both the DR and Starter are in leadership positions and must be aware of their surroundings. They could be within earshot of a volunteer overhearing their comments or worse a coach. Chit-chat like this will likely cause a loss of credibility on the deck and could lead to creating a toxic atmosphere at a meet. That is why this is banned within our standards of conduct.

Additionally, this should not take place in hospitality either. There are a lot of volunteers around and you have to beware of the audience. Again, this type of chatter could make its way on deck creating a bad situation.

VSI Policy and Procedures expects our officials to be professional both on and off the deck.

SITUATION FOR CJ & ST

ST observes a swimmer with an illegal suit prior to a race. What should be done?

RESOLUTION:

If this is noticed prior to the race, notify the CJ or DR. The DR or MR may have been provided a swimsuit waiver. These waivers are granted by the Chair of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee. If not, this gives the MR/DR some time to notify the swimmer's coach of the illegal suit. The MR or DR could also advise the swimmer, that they can swim in the illegal suit, however, they will be disqualified for competing an illegal suit.

If this is not noticed behind the blocks, but rather in the water, the S&T can raise their hand and the CJ will adjudicate the call. The on-deck DR will notify the coach of the disqualification. The main point here is to use the process established by the deck hierarchy. Inform the CJ, DR and MR will handle any issue with illegal suits or illegal tape for that matter. If the swimmer enters the water and competes, raise your hand and the call will be adjudicated.

As officials, we cannot tell a swimmer they cannot swim with an illegal suit. We can advise both the swimmer and the coach, that if they swim with an illegal suit, their swim will be disqualified.

SITUATION FOR CJ & ST

CJ adjudicates a Stroke call. During the conversation CJ, who is also a certified DR, states "that is not a call". Then calls it into the DR as "no call". Is this allowed?

RESOLUTION:

No this is not allowed. When working as a CJ, regardless of advanced certifications, the individual needs to follow the protocol of a CJ. If the adjudicating CJ feels there is doubt in the call, they should report back to the DR, "Recommend not acceptance" or come over the DR and discuss the S&T's jurisdiction, the call and what they saw and the reason for not recommending acceptance. The only Officials who can overturn a call are the MR/DR and the S&T Official who made the call.

SITUATION FOR CJ & ST

A breaststroke swimmer moves his hands in a sculling or flipper movement at the end of the first arm stroke, both after the start and after the turn. Should he be disqualified?

RESOLUTION:

No, he should not be disqualified. Applicable Rule: 101.2.2. This is legal provided, "All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement." A sculling motion of the hands, only as a part of the arm stroke, is not considered the beginning of a new stroke.

SITUATION FOR CJ & ST

A stroke judge observes significant water turbulence following every breaststroke kick taken by the swimmer in lane 4. The S&T raises their hand and call is butterfly kick during the swim. How would you adjudicate the call?

RESOLUTION:

If this is all of the info that is reported to the CJ, then the question the CJ should ask is, "Did they see the actual leg movements performing a butterfly kick, or only the extreme water turbulence?" If they only

observed the water turbulence, then the call should not stand and the CJ should not recommend acceptance to the DR. The turbulent water could just as likely be caused by a completely legal breaststroke kick. The official must actually observe butterfly kick in order to make that call. Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

SITUATION FOR CJ & ST

At the local aquatic center, not all of the 15-meter buoys on the lane lines are aligned, and there is some variation between the lanes. At the start of the butterfly, the swimmer in lane 4 dives in and kicks underwater with a legal butterfly kick. His head does not break the surface of the water by the 15-meter buoy in his lane; however, he does break the surface of the water by the 15-meter marks in lanes 2 and 7. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

RESOLUTION:

As of May 1, 2019, we no longer judge the 15-meter mark by the lane buoys. Article 103.16.2 applies which states, "Dividers shall consist of contiguous floats having a minimum diameter of 5 centimeters (2 inches) to a maximum diameter of 15 centimeters (6 inches). The color of the floats extending from the walls the distance of 5 meters for long course and short course meters and 15 feet for short course yards shall be distinct from the rest of the floats. Distinctive colored floats, or markers extending around the full circumference of the floats, shall be placed at 15-meters (49 feet 2-1/2 inches) from each end wall in both short course and long course pools. **A fixed mark shall be placed on any wall or the deck adjacent to an outside lane to correctly align the 15-meter buoys for judging underwater starts/turn distances. The mark on the wall or deck will be considered the default marking for officiating purposes.** Additionally, in long course pools, a distinctive warning line or lane markers may be placed at a distance of 13 meters from each end wall. Damaged or broken floats shall be removed and/or replaced, to the extent possible."

