

# **Greater Annapolis Swim League**

## **Starter & Lead Officials Clinic**

**2025 Season**

**For New & Returning Officials**

## AGENDA

- Role of the Starter
- Using an Electronic Starting System
- Meet Preparations and Anticipations
- Patience: Vital But not Easy
- Tips for Meet Pacing
- How to Talk to Swimmers
- Start Procedures
- False Starts
- Delivering a Great Timer Briefing

*Note:* It is common for the same person to serve as both Start and Lead Official.

# Role of the Starter

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STARTER's GOAL: *Ensure all swimmers get a fair start.*

The Starter's role is to gauge when...

- The field is ready to start
- The field is ready to be sent
- Intervention is required after they're in the water (rare)

## **Four Keys**

1. Preparation      *Look at your heat sheet to know who to expect for the start.*
2. Anticipation      *Potential no-shows? Obstructions? Distractions?*
3. Patience          *Wait for the field to settle. Will be different for each heat.*
4. More Patience    *But know when it is too long and time to stand them.*

# Using an Electronic Starting System

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- To Talk:** Depress the microphone key.
- To Start:** With Mic key depressed, press red button firmly.
- To Recall:** With Mic key depressed, push & hold red button.

## **Best Practices**

- Hold Mic to chin to avoid straining voice
- Brevity: Ambient noise swallows words
- Speak in a calming, descending tone.
  - *Exhaling as you speak can help.*
- S-p-e-a-k\_\_S-l-o-w-l-y
- Brief\_\_Pause\_\_After\_\_Each\_\_Word



# Meet Preparations and Anticipations

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## Check starting system readiness

- ☐ Ensure full battery charge
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with microphone operation/feel
- ☐ Adjust sound level and ensure that strobe flashes

## Mark your Meet Program for “knowables”

- ☐ Disabled swimmers?
- ☐ Timer migrations (to turn end for 25s; return to start end for 50s)
- ☐ In-water start events (backstroke and medley relays)
- ☐ Swimmer movement
  - *Only if a team elects to start 50BK from the turn end—not recommended.*

# Hearing Impaired Protocol

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- Use an **auxiliary strobe** place in view of the swimmer (if the facility has one).
- Absent an auxiliary strobe, **allow a coach to tap the swimmer**.
  - On the hand (in-water start)
  - On the back (forward starts)

# The Starter's Patience: *Vital, But Not Easy*

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**Our Foe:** The clock in our heads runs at *3X real-time*.

1. Patience: **Wait for the swimmers** to become stationary.  
*Remember:* Stationary does NOT mean motionless.
2. Patience: **Be willing to wait longer than feels comfortable** before standing them.
3. Patience: With the **young ones**, “**as good as it gets**” is as good as it gets.

# Tips for Optimal Meet Pacing

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- Announce each *Event* only once.
  - “Announcing Event N, gender/age group/distance/stroke” (*read off the program*)
  - “There will be N heats”
  - “Heat 1”
  - Thereafter until the next Event, announce only Heat number: “Heat 2”, “Heat 3”, etc.
- Except on a new Event, call the **next heat** immediately upon the **last swimmer finishing**.
- Do not waste time or break the meet rhythm by asking if timers are ready.
  - **When timers switch ends, try to verify all timers are in place.**
- Keep the tempo up but manageable by **watching timers for readiness** in the lane of the last finisher.

# How to Talk to Swimmers

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- Relaxed, confident delivery
- Smiling when speaking softens commands perfectly
- Address swimmers as “ladies” or “gentlemen”
- Be consistent: ALWAYS only “Take your marks” and “Stand” (or “Stand please.”)

## *Exceptions:*

- For prolonged delays, “Swimmers relax please.” or “Swimmers relax.”
  - After a prolonged delay, “Swimmers...<pause>...take your marks.”
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- To clear the pool:
    - “Thank you, ladies (gentlemen).”
    - Give them time. If they don’t react, “Clear the pool, please.”
  - Minimize use of the microphone apart from the main commands.
    - *Unless the starter is also the announcer.*

# Start Procedures

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## Before Each Heat

- **Position:** -Stand within ~5 meters of start end: Wider angles tend to give you better looks at the group of swimmers
- **View:** -Observe the field peripherally, while being able to distinguish individual lanes
- Observe swimmers **behind the block**
  - *Anticipate potential snags (no-shows, obstructions, distractions)*
- Call the heat and as needed: *“Heat N, step up please.”*
- Allow swimmers to step up and settle in
  - Read their body language
  - Often they’ll blow out a big breath and you can see their shoulders drop.

