



STARTER TRAINING NOTES

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1. Introduction

These notes detail the responsibilities, duties and procedures applicable to the position of Starter.

These training notes cover swim meets in general, with a bias towards Australian and NSW State Championships as they are the standard that should be emulated and the principles should be applied at every level of competition. This ensures consistency and uniformity in all levels of competition across the State and equips Starters to officiate at Australian and NSW State Championships.

The only difference between starting at Australian, State or Area Championships, and to Club Meets or Club Nights, may be the starting devices used. Starters are encouraged to practice their skills and take every opportunity to become more experienced and proficient. The Swimmers will benefit by the adoption of standard practices at every level.

Failure to follow all of the starting requirements of Championship meets will do a disservice to Swimmers and Starters. Club should be the practice arena to hone and refine skills. Starters should take every opportunity to improve their skills no matter at what level.

To be competent in their position, Starters will need to know the applicable Swimming Rules which are referred to in these notes by their number in the rules, e.g. SW4.1. The Swimming NSW Rules often refer to the appropriate Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA) Rule (SW or FR) as included in the FINA Handbook.

2. General

Starters are required to report to the Referee at least thirty (30) minutes before the advertised starting time of the meet.

This enables the Referee to:

- Mark the Starter present against the Officials' Appointment Roster,
- Give the Starter a program,
- Advise of any special instructions.

This also provides the opportunity for the Referee and Starter to discuss working arrangements. Key points to cover.

- Has the Referee and / or the Meet Director decided to start "over the top" to reduce the time between heats? This decision may be published in the program or may be announced at the start of a meet or session.
- Can the Starter talk to the Swimmers? If Yes, this could include:
 - "Stand Down" for swimmers before Starts,
 - "Leave the Water Swimmers",
 - "Move down the lane rope swimmers" for over-the-top Backstroke starts

When starting over the top is used, the swimmers remain in the water at the conclusion of their heat. For dive starts, when the Referee sounds the long whistle to start the next heat, the swimmers in the water must immediately move to the side of their lane, be close to the wall and must remain stationary until the race has started.

For backstroke and medley relay starts, the swimmers should move out from the wall and to the side of their lane before the first long whistle. The Starter, in conjunction with the Referee, must ensure that the swimmers in the water comply with these requirements before starting the next heat.

Starters should be sure of the level of communication with the Swimmers required by the Referee. Starters should not take it upon themselves to give instructions to the Swimmers, unless advised by the Referee. The Starter's focus must be on starting each race, ensuring all competitors gain a fair start.

3. Equipment

Starters require:

- A Starting Device,
- A whistle,
- Pens and / or pencils,
- A stopwatch (for **handicap races**)

Starting devices include:

- Pistols and ammunition,
 - In NSW and the ACT the Firearms Act requires users to be in possession of a licence,
- An electric horn with a synchronised light,
- A whistle with a signalling device such as a flag or a white handkerchief.
 - Typically this is a back-up of last resort for **scratch races**,
 - This is also used in conjunction with a stopwatch for **handicap races**

3.1 Starting Equipment where AOE and / or SAT is Used

3.1.1 With A Pistol

The starting signal initiates this equipment via a transducer that can be affixed directly to the gun or fixed in an elevated position. A light in the base of the transducer lets the Starter know when the equipment has been initialised by the AOE / SAT Operator and is ready for a start. This light goes out whilst the AOE / SAT is running during a race.

3.1.2 With Electronics

The starting signal is initiated by a hand held device, which incorporates a start button and a microphone with an on/off switch or button. A light on the device lets the Starter know when the equipment is ready for a start and goes out whilst the AOE / SAT are running during a race.

4. Pre-Meet Checks

Starters should check the following and discuss any concerns with the Referee:

- The starting device.
- Where AOE and / or SAT is used, work with the AOE / SAT Operator to check as follows:
 - The transducer if a pistol is used,
 - The hand held starting device if Electronic Timing Equipment (ETE) is used. This will incorporate:
 - Start Button,
 - Microphone button / switch,
 - Volume control
 - The Starting device is correctly configured to only pass a “Ready” signal to the Starter when the equipment is armed to Start.
- The Starter’s stand (both ends where necessary) is placed in a position to ensure the Starter has the best view of all lanes and Swimmers. The stand may need to be moved to ensure this occurs,
- The ability of all Swimmers to hear the starting signal,
- Microphone operation and volume. Check for “feedback”,
- The false start rope, its operation and placement. The false start roped is placed 15 metres from the start end and may be required at both ends of the pool.
- Where manual stop watches are in use, the timekeepers’ have an uninterrupted view of the starting device to see the light or smoke flash from a pistol.

