

Compilation of Swimming Official News Items

This document provides readers with a summary of some of the questions asked since 2010. Where appropriate; each question is included adjacent to the relevant FINA rule.

Reports and Reporting: (June 2010)

It is appreciated that there are some Timekeepers who say "I do not want to be a Judge because I do not want to disqualify a swimmer." It must be remembered that it is the Referee who disqualifies the swimmer not the Judge. It is the duty of a Judge duty to observe and report any infringement that he or she has seen. It is a matter for the Referee to decide if a disqualification is required based upon the report given by the Judge.

Always remember that if ever there is any shadow of doubt as to what occurred then the swimmer gets the benefit of that doubt.

Starting in the water- (May 2011)

The FINA Technical Rule SW4 provides for 2 starts.

SW 4.1 The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races shall be with a dive. On the long whistle (SW 2.1.5) 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.

SW 4.2 The start in Backstroke and Medley Relay races shall be from the water. At the referee's first long whistle (SW 2.1.5), 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 (SW 6.1). 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.

Questions have been asked about what to do with the swimmer who for a variety of reasons may not be able or may not be permitted to start as defined above. Provision for starting in the water is contained within the FINA Masters Technical rules.

MSW 3.2 When using the forward start, the referee's whistle shall indicate that the swimmers may take their positions with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform or pool deck, or in the water with one hand having contact with the starting wall.

For all forward starts, as in SW4.1, where the swimmer must start in the water the swimmer must be stationary in the water with one hand in contact with the starting wall when the starting signal is given.

For relay races the hand of the swimmer starting in the water must remain in contact with the starting wall until the incoming swimmer has completed their length and touched the wall. The team of the swimmer whose hand loses contact with the starting wall before the preceding swimmer touches the wall should be disqualified.

Freestyle

SW 5.1 Freestyle means that in an event so designated the swimmer may swim any style, except that in individual medley or medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.

SW 5.2 Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length and at the finish.

SW 5.3 Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface.

Question- (June 2011)

You are attending an Open Meet taking place in a 25m pool and have been appointed as the Inspector of Turns on Lane 3 at the turning end of the pool.

Event 3 is the Ladies Open 100m Freestyle and the swimmer in your lane is observed to be swimming Butterfly. All goes well until the third turn whereupon the swimmer touches the wall with only one hand.

What do you do and why?

Answer: Report nothing. The swimmer is competing in a Freestyle race and providing some part of the swimmer touches the wall upon completion of each length no infringement of the freestyle rules has taken place.

Question 2: In a subsequent heat a swimmer completes all 4 lengths in accordance with the Butterfly stroke rules. Can the swimmer use the time as a 100m Butterfly qualification time?

Answer: The event is a Freestyle race therefore the time recorded is a Freestyle time and can only be used as a Freestyle qualification time.

Question 3- (Sept 2011)

Prior to the start of a 100m Freestyle event a swimmer informs you that she will be swimming 100m Butterfly in order to obtain a Butterfly qualifying time.

1. Is the swimmer permitted to swim Butterfly?
2. What do you advise the swimmer in your reply?

Answer

1. Yes
2. Advise the swimmer that the race is a freestyle race and as such the time recorded will be a freestyle time and cannot be used as a Butterfly qualifying time.

Missed Touch in Freestyle- (Nov 2011)

It is the Men's 1500m Freestyle taking place in a 25m pool with 8 lanes. The lap cards are being operated by the Inspectors of Turns at the turning end of the pool. Upon hearing the whistle during heat one, the swimmer in lane two failed to touch the wall at the turn. Realising his mistake, he sculled backwards to touch the wall with his feet before swimming on to complete the final two lengths without further incident. Is this legal?

Answer: Yes

SW5.2 states: Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall on completion of each length and at the finish.

The FINA video is clear in what is permitted.

“Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer may turn in any manner desired as long as contact is made with the wall at the end of each length of the race.

If the swimmer misses the wall whilst turning it is permissible for that swimmer to go back and touch the wall before continuing the race.

If the swimmer misses the wall and fails to return for the touch it is a violation.”

It must be remembered that:- “In relay events, the team of a swimmer whose feet lose touch with the starting platform before the preceding team-mate touches the wall shall be disqualified” . SW10.11. There is no opportunity to return to the wall/starting platform to re-start. The team is disqualified.

