



**Starter
Certification Clinic**

Agenda

- OSI Philosophy
- Certification Requirements
- Introduction and Preparation
- Equipment and Set up
- General Information
- Commands
- Whistle Start Protocol
- Starts and False Start Protocol
- Resources

Handouts

- Starter Clinic PowerPoint
- Certification requirements
- Training record

OSI Officiating Philosophy

Fair and equitable conditions of competition are maintained and uniformity in the sport is promoted so that no swimmer has an unfair advantage over another

What does that mean?

- Success of every meet depends on the official's integrity, knowledge, concern and regard for the competitive interest of the swimmer
- One set of rules applies to all swimmers
- Swimmers get the benefit of the doubt
- We do not judge style
- Demonstrate impartiality and professionalism on deck

Starter Certification Requirements Summary

- Certified as S&T for at least one year
- Attend Starter Training Clinic
- Complete 10 sessions of training
- Satisfactorily complete Stages 1- 4 on deck training sessions
- Start at least 3 sessions at ABC or BC meets
- Start 50% each at 12 & under sessions and 13 & over sessions
- Pass online test

Introduction

The Starter is a critical position on deck and cannot be taken casually

- You are in direct contact with the swimmers during a critical phase of the race – the start
- Your actions can clearly affect the swimmer's performance
- Starting should be constantly practiced and improved
- The best Starter is the one that no one can remember at the end of the meet

Preparation

- Take officiating responsibility seriously
- Work regularly at the job and always be open to continually trying to improve
- Be professional in manner
- Always be in the proper attire for an official

Equipment

Starting device

- Electronic timing system with horn starting signal and strobe light
- Strobe light should be clearly visible to both swimmers and timers
- Speakers located so swimmers can easily hear starting commands and signal
- After warm-ups, work with check that microphone and speakers are working correctly. This may include a test start and recall test.

Equipment (cont' d)

- A test start, under direction of the Referee and ET should be performed when switching connections from one end of the pool to the other to ensure that a starting signal is being received by the timing equipment
- The starting unit should be switched off and connected to the charger between sessions
- Starter's pistol or whistle should be used if no electronic starting system

Equipment (cont' d)

- Copy of events to be swum
- Disqualification slips
- Pen/pencil

Communications

- Prior to the meet, check with the Referee for any special instructions or preferences
- Let the Referee know where you prefer to stand, this may change for forward and backstroke starts

Whistle Start Protocol

- Four or more short whistle blasts by the Referee signals swimmers in upcoming heat that their start is coming up
- One long whistle blast by the Referee signals the swimmers to step on the blocks or into the water
- For backstroke starts, an additional whistle blast signals "place your feet"

General Procedures

The Starter shall:

- Stand within ten feet of the start end of the pool at a point where he/she will have a clear view of the pool
- Ensure that strobe flash is clearly visible to timers
- Assume full control of the swimmers upon signal from the Referee (outstretched arm following the long whistle) and maintains control until a fair start has been achieved (and Referee drops his/her arm).
 - On occasion, the Referee may drop his/her arm to stop the start from proceeding
- Starter retains control until last swimmer surfaces

General Procedures (cont' d)

- Use minimal commands necessary so that swimmers always experience standard, predictable starting commands
- Mark off the heats as they are swum
- Note empty lanes
- Take order of finish
- Follow Referee directions
- Check with Referee if in doubt

Forward Start

- Referee will blow four or more short whistle blasts to signal the next heat of swimmers to move behind/beside the blocks
- One long whistle blast signals the swimmers to step onto the blocks or move to the edge of the pool

Forward Start (cont' d)

- When the swimmers are ready, the Referee will signal with an outstretched arm that the swimmers are in the Starter's control and the heat is closed
 - Do not ask swimmers to step up, or call for missing swimmers unless directed to do so by the Referee
 - Act as a second set of eyes for the Referee; if there are problems behind the blocks, let the Referee know
 - Know which lanes should be empty/full
 - Ensure you can see the whole field simultaneously, without focusing unduly on individual swimmers

Forward Start (cont' d)

- Pause until you feel you have control and the swimmers are ready
- In a flat, descending tone say "take your mark" as in "close the door", "walk the dog", etc.
- Prior to the "take your mark" command, the swimmer's feet may be placed anywhere on the starting platform
- After the "Take your mark" command, the swimmer must have at least one foot to the front of the starting platform

Forward Start (cont' d)

- Allow swimmers time to assume a stationary position
- Some swimmers will remain standing, while other swimmers will achieve a set position before the "take your mark" command is given
- Stationary is a relative term when used with young swimmers

Forward Start (cont' d)

- When all of the swimmers are stationary, the Starter gives the starting signal
 - The rules state that the swimmer must "immediately assume their starting position", they do not state that the swimmers must "come down together"
 - Making sure that there is no motion can be difficult as some swimmers continue to change position after a point at which you might have thought they would have stopped

Backstroke Start

- Swimmers enter water on Referee's long whistle.
- Upon second long whistle blast, swimmers place their feet on wall with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips.
- Standing in or on the gutter, or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the Starter's responsibility. If not corrected before the start signal, no penalty may be imposed.
- All other aspects of the start are the same as the forward start

Relay Starts

- Starts for the lead swimmer are the same as the individual events
- The starts of subsequent swimmers are the responsibility of the Relay Take-Off Judges

False Start Protocol

- The swimmers best effort is generally on their first start. They should not be penalized for a good start by having a race recalled due to someone else false starting. The penalty for the false start will be imposed to the offender after the race.
- Upon observing a false start, both the Starter and Referee should independently record the offending lane(s). The Starter states to the Referee "I have a potential false start". If the Referee confirms seeing a false start, Starter will show the Referee his/her false start record.
- False start disqualification requires dual confirmation. With confirmation by the Referee, the swimmer is charged with a false start.

