



**POTOMAC VALLEY**  
**SWIMMING**

# Starter

## *Presentation*



- ***Philosophy of Starting***
  - ***Significance of the position of Starter***
    - ***Only position with consistent interaction with the swimmers***
    - ***Sets the tone and the tempo of the meet***
    - ***The Starter may have to fill in as a Stroke & Turn official if short-handed.***





- **Characteristics of a good starter**
  - **Outwardly calm**
    - *Even when things aren't going your way*
  - **Projects confidence**
    - *Lack of confidence is infectious to swimmers (and the referee!)*
  - **Professional at all times**
    - *No place for casualness, or sloppiness.*
    - *Be aware of tendency to get tired toward end of meet.*
    - *Arrive early, at least 30 mins before warm ups to assist the referee.*
    - *Dress professionally.*





- **Characteristics of a good starter** – cont'd
  - **Be focused and alert during the meet, but especially at “the start”**
    - **Make sure you are positioned where you want to be**
      - **Must be within approximately 5 meters of starting end**
    - **Make sure that you can see the whole field**
      - **For backstroke starts, position yourself even with the swimmers so that you can see the swimmers’ toes (under/over the pool edge) and potential false starts**
  - **Don’t address concerns or controversies that do not involve you.**





- **Characteristics / attributes of a good starter – *cont'd***

- **Be FAIR**

- *Give the swimmer the benefit of the doubt*
- ***Be patient, particularly with the swimmers***
- *Look for goggles/suits being adjusted*
- *Be aware of accommodations required for swimmers with a disability*
- ***Do not rush the swimmers***
  - *Sole purpose is to ensure that all competitors get a fair start*
  - *Give the swimmers adequate time after, “take your marks” to settle into their starting position*





- **Characteristics / attributes of a good starter** – *cont'd*

- **Need a calm, confident voice**
  - **Tone should be conversational**
    - **“Invite” the swimmers to swim. Don’t “order” them to swim**
  - **Use the least amount of verbiage possible**
  - **Use standard, consistent commands**
  - **The starter’s voice is an audio queue to the swimmers that “it’s time to swim”**
  - **If an announcement needs to be made, let the Announcer or Referee make it**





- **Characteristics/attributes of a good starter – cont'd**
  - **Develop the proper “inflection” to your commands**
    - **Conversational**
    - **Use a cadence that is inviting and with a slight drop in pitch**
  - **Practice the commands:**
    - **“Take your marks”**
    - **“Step in” or “step up” or “step down”**
    - **“Place your feet”**
    - **“Stand” or “stand, please” or “stand down”**
    - **“Thank you, swimmers” – to clear the pool**
    - **“Clear the pool, please”**
    - **“Swimmers, lane X is attempting a lead-off split of 50 meters”**
  - **Don’t develop a pattern to your starting cadence as this encourages the swimmers to anticipate the start**
  - **The swimmers will let you know when they are ready !**



- **Pre-meet responsibilities:**



- **Equipment check**

- **Make sure starting system is or has been charged**
- **Make sure starting system works**
  - **Set up system if not previously done**
  - **Test sound & amplification**
  - **Check all speakers**
  - **Check connection of starting cable**
  - **Ensure starter's voice can be heard in each lane**
- **Check stability of starting blocks**
- **Check for a bell and lap counting sheets before sessions with distance events**
- **Check for location and status of backup system in case it is needed**







- **Pre-meet responsibilities** - cont'd:
  - **Check status of timer check-in**
    - *If necessary, confirm number of timers needed with Meet Referee*
    - *If short of Timers notify Meet Director*
  - **Timers briefing**
    - *Schedule for 15-20 mins prior to start of meet*
      - *Notate briefing time on timers' signup sheet*
    - *Refer to Timer Briefing notes on PVS website*





- ***Pre-meet responsibilities*** - cont'd:
  - ***Coordinate with the Referee***
    - ***Know the warm-up procedures for the meet***
      - ***You will probably be in charge of the pool during warm-ups while referee is attending officials' briefing***
      - ***“Assigned” or “Open” lanes, etc.***
    - ***Ask about the use of “dive-over” starts***
    - ***Ask if there are swimmers with a disability and if so, what accommodations should be used***
    - ***Review procedures for possible false start calls***





- **Starting protocol / sequence**

- **With an Announcer**

- ***The Announcer should announce the event #, age group, gender, and the heat # --- after the chirps but before the long whistle***
  - ***Clarify this with the Announcer before the meet begins***
  - ***Be consistent with this protocol***

