



## Northwest Aquatics League Training and Certification

### Situations and Rulings for NWAL Referees

**SITUATION:** During the 50 yard backstroke (a) a backstroke flag line breaks and two swimmers stop when they make contact with the line; (b) a lane marker breaks and interferes with a swimmer. In both situations, the referee stops the event until repairs are completed and the swimmers have recovered, then offers a re-swim to all swimmers, including those who were not affected. **RULING:** Correct procedure.

**COMMENT:** Backstroke flags should be considered safety equipment and no one may be allowed to swim backstroke until they are replaced. If equipment cannot be repaired in a timely manner, the team representatives should discuss alternative arrangements for completing the meet at another facility or postponing the meet until repairs can be made. An acceptable approach for (a) is to change the order of events to allow someone time to obtain new flags or make repairs to the flags and for (b) to reposition the lane lines so it only affects 1 lane and reseed the meet with 1 less lane.

**SITUATION:** During the 100 yd IM, the referee discovers the starting block in Lane 3 has become loose and is not securely attached to the deck. The host team is unable to repair it. The referee (a) requires all swimmers to use a deck start for the remainder of the meet or (b) has the meet reseeded avoid using the unsafe/unfair equipment.

**RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** When one or more starting blocks are not securely attached, all swimmers should start on the deck in order to provide a safe, uniform and equitable setting for competition. Nothing in the rules prohibits open lanes. Swimming with Lane 3 unoccupied is an acceptable alternative.

**SITUATION:** During the meet the referee notices clouds of muddy water pouring out of the pool's circulation jets. Within minutes, he is unable to see the markings on the bottom of the pool. The referee decides to continue the meet. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** The team representatives should discuss alternative arrangements for completing the meet at another facility or postponing the meet until the water quality can be restored.

**SITUATION:** Prior to the beginning of the meet, the visiting team representative notices that black target lines are not present on the end walls of the pool. The team representative (a) declares the pool to be non-standard and insists on moving the meet to their pool; or (b) refuses to swim unless towels are hung as targets. **RULING:** Incorrect Procedure. **COMMENT:** (a) End wall targets are recommended equipment only, and are not required. Therefore, their absence does not constitute a non-standard pool. (b) the referee is only required to hang towels (or other suitable markers) if the top edge of the pool lacks a contrasting color (e.g., a single row of tiles).



**SITUATION:** The clerk of course and referee mutually agree to re-seed a later heat to allow a swimmer who missed her heat to swim, but agree not to score her swim.

**RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** Exhibition swimming is not permitted under any circumstances. A swimmer who missed a swim because of the actions of a meet official could be permitted to swim (for points) in a later heat or event at the referee's discretion.

**SITUATION:** The referee observes a competitor wearing a cap with: (a) a local USA swim club logo; (b) a college insignia or logo; (c) numbers; (d) a 2" X 3" American flag; (e) the manufacturer's logo or trademark; (f) her NWAL team's logo/mascot/name; (g) another NWAL team's logo/mascot/name and takes no action. **RULING:** Correct procedure **COMMENT:** Unless the cap violates uniform rules related to buoyancy or artificially increasing speed it is legal. All normal swim caps are legal. The Meet Ref may prohibit caps that are marked with inappropriate language or taunts.

**SITUATION:** A competitor is disqualified for bending over the pool edge to splash water on himself prior to the race. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** This disqualification is at the discretion of the referee. Normally, the swimmer would not be disqualified unless he interfered with another competitor as a result of splashing water on himself.

**SITUATION:** A spectator interferes with the conduct of the meet and refuses to stop. The referee suspends the meet until the meet management has removed the spectator from the premises. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Halting the meet is about the only action a meet ref take until law enforcement arrives. Under no circumstances should any person other than law enforcement use force to remove an unruly spectator.

**SITUATION:** While waiting behind the blocks for a race to begin, a swimmer taunts an opponent on the basis of relative ability. The Meet Ref evaluates the severity of conduct to determine if the swimmer will be disqualified from the next event. **RULING:** Correct procedure **COMMENT:** The referee has the authority to disqualify the swimmer from the next event, or the event immediately prior to the unsportsmanlike conduct. Further, the Meet Ref also has the authority to disqualify the swimmer from further competition or eject the swimmer from the premises if, in the opinion of the referee, the swimmer's conduct warrants it.

