

Starter Clinic

A. Equipment and Supplies

1. *Officials Clinic Certification Form*

Have attendees fill in name and address, club affiliation. As clinic instructor send into Section Office at the completion of the clinic.
(ie: Swim Alberta Office)

Officials Certification Cards

The Official taking the starting clinic will most likely already have his own card. Sign-off a new one (for the starter clinic) if he has forgotten his original card.

2. Starter Pistol, shells, ear plugs, electronic starting devices if available.
3. Access to use of a horn, start amplifier.
4. It is ideal if this clinic can be conducted at a pool with use of the starting equipment, starting blocks, and demonstration swimmers.
5. Swimmers can be used to demonstrate different start positions, and some typical false starts.

B. Starter's Role and Pool Position

1. The Role

- a) The Starter position is critical in the running of a successful meet.
- a) He and the Referee must function as an effective team to ensure that fair starts are achieved consistently throughout the session.
- c) The central point of the starter's role is to ensure a fair start for all swimmers.
See Rule: SW 2.2.3
- d) To exercise your function as a Starter, you:
 1. must have a good working knowledge of the rules;
 2. must be **consistent** and exercise good judgement;
 3. must earn the confidence of the swimmers; and
 4. must respect the swimmers and enjoy the sport.
- e) Only by practice, can a Starter achieve these goals.
- f) Many people are initially nervous about starting.

Starter Clinic

Page 2

It is recommended that the new starter begin at a club time trial and other low-pressure meets. Encourage starters to keep trying higher level meets as their confidence and enjoyment of the experience increases.

2. The Position

S.W. 2.2.4 When starting an event, the starter shall stand on the side of the pool within approximately five meters of the starting edge of the pool where the Timekeepers can see and hear the starting signal and the swimmers can hear the signal.

C. Performance Of The Position

1. Before The Meet

- a) Arrive early – at least one hour before the start.
- b) Check the starting equipment and become familiar with the pool layout.
 1. Is a gun or electronic starting equipment to be used?
 2. Have the electronics been set up and operating? TEST.
 3. Are all loudspeakers, horns, and strobe lights working?
 4. Set and test the volume levels.
 5. Is there a standby gun and ammunition available? If so check the operation of the gun, ammunition supply, ear plugs.
- c) Are any races to be started from the turn end of the pool?
 1. If so, is the starting equipment to be moved and how?
 2. Or is there equipment set up at both ends? TEST
- d) Check the Starter's Platform
 1. Is it in the correct position / location? Adjust to suit your location, preference or style.
- e) Briefing with the Referee
 1. The meet shall be run under FINA start rules. As of Sept. 01, 1996 only a FINA start is to be used in ALL sanctioned competitions in Canada.
 2. Check out what type of meet it is: Age Group, Masters, SWAD. Ensure you have reviewed and checked out the appropriate rules.
 3. Be aware of duties the Referee may like you to perform. ie: Turn Judge.
 4. Discuss with Referee whistle protocol. SW 2.1.5
 5. Process to handle equipment problems, or movement of equipment.
 6. Is there a Starter and Referee for boys and girls or only one?
 6. How have other sessions gone in regards to starting, any DQ's or other problems?

Starter Clinic
Page 3

- f) Establish the Procedure for Normal Starts
1. Check with the meet organizer to ensure whether the meet shall be a one start or two start meet.
 2. Does the Referee want you to advise swimmers to adjust their position on the blocks or in the water? ie: Toes below the water line, asking swimmers to stay in or to leave the pool at the races end.
 3. Will the Starter be announcing the Event number and Heats during the sessions?
- g) Establish the Procedure for False Starts
1. Referee and Starter to confer & agree on any false starts before any disqualifications are made. Refer to SW 2.2.2 and SW 2.2.3. Ensure rules, tolerances etc. are understood to ensure consistency. If the Referee and the Starter can not agree on the swimmer that caused the false start, (one says lane 3, "late coming down", the other says lane 4, "movement before the starting signal"), you should not disqualify anyone because there is doubt.
- h) Watch Check
1. Find out who the Chief Timekeeper is. Confirm when and where a watch check will occur?
- i) Meet Flow
1. Discuss any time problems and solutions (need to speed up or slow the meet down).
- j) False Start Rope
1. Who will operate it?
 2. How is it operated?
 3. Who will move it for 25/50 meter races?
- k) Distance Events
1. Are bells being used? Is the Starter to sound the starting horn (or gun) when the lead swimmer has on lap plus five meters to go?
 2. Will you be expected to count or track the lead swimmers laps, to ensure a bell is rung or a starting device is sounded at the correct time? Note: You may be asked to remind the Lane Timerkeepers to ring the bell for the bell lap and may have to provide a pistol shot if there are no bells.