- **Without an Announcer**

- ***The Starter should assume the role of the Announcer by stating the above information after the chirps but before the long whistle***
  - ***Full announcement only at the beginning of each event***
  - ***Just the heat number is announced for all subsequent heats***



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- **Starting protocol / sequence** – cont'd
  - **Referee will issue a series of short whistle chirps**
    - **This indicates to the swimmers that they need to shed any extraneous clothing and approach the starting line**
  - **Announcer, (or Starter), announces event, heat, etc.**





- ***Starting protocol / sequence – cont'd***
  - ***Referee will then blow one long whistle***
  - ***Referee will then extend his/her arm towards the Starter***
    - ***This extended arm signifies that the start now belongs to the Starter***
    - ***Starter must be able to observe referee's arm while attention is focused on the swimmers***





- ***Starting protocol / sequence – cont'd***
  - ***For backstroke starts, before the start there will be two (2) long whistles -- the first to invite the swimmers to enter the water -- the second to have the swimmers place their feet on the wall***



- ***The start now belongs to YOU!***





- **Starting protocol / sequence** – cont'd
  - **Pause. Take a breath.**
  - **“Invite” the swimmers to “Take your marks”**
  - **Allow the swimmers to take their starting position, at a reasonable pace**
  - **THE SWIMMERS WILL TELL YOU WHEN THEY ARE READY**
    - **If one of the swimmers takes a significantly longer time to do so, “stand” the field**
      - **No single swimmer should control the start.**
    - **Swimmers must have at least one foot at the front of the starting block or deck but not necessarily at the front edge**
    - **If there seems to be too much movement, “Stand” the field**
    - **If there is too much noise or a distraction, “Stand” the field**
    - **After two “stand” commands, check with the Referee about stepping the field down**





- **Starting protocol / sequence** - *cont'd*
  - **Backstrokers may have toes out of the water as long as they are not curled over the edge or in the gutter**
  - **When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad**
  - **Once the swimmers have taken their “mark” and are “stationary” --- push the starting button**
    - **Wait “One extra heartbeat” – Pat Lunsford**
    - **Swimmers must be “stationary”, not necessarily “motionless”**
    - **Keep your finger over the start button just in case a recall is necessary**







- ***Starting protocol / sequence*** cont'd
- ***Recall the heat if there has been outside distraction just prior to the start***
  - ***Try to catch the swimmers in the air***
  - ***No false start is to be charged if heat is recalled***
  - ***Stay on the recall a reasonable length of time***
    - ***Don't panic if they swim too far -- there are procedures for a re-swim***
    - ***NEVER encourage another swimmer to jump in after a swimmer!!!***





- ***What to do when all does not go well!***
  - ***A swimmer goes into the water before the starting signal: starting signal is not given***
    - ***“Stand” the rest of the field***
    - ***Step the field down with the referee’s concurrence***
    - ***Determine if you know why the swimmer entered the water***
      - ***If swimmer tried to anticipate the signal -- **False Start*****
      - ***If swimmer reacted to another swimmer’s movement -  
- **False Start*****
      - ***If swimmer slipped and fell --- **No False Start*****
      - ***If swimmer reacted to outside influences such as a camera or cell phone noise -- **No False Start*****
      - ***If swimmer reacted to the “stand” command –  
**No False Start*****





- ***What to do when all does not go well! -***

*cont'd*

- ***Swimmers charged with a False Start due to an early start before the starting signal shall be notified by the Referee -- this allows the swimmer to explain the reason for the early entry***
- ***When swimmer is in motion prior to starting signal, and signal has been given:***
  - ***No recall***
  - ***Make immediate note of the correct lane on the heat sheet***





- ***What to do when all does not go well!***

– cont'd

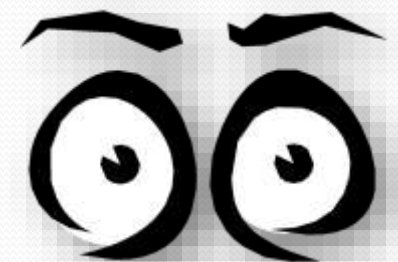
- ***Starter must initiate the false start call with the Referee***
  - ***“I have a problem.”***
  - ***Show marked heat sheet to Referee***
  - ***Referee must concur: dual confirmation required***
- ***Starter or Chief Judge writes up DQ slip***
- ***Swimmers may be recalled if Starter is not comfortable with the start***
  - ***No false start is charged***



