



STROKE AND TURN JUDGES

INTRODUCTION

Stroke and turn judges are the eyes of the referee on deck. Other than the referee, stroke and turn officials are the only officials who can make a call without dual confirmation, and the referee very rarely exercises this authority. Referees and chief judges will ask questions when a stroke and turn judge makes a call, but the referee can only overrule the call on a point of rule interpretation, or for an action which the referee has personally observed.

Well run meets and good competitive results are directly related to good officiating. This requires a thorough knowledge of the rules and the ability to apply them fairly and consistently. It can only be attained by studying the rules, attending training sessions, and working regularly at meets.

Swimmers should not be expected to compete to absolute perfection. Flexible judgment and common sense is necessary.

Officials must never overlook one important fact — the swimmers have worked hard to become competitive. They all deserve an equal chance. Officials must ensure that they do not, either by inaction or an irresponsible or inappropriate decision, disrupt the equity and fairness of the competition

Swimming has a very severe penalty for violation of the technical rules: disqualification from the event. If an athlete is disqualified, it is as if the swimmer never swam the event at all. The athlete is not assigned a position in the standings, and the time in which they finished is not recorded. It is for this reason that **the benefit of the doubt must always go to the swimmer.**

That is not to say that stroke and turn officials should not make calls. The purpose of stroke and turn officials is to observe, but not scrutinize, the competition for compliance with the technical rules of swimming. If a

stroke and turn official clearly observes a disqualification, then they should report it. The purpose of calling violations is not to punish the violator, but to be fair to and to protect the other swimmers in the race.

BASIC CONCEPTS

Take officiating seriously and work hard at it. Competitors have the right to expect officials to know the rules and interpret them correctly, fairly and courteously. Stroke and turn officials should:

1. Study USA Swimming Official Rules book regularly.
2. Uniformly interpret and apply rules.
3. Call violations when seen, but don't guess or anticipate.
4. Be fair and consistent; always give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt.
5. Disregard club affiliation.

Work regularly at the job.

1. Officials need practice, just as competitors do.
2. Working regularly builds confidence.
3. Attend training sessions—keep up with rule changes and new interpretations.
4. There is no substitute for experience.

Be professional in your manner. A good official should:

1. Make decisions quickly and decisively.
2. Not smoke or eat on deck.

3. Not coach the swimmers.
4. Refrain from cheering and control their emotions.
5. Not fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators during competition. Disregard club affiliation and personal relationships.
6. Not display outward signs during race regarding illegality of a competitor except a raised hand.
7. Not concentrate on frequent violators to the exclusion of others.
8. Give undivided attention— from start to finish.
9. Admit a mistake; if you made a wrong call, the competitor's welfare is more important than your own ego.
10. If uncertain of your role, consult with the chief judge or referee.

Dress Properly. Officials look much more "official" if they are dressed both properly and neatly and are well groomed. Except for finals at championship meets, the PVS dress code is: navy blue slacks (but no jeans), shorts or skirt, white shirt and white, rubber soled shoes. At finals at championship meets, the dress will usually be a short sleeved, light blue oxford shirt with navy blue pants or skirt.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The referee or, at the referee's discretion, the chief judge assigns and instructs stroke and turn judges. Before the competition begins, the referee or chief judge determines the respective areas of stroke and turn judge responsibility and jurisdiction. These may include joint, concurrent, or coordinated responsibility and jurisdiction.

Once assigned a position on deck, stroke and turn officials should remain there until relieved or excused by the referee or chief judge. If offered relief from a relief official, stroke and turn judges should leave the deck, returning at the end of the defined relief period. If a stroke and turn judge needs to leave the deck and a relief official is not available, they should first notify the referee or chief judge.

The stroke and turn judges' responsibilities begin immediately after the start. Any action prior to the start is the responsibility of the starter. Each stroke and turn judge should observe the start since their duties commence immediately after the start.

Depending upon the meet, officials may either be assigned as stroke judges, turn judges, or stroke and turn judges.

Stroke and Turn Judges

At short course (25 yard) pools, PVS generally uses combined stroke and turn judges. These judges are typically positioned at the ends of the pool. Stroke and turn judges will usually remain at the ends of the pool, except for freestyle and backstroke events.