**SITUATION:** A swimmer is entered in two events – heat # 2 of breaststroke and in the butterfly event. The swimmer jumps into the water without the referee's permission: (a) during heat #4 of breaststroke, (b) during heat #1 of breaststroke, or (c) between heat #4 and heat #5 of breaststroke. The referee (a) disqualifies the swimmer from butterfly, (b) disqualifies the swimmer from breaststroke, (c) determines the action is unsportsmanlike conduct and disqualifies the swimmer from butterfly **RULING:** Correct



Procedure. **COMMENT:** (a) and (b) the swimmer should be disqualified from the next event he or she will swim. If the swimmer has no additional events then the swimmer should be disqualified from the last even swam. (c) the referee has the authority to determine that this is unsportsmanlike conduct and disqualify the swimmer as described in (a) and (b).

**SITUATION:** A swimmer trips and falls in the water while trying to step onto the starting platform prior to the start of an event. The referee verifies that swimmer is uninjured and allows the swimmer to compete. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** The referee should allow the swimmer to compete. Although competitors may not enter the water prior to an event, disqualifying a competitor who accidentally has fallen would constitute obvious unfairness and justifies setting aside this application of the rule.

**SITUATION:** At the conclusion of the 100 yard medley relay, the first swimmer in Lane 3 jumps into the water to congratulate the final swimmer; (a) before all teams have finished the race; (b) immediately after all teams have finished the race. The referee (a) disqualifies the team in lane 3, (b) evaluates the behavior for unsportsmanlike conduct and disqualifies the swimmer from the next event in which the swimmer will compete.

**RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT** (a) is illegal; the relay team in Lane 3 is disqualified from the event; (b) most likely illegal; the first swimmer in Lane 3 may be disqualified from his next scheduled event for unsportsmanlike conduct at the discretion of the referee.

**SITUATION:** Just prior to the 50 yard freestyle, a swimmer cannot be located and fails to report to the blocks in time for his heat. During the heat, the missing swimmer walks on to the deck, realizes he should be swimming, and dives into his lane and starts competing. (a) The referee disqualifies him from that event and from his next scheduled event for unsportsmanlike conduct. . (b) The referee allows the time to stand because there was no unfair advantage. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** (a) since the swimmer was officially entered in the race, and was not scratched from the event, he should not be disqualified from his next scheduled event for unsportsmanlike behavior. (b) A swimmer who fails to report to the starting blocks in time for the initial start is not permitted to swim, and shall be disqualified from that event.

**SITUATION:** The starter calls for the next freestyle heat to step up onto the blocks. The swimmer in Lane #2 is standing behind the timer's chair talking to another swimmer, and does not step up. The Referee immediately signals the starter that the race may begin. The swimmer in Lane # 2 then realizes that his heat is on the blocks, and quickly steps up onto his starting block. The Referee disqualifies the swimmer in Lane # 2.

**RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** The Referee is responsible for making sure that all swimmers are in position before signaling the starter that the competition may begin. The Referee must be reasonably certain that the swimmer is actually missing before signaling the starter. He may instruct the starter to use the microphone to call for



a missing lane, (e.g. “swimmer lane two”?) or he may instruct the timers in that lane to call for the missing swimmer. If the Referee prematurely signals the starter, and a missing swimmer appears at the blocks, he should permit the swimmer to compete.

**SITUATION:** The Referee notices that the swimmer in Lane #4 was not in a set position when the starter gave the starting signal, and he immediately recalls the race using his whistle. The starter restarts the race and no false start is charged to any swimmer.

**RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The Referee is responsible for ensuring fair starts. If the starter gives the starting signal before all swimmers have been given a chance to get into their starting (set) position, this would constitute an unfair start, and the race must be recalled. **IMPORTANT** – The Referee is expected to be in a position to see the unfair start and must have a recall device ready for immediate use. Being out of position, or leaving the whistle out of one’s mouth is not best practice for a Referee.

**SITUATION:** In a meet using dual confirmation on relay takeoffs (as instructed by the meet referee during the officials meeting), the fourth swimmer in Lane 2 of the 100 yard medley relay leaves early. Following the finish of the heat, the Referee confirms that both judges observed the violation. Before he can walk over to Lane 2, the swimmers have left the area and cannot be located. The referee proceeds with the next race, and informs the coach of the disqualification later. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The referee should make a reasonable effort to inform the swimmers of their disqualification. However, unnecessary delay of the meet should be avoided.

**SITUATION:** When a coach returns home from a meet and reviews the scoresheet, he discovers that it is incorrect and actually his team won the meet. The coach calls the computer operator and asks her to correct the mistake, and change the score of the meet. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** The meet score can be reviewed and clerical errors corrected within 24 hours of the completion time recorded by the Meet Referee. However, notification of the error must be made by the Team Representative to either the Meet Referee or to an NWAL Officer. The coach and computer operator do not have the authority to make corrections to the meet score.

