

CSA Starter Clinic

Goal/Purpose: To ensure that all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start. By taking the time to know the rules and protocols; and by working to improve your skills as a Starter, you can give the swimmer the opportunity to have the best start they've ever had every time you say "Take your mark".

102.14 STARTER

.1 **Preparation** — The Starter shall stand within ten feet of the starting end of the pool and upon signal from Referee, shall assume control of swimmers until a fair start has been achieved.

- 1) **Location of Starter**
 - a. Select position to see all lanes. Referee will adjust to your preference
 - b. Change position for backstroke? Usually closer to the end.
- 2) **After short and long whistles, the Referee will turn control of heat over to Starter with outstretched arm.**
 - a. Referee turns heat over as soon as swimmers, timers and officials are in place. It is the Starter's job to determine when the heat is ready to swim, not the Referee's.

.2 **Optional Instructions** — The Starter may:

- A Announce the event.
- B Advise the heat when a swimmer will be attempting to achieve a time at an initial distance.
- C For backstroke starts, give the command, "Place your feet."

- 1) **The fewer words from a Starter, the better!**
 - a. Ideally, the only three words the starter should ever say are "Take Your Mark". Athletes are trained to listen for the starter's voice.
 - b. Refrain from using the microphone for unnecessary chatter. "Chatter" distracts the athletes and contributes to bad starts.
- 2) **Acceptable Announcements**
 - a. Before the first heat of an event announce Event #, Gender, Age, Distance and Stroke. Example: "This is Event 5, Girls 9-10 200 Meter Medley Relay. Heat 1".
 - b. Announce only the Heat # for each subsequent heat in an event. This is to help judges and swimmers keep track of heats.
 - c. Sequence: Short whistles, announce, long whistle(s), start

.2 The Start

- A At the commencement of each heat, the Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles to remove all clothing except for swimwear, followed by a long whistle indicating that they should take and maintain their positions on the starting platform, the deck, or in the water. In backstroke and medley relay events, at the Referee's first long whistle the swimmers shall immediately enter the water and at the second long whistle shall return without undue delay to the starting position.
- B When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter's control.

1) Starting a heat (forward start)

- a. Referee gives short series of whistles (Swimmers get ready)
- b. Announce heat #
- c. Long whistle (Swimmers step up on blocks)
- d. Referee turns control of heat over to Starter with outstretched arm

2) Starting a heat (Backstroke and Medley Relay)

- a. Referee gives short series of whistles (Swimmers get ready)
- b. Announce Heat #
- c. Long whistle (Swimmers enter the water)
- d. Second long whistle swimmers to the wall and assume relaxed position
- e. Referee turns control of heat over to Starter with outstretched arm

- C 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. Swimmers starting in the water must have at least one hand in contact with the wall or starting platform. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.

- 1) When the Starter senses the heat is ready to swim, he gives the "Take Your Mark" command.
 - a. Swimmers will dictate the start of a heat by their readiness to swim
 - b. "Take Your Mark" command is given in a relaxed conversational manner. Practice, practice, practice!
- 2) Upon giving the "Take Your Mark" command the swimmers should:
 - a. Immediately assume the starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting block (forward start)
 - b. Remain stationary until the starting signal is given
- 3) Once all swimmers are stationary, the starting signal is given
 - a. "Stationary" is a relative term for younger swimmers
 - b. Patience is by far the most important trait of a good Starter

101.1

D When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command "take your mark", the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command "stand up" upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.

- 1) Give "Stand" command if a swimmer does not come down promptly. To allow one swimmer to come down slowly puts the other swimmers at a disadvantage.
- 2) Give "Stand" command if swimmers do not settle in to a stationary position within a reasonably short period of time. Do not hold the swimmers in the T.Y.M. position waiting for other swimmers to become stationary.
- 3) Give the "Stand" command in a voice that is softer and lower (pitch) than your regular starting voice. A sharp "stand" command causes swimmers to fall into the pool. This skill requires practice!
- 4) Do not overuse the "Stand" command.

.3 False Starts

A Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms Starter's observation that a violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "Stand up" command and may step off the blocks. The Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.

- 1) In the event that a swimmer STARTS before the starting signal, the following procedure must be followed:
 - a. Starter gives "Stand" command relieving other swimmers from false start DQ
 - b. If the swimmer intentionally started (moved forward as if to start the race) then the Starter should recommend disqualification to the Referee by written notation.
 - c. If the swimmer merely lost balance or slipped, no DQ should be recommended.
 - d. If Starter recommends disqualification, Referee must agree / confirm by independent written notation.

B If the starting signal has been given before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue without recall. If the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred, the swimmer or swimmers who have false started shall be disqualified upon completion of the race.

- 1) If the Starter observes a false start (moving forward from a stationary position) as the starting signal is being given, the following procedure must be followed:
 - a. Starter makes a written notation of the lane number(s)
 - b. Starter must initiate process by stating to the Referee "I have a potential" false start (without showing referee the notation)

- c. Referee must have independently observed the violation and without discussion with the Starter made a written notation of the lane number(s)
- d. If the Referee's written note matches the Starter's, then a false start is confirmed.

E A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.

- 1) In the backstroke, Starter should scan feet of swimmers checking for toes that are illegally placed and have swimmer correct before the "Take Your Mark" command is given. Rule 102.4.1 states: Standing on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start it illegal.

Miscellaneous

- 1) When to step the heat down to allow them to refocus
 - a. after a swimmer goes into the pool before the gun (judgment call)
 - b. after second "Stand" command in a heat
 - c. any unusual delay.....do not leave swimmers standing on the blocks or holding the backstroke handles
- 2) After a longer than normal delay, use "Ladies" / "Gentlemen" to bring their focus back to the race. Make sure you pause (2 seconds or so....) before giving the TYM command.
- 3) Handling the microphone and keeping your concentration
 - a. As the ref gives the long whistle, open the mic and slowly raise it to your mouth
 - b. Hold the mic against your mouth for best volume and clarity
 - c. Hold the wire with your other hand to prevent the mic from being accidentally yanked from your hand
 - d. Once the start signal is given, follow the heat into the water to the backstroke flags as you slowly put your arm down to your side,
- 4) Exhibit a calm and comfortable demeanor. Look comfortable and calm and the swimmers will likely follow suit. If you're nervous and jumpy, they will be too.
- 5) Be professional and neutral. You are not a spectator. You are not there to entertain or be seen. The best compliment someone can make is "I didn't see you at the meet last night???? Were you there?"
- 6) Learn from your mistakes. You will make mistakes and you will have "bad nights" where you just don't feel comfortable and have trouble getting it right. Do the best you can.....and learn from each mistake.
- 7) Practice, practice, practice! Volunteer to Start at your team's Time Trials. Practice in your car. Practice in front of a mirror, etc. Watch and learn from other more experienced Starters.