Backstroke

SW 6.1 Prior to the starting signal, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited.

SW 6.2 At the signal for starting and after turning the swimmer shall push off and swim upon his back throughout the race except when executing a turn as set forth in SW 6.4. The normal position on the back can include a roll movement of the body up to, but not including 90 degrees from horizontal. The position of the head is not relevant.

SW 6.3 Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race. It is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, at the finish and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.

SW 6.4 When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in his/her respective lane. During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to the breast after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to the position on the back upon leaving the wall.

SW 6.5 Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in his/her respective lane.

Backstroke Start- (Sept 2011)

Handgrips for backstroke starts are usually provided on the starting platforms in both the horizontal and vertical position. The swimmer may use whatever is provided on the starting platform be it a horizontal or vertical bar.

Backstroke Turn

Question 1: (June 2011) The following report is given to the Referee by an Inspector of Turns for a swimmer during a 100m backstroke race in a 25m pool. "The swimmer approached the wall for the third turn on her back then shortly before arriving at the wall turned onto her front, reached for and touched the wall with both hands, pushed off on her back and proceeded to complete the remaining length" What technical rule, if any, has been infringed?

Answer: None

Question 2:- (October 2012) A swimmer turns onto their breast at the turn, brings one arm over and touches the wall with the hand at the end of the arc (no drifting in and no underwater pull), brings their legs under their body and pushes off from the wall on their back – is this OK?

Question 3:- (October 2012) In a 50m backstroke event in a 25m pool a young swimmer comes up to complete the first length and touches while on the back [did not attempt a tumble turn] when they are turning to start the final length their foot slips and touches the bottom of the pool, they then lift their foot off the bottom and push off from the wall of the pool and continue the length and finish whilst on their back. Should they be DQ for standing on the bottom of the pool or are they ok because both lengths have been swum correctly as per the rules and the only problem happened during the turn?

Answer: There is no reason to disqualify either swimmer in Question 2 or Question 3.

In question 1 the swimmer left the position on the back to execute the turn, (SW6.2) touched the end of the pool with some part of the body- the hand- and left the wall on the back. (SW6.4)

In question 2 the swimmer touched the wall with some part of the body and pushed off from the wall on the back. The swimmer did not push off from the bottom of the pool nor did he/she take a stride or step from the bottom of the pool. (SW10.4)

Backstroke Turn- (May 2012)

There is no issue with what the legs do be it an alternating kick or simultaneous butterfly kick. The main point is that the swimmer must be on the back throughout the race except when executing a turn. SW6.2 During that turn the swimmer may use one single or one double arm pull to initiate that turn. SW 6.4

If the swimmer has not begun to turn once the arm/arms have completed the pull the swimmer should be reported for being off their back and failing to initiate the turn as in SW 6.2.

Should the swimmer leave the position on the back and kick into the turn without any arm movement – again the infringement would be SW6.2 as the swimmer had left the position on the back.

The key to observing the turn is the body position together with the arm movement.

Breaststroke

Butterfly Kick- FINA Interpretation – (Mar 2012)

SW 7.1 After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs during which the swimmer may be submerged. A single butterfly kick is permitted during the first arm stroke, followed by a breaststroke kick.

Interpretation:

The first arm stroke begins with the separation of the hands.

SW 7.2 From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time. From the start and throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

Interpretation

A pause after the separation of the hands is not a violation of the rule.

Butterfly Kick – (Jan 2012)

SW 7.1 After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs during which the swimmer may be submerged. A single butterfly kick is permitted during the first arm stroke, followed by a breaststroke kick.

A swimmer does not have to perform a butterfly kick

There can only be one butterfly kick.

The butterfly kick must take place during the first arm stroke.

The butterfly kick must be followed by a breaststroke kick

From this information we can see that the swimmer may perform a butterfly kick at any time from the point that the hands move, from the streamline position after the start or turn, outwards and or backwards all the way to the point at which the hands are “completely back to the legs”. (SW7.1.)

Question: (Nov 2011)

A swimmer places one hand on top of the other when pushing forward in the streamline position. A report is received for an infringement under SW7.2. The hands are not on the same horizontal plane.

Is this a reason for disqualification?