# Start Procedures

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## Normal Starting Sequence

- When swimmers are lined up and ready - **“Take your marks.”**
  - Slightly descending inflection: “Close the door” -- “turn the page”
  - If you can, soften the T and (easier) swallow the K
- On “Take your marks”, allow swimmers to **assume their starting position**
  - **Forward starts:** Toes of at least one foot curled over the coping (for safety).
  - **In-water starts:** Swimmers must have **at least one hand/one foot in contact with the wall.**
- When all swimmers are **stationary**, *give the start signal.*
  - Remember to keep the mic key pressed when giving the start signal.

# Start Procedures

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## Starting Sequence Issues

### When Swimmers *Don't* Take Their Marks Promptly...

- Wait briefly for the swimmer to notice and take their marks.
  - Up to ~5 seconds is not unreasonable to wait them out
  - Remember the clock in your head runs fast! Patience.
  - Resist the urge to stand them up.
- If too much time passes, “Stand” (or “Stand please”).
  - Make sure they all stand up or step back. Repeat “Stand please” if needed
- Repeat the “Take your marks” step.
- When all swimmers are stationary, give the starting signal.

Source: USA Swimming Rules, 101.2

# Start Procedures

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## **After the Start Signal**

1. Hold the microphone **ready for recall** until heads surface.
2. **Mark any empty lanes** in starter program.
3. Look behind the blocks for the **next heat swimmers**.
4. In 50s and 100 IM, **watch out for stragglers!**
5. For pacing, you can put the next heat of backstroke in the water as 25s finish (or as swimmers clear the pool in 50BK)

# False Starts

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## What Constitutes a False Start?

- **Forward torso movement** *after* swimmers get stationary following “Take your marks” but before the start signal is given.
- The forward movement breaks an imaginary vertical plane.

## *But...*

- Swimmer's must be allowed to settle and establish marks.
- It is **not a false start** if...
  - The swimmer was not settled. The Starter should “stand” the field, but not charge a false start of the starter signaled start before the field was ready.
  - If the swimmer resets to a stationary starting position **before the start signal is given**.
    - *For jumpy swimmers, it is often better to “stand” the field so they can settle.*
- It is not a false start if someone falls in the pool responding to the “Stand” command.

# False Starts in GASL Individual Events

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## Modified “No-Recall” start protocol applies.

- No dual confirmation for individual events.
- Basic Rule: Do not recall heats for a false start.

### *Exceptions:*

- You botch the start AND it affects one or more swimmers.
  - For physical or safety issue, like something falls in the pool.
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- If a swimmer false starts in an individual event:
    - Allow the heat to finish
    - Pause the proceedings to alert both coaches of the false start
    - Swimmer who false started may re-swim (or accept disqualification)
    - Other swimmers who felt affected by false start may re-swim
    - Set the re-swim to allow enough time for swimmers to recover
      - Note: A re-swim time is their official time. No “fielder's choice”.*
    - A 2nd false start disqualifies the participant.
      - A false start in a re-swim serves as a modified “dual confirmation”.

# GASL Relay False Starts/Relay Takeoffs

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**Standard no-recall false start protocol applies.**

- Identify (and remind) the official who will judge the start/relay takeoffs with you.
- Apply **dual confirmation** procedure to leadoff swimmer.
  - If you observe a false start/relay takeoff, circle swimmer's lane number on your heat sheet
  - After the heat, compare with your counterpart.
  - **If both called it a false start, it's dual confirmed.** *Otherwise, no call.*
  - Do not raise a hand for a false start/relay exchange.
    - One start/takeoff judge can not influence the other.