False Start Protocol (cont' d)

- A recall by the Starter for unusual circumstances that affect the race is appropriate, e.g. Starter error in starting procedure, lane-line breaks, flash photography, or loud noise at beginning of race, etc.
- If the recall signal is activated, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start and the Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.
- 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

False Start Protocol (cont' d)

- Any swimmer starting before the starting signal shall be disqualified if Referee independently observes and confirms Starters observation of a violation. Swimmers remaining on the blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with a command from the Starter.

- A swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relieved of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer's reaction to the "stand up" command.

On deck paperwork

- Keep track of the current heat/event on a heat sheet
- Mark any no-shows for each heat
- Mark confirmed false starts
- Record order of finish
- Have DQ slips available for writing false start violations
- Have relay take-off slips available if you are asked to be a side judge

Rules of Thumb

- The primary responsibility of the starter is to ensure that all swimmers receive a fair start
- Use a calm conversational tone and voice inflection. Speak clearly, distinctly, and slowly. Never raise your voice or shout
- Breathe steadily
- Use minimal commands necessary so that swimmers always experience standard, predictable starting commands
- Hold your focus on center lanes so that outer lanes are within your peripheral vision.

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Rules of Thumb (cont' d)

- Do not penalize the swimmers because you gave them a bad start
 - A bad start is not the same as a false start
 - Stand the heat and recompose yourself if necessary
 - Recall the heat if necessary (rare)
- Do not worry about the timeline after you have assumed control of the swimmers

OSI Commands

- Step up (in) please
- Take your mark
- Stand please
- Hold your position
- Respond promptly to the command
- Respond promptly and hold your position
- Step Down Please
- Stand down or relax please

Optional instructions

- In the absence of an announcer, the Starter may announce the event and heat, e.g. "Event 1, Women's 13-14 100 Yard Freestyle, Heat 1"
- The Starter may advise the heat when a swimmer will be attempting to achieve a time at an initial distance

Dealing with a noisy venue

Do (With concurrence of Referee)	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wait for the noise level to drop, often the crowd will quiet if you wait• Have Announcer request "Quiet for the start, please"• If no Announcer, Starter announces "Quiet for the start, please"• step swimmers off the blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not attempt to talk over the noise• Do not raise your voice or shout, it is generally ineffective and makes you look unprofessional• Do not proceed with "Take your mark" hoping the swimmers will hear you

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Dealing with swimmers not getting set

- 1st instance—stand the heat
- 2nd instance—stand the heat and issue generic warning such as "Please respond promptly to my command"
- 3rd instance—with concurrence of Referee stand the heat, step it down, and issue specific warning to the problem lane, such as "Lane 3, please respond promptly to my command"
- 4th instance—recommend to the Referee a DQ for "deliberate delay" (extraordinarily rare)

Warning Signal

- In individual events 500 yards or longer, a signal shall be sounded over the water at the finish end of the lane of the leading swimmer when that swimmer has two lengths plus five yards/meters to swim
- When a bell is used, the bell shall be rung from the time the swimmer swims under the flags until the swimmer returns to the flags
- If hosting club provides bells for each lane, timers should be instructed on the procedure under supervision of the Starter
- If events have been combined (age, sex) into a single heat, the signal shall be sounded for the lead swimmer of each event in the combined heat

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Starting swimmers on deck or in the pool


- The Referee can allow swimmers to start from the deck or in the water
- If starting from the deck, the swimmer must have at least one foot at the front edge of the deck following "take your mark" and then remain stationary until the start
- If starting in the water, the swimmer must "grab" the wall with at least one hand following "take your mark" and then remain stationary until the start
- Shallow end starts, swimmers must push off wall not bottom of the pool.

Starting swimmers with disabilities

- Starter should be familiar with specific guidelines in Article 105 in the rule book.
- It is the athlete's responsibility (or his/her coach) to request modifications
- Before a meet always review the procedures for hand signals
- Remember, a swimmer with a disability may need extra time to assume a starting position and to exit the pool

Training opportunities

- In general, all training sessions must be performed at OSI/USA Swimming sanctioned meets
- Pre-arrange your training with the Referee prior to the meet




Resources

- Oregon Swimming, Inc. website: www.oregonswimming.org
 - Officials
 - Training forms
 - List of trainers
- USA Swimming website: www.usaswimming.org
 - Official Tracking System
- The Start, Philosophy and Protocol, DVD produced by USA Swimming, available for purchase on website



If All Else Fails - ASK

- Use all resources available
 - Other officials
 - Referees
 - Area Officials Chair
 - Officials Chair



Thank you!

See you on deck