During freestyle events, stroke and turn officials will generally be positioned at the corners of the pool where they can observe touches at each turn. The turn officials at the starting end of the pool should step away at the start and the finish of the race. This is especially important for the turn official that is standing at the corner from which the referee and starter are starting the race.

For backstroke starts, the stroke and turn officials at the starting end that judge lane 1 and the highest numbered lane (e.g., lane 8 or 10) may be asked to walk to the sides of the deck and to "wrap around" to the corners at the start to observe the position of the swimmers' toes after the starting signal has been sounded. When at the corners, the judges should observe the lanes in the closest half of the pool (e.g., lanes 1-4 in an 8 lane pool.) After observing the start, the stroke and turn officials would then return to their assigned position to judge the remainder of the race.

Combined stroke and turn judges will usually have jurisdiction over a defined set of lanes for the entire pool or the closest half. The jurisdiction will be defined by the referee or chief judge during the session briefing.

At long course (50 meter) pools and at some higher level meets at short course pools, separate stroke judges and turn judges will be assigned.

Turn judges are positioned at the starting and turning ends of the pool. Their responsibility is to observe

whether, when turning or finishing, the swimmer complies with the turn and finish rules applicable to the stroke used.

Stroke judges observe whether the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed. They are usually positioned on the sides of the pool.

Turn judges will usually only have jurisdiction over the starts and turns, while stroke judges will usually have wall-to-wall jurisdiction. This jurisdiction should be assigned at the briefing prior to the session.

In some cases, unique pool configurations may necessitate alterations of these jurisdictions.

Fifteen Meter Mark: If assigned jurisdiction for observing the 15-meter mark, for all strokes for which the 15-meter mark is observed, stroke judges should look straight across the pool, using the markers on the lane lines as a point of reference. If the floats are not perfectly aligned, the marker that is the farthest from the end of the pool should be used.

Position:

Stroke Judges walk on the sides of the pool. During backstroke, butterfly and freestyle, be at the 15-meter mark to observe where the swimmer surfaces.

Breaststroke and butterfly are best judged by walking abreast or slightly behind the swimmers. If the field starts to spread out, the judge should maintain a position that is slightly ahead of the trailing swimmers. Should sufficient officials be available to allow two strokes per side, lead/lag judging may be used.

Lead/Lag judging uses four stroke judges, two judges walking each side of the pool. When there are sufficient judges, this method provides more consistent observation of all swimmers. In a typical wall-to-wall jurisdiction, the lead judge normally starts at the 15m mark while the lag judge is positioned between the 15m mark and the start end. As the heat begins, the lag judge watches the initial strokes and kicks while the lead judge observes that the swimmers conform to the 15m rule (except in breaststroke). Once the swimmers have all passed the 15m mark, both judges follow them down the course, observing strokes and kicks. As the swimmers separate, the two judges likewise separate to maintain balanced observation, typically with lead judge

observing the two lead swimmers in the jurisdiction while the lag judge observes the two lag swimmers (assuming an eight-lane pool and assuming the swimmers have not separated 3-1 or 1-3). As the swimmers approach the turn end of the pool, the lag judge stops at the turn end 15m mark while the lead judge continues the observation into the turn and the initial actions of the second leg of the race. As the swimmers head back toward the start end, the lag judge becomes lead and the lead judge becomes lag. This coordination continues until the race finishes.

Turn (or combined stroke and turn) officials at the starting end of the pool should position themselves behind the starting blocks when the next heat is being started. They should move quickly to the edge of the pool immediately following the starting signal. After all swimmers have left the stroke and turn judge's jurisdiction, the official should step away again. The stroke and turn judge should return to the edge of the pool as the athletes reenter the judge's jurisdiction.

Stroke and turn judges should provide a consistent level of observation for all heats. Occasionally, there will be empty lanes in a judge's jurisdiction. When this occurs, the judge should still observe the empty lanes as if someone were swimming in them. Otherwise, some athletes would be observed more than others.