# • **What to do after the start**

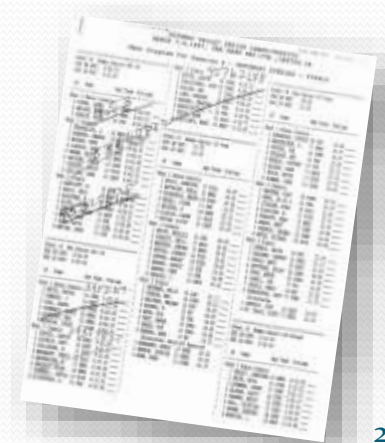


- **Keep eyes on swimmers until all heads have surfaced**
  - **Keep “talk button” on mic down for a short period in case of need for recall**
- **Inform ETS Operator of empty lanes if requested**
- **Observe swimmers preparing for the next heat**
  - **Note any swimmers that might appear inordinately nervous or “twitchy”**
  - **Try to observe where any unexpected empty lanes may occur, making DR aware as previous heat finishes**
  - **Help DR to keep track of last swimmer in the heat**
  - **Stay focused on swimmers for the next heat behind the blocks for any last second suit/goggle adjustments**
    - **Broken goggles, drag suits still in place, etc.**
    - **Have mic in hand ready to go for next heat**





- **What to do after the start** – cont'd
  - You will be expected to be a **“Place Judge”**  
**--mandatory at all meets**
  - This is typically referred to as **“OOF”** – **“Order of Finish”**
    - A separate clipboard for recording OOF is maintained
  - Typically assigned to the **“Off Starter”** if more than one Starter working
  - **“OOF”** is used to verify placement of swimmers if there is a timing malfunction
  - Very important to be as accurate as possible



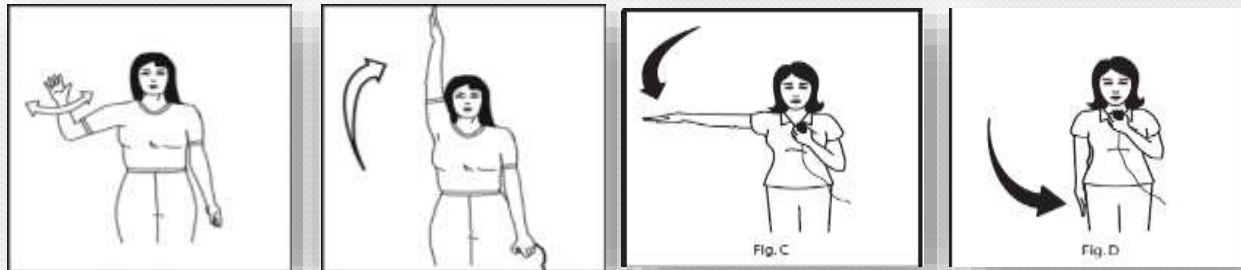


- ***What to do after the start – cont'd***
- ***Distance events***
  - ***“With the exception of relays, in events 500 yards or longer, the Starter or a designee shall sound a warning signal over the water at the finish end of the lane of the leading swimmer when that swimmer has two lengths plus five yards or five meters to swim. As an alternative, a bell warning signal may be given over each lane by a lane judge or timer for that lane.”***
  - ***Covers 500, 1000, 1650 yards, plus 800 & 1500 meters – freestyle only***
  - ***Usually a bell***
  - ***Ring from backstroke flag in, to backstroke flag out***
    - ***Must keep track of laps for all swimmers on lap counting sheet***



- ***Special situations***

- ***Starting protocol for hearing impaired or deaf swimmers (taken from USA Swimming Rule Book)***



1. Twist hand at chin level – short whistles
2. Arm overhead – long whistle, swimmer steps onto starting block
3. Arm moves to shoulder level – signal to “Take Your Marks”
4. Arm moves to side of body – starting signal

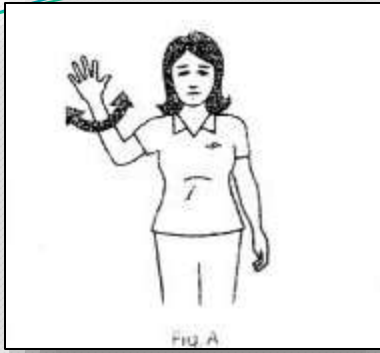


- Arm raised overhead with palm up (at any time after “Take Your Marks” and prior to starting signal) – swimmer released from “Take Your Marks” command

