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To: General Chairs Board of Directors, USA Swimming  
Officials Chairs USA Swimming Officials  
Rules & Regulations Committee USA Swimming Coach Members

From: Daniel W. McAllen III, Chair, Rules & Regulations Committee

Re: Breaststroke and Butterfly Separated Hands Interpretation

At its Congress in 2013, FINA adopted rules changes requiring the swimmer's hands be separated at turns and the finish touch in both breaststroke and butterfly. Since the word "separated" is subject to interpretation, for purposes of the turn and finish rules in both breaststroke and butterfly the following shall be determinative.

- (1) "Separated" means that the hands may touch each other at the thumbs (no visual separation required) but there can be no overlap or interlocking of the hands, including thumbs and fingers, whatsoever.
- (2) A swimmer who simultaneously has the thumbs touching and the tips of the index fingers (picture a little triangle) is legal. Likewise, a simultaneous two hand touch with only the tips of the index fingers touching each other is legal.
- (3) It is legal for the hands to be one over the other if there is space between them. However, one hand cannot be resting on top of the other, nor can the palms be pressed together in a prayer position at the touch.
- (4) It is legal to touch with the fingers and have the thumbs under the hand or pointing downward, in which case the index fingers may be touching.

**A little common sense will go far in applying this rule if one remembers that the goal is for the swimmer to touch with both hands separately and not joined in any way that could be construed as creating a single unit.**

Daniel W. McAllen III  
Chair, Rules & Regulations Committee