Reporting violations:

1. Upon observing an infraction in their jurisdiction, stroke and turn judges shall immediately raise one hand overhead with open palm. This is intended to require officials to act decisively and to preclude consultation with other officials or reflection on the consequences of a call. If the official does not raise a hand immediately following an infraction, the referee should not accept the disqualification.
2. Violations should be reported in writing using the slips that are provided. These slips should detail the event, heat number, lane number and violation.

At some meets, the chief judge will complete the disqualification slip and present it to the stroke and turn judge to neatly print their name. Prior to signing the form, the judge should review all information for accuracy.

At other meets, stroke and turn judges will record the disqualifications themselves. If the meet uses USA

Swimming disqualification slips, then the proper boxes should be marked. If using the free response type of disqualification slips, the violation should be described concisely using the language from the USA Swimming Rulebook.

Disqualifications:

1. Can be made only by the official within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed.
2. Must be based on personal observation.
3. Must be based on violation of a rule in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.
4. The swimmer should always be given the benefit of any doubt. Except for the referee or chief judge, the opinions of others should not be considered.
5. Be sure a violation occurred, understand clearly what it is, and be prepared to explain it.

Relay take-offs (if assigned jurisdiction for relay take-offs): When observing relay take-offs, the feet of the departing swimmer should be observed first. Once the feet have lost contact with the starting block, then the touch of the incoming swimmer should be observed. If the touch has been made, then the exchange is good. If the touch has not been made, then the take off was early. These exchanges are generally recorded on slips that are provided - circle the exchange if it is good or cross through the exchange if it was early. If dual confirmation is being used, the official should not give any indication other than to mark the exchange on the slip.

Mental Traps:

A judge will gain the technical knowledge required to judge the strokes and turns or finishes and become proficient with practice. The challenge, however, is to apply that knowledge properly. Be careful not to apply human reason in such a way that it causes poor or "sloppy" judgments. Some examples of the "mental traps" that can arise are:

1. **Advantage or disadvantage.** There is no intent that whether a swimmer gains advantage should be a factor, thus justifying inaction by officials in not calling violations such as missed turns, touches, etc.

This type of negative interpretation only leads to "sloppy" officiating. Unfair advantage may be used to explain one reason why an action is an infraction. Still, a violation of the rules should be noted and the competitor disqualified whether an advantage is gained or not.

2. **The "Twice Theory."** Some judges feel they should wait until an infraction happens more than once before they call it. There is no basis for waiting to see an infraction happen twice and, in fact, it often won't. The official must simply be certain of what they see and make the call as soon as it is observed. If there is any doubt about the violation, then no call should be made! By the same token, stroke and turn officials should not concentrate on one swimmer to see if the suspected infraction is committed again. They should continue to give all the competitors uniform coverage in observing their performance.
3. **"We don't disqualify 8 & Unders."** People who take this position often rationalize it by saying they don't want to cause "mental trauma" to a youngster. While this may sound good, it is grounded in some clearly erroneous beliefs:

First, it views the judge's role as punitive. This is completely wrong. Rather, a disqualification should be viewed as: a) protecting the other athletes in the competition, and b) educating the athlete who commits the infraction.

Second, it assumes that younger swimmers are beginners while older swimmers are experienced, and should be held to a stricter standard. Yet, athletes enter the sport at various ages, and some 8 & unders are more "experienced" than some teenagers who are just entering the sport. In any event, experience is irrelevant.

Finally, the idea that disqualifying an 8 & under will "traumatize the child's psyche" is ludicrous. Youngsters are constantly being corrected during their early, formative years; that's how they learn.

4. **"Don't ask me to judge my child."** The referee must know that the judge treats everyone in the field the same—fairly and equitably—all the time. The referee must be confident that a judge will identify an infraction regardless of who the swimmer is. This is probably the ultimate test of the judge's

impartiality. To the judge, this is the time to separate themselves from the parental role and accept the responsibility of being a USA Swimming official.

5. **Don't Infer (Extrapolate).** You can only call what you see, NOT what you infer. For example, when a two handed simultaneous touch is required, you must actually see the swimmer miss the wall with the hand on the turn, and not assume that the touch was missed because, by the time you looked, only one hand was touching the wall.

Or, as a second example, you must actually see the breaststroker take the second arm pull and be past the widest part of that second stroke before the head surfaces, not assume that the swimmer took two pulls to get that far out in the pool when you saw the head surface.