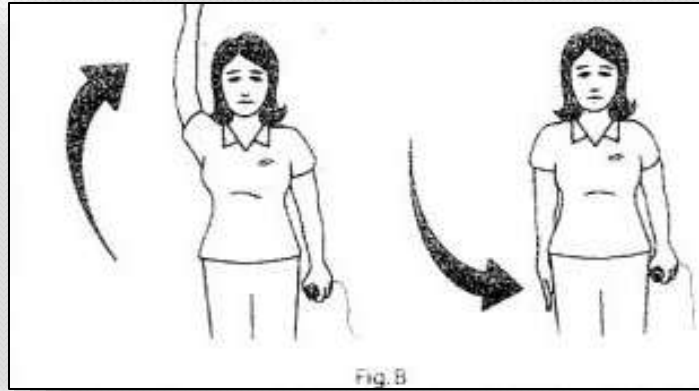
## **Forward start**



# Backstroke start



Twist hand at short whistles



Arm overhead-swimmer enters water: drop arm to side while swimmer enters water (1<sup>st</sup> long whistle)



Arm overhead-swimmer returns to backstroke start position (2<sup>nd</sup> long whistle)



Arm moves to shoulder level -Signal to "Take your marks".



Arm moves to side of body-starting signal

# Backstroke start



**Arm overhead-swimmer with palm up (any time after “Take Your Marks” and prior to starting signal) – swimmer released from “Take Your Marks” command**

# • Certification Procedures



*(to be completed within one year of clinic attendance)*

- Age - 18 years or older
- USA Swimming member in good standing (current registration, APT and BC)
- Session and time requirements:
  - Certified as a Stroke & Turn Judge for at least three months
  - Worked a minimum of four sessions at a minimum of two meets as a Stroke & Turn Judge
- Complete a Starter Clinic ([online or in person](#))
- Pass the [USA Swimming Starter Certification Test](#) (prior to evaluation session)
- Minimum of four apprentice sessions at sanctioned or approved meets
  - At least two different meets
  - At least two different mentors
  - Completion of [Starter Evaluation Form](#) after each session affirming satisfactory performance
  - Evaluation Session may be done any time after the 3rd apprentice session ([Evaluator List](#))
  - Note that if evaluation is not successful, the evaluator must submit to the apprentice a written action plan within two weeks and copy the Officials Chair.
  - *Members who have five plus years of USA Swimming experience as a 13&O athlete or coach member need only complete half of the on-deck apprentice session requirements provided they show competency in the position, at the discretion of the LSC Officials Chair or designee.*
- After successful completion of evaluation, submit the [Certification Request Form](#).
- Certification: good until Dec 31, 2026.

# • ***Recertification Procedures***



- Continue to be a USA Swimming Official in good standing (current registration, APT and BC)
- Session requirement: eight sessions over a three year period as a starter
- Attend a Clinic (recommend Starter Clinic) at least once every 3 years
- Pass the **USA Swimming Starter Recertification Test**
- Submit the online **Officials Recertification Request Form**
- Recertification extends your certification for three years and recertifies S&T Judge.