Answer: No. There is no reference to the position of the hands. It is perfectly possible for swimmers to place one hand on top of the other whilst the arms remain in the same horizontal plane.

Butterfly

SW 8.1 From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. Under water kicking on the side is allowed. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time.

SW 8.2 Both arms shall be brought forward together over the water and brought backward simultaneously through-out the race, subject to SW 8.5.

SW 8.3 All up and down movements of the legs must be simultaneous. The legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.

SW 8.4 At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously, at, above or below the water surface.

SW 8.5 At the start and at turns, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks and one arm pull under the water, which must bring him to the surface. It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface. The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish

Butterfly Finish- (Oct 2011)

A young swimmer is competing in a 100m butterfly race in a 25m pool. They become very tired although the arms are brought forward over the water simultaneously on every stroke during the race. The penultimate stroke before the touch at the finish brings them quite close to the wall and they are unable to bring the arms forward over the water for the final stroke.

Scenario 1: The arms are brought forward over the water on the penultimate stroke and remain in the forward position with the swimmer using their legs to kick into the finish. Report or No Report?

No report- No infringement has taken place

Scenario 2: The arms are brought forward over the water on the penultimate stroke and brought backwards. In order to prevent himself from swimming into the end of the pool and hitting his head the swimmer quickly pushes the hands forwards under the water. Report or No Report?

Report - the swimmer failed to bring their arms over the water as referenced in SW8.2.

Individual Medley

SW 9.1 In individual medley events, the swimmer covers the four swimming strokes in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance.

SW 9.2 In medley relay events, swimmers will cover the four swimming strokes in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle.

SW 9.3 Each section must be finished in accordance with the rule which applies to the stroke concerned.

Judging turns – June 2012

As an Inspector of Turns this is one of the more challenging events to judge as at each change of stroke the swimmer must complete one stroke in accordance with the finish rules and commence the subsequent stroke in accordance with another set of stroke rules. What happens in between can and does vary greatly.

Butterfly to Backstroke: This is fairly straight forward as the quickest and easiest way is to touch the wall with both hands on the front and push off backwards. Remember a swimmer may choose to leave the wall on their side in the backstroke however as long as he/she is not past vertical towards the breast this is legal.

Backstroke to Breaststroke: This is the most challenging as there is considerable variation on how it is performed. However the principle is the same. The swimmer must touch the wall whilst on the back and leave the wall on the breast. Again it is important to remember that at the touch the swimmer may be moving towards their breast but as long as they are not past vertical towards the breast this is legal. A swimmer may be submerged at the finish however a swimmer may not submerge prior to the finish. Following the touch the swimmer can turn in any manner they wish however they must be past vertical towards the breast when the feet leave the wall. The swimmer may not leave the wall on the back and then turn over onto the breast.

Breaststroke to Freestyle: The swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously however it must be remembered that one hand may only touch the wall very briefly almost in a “brushing” motion whilst the second hand is placed firmly against the wall. Once that touch is made the swimmer may turn in any manner to swim the freestyle.

200m IM in 25m pool Question: (June 2010)

Scenario 1: The swimmer completes 4x25m IM followed by another 4x25m IM!

Scenario 2: The swimmer completes the butterfly and backstroke sections with no problems but then swims 25m Breaststroke followed by 25m freestyle and stops.

What is the correct report for each of these instances?

Answer: In both instances the swimmer did not complete the event in accordance with SW9.1 and should be disqualified

Mixed Events

SW10.1 All individual races must be held as separate gender events.

Question: (July 2012)

We are holding our Club Championships and in some of the longer distance events have very few swimmers. We would like to swim boys and girls together and have heard this may be possible. Is this correct?

Answer:

Yes, that is correct.

SWAG 1: Federations may adopt their own Age Group rules, using FINA technical rules.

The above rule provides the opportunity to swim males and females together within age group swimming providing that the competition conditions state clearly that these are Age Group events and will be swum as mixed male and female.

Tape

SW 10.8 No swimmer shall be permitted to use or wear any device or swimsuit that may aid his/her speed, buoyancy or endurance during a competition (such as webbed gloves, flippers, fins, etc.). Goggles may be worn. Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by FINA Sport Medicine Committee.