3. During the Meet

- A)** Preparing for the start of the race. (SW 2.1.5) At the commencement of each event the Referee shall signal the swimmers to the blocks. When the swimmers and officials are ready for the start, the Referee shall signal such with an outstretched arm. This indicates that the swimmers are now under the Starter's control.
- B)** The Starter shall have full control of the swimmers from the time the Referee turns the swimmers over to him (SW 2.2.1) until the race has commenced.
1. Ensure that all Timekeepers can see the starting device. (gun or flash).
 2. Note: You should have confirmed this during the watch check.
 3. Shall comply with all the rules for the " Start " SW 4.
 4. May serve as a Turn Judge or Finish Judge if requested by the Referee. (Part of your pre-meet briefing with the Referee.)
 5. Shall give the command "Take Your Marks" in a slow, steady, non-military voice. Note: In the Olympic Games, World Championships, and other FINA events the command "Take Your Marks" shall be in English (SW 4.4),
 6. Shall activate the starting device when all competitors are stationary and complying with the starting rules. (SW 4.1, SW 4.2, SW 4.3)
 7. The Starter should keep a record of all the false starts, the lane, time, name of the swimmer and resolution, on his heat sheet for future reference. The heat sheet should be given to the Meet Manager at the end of his session.
- C)** The Starter shall report a swimmer to the Referee for delaying the start, for willfully disobeying an order or for any other misconduct taking place at the start. Only the Referee may disqualify a swimmer for such delay, willful disobedience or misconduct. Such disqualification shall not be counted as a false start. Note rules CSW 4.7 False starts.
1. The Starter can not disqualify a swimmer for undue delay of the start. (ie:) If: After the race has been turned over to the Starter (and there is an empty lane) an additional swimmer suddenly mounts the blocks in the empty lane. or If: A swimmer who has no intention of holding on the first start (now depends if the meet is one or two starts) then
 2. The Starter will ask the swimmers to "Step Back" and confer with the Referee.
 3. It must be the Referee who makes the disqualification.
- D)** The Starter shall have the power to decide whether the start is fair, subject only to the decision of the Referee. If the Starter judges that the start was not fair, he shall recall the swimmers immediately after the signal to start has been given. The exception is after a false start has occurred, the Starter shall not recall the swimmers. (S.W. 4.5, S.W. 4.6)

False Start Exceptions:

- ◆ If a swimmer was drawn into a false start by movement in the lane next to him or loud noises from other parts of the building or
- ◆ If the Starter held the swimmers for an unreasonable amount of time while waiting for all swimmers to come down and hold, causing a ragged and unfair start, then

The race should be recalled and another fair start attempted.

The Referee could DQ for a delay of meet or decide it was an officials error with no DQ.

Note: Prior to each subsequent attempt to start, the race shall revert back to the Referee.

4. The Start

- A. Note SW 4.1 (one or two start rule.) SW 4.2 The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and the Individual Medley race shall be with a dive. On the long whistle (SW 2.1.5) from the Referee the swimmers shall step onto the starting platform and remain there. On the starters command “take your marks”, they shall immediately take up the starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platforms. The position of the hands is not relevant. When all swimmers are stationary the starter shall give the starting signal.
1. The starter shall not start the race until **all** swimmers are stationary.
 - ◆ “Stationary” does not mean standing rigid.
 - ◆ Some swimmers will fidget until the Referee turns the race over to the Starter.
 - ◆ It is the Referee’s responsibility to ensure the swimmers are ready to swim before he turns them over to the Starter.
 2. The Starter, often, has the only communication system with the swimmers and should assist the Referee in ensuring that the swimmers toes are below the water line, announcement of second starts etc.
 3. The swimmers are turned over to the Starter by the Referee raising his hand waist high and pointing down the pool.
- B. SW 4.3 The start in the Backstroke and Medley races shall be from the water. At the Referee’s first long whistle (SW 2.1.5) the swimmers shall immediately enter the water. At the Referee’s second long whistle the

swimmers shall return without undue delay to the starting position (SW 6.1). When all swimmers have assumed their starting positions, the Starter shall give the command “take your marks”. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.