Where two starters are appointed, they should meet with each other and establish a rapport. This should include and agree on the placement of the starting stand and jointly undertaking equipment checks.

5. The Starter’s Command

5.1 The Command “Take Your Marks”

The Command “Take Your Marks” should be given in an even speaking voice. Key considerations:

- There should be no “singing” of the command. It should be given without pauses nor should it be drawn out,
- The command should not be given too quick or “rushed”,
- The Starter should let the microphone do the work,
- The microphone should be held the same distance from the mouth each time the Starter speaks.

5.2 Tips

- The Starter should be aware of audible “clicks” that can be given when a microphone switch is operated. This can be avoided by operating the switch while the Referee is blowing the whistle to invite Swimmers to the Starting Platform / to the wall for Backstroke Starts

- A few deep breaths when the microphone is switched off can alleviate nervousness

5.3 Protocols

5.3.1 Heats / Timed Finals

At the start of the meet/session the starter should mount the starting platform as soon as introductions are completed and/or all is in readiness for the start of the first Event.

Where AOE / SAT is used, the Starter should give the Referee an agreed signal when the starting device is ready for a start. This can be:

- A nod,
- Lifting a microphone to the mouth ready to speak,
- A voice cue – for example “Ready to Start”

After the start of each race, the Starter should step down from the starting platform and move away, or sit down until the next race. The Starter should not linger on the Starting Platform.

5.3.2 Reporting Infractions

Should the Starter observe “Starting before the Starting Signal” Infractions, the Starter should report the lane(s) number(s) to the Referee immediately with a concise recommendation for disqualification. The Starter must be sure of the lane number(s) of the offender(s) when recommending disqualification.

Both the Starter and the Referee must be in agreement that there has been an infraction for a disqualification to occur at the start.

An infraction report will be completed by the Starter, after they have moved away from the Starting Platform, where appropriate.

If a competitor starts before the starting signal, the infraction would be written as “STARTED BEFORE THE STARTING SIGNAL”. Infraction reports **must** be completed correctly in the context of the Rules, before being submitted to the Referee.

The Starter shall also report to the Referee any swimmer (SW2.3.3):

- Delaying the start
- Wilfully disobeying an order
- Or for any other misconduct taking place at the start

5.4 Starting Instructions

Where Announcers are appointed, the Announcer will introduce the event and heat, and for “A” Finals, will also introduce the competitors.

Areas and Clubs are encouraged to appoint Announcers for their meets. Starting Instructions must be provided in all Meet Programs.

5.4.1 Event Instructions where there is no Announcer

In addition to the printed Starting Instructions, the Referee can require the Starter to give abbreviated instructions to swimmers prior to the start of the race where no Announcer has been appointed. These abbreviated instructions are;

- For the first heat in each event, the event type and distance e.g. "Event 1 - Boys 100 metres Freestyle - Heat 1"
- For subsequent heats in the event, the event and heat number e.g. "Event 1 - Heat 2"

6. The Start

6.1 Positioning

When starting all scratch events, the Starter usually stands on Lane 1 side of the pool in a position to observe all swimmers at the same time, within 5 metres from the starting end of the pool.

6.2 Starter's Control over the Swimmers

The Starter has full control over the swimmers from the time the Referee considers that all swimmers and officials are ready for the start and gestures with an outstretched arm, until the race has started.

6.3 The Start

The Start Rule (SW 4) is quoted in full below. Explanations of the procedures used by both the Starter and the Referee in the application of this Rule follows each part of the Rule.

SW 4 THE START

SW 4.1 The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races shall be with a dive. On the long whistle, (SW2.1.11) from the Referee the swimmers shall step onto the starting platform and remain there. On the Starter's command "Take your Marks", they shall immediately take up a 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.