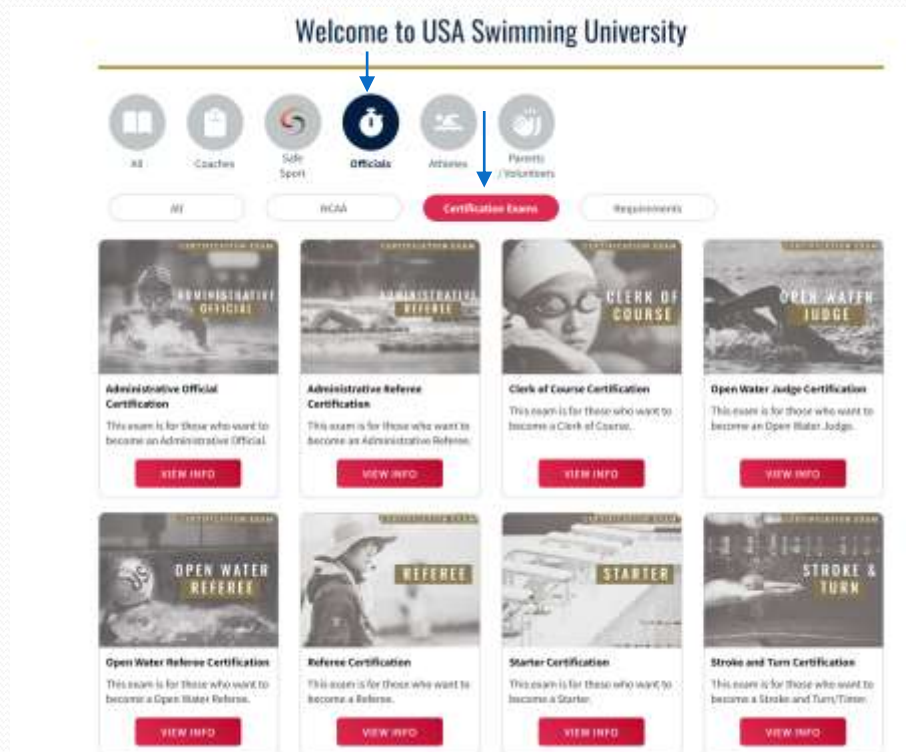


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# USA Swimming Online Tests

- Log in to the USA Swimming web site and choose **Education->Course Catalog**
- Click **Officials** and then **Certification Exams**





# USA Swimming Online Tests

- Click View Transcript to access your transcript
- Test results (pass/fail) are automatically transmitted
- Please make sure that after the pop-up score you scroll to the bottom and click “next” so that the test result gets recorded.