# Timer's Briefing

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GASL “[Timer's Briefing](https://gasl.swimtopia.com/officials)” : <https://gasl.swimtopia.com/officials>

## 1. Welcome! Emphasize Vital job:

- Swimmers depend on fair, accurate times
- Introduce head timer
- Discuss Head Timer swap procedure for fouled watch

## 2. Reminders:

- Step back at start
- Step up at the finish
- Turn cell phones silent or off
- No photography behind blocks

*See GASL Rules for complete recommended Timer Briefing.*

## 3. Pool configuration: N-lane pool, start end/turn end, Lane 1/Lane N

## 4. Timer relocation: Move to turn end for 25's.

# Timer Briefing - Key Elements

Ensuring accurate times is in their hands...*literally*

## Start

### Positioning doesn't matter

- ✓ See the strobe
- ✓ Stay behind swimmers

#### Before the Start:

- Confirm right swimmer, right heat
- Encourage swimmers to step up/in
- Monitor start strobe by "take your marks"
- Start watch on strobe (horn if you blink)

#### After the Start:

- Watch not running? "HEAD TIMER!!" (swap)
- Locate next heat swimmer

## Finish

### Positioning matters

- ✓ Must get eyes parallel to wall

#### At the Finish:

- Hold watch in dominant hand
- Stand at deck edge looking down. Don't watch swimmers hand.(Don't anticipate the touch.)
- Stop the watch when ANY BODY PART touches

#### After the race ends:

- For 25s, ask child's name (doesn't matter if they swam in wrong heat or lane)
- Record times, reset watch, look at strobe

## AGENDA

- **Scope of Lead Official Role**
- **Week Before Meet**
- **Before the Meet**
  - Week of Meet
  - Day of Meet
- **During the Meet**
- **Points of Emphasis for Officials Briefing**
- **2025 GASL Rules Updates, Clarifications & Deviations**

# Scope of the Lead Official Role

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- Facilitate with GASL and USA Swimming technical rules.
- Ultimate authority on matters of *rule* (*may* overturn).
- Intermediary on judgment calls (*may not* overturn).
- Field coach disputes, consults w/ other Judges about disputed calls.
- Reviews DQ slips for accuracy and proper rules application.
- Understands Starter protocols, especially False Starts.

**Officiating accuracy & consistency across all GASL clubs is the objective!**

Consistency starts with consistent training and consistent briefings.

# Before the Meet

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## Week of Meet

- The Senior Lead Official among competing clubs shall be designated the Lead Official for the meet.
  - The Lead Official for each club should agree by e-mail who is the senior Lead Official
  - Seniority is based on preference in the following order:
    - USA/Y Swimming Referee
    - USA/Y Swimming Chief Judge
    - USA/Y Stroke & Turn Official
    - GASL-only Lead Official
    - GASL-only Stroke & Turn Official

*Note: Ties for seniority should be broken by years of experience at the position.*

# Before the Meet

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## Day of Meet

- Arrive 45 minutes early
  - Plan to **brief officials** approx. 30 minutes before meet (or, coordinate briefings with the Starter)
  - **Introduce** yourself to coaches and league reps (they should find you, but...)
  - **Check in with Starter and Head Timer** to ensure Timer briefing happens
- **Review False Start protocols** w/ Starter
  - Relay and Individual events
  - Remind technical team DQ slips should come to you first, then ASAP a copy should go to head coaches (Optional)
- Provide **Officials Briefing** for stroke rules, protocols, relay starts & exchanges
- Assign **jurisdictions**, discuss positioning and rotation (if applicable)
- Remind judges to steer argumentative or extended discussions to you

## During the Meet

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- Process DQs, remind computer table to feed carbons to coaches ASAP. (*If used.*)
- Be prepared for false starts and to decide when to re-swim.
- Help Starter remember to move timers
- Keep your cool if coaches dispute calls.
  - Pause the meet if you have to (e.g. you're playing a dual role)
  - If irresolvable, invite coach to protest the meet (thankfully, rare) and move on.
- Gather all judges' heat sheets at end of meet, check in with computer table.
- Don't depart until the meet goes final.
- Report protest asap to [Board@swimgasl.org](mailto:Board@swimgasl.org) (thankfully, rare)

