

Judging Breaststroke in High School for Compliance with USA Swimming Rules

Bruce Stratton, Chairman of the Rules and Regulations Committee, recently wrote an interpretation on how to handle a swimmer who is disqualified in a high school meet for doing a downward butterfly kick after the start and turns in a breaststroke event.

The spirit and intent of Article 202.5 is to allow USA Swimming athletes the ability to use a time achieved in another association's meet as long as the swim was done in accordance with USA Swimming technical rules for the particular stroke. Prior to this year, the USA Swimming rules were more restrictive than HS rules and therefore we did not normally have a situation where a swimmer would be DQ'd for HS but still be in compliance with USA-S. We were primarily concerned with an athlete using the more permissive HS rules, but not be in compliance with our rules. Accordingly, a DQ under HS rules would normally mean the athlete had also violated a USA Swimming rule. We now have a situation that is just the opposite and an athlete can be DQ'd for HS, but still have a legal swim for USA S.

I can think of no reason not to accommodate an athlete who was DQ'd for HS, but still swam a legitimate time for USA S. I would think this would be a rare occurrence because normally observations take place at season culminating meets and athletes would not want to be disqualified in return for a USA-S time.

The fact that a swimmer is DQ'd under HS rules and will have DQ listed next to his name in the results is irrelevant and does not mean the time cannot be used. It may not be an official time for HS purposes, but for USA-S purposes an "official time" is one achieved in accordance with our technical rules and assuming that criteria is met, the time should be good.

Even though a time is listed as a DQ in the results, the time is still easily obtainable from the actual timing records. Determining which heat and lane the swimmer was in is also readily available. I also don't think there is a significant issue with respect to the observer. The observer may have to inquire of the HS official as the nature of a disqualification or disqualifications. There still is a requirement that the observer actually observe the swimmer and judge that there was no violation of a USA-S technical rule. The mere fact that a swimmer was DQ'd for a butterfly kick during the breaststroke, does not mean the swim is automatically good for USA-S. It still must be observed as being legal by the observer.

In summary, an athlete who is disqualified for an infraction of another association's rule that is different from USA Swimming rules, but who nevertheless complies with all of USA Swimming's technical rules and is observed as doing so by the USA Swimming observer, is entitled to the time for that swim. The determination of an "official time" is not based upon how it is listed in the other association's results, but upon whether the athlete complied with all USA Swimming technical rules.

Given this interpretation, it is important for the NTV officers and the observing officials to understand their duties should such a situation occur at a high school meet where swims are being observed.

1. As an observer, whether acting in a dual role as HS official and USA-S observer or just as observer, you should follow the same steps you would in noting a disqualification for USA-S rules – mark your heat sheet or record of the event noting that the swimmer did a kick that is legal according to USA-S technical rules and swam the event legally. If you are performing a dual role and the swimmer is in your jurisdiction, you would have disqualified the swimmer for HS rules and noted compliance with USA-S rules.
2. At the end of the session you should check with the referee to find out if there was a disqualification in the breaststroke event and clarify what the disqualification was. It is important to verify that the swimmer was not also disqualified for a reason other than a downward butterfly kick after the start and the turn.
3. Any swimmer who was disqualified in the breaststroke event for doing a downward butterfly kick or his/her coach or representative must come to an observer and specifically request that an official time for the swim be documented for USA-S purposes. The request must be made by the end of the session.
4. If you get a request for such time, you must determine from the computer operator, referee, or administrative referee the official time from the proper heat and lane and secure a copy if possible. The official time or a record of it, signed by the observer noting compliance with USA-S rules, must be turned over to the LSC SWIMS officer who will be doing the data entry for times from the meet. Such time would be manually entered into the database.
5. Coaches at the meet should be notified of the procedure at the coaches' meeting or through a handout in their coaches' packets. It is important to educate the USA Swimming club coaches through the LSC so that they can inform their swimmers on the process should the occasion occur.