- After swimmers are placed behind their starting platforms by the Check Starter;
- The Announcer announces the event and heat number.
 - *The Referee should not delay the start if the Announcer fails to introduce the event and heat number in a timely fashion.*
- On the long whistle signal from the Referee, the swimmers step onto their starting platforms, and remain there.
- When satisfied that the swimmers and Officials are ready, the Referee gestures to the Starter with an outstretched arm indicating that the swimmers are under the Starter's control.
- The Starter promptly tells the swimmers to "Take your marks";

- On the Starter's command "Take your marks" swimmers must immediately take up a starting position, with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform. The position of the hands is not relevant.
 - *The swimmers do not have to be flat-footed at the start;*
 - *The swimmers feet or foot does not have to be at the front of the starting platform until the command "take your marks" is given.*
- As soon as all swimmers are stationary, the Starter gives the starting signal (pistol shot, horn, whistle or command).
 - *If used, the starting pistol should be held above the head with arm extended so that the Timekeepers can see the flash or smoke. It should also be held close and adjacent to the transducer (if it is not fixed to the pistol) to activate the automatic timing equipment.*
 - *The Starter should watch all swimmers until satisfied the start is fair. The Starter has the power to decide whether a start is fair subject only to the decision of the Referee.*

SW 4.2 *The start in Backstroke and Medley Relay races shall be from the water. At the Referee's first long whistle (SW2.1.11) 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 (see SW6.1). 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.*

- In a Backstroke or Medley Relay event, the swimmers enter the water on the first long whistle and on the Referee's second long whistle, swimmers should return to the starting position without undue delay and remain there.
- In Backstroke and Medley Relay events, when the swimmers have returned to their starting position after the Referee's second long whistle, the starting procedure is:
 - The Swimmers line up in the water, facing the starting end wall or platform, with both hands holding the starting grips.
 - When satisfied that all are ready the Referee will gesture with an outstretched arm to the Starter and the Starter tells swimmers to "Take your marks".
 - As soon as all swimmers are stationary, the Starter gives the starting signal.
- Standing in or on a gutter or bending the toes over the lip of a gutter is prohibited.

SW 4.3 *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 completion of the race. If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given, but the remaining swimmers shall be called back and start again.*

6.4 Starting Before the Starting Signal

The Starter reports to the Referee any swimmer starting after the command "Take Your Marks" and before the starting signal has been given. If a swimmer starts before the starting signal has been given, the Starter will instruct the remaining swimmers to "Stand Down" from their starting position. After the offending

swimmer(s) has left the water, the starting procedure is commenced again. The swimmer(s) who started before the starting signal was given may be disqualified by the Referee and not allowed to re-start.

If the starting signal is given before the disqualification is declared, the race is allowed to continue and the swimmer or swimmers are disqualified upon completion of the race.

- It is permissible for the Starter to give a "Stand Down" command if a swimmer is not stationary or is slow taking his starting position. If the swimmers are asked to "Stand Down" and a swimmer or swimmers go into the water, if in the opinion of the Starter, or the Referee, the false start was caused by the Starter, then the Referee shall have the discretion to allow the swimmer or swimmers to start in the race.

6.5 The Starter's Responsibilities

The following comments apply equally to dive starts from the starting platform or backstroke starts in the water.

The Starter's most important responsibility is to judge whether a start has been fair i.e. whether all swimmers are stationary before the start signal is given. "**Stationary**" means that there is "**no apparent movement**" but does not mean that the swimmers must stand flat-footed.

Sometimes a swimmer is reported to the Referee for "not being stationary at the start". This is incorrect for reporting purposes. The infringement is "STARTED BEFORE THE STARTING SIGNAL". If a swimmer is not stationary then the starting signal should not be given.

In fairness to all, swimmers should not be held for long at the start while waiting for one or more swimmers to become stationary. If this occurs, the Starter should immediately tell all swimmers to "Stand Down". The Referee may instruct the Starter to remind the swimmer having difficulty settling down to take up a starting position as soon as instructed, and to remain stationary.

The "Stand Down" command allows the Referee to recommence the starting process from the long whistle.

- The powers of a Starter are limited to reporting an offender to the Referee. Only the Referee may disqualify a swimmer. The Starter should be sure the infringement is "wilful" before making a report.

The Starter would report a swimmer to the Referee for "wilfully disobeying an order" or "delaying the start" if:

- After being warned, the Swimmer(s) continue to take up a starting position slowly; or
- The Swimmer(s) wilfully delay the start by slow preparation and continue to be slow moving into position even after a formal request by the Starter or the Referee

The Starter also has a responsibility to ensure that reasonable help is given to very young, junior or inexperienced swimmers to understand how the start and false start rule operates.