Welcome to USA Swimming University

VIEW TRANSCRIPT

VIEW CERTIFICATIONS





# Appendix



# Colorado "Infinity" Starter

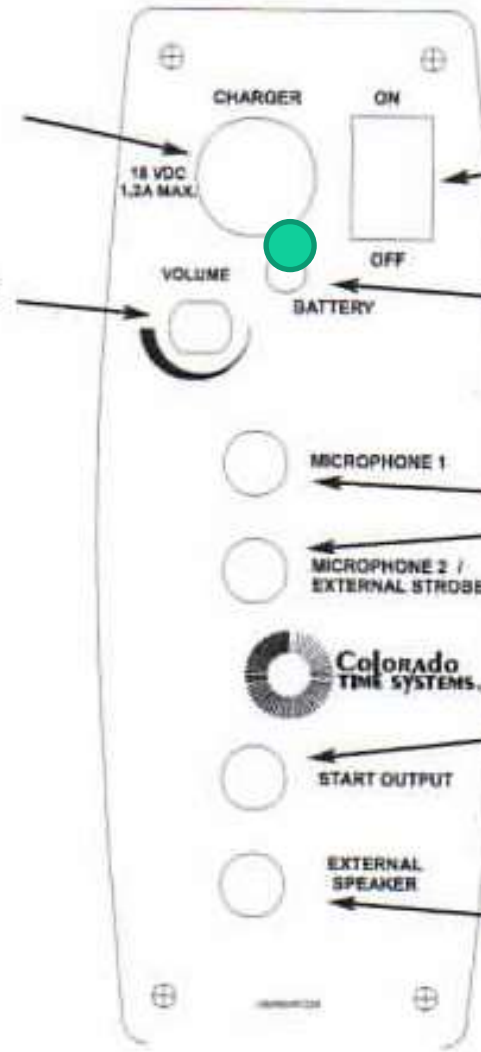


Strobe



12v Battery  
Charger Input

Speaker Volume  
Control



Power Switch

Battery Life  
Indicator LED

Wired Microphone  
or External Strobe  
Inputs

CTS Timer Output

External Speaker

Connector Panel

Speaker

3/19/2024

Figure B: Infinity Connection Panel

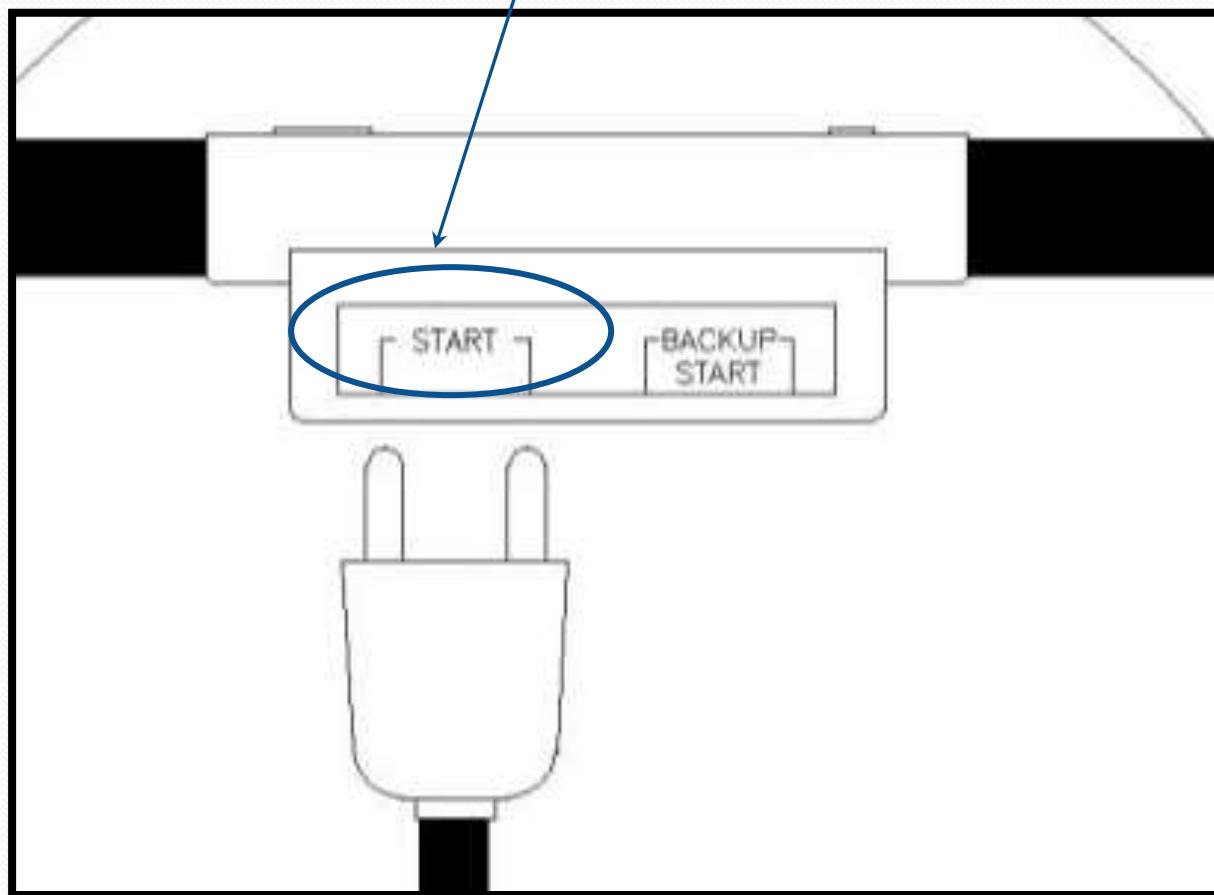


# Colorado "Infinity" Starter



Make sure this is used!

Harness  
connection



# Colorado “Infinity” Microphone



- Press to talk
- Hold down until sure a recall is not needed



- Press to initiate “start”
- Press again to initiate recall



# Other starting systems used within PVS:








# Lap recording sheet (Vers #1 - abbreviated):

- Available for all distance events.

## 500 YARD FREESTYLE

EVENT _____		HEAT _____
lap	yard	order of touch
2	50	
4	100	
6	150	
8	200	
10	250	
12	300	
14	350	
16	400	
 <b>450</b>		
	500	

EVENT _____		HEAT _____
lap	yard	order of touch
2	50	
4	100	
6	150	
8	200	
10	250	
12	300	
14	350	
16	400	
 <b>450</b>		
	500	

EVENT _____		HEAT _____
lap	yard	order of touch
2	50	
4	100	
6	150	
8	200	
10	250	
12	300	
14	350	
16	400	
 <b>450</b>		
	500	



# Lap recording sheet – (Vers #2 - abbreviated):

- Available for all distance events.