Question: (Sept 2011)

Is it necessary for the FINA Sport Medicine Committee to approve tape on a swimmer and how can this be arranged?

Answer: The FINA rules are written for use at FINA Championships and competitions and there are occasions when specific rules apply only to those competitions. In Great Britain we follow the FINA rules for our competitions however it is not necessary to contact FINA for a competition which is of no concern to them- such as your local Saturday Night gala, League or Open Meet of which there are many. It is unlikely there will even be a doctor appointed to the event to be able to assist in any decision being made so the decision falls to the Referee of the event who ever he or she may be.

It is a matter for the Referee to decide if the wearing of tape may contribute to the performance of the athlete. A piece of waterproof tape such as an adhesive dressing covering a small cut or wound will not make any difference to a swimmers performance. There is no reason to prevent a swimmer competing with it or to disqualify the swimmer after the race has been completed.

On the other hand large pieces of strapping may be applied to protect a swimmer from further Injury. In such an instance should the swimmer be competing? He or she may be at risk from further injury? It may be prudent for the Referee to exclude the swimmer from competition in their best interest! Occasionally an athlete may provide medical evidence in support of the need to wear some tape. The athlete must present this before the swim in the same way a Certificate of Disability or a Function Ability Card is submitted.

In all these scenarios it is the responsibility of the Referee to use common sense to ensure the competition is fair and in the best interest of all those competing. Do remember that the Referee does not always see everything and that it is the duty of the Official to report whatever is observed so if you do see a swimmer with large pieces of tape down their back it should be reported. The Referee may well know all about it and

have given permission but there is always the change that he or she may not know and are waiting for your report!

Immersion- (Oct 2010)

SW 10.9 Any swimmer not entered in a race, who enters the water in which an event is being conducted before all swimmers therein have completed the race, shall be disqualified from his next scheduled race in the meet.

It is fairly common practice for swimmers to wet goggles and themselves. Where electronic timing is installed it is a good idea to prevent swimmers from leaning over and either touching another swimmer or accidentally interfering with the timing equipment during a race. Moving round to the side or using an empty lane should pose no problem. This is not considered to be an infringement of SW10.9.

It should be noted that some International competitions do provide swimmers with buckets of water near the starting blocks specifically for swimmers to use to facilitate this "wetting".

What does constitute an infringement?

Any swimmer who actually gets into the pool to wet him/herself whilst a race is in progress should be disqualified from their next race.

Relay Takeovers

SW 10.11 In relay events, the team of a swimmer whose feet lose touch with the starting platform before the preceding team-mate touches the wall shall be disqualified.

There is no opportunity to return to the wall/starting platform to re-start.- (Nov 2011)

Question- (Feb 2011)

"The inspector of turns at the starting end was adjudicating the takeovers and monitored the approach of the incoming swimmer with the outgoing swimmer waiting at the rear of the block. As the incoming swimmer approached the wall the outgoing swimmer moved forward skipping to the front edge during which both feet momentarily left the block with some forward momentum, he landed back on the block before the incoming swimmer touched the wall. The outgoing swimmer continued to extend into his dive, with his feet in contact with the block, when the incoming swimmer touched.

The inspector of turns made no report as he considered the feet were in contact with the block when the touch was made."

Was this decision correct or should a report have been made as an infringement of SW10.11?

Answer

No infringement had taken place as the feet of the outgoing swimmer were in contact with the starting platform at the time the incoming swimmer touched the end wall to complete his leg.

Pacing (Feb 2012)

SW10.16: No pace-making shall be permitted, nor may any device be used or plan adopted which has that effect.

Training devices such as the Aquapacer and Finis Pacer are training aids and cannot be used in competition. They may be used during training and warm-up only. Any athlete using such a device in competition should be disqualified.

Records

SW 12.11 A swimmer in an individual event may apply for a World Record at an intermediate distance if he or his coach or manager specifically requests the referee that his performance be especially timed or if the time at the intermediate distance is recorded by Automatic Officiating Equipment. Such swimmer must complete the scheduled distance of the event to apply for a record at the intermediate distance.