SITUATION FOR CJ & ST

During the start of a butterfly race, a swimmer realizes that his suit has come loose. After taking a stroke, he simultaneously reaches back with both arms, pulls his suit forward, and recovers his arms over the water. Should the swimmer be disqualified? If so, what is the call?

RESOLUTION:

No. The rule states, "Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race." The swimmer did not do anything to violate this rule. Applicable Rule: 101.3.2

SITUATION FOR DR & SR

At the start of the 50-yard freestyle, the Referee blows the long whistle, indicating for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks. A swimmer is standing behind the block in lane 7, but does not step up. How should the situation be handled?

RESOLUTION:

Part of the Starter's job is to be observing the swimmers behind the block for the next race and letting the Referee know if the heat is full, or if a swimmer is missing or there is an issue behind the blocks. This

should be discussed with the DR prior to the start of the session as to what type of information they want to know.

In this situation, the Referee should ask the Starter to give the command for “Lane 7 step up please,” or “Heat XX, Step up.” If the swimmer responds to the command by stepping up onto the block, the heat should proceed normally. If the swimmer does not respond to the command by stepping up onto the block, the Referee should investigate the situation— it is possible that the swimmer may not understand the command. If no extenuating circumstances are found and the swimmer is simply refusing to comply, a disqualification for delay of meet, or a penalty for failure to compete (no-show), may be in order. Applicable Rules: 101.1.2A, 101.1.5A, 101.1.5B

SITUATION FOR DR & SR

In the 100-yard freestyle, the Referee blows the long whistle, and the swimmer in lane 3 steps up onto the block. The Referee hands over the race to the Starter, the Starter proceeds with the “Take your Mark” command and notices that the Lane 3 swimmer has one foot towards the back of the block and his other foot a few inches away from the front of the block. Are the feet in an acceptable starting position?

RESOLUTION:

Yes, this is an acceptable starting position. The rule states, “On the Starter’s command ‘Take your mark,’ the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position, in the forward start, with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform or the deck.” Anywhere on the front half of the starting platform is considered to be the front of the starting platform.

SITUATION FOR DR & SR

Championship final of the 100-yard butterfly, just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your mark,” command is given, the swimmer in lane 6 twitches his right knee, leaving his stationary starting position and diving into the pool. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 7 leaves his stationary starting position and dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. After a significant delay, lanes 4, 5, & 3 all dive in. How should the situation be handled?

RESOLUTION:

If possible, the Starter should stand the heat. If it is observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee that both swimmers started before the starting signal, both swimmers should be disqualified for false starts. If the Starter is able to stand the heat, the swimmers should be removed from the heat. The fact that that the false start in lane 7 may have been in reaction to the false start in lane 6 has no bearing on the disqualification.

Since there was a long delay, and the heat was not stood, then the swimmers in 4, 5, & 3 should not be disqualified for a false start. The Starter should have stood the heat and relieved the remaining swimmers from their starting position. Applicable Rules: 101.1.2C, 101.1.3A, 101.1.3B.

SITUATION FOR DR & SR

When the referee hands over the race to the starter, there is no swimmer in lane 8. After the start, a swimmer jumps off the block of Lane 8 and into the water in Lane 8. How should the situation be handled?

RESOLUTION:

Provided the swimmer was not held up by the timers, then the DR should simply notify the Timing Equipment Operator to shut off the time for Lane 8. Since the lane is shut off, it is considered a no-show and swimmer “failed to compete as they were not ready to swim.”

If the timers held up the swimmer, then the athlete should be allowed a re-swim. Remember, Timers are Officials and if they make an error, then an athlete should not be penalized for an Officials mistake.

SITUATION

Backstroke event using ledges. Before the race, a swimmer removes the installed ledge and places his own ledge on the block. ST inquires, the swimmer says the guy in the white shirt on the corner said it was OK, what do you do?

RESOLUTION:

This is not allowed and the original backstroke ledge must be used. Applicable rule 103.15.5 states, “Should backstroke ledges be used, identical ledges shall be provided for all lanes”. The S&T should notify the CJ if this occurs.

MAAPP Situation for all: Were you listening to Mary?

A former college swimmer is now a registered unattached USA Swimmer. He trains alone and not with any club. He wants to participated in VSI swim meets. Is he considered an “Applicable Adult”? Does he need to complete MAAPP training, why or why not?

RESOLUTION:

All registered USA Swimmers, 18 years of age and older are required to complete MAAPP training.

WHAT IS A FALSE START?

The rules state... “When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.c) and “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation” (101.1.3A). So, what constitutes a false start? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says “stand please” after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said “stand please”, but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the "stand" command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He fell into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is NOT a false start.** Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and no starting signal ever sounded.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the “stand” command. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action. **This is NOT a false start.**