6.6 Recall after the Start

In unusual circumstances that may have prejudiced the chances of a swimmer, the Referee may require the Starter to recall the swimmers. This is normally done by repeating the starting signal and dropping the false start rope.

Some examples where a recall may be given include:

- Pool problem or equipment failure, such as debris in the pool, a broken lane rope,
- A sudden crowd noise occurring during the start, such as a whistle or siren,
- The Starter giving the starting signal before all swimmers are ready or stationary.
- Accidental dropping of the false start rope interfering with a swimmer.

7. Handicap Events

Handicap events are generally only run on Club nights or at local meets. The following is an explanation of the procedures used by The Check Starter, the Referee and the Starter when handicap events are conducted.

- The Check Starter informs the swimmers of their starting number and places them in their starting positions, in the water for Backstroke and on the starting platform for all other strokes.
- The first to start is the limit swimmer, who is placed in the right hand lane of the pool, usually Lane 1, and the scratch swimmer, last to start, is in the furthest lane. The Starter is positioned behind the starting platforms, behind the limit swimmer.
- When the Referee gives the signal that all Officials are ready, the Starter gives the command, "get ready". This allows swimmers to assume their starting stance.
- When the limit or first swimmer is stationary, the Starter calls "Go" and simultaneously starts the stopwatch and positions the handicap signalling device at a predetermined position (notified to timekeepers in their pre-meet briefing by the Referee). The Starter then moves across the pool behind the swimmers distinctly counting off the seconds from the stopwatch starting from "one" and continuing until the scratch (last) swimmer's starting number is called.
- Any swimmer starting before "go" or his/her respective starting number is called shall be disqualified, unless the swimmer corrects the mistake by returning immediately to the starting point at the wall and restarting after their starting number is called. Since the Starter will be concentrating on calling the time from the stopwatch, it is the Check Starter's job to watch the swimmers and report any who do not meet these requirements.

At a meet where electronic timing is in use the electronic starting signal is used instead of the command "Go". The electronic starting signal will also initiate the starting signal light which can be utilised by manual timekeepers if these are in use. All other aspects of the handicap start remain as above.

8. Applicable Rules

The following Rules relate to Starter's responsibilities and duties:

- SW 2 Swim Meet Officials, particularly:
 - SW 2.1.11 Referee handing over control
 - SW 2.3 Duties of Starter
 - SW 2.4 Duties of Check Starter


General Comments on Rule SW2

- SW 3.10 Qualifiers
- SW 4 The Start
- SW 5 Freestyle swimming including definition for Medley Events
- SW 6 Backstroke swimming
- SW 9 Medley swimming
- GR 21 Accidental omission by an Official.

9. Summary

- Know the rules of swimming,
- Know how to position yourself and the protocols,
- Familiarise yourself with the location and any equipment you will be working with,
- Familiarise yourself with the people you will be working with. Teamwork is essential,
- Be consistent, not only in applying the rules but also how you act and how you position yourself,
- The benefit of any doubt must go with the swimmer.

10. Infraction Report Form

SWIMMING NSW LIMITED RULE INFRACTION REPORT				 swimming new south wales					
EVENT NO.		HEAT NO.			DATE				
DISTANCE Metres		FREE	BREAST	BACK	FLY	I.M	MEDLEY RELAY	FREE RELAY	
AGE GROUP		SEX : Male Female		HEAT FINAL	TIME OF INFRACTION :				
INFRACTION OCCURRED AT :				START	START END	TURN END	OTHER :		
LANE 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
INFRACTION -									
REPORTED BY :	INSPECTOR OF TURNS		JUDGES OF STROKE		REFEREE		STARTER		
NAME :					SIGNATURE :				
ACTION TAKEN :		DISQUALIFIED			NONE				
NAME OF REFEREE :					SIGNATURE :				
ANNOUNCERS MESSAGE :			INITIAL :		TIME ANNOUNCED :				
In Event No Heat no the competitor in Lane no was disqualified for :									



swimming
new south wales

INFRACTION REPORT

Event No	Heat		Men		Women
m.	Free	Back	Breast	Fly	Medley

Announcement Time

LANE	INFRACTION
0	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

STARTER

INSPECTOR OF TURNS

JUDGE OF STROKES

REFEREE