Question- (Sept 2011)

You are the Inspector of Turns appointed to the turn end of lane 4 in a 50m pool at an Open Competition with electronic timing. Before the final heat of the 100m Backstroke you are advised by the Referee that the swimmer in your lane wishes to make a record attempt at the 50m Backstroke. What additional duties and observations will be required of you for this race?

Answer:

Ensure the swimmer is timed on completion of the first length using a hand held timer and/or semi AOE button.

Ensure the swimmer completes the first length in accordance with the finish rules for backstroke- namely the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in his/her respective lane.

The swimmer must then swim on to complete the 100m distance without any infringement.

Masters Records: (Nov 2010)

British Swimming issues a Certificate of Swimming Disability to athletes who have impairments that prevent them from competing against able bodied competitors. The purpose of the certificate is to ensure that disabled competitors do not get disqualified for performing a stroke incorrectly due to their disability and who have either not yet been classified, do not wish to undergo classification, or do not fit the Functional Classification System. Certification is only given to swimmers with a permanent disability and not swimmers suffering from short term incapacity.

The following information with reference to Record applications should be noted by all Referees officiating at Masters Competitions.

A number of Masters Swimmers have a Certificate of Swimming Disability. However such certification is not recognised by LEN or FINA therefore any swimmer who breaks a European or World Record using the benefit of an exemption detailed on the certificate may not submit a record application. Swimmers breaking a British record using the benefit of an exemption detailed on the certificate may submit their application to Great Britain. Masters swimmers with a valid Certificate of Swimming Disability who break a European or World record without using the benefit of an exemption detailed on the certificate will continue to have their application processed and forwarded to LEN/FINA as appropriate.

Swimmers with a Disability

January 2012

Functional Ability Cards: These are designed to assist competitive swimmers with a disability to access competitions.

By using the card competitors can be safe in the knowledge that they will not be disqualified if their disability precludes them from performing a stroke to the relevant parts of FINA swimming rules.

This card is also an integral part of the records and rankings system for swimmers with a disability and acts as identification and proof of IPC classification and rule exceptions. Such cards must be submitted to the Race referee prior to the start of the race.

Cards are renewable annually in January and all current holders are being issued with new cards that are valid until 31st January 2013. These new cards have a yellow border round the photograph.

Certificate of Swimming Disability: These are provided for swimmers who have impairments that prevent them from competing against able bodied competitors. The purpose is to ensure the holder is not disqualified for performing a stroke incorrectly due to the nature of the impairment. Holders either have not yet been classified, do not wish to undergo classification or do not fit the Functional Classification System.

A certificate is only provided to a member with a permanent disability and not one suffering from any short term incapacity. It is valid for 2 years, whereupon re-application is required.

No disability record can be claimed when using this certificate for exemption from complying with the laws of the stroke.

Lap Cards.- (April 2012)

“It is the swimmers responsibility to ensure he or she completes the course.”

The following information was provided at a FINA Officials Seminar and relates to an incident at the FINA World Short Course Championships in 2010.

“The following took place in a 1500m Freestyle race in a 25m pool with the lap cards positioned at the turning end of the pool. For some reason, perhaps the lap cards became very wet and stuck together, the official turning the cards turned over too many at one of the turns and no-one noticed. The official at the starting end did not count the laps of the swimmer in his lane but relied on the official at the turning end to display the correct number and therefore rang the bell when he thought, in accordance with the displayed lap cards, the swimmer had 2 lengths remaining. The swimmer stopped after completing the 2 lengths post warning signal and was subsequently disqualified for not completing the distance.”

A protest was submitted and rejected. The result stood and the swimmer was not permitted a re-swim.

Swimsuits

Costumes with Zips- (November 2011)

British Swimming and the ASA do permit swimmers to wear costumes with zips providing the style and material complies with the current regulations for swimsuits. Details of the statement issued in February 2010 can be found on the Officials section of the website.

October 2012

<http://www.swimming.org/britishswimming/swimming/general-resources/>

Full Length Swimwear: (October 2012)

There are occasions when, for religious reasons, a swimmer needs to remain covered and the wearing of a full length body suit should not pose a barrier to the individual taking part in training and/or competition. The Legal Department has provided guidance in relation to this and the document can be accessed via the link below.

http://www.swimming.org/assets/uploads/library/Swimwear_and_Equality_Guidance_Note_130210v4_Re_PrintFINAL.pdf