1. If the swimmers have entered feet first and are all in position on the wall, a second whistle may not be required.
- C. SW 6.1 Prior to the starting signal, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. The feet, including the toes, shall be under the surface of the water. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited.
1. The Starter has the only communication system with the swimmers. After the race has been turned over to him, if he observes a swimmer move his toes above the water line, he can advise the swimmer at fault to keep his toes below the water line and then proceed with the start.
 2. If the swimmer moves his toes above the water line, after the command “take your marks”, he can be DQ'd. (CSW 4.7.3)
- D. SW 4.5 One Start Rule. When using the one start rule, any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given, shall be disqualified. If the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon the completion of the race.

If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given. The remaining swimmers shall be called back or asked to step down. Control of the swimmers will revert back to the Referee, and a fair start shall be attempted again.

- E. SW 4.6 Two Start Rule. When using the two-start rule, the Starter shall call back the swimmers at the first false start. Upon the swimmers return for the restart the starter shall announce, “ swimmers this is your second start”. At this point control of the swimmers reverts back to the Referee. After the first start any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given shall be disqualified. If the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon the completion of the race.

If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the starting signal shall not be given, the remaining swimmers shall be called back or asked to step down. Control of the swimmers will revert back to the Referee, and a fair start shall be attempted again.

- Common Sense application:
 - If one swimmer jumps the start signal because of the movement of another swimmer (drawn-in), and is lead into a false start, DQ only the swimmer causing the false start.

- ◆ If a swimmer moves just before the starting signal and the starter cannot avoid activating the starting signal and no other swimmer was moving, DQ as stated above.

- ◆ If a swimmer moves just before the starting signal and other swimmers are starting to move thus causing a **ragged start** and the starter cannot avoid activating the starting signal :
 - recall the race.
 - DQ the swimmer who started the movement, or
 - Start the race again with no DQ's, charging the false start to a Starter's error.

- ◆ If the Starter errs and starts the race before all the swimmers are Stationary:
 - recall the race and advise the Referee that it was your error.
 - no DQ's in this situation.

- ◆ If the Referee and Starter can not agree on the swimmer that caused false start.
 - One saying it was lane 4, "late coming down", and the other saying it was Lane 3 "reintroduction of movement before the starting signal". They could both be disqualified if the situation warranted, but it would be best to only disqualify the swimmer that caused the false start, if this cannot be agreed upon, deem it to be an "official's error" and restart the race with all swimmers.

- ◆ If you are working an age group meet with many novice swimmers, **be lenient, they** are just learning the start position.
 - you might just advise the swimmers to step back and go over to talk with the offending swimmer, this may be the best (positive) solution.

- ◆ Be careful of the swimmers who use the track start.
 - some will move backward after grabbing the blocks. This is allowed as long as they do not stop first, before moving backwards. This would be a reintroduction of movement.

- E. SW 4.7 When using the two start rule, the signal for the false start shall be the same as the starting signal but repeated rapidly along with the dropping of the false start rope. Alternatively, if the Referee decides that the start is false or unfair he shall blow his whistle, which shall be followed by the starter's signal (repeated) and the dropping of the false start rope.

1. After The Meet

- A. Attend a debriefing with the Referee or Management Committee. Comment on both strengths and areas of improvement for the next session.
- hand in your session sheets in the event your notes are needed for referencing.
- B. Ensure that the equipment used is secured.
- Starter's electronic equipment is shut down.
 - Guns and shells are safely put away.
 - False start rope is secured.
 - Clip board is returned to the officials' room.
- C. Check the Officials' schedule for the next session that you work.

Situations for Discussion

How would a Starter handle each of the following situations:

1. Following the command “take your marks”, and before the starting signal, a backstroker move his feet so that his toes break the normal surface of the water. Refer to rules SW 6.1 , SW 4.3, CSW 4.7.3 The offending swimmer is disqualified. The race is turned back to the Referee, and the race is restarted with the offending swimmers lane empty.

2. Following the command “take your marks”, the swimmers assume a position, then a swimmer begins to move before the start signal. Refer to rules SW 4.1, SW 4.2, SW 4.5, SW 4.6, CSW 4.7.4.
 - One start rule, let the race continue then employ rule SW 4.5
 - Two start rule, employ rule SW 4.6, announce: “swimmers this is your second start”, and turn the race back to the Referee. If it occurs on the second start, let the race continue and DQ the offending swimmer at the race’s conclusion.