# Officials Briefing - Points of Emphasis

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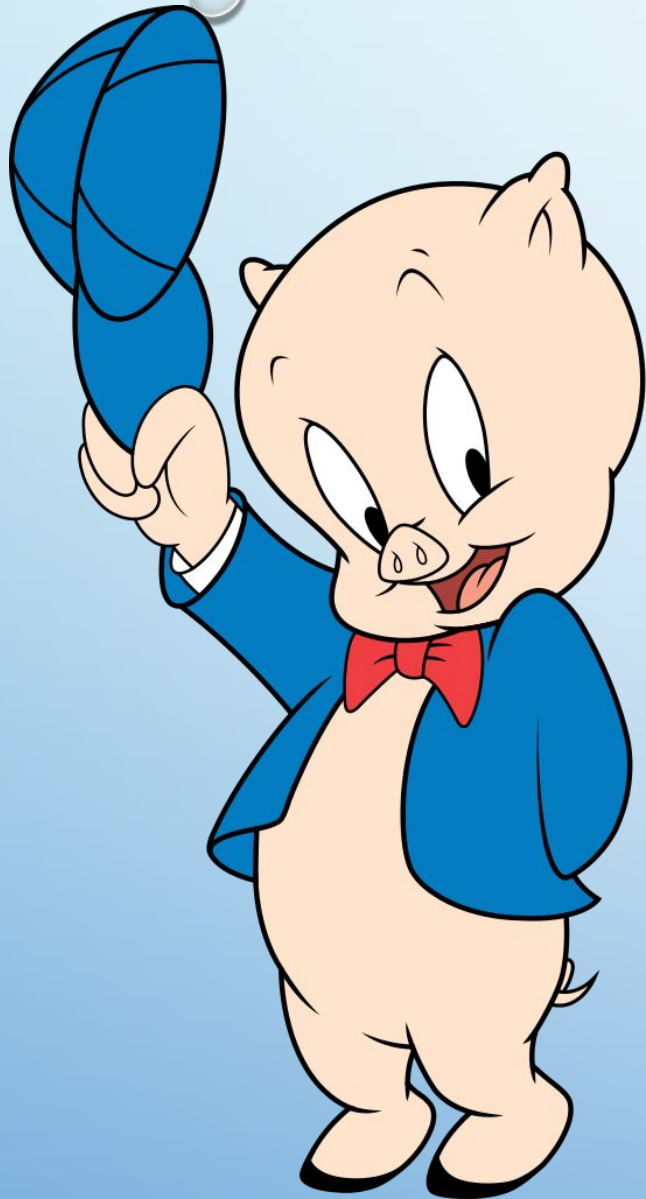
- Raising hands confidently for stroke infractions; *not* for early takeoffs
  - When in doubt (infraction or just ugly?), raise hand.
  - Keep observing, then write on program, then DQ whenever you can
- Relay exchanges (observe **feet first, then touch**; hand/foot on wall in shallow end)
- Relay starts personnel
  - Requires 2 judges at each end where relay exchanges will occur.
  - Cannot also be a Stroke & Turn Official for Medley Relays.
- Remind Starter about relay start protocol.
- Anyone can ask judges, “What was the call please?” No one may argue.
- Remind them how to think and feel if you need to inquire about one of their calls.
- Backstroke flip turn
  - What is a delay? If you had to ask yourself...*it wasn't*.
- Underwater recovery in butterfly – 2 places, swims and touches.
- Breaststroke: Scissors kicks and Start/Turn progressions
- Clarify 15M rule (far end from swimmer's PoV) for that pool

# 2025 GASL Rules

## Updates, Clarifications & Deviations

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- Technical Racing Suits
  - Tech suits are **only** allowed during Championship meets.
  - Tech suits are not allowed for any 12U swimmers in any meet.
- Whistle Protocol for Starts & Flyover Starts
  - USAS **whistle protocol** for starts is only allowed by **mutual agreement** among competing clubs **prior to the day of the meet**.
  - **Flyover starts** are only allowed by **mutual agreement** among competing clubs **prior to the day of the meet**.
- Relay “Running Starts”
  - During relay exchange starts, the swimmer may take 1 step forward with each foot.
  - A trailing/2nd step must not take the foot forward of the lead/1st step.
  - A swimmer whose feet have lost contact with the deck before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified. (Standard rule.)
  - *Standard start/false start rules still apply to the 1st relay swimmer.*



THAT'S ALL, FOLKS.