**SITUATION:** Ten minutes after completion of the meet and prior to signing the scoresheet, the referee notices that a swimmer competed in the 50 free, 100 I.M., 50 back, 50 fly, and 200 Free relay (obviously using the exception report), and disqualifies him in his 4th individual event (the 50 Fly). **RULING:** Correct procedure, but incorrect ruling. **COMMENT:** The swimmer should be disqualified in all events including the 200 free relay team. The referee has up to 15 minutes after completion of the last event to review the scoresheet (and exception report) and make changes, before signing the scoresheet as official.

**SITUATION:** In a meet where dual confirmation is being used, the meet referee is serving as one of the side takeoff judges. The second swimmer in the freestyle relay



leaves the block early. The other takeoff judge does not notice the violation, but the referee does. The relay team is not disqualified. **RULING:** Correct procedure.

**COMMENT:** If the meet referee assigns himself to a position (other than deck referee) during part of the meet, he can only call infractions that are within his jurisdiction at that time. Because the meet referee was serving in the capacity of a takeoff judge at the time, he did not have jurisdiction to over-rule the other takeoff judge. Further, when dual confirmation is used the relay team shall be disqualified **only if** both relay take off judges have recorded the same infraction. The rules prohibit the referee from overruling relay take-off judges when dual confirmation is used. Unless the take-off was so early that it was not viewed as an exchange, it is inappropriate for the referee to overrule the take-off judges.

**SITUATION:** Swimmer A fails to show up in time for his event. The other swimmers are on the blocks, and Swimmer B false starts. While the heat is being recalled, swimmer A appears. The referee does not permit swimmer A to swim, marking it as a no show, charges swimmer B with one false start, then restarts the race. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The referee should determine why swimmer A was absent for the initial start, if a meet official was responsible for swimmer A's absence, the Referee could permit him to swim.

**SITUATION:** A false start is called by the starter but is not confirmed by the Referee. No false start is charged. **RULING:** Potentially correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The starter has the authority to call a false start, unless the Meet Referee has instructed officials in advance to utilize a dual confirmation procedure for false starts. If dual confirmation is not being used, the Referee has the authority to overrule the starter if he has personally observed the start and does not see a violation of the starting rules. The Referee also has the authority to recall a heat if he has personally observed a false start and the starter fails to see the infraction. The Referee is ultimately responsible for ensuring fair starts.

**SITUATION:** A team rep presents the meet ref with a letter from the head of surgery at a prominent hospital indicating that a swimmer needs to wear compression tape as a result of a recent procedure but is otherwise safe to swim. The ref allows the swimmer to participate using the prescribed compression tape. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** NWAL's philosophy is that attempting to manage compression tape on a permission basis is not practical. Since compression tape provides compression and can be a competitive advantage NWAL decided to simply disallow the use of compression tape entirely.

**SITUATION:** A swimmer who was originally entered in events 3, 27 and 37 was scratched in the scratch meeting due to a family commitment. After event 37 the swimmer shows up and the coach and team rep request that the swimmer be allowed to



enter events 67 (Butterfly) and 77 (Free Relay). The meet ref and clerk of course refuse to allow the swimmer to enter event 67 but do allow her to participate in event 77.

**RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The entry lists exchanged on Thursday or at some other mutually agreeable time are the official entry lists. No subsequent modifications may be made, other than those allowed in the Scratch Meeting. For that reason the swimmer may not swim event 67. However, all participants on the entry lists for that age and gender are alternates for the relay. Alternates may be substituted at any time.

**SITUATION:** A swimmer who was originally entered in events 37, 57 and 67 was scratched in the scratch meeting due to a family commitment. Due to the number of scratches made at the scratch meeting, the Clerk of Course reseeds the meet with the smaller list of swimmers. Prior to event 57, the swimmer shows up, and the coach and team rep request that the swimmer be allowed to compete in events 57 (Back), 67 (Fly) and 77 (Free Relay). The meet ref and clerk of course insert the swimmer into open lanes and allow her to participate in event 77. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The entry lists exchanged on Thursday or at some other mutually agreeable time are the official entry lists. No subsequent modifications may be made, other than those allowed in the Scratch Meeting. However, swimmers are not officially scratched until the swimmer fails to step up onto the blocks prior to the Deck Referee's whistle. The fact that the meet had been reseeded does not impact the decision. For that reason the swimmer may compete in events 57 and 67. Additionally, the events do not have to be reseeded with the additional swimmer. She may swim in any open lane as determined by the referee. Finally, all participants on the entry lists for that age and gender are alternates for the relay. Alternates may be substituted at any time.