1. If a swimmer does not respond to the command “take your marks”. Refer to CSW 4.7.1 and CSW 4.7.2
 - As a Starter do not activate the starting signal.
 - Instruct the swimmers to step down.
 - Discuss with Referee, if in agreement the Referee will DQ the swimmer.
 - The race will returned to the Referee, the DQ’d swimmers lane shall remain empty.

1. On the SECOND attempt at starting a race, a swimmer resumes his starting position and then topples from the blocks before the starting signal is given.
 - Did the swimmer slip because of a slippery block? Any doubt would go to the swimmer.
 - If the swimmer slipped:
 - the swimmers are instructed to “step back “.
 - the race shall be returned to the Referee and
 - the swimmer shall not be DQ’d.

If its judged that the swimmer could not hold his mark.

Refer to SW 4.5 and SW 4.6 and CSW 4.7.4, SW 2.2.3

- The swimmers are instructed to step back.
- The race is turned back over to the Referee.
- The offending swimmer shall be DQ’d.
- The race shall be started again, with the lane empty.

Starter Clinic
Page 10

1. On the third attempt at starting the same race, One swimmer jumps the gun:
 - a. The starting signal had not been activated.
 - the swimmers will be instructed to “step down”
 - the race shall be turned back over to the Referee
 - the offending swimmer shall be disqualified
 - the race shall be started again with the lane empty.
 - a. The starting signal had been activated.
 - the swimmers shall not be recalled, the race shall continue.
 - the offending swimmer shall be DQ'd upon the completion of the race.
1. The swimmers come down in a very uneven disorganized fashion.
 - ask the swimmers to “step down “
 - the race should revert back to the Referee for another start attempt.

Uneven disorganized starts are often caused by the Referee turning the race over to the starter before the swimmers are ready. In this situation the starter can wait until he feels a fair start can be achieved or instruct the swimmers to “step down “. You may witness this behavior in older swimmers especially in 50 & 100 meter sprints.

1. The swimmer in lane 6 comes down too slowly to his mark and lane 7 topples into water.

One start Rule: A judgement call. Normally as long as a swimmer is showing continuous motion from the command “take your marks” he is not at fault. The swimmer falling in may have come down very quickly and could not hold his mark until the rest of the field was stationary.

Two start Rule: Refer to rule SW 2.2.2, SW 4.6, and CSW 4.7.3.

Question: Was the swimmer too slow?

If the answer is NO.

One start rule: The swimmer falling in is DQ'd CSW 4.7.4

Two start rule: SW 4.6 If on the second start attempt: Instruct the swimmers to “step back” and disqualify the swimmer in lane 7.

ONLY THE SWIMMER CAUSING THE FALSE START SHOULD BE DQ'D
(ie: If the answer was YES)

Starter Clinic
Page 11

2. The swimmer in lane 5 does not hold and leaves before the starting signal. Lane 6 falls in after lane 5 jumps, no other swimmers move. Rules CSW 4.7.1 SW 2.2.2 CSW 4.7.4. If the Referee determines the action was deliberate the swimmer in Lane 5 can be DQ'd. Such a disqualification shall not be counted as a false start. Lane 6 would normally be safe as he did not cause a false start.

If on a second start and the starting signal had NOT been activated.

- instruct the swimmers to step down
- disqualify the swimmer in lane 5 (cause of the false start)

If on the second start the starting signal HAD been activated. Rule SW 2.2.3 The starter should recall the race because lane 6 was drawn by the movement next to him and did not get a fair start.

Lane 5 could be DQ'd by the Referee, for intentional delay of meet SW 2.2.2 or CSW 4.7.4 as the heat had been stopped.

1. While taking the starting position, the swimmer in lane 3 never came to a complete stop, but is in a slow and barely noticeable continuous motion, and the starting signal is given.

Rules SW 4.2 , SW 4.3 When all swimmers are stationary the Starter shall give the starting signal.

Rule GR 8.3 If an error by an official follows a fault by a competitor, the fault of the competitor may be expunged.

The race shall be recalled:

- The race shall be turned back over to the referee with no disqualification.
- An error by an official after a fault by a swimmer leaves the swimmer blameless.
- The Starter should have waited until all swimmers were stationary, (set) before activating the starting device.

Good Luck, Have Fun , You have now completed the Starters Clinic

Advice: Before every meet where you are a starter, review swim rules SW 2.2 Starter and SW 4 Starting