Don't look for reasons to disqualify. If you see the infraction and it is clear, report it, but if you are uncertain, remember that the benefit of any doubt must go to the athlete.

SELECTED DEFINITIONS (From the USA Swimming Rulebook)

ARM — that part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist.

HORIZONTAL — parallel to the surface of the water.

ON THE BACK — position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the back.

ON THE BREAST — position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the breast.

PROPULSIVE — having power to propel.

SCISSOR KICK — use of the top of the instep of one foot and the bottom of the other foot in the propulsive part of the kick

SIMULTANEOUSLY — occurring at the same time

TOUCH — contact with the end of the course

TURN — a point where the swimmers reverse or change

direction.

WALL — vertical portion of the pool, contiguous surfaces of the deck and overflow gutter, the front portion of the starting block or platform, or the touchpad at the end of the course

FREESTYLE:

1. ***Start***—The forward start shall be used.

2. ***Stroke:***

- a. In an event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style, except that in a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke.

- b. 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 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface. (Note: completely re-submerging thereafter, except when entering a turn, is grounds for a disqualification. However, having the body momentarily covered by water is not grounds for a disqualification.)

3. ***Turns***— Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall. (Note: a hand touch is not required!)

4. ***Finish***— The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his person touches the wall after completing the prescribed distance.

5. ***Common violations:***

- a. Failure to touch at the turn. NOTE: if the touch is missed, the official should continue to watch (the swimmer may either reach back or swim back and make a legal touch any time prior to completing that length of the pool.)

- b. Failure of the head to surface by the 15-meter mark following the start and each turn.

BACKSTROKE:

1. ***Start***

a. The swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips.

b. Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited. (Note: if the toes or feet were in an illegal position before the start, there should not be a disqualification. It is the starter's responsibility to correct illegal position of the feet or toes prior to the start.)

2. *Stroke:*

a. The swimmer shall push off on his back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race. (Note the definition of "on the back.")

b. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except 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 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.

3. *Turns:*

a. Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall..

b. During the turn the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or a immediate continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. (Note: if the swimmer is too close to the wall, they do not need to do a flip turn but may touch the wall to turn.)

c. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall. (Note the definition of "on the back.")

4. *Finish*— Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. (Note the definition of "on the back.")

5. *Common violations:*

a. Turning shoulders past vertical on the turn and pausing prior to beginning an arm pull.

b. Turning shoulders past vertical on the turn, taking a

single or simultaneous double arm pull, and pausing prior to continuing the turn.

c. Turning shoulders past vertical on the turn, and taking more than one single or simultaneous double arm pull.

d. When shoulders have turned past vertical on the turn, swimmer missing touch on the wall and sculling back to touch.

e. Failure to return to or past vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall on the turn.

f. Shoulders past vertical towards the breast at the finish.

6. *Notes:*

a. Backstroke is essentially freestyle on the back. There are no restrictions on arm or leg movement except if the swimmer turns on the breast as part of a turning action.

b. If the swimmer turns past vertical towards the breast at a turn, a flip turn is not required. If the swimmer begins to turn past vertical towards the breast, but touches the wall with some part of their body (hand, arm, head, etc.) before going into the turn, it is legal as long as their turning motion was continuous. They may then turn in any manner they want as long as they're at or past vertical towards the back when their feet leave the wall.

BREASTSTROKE:

1. *Start*— The forward start shall be used.

2. *Stroke:*

a. After the start and after each turn when the swimmer leaves the wall, the body shall be kept on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall. (Note the definition of "on the breast.")

b. Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.

c. All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

d. The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water. The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish. The hands shall be brought back on or under the surface of the water.

e. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.

f. During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of the water.

g. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs.

h. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.

3. **Kick:**

a. After the start and each turn, a single butterfly kick, which must be followed by a breaststroke kick, is permitted during or at the completion of the first arm pull.