## Five Hundred Sheets

	Event			Heat						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
50 (2)										
100 (4)										
150 (6)										
200 (8)										
250 (10)										
300 (12)										
350 (14)										
400 (16)										
<b>450 (18)</b>										
500 (20)										

	Event			Heat						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
50 (2)										
100 (4)										
150 (6)										
200 (8)										
250 (10)										
300 (12)										
350 (14)										
400 (16)										
<b>450 (18)</b>										
500 (20)										

# • Lap recording sheet - Vers #3

- “Home made!
- Good for all short course distance events



1650 Yard Freestyle		Event # _____										Heat # _____																						
Ln\Turn#	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	
1																																		
2																																		
3																																		
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5																																		
6																																		
7																																		
8																																		

1650 Yard Freestyle		Event _____										Heat # _____																							
Ln\Turn#	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66		
1																																			
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7																																			
8																																			



# • Split recording sheet , used by timers

(abbreviated):

- Placed on timers' clipboards for recording of split times off of scoreboard

500 Yard Freestyle

Split Recording Sheet

Event #: \_\_\_\_\_

Men

Women

(circle one)

Laps	Yards	Heat #: _____	Heat #: _____	Heat #: _____
2	50			
4	100			
6	150			
8	200			
10	250			
12	300			
14	350			
16	400			
18	450	Bell	Bell	Bell
20	500			

# Timer Briefing



## Thank You for Stepping Up to Help Today!

- With your help and attention each swimmer will receive an accurate official time.
- Introduce yourself and the Head Timer.
- Any new timers? That's great! It's easy to learn and we'll teach you how right now.
- Please start by turning off cell phones, any device that could distract you or the swimmers.
- Remember that watches are important, but **buttons are critical**.
- **Before the Race:**
  - Timer with the clipboard verifies that the correct swimmer/relay is present and in the correct lane, heat, and event.
  - Except for backstroke, remind previous heat to stay in the water for dive over starts.
- **At the Start:**
  - Make sure you can see the strobe; observe the strobe light and start the watch at the moment of the flash.
  - Strobes do fail occasionally; in that case, start the watch on the sound.
  - Please start the watch even if your lane is empty, just in case a backup is needed.





# Timer Briefing - cont'd



## Immediately After the Start:

- Check the watch to ensure it has started and is working properly.
- If you miss the start or if the watch malfunctions, raise watch overhead to signal the Head Timer.

## During the Race:

- Keep track of the race and the distance completed by your swimmer.
- Timer with the clipboard should be verifying the name of the swimmer in the next heat.
- If a swimmer misses a heat, send the swimmer to the Referee.

## At the Finish:

- Come forward to the edge of the pool, look directly down the wall.
- Stop the watch and the button when any part of your swimmer touches the end of the racing course.
- **Remember, buttons are critical!**



- Timers and officials share deck space at the finish—please be considerate of one another.

# Timer Briefing cont'd



## After the Finish:

- Step back to make space for the next swimmer.
- Timer with the clipboard records the watch time(s) on the sheet in the same order for each heat.
- Record “NS” if the swimmer missed the race.
- Note any other problems such as a late or missed pad.
- Remind swimmer to remain in the pool (except for Backstroke, or if dive-over starts not being used).



## Additional Instructions (depending on circumstances):

- Cameras not permitted behind the blocks.
- Do timers need to move to opposite end of the pool for any events?
- Are swimmers starting any events from opposite end of the pool?
- For relays, verify the order of the swimmers on the relay team.
- For distance events, are timers counting lengths or ringing bells?
- Any other special instructions?
- **Again, Thank You for Supporting Your Swimmers Today!**



**Mini-Meets: 25 yard events go to other end of pool.**

**Long Course Meters: 50 meter events, swimmers may start from other end (depending on pool set up).**



# Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy “MAAPP”



## Officials and timers briefing: (required!)

- This meet is conducted according to current USA Swimming Rules, including the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy.
- Make sure all interactions with athletes are observable and interruptible.
- Deck changing is prohibited. Report instances of deck changing to the meet referee/meet director.
- [IF ONLY ONE LOCKER ROOM/RESTROOM] Make sure you are not alone with an athlete in the locker room, including to use the restroom. Be proactive and tell the meet director immediately if this happens, even when it occurred through no fault of your own. Separate times have been delegated for your use.
- [IF MULTIPLE FACILITIES] There is a separate locker room/restroom for athletes and all other adults. Make sure that you are only using the facility marked for you.

# Situations: (Source USAS 4/5/2012)



## 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.**



# Situations:



## 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.

# Situations:



## 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 marks” 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.**



**Remember: “Treat every start like it is  
the last start you will ever make!” -- Pat  
Lunsford – Olympic Starter 2004**



***Thank you!  
Good luck!  
See you on deck!***