Note: an interpretation issued by the USA Swimming Rules Committee states: "The first arm stroke begins with the separation of the hands.... A pause after the separation of the hands is not a violation of the rule.... This interpretation requires 'observable separation' to initiate the arm pull. No other action will initiate the arm pull.... This interpretation requires additional separation if the swimmer starts or leaves the wall after a turn with the hands already separated."

b. Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

c. The feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick.

d. A Scissors, alternating movements or downward butterfly kicks is are not permitted except as provided herein.

e. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

4. **Turns and Finish:**

a. At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level. (Note: the hands need not be on the same level. The hands can touch as long as they do not overlap in any way.)

c. At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted.

d. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.

5. **Common violations:**

a. At the start or after a turn, initiating a downward butterfly kick prior to beginning the first arm pull.

b. At the start or after a turn, more than one downward butterfly kick.

c. At the start or after a turn, head still below the water surface when the hands begin to turn inward at the widest part of the second arm stroke.

d. Downward butterfly kicks during the swim.

e. Not moving the arms in the same horizontal plane throughout the race (including the turns and the finish.)

f. Nonsimultaneous or one-hand touch on turns or finish. (Hands need not be on the same level. On the turns, be alert for a legal, "quick" touch—can be mistakenly interpreted as a one-hand touch. You should stand so that you can observe the entire wall.)

g. Alternating or scissors kick.

h. Body not at or past the vertical towards the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall after a turn.

SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF JUDGING BREASTSTROKE

The first arm pull after the start and each turn may bring the hands all the way back to the legs. Thereafter, they can be brought back no further than the hipline. What constitutes the "hipline," however, is not defined. Therefore, judges should allow swimmers to pull to anyplace in the general area of the hips. The intent is to observe that, throughout the race, the swimmer does not

glide underwater with the hands flat or nearly flat against the side of the body, as is normal after the initial pull at the start and after each turn. The swimmer should be given the benefit of any doubt relating to the position of the "hipline."

When observing whether the downward butterfly kick occurs in the proper sequence, the position of the hands should be checked following the start or the turn. The gaze should immediately shift to the legs. If a downward butterfly kick occurs, the gaze should shift back to the hands to check for separation (or additional separation.)

After the first stroke and kick on the start and after each turn, the head must break the water surface before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second arm stroke. The hands do not have to stay in the water on the recovery. They may be recovered over the water; however, they must still be pushed forward together from the breast and the elbows must, at least, touch the water surface, except when reaching for the wall at a turn or the finish.

The head does not have to stay above the water level throughout the race. After the first underwater arm stroke and kick, the head need only come above the water once during each stroke cycle, but it actually has to break the water surface. The swimmer is permitted to "dive" under the water during each cycle, as long as a butterfly kick is not used to facilitate the diving action as this is part of the stroke, not a start or turn.

On turns or at the finish, swimmers do not have to touch with both hands at the same level. The hands must, however, touch simultaneously. Stroke and turn judges should stand at the edge of the pool when observing turns and finishes so that they can see the entire wall.

BUTTERFLY:

1. Start:

a. The forward start shall be used.

2. Stroke:

a. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer's shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast.

b. The swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water, which must bring the swimmer to the surface.

c. It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface.

d. The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish.

e. From the beginning of the first arm pull, the body shall be kept on the breast except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall. (Note definition of "on the breast.")

f. Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race. (Note the definition of "arm." It is not necessary for the entire arm to come out of the water, but the entire arm – from wrist to shoulder – must break the calm water surface.)

3. Kick:

a. All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous.

b. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. (Note: the feet may be crossed, or one may be higher than the other, provided no alternating action is introduced.)

c. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.

4. Turns:

a. At each turn the body shall be on the breast. (Note the definition of "on the breast.")

b. The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface. (Note: the hands need not be on the same level. The hands can touch as long as they do not overlap in any way.)

c. Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired.

d. The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.

5. **Finish:** At the finish, the body shall be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface. (Note: the hands need not be on the same level. The hands can touch as long as they do not overlap in any way.)

6. **Common violations:**

a. Hand touch not simultaneous or one- hand touch. Be alert for a legal, " quick" touch—can mistakenly be interpreted for a one-hand touch. You should stand so that you can observe the entire wall.

b. Entire arm – from wrist to shoulder – not breaking the calm water surface.

c. Arm recovery not over the water final after pull at the turn or finish (usually characterized by short pull and an underwater, stabbing touch).

d. Non-simultaneous arm movement.

e. Alternating kicking movement, such as flutter kicks.

f. Scissors or breaststroke kicking movement.

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY:

1. The swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance in the following order: the first one-fourth, butterfly; the second one-fourth, backstroke; the third one-fourth, breaststroke; and the last one-fourth, freestyle. (Note: In the IM, "freestyle" means any other stroke than the butterfly, backstroke or breaststroke. Freestyle must have been swum for a sufficient distance to be recognized as swimming in the style of a prohibited stroke.)

2. Stroke. The stroke for each one-fourth of the designated distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke.

3. Turns

a. Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke.

b. The turns when changing from one stroke to another shall conform to the finish rules for the stroke just completed, and shall be as follows:

(1) Butterfly to Backstroke — The swimmer must touch as described for butterfly. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner, but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.

(2) Backstroke to Breaststroke — The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.

(3) Breaststroke to Freestyle — The swimmer must touch as described for breaststroke. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner.

3. Finish. The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his/her person touches the wall after the prescribed distance.

4. Common Violations

a. Same as described for the individual strokes.

b. Not finishing the backstroke on the back.

5. Notes

There are three ways in which a swimmer might transition from backstroke to breaststroke: (1) an open turn, where they finish on their back and then rotate towards the breast; this is the most commonly used turning style, (2) a "bucket" turn, where they finish on their back and then flip backwards with their legs towards the wall; this is the second most commonly used turning style, and (3) a "crossover" turn, where they bring their lead arm directly over their heads and make the touch just before their shoulders get past vertical towards the breast as they make the turn. Regardless of the style used, the backstroke must be finished on the back. If the shoulders are observed to rotate past vertical towards the breast prior to the athlete contacts the wall, a disqualification should be called.

RELAYS:

1. **Freestyle**— Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance using any desired stroke(s). Freestyle finish rules apply. .

2. **Medley**— Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance in the following order: first, backstroke; second, breaststroke; third, butterfly; and fourth, freestyle. Rules pertaining to each stroke used shall govern where applicable. At the end of each leg, the finish rule for each stroke applies in each case.

3. **All Relays**

a. No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event.

b. When automatic relay take-off judging is used, each swimmer must touch the touchplate or pad in his/her lane at the end of the course to have finished his/her leg of the relay race. (PVS generally does not use automatic relay take-off judging.)

c. In relay races a swimmer other than the first swimmer shall not start until his/her team-mate has concluded his/her leg.

d. Any relay team member and his/her relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg enters the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race. Exception: When an in-the water start is required or such start is approved by the Referee.

e. Each relay team member shall leave the water immediately upon finishing his/her leg, except the last member.

f. In relay races the team of a swimmer whose feet have lost touch with the starting platform (ground or deck) before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified.

g. In relay races involving in-the-water starts, the team of a swimmer who has lost touch with the end of the course before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified, unless the swimmer in default returns to the original starting point at the wall.

JUDGING SWIMMERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

1. In judging the stroke or kick of a swimmer with a physical disability, the referee and stroke & turn judge should follow the general rule that: if a part of the body

is absent or cannot be used, it is not judged; if it is used during the stroke or kick, it should be judged in accordance with the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.

Judgments should be made based on the actual rule — not on the swimmer's technique. For example, the breaststroke swimmer with one arm or leg shorter than the other, may have a non-symmetrical stroke or kick, but as long as the arm or leg action is simultaneous, it would meet that portion of the rule. No flotation devices should be permitted.

2. Guidelines for judging swimmers with various disabilities are contained in Article 105 of USA Swimming Rules and Regulations. Get familiar with them. You never know when you will need to apply them at a meet.

CONCLUSION

Officiating can be enjoyable. It is not designed to win popularity contests; however, the self satisfaction of having done a good job is very rewarding. Unfortunately, inferior officials rarely recognize their inadequacies, but fellow officials, coaches and swimmers do. All officials must continually reassess their own performances. This can best be done by regularly reviewing the rules and training material and by attending training sessions.

The new or inexperienced official often asks, "How long will it take me to become a good stroke and turn judge?" It depends upon the individual, but it won't happen overnight or without effort. Knowing the rules and attending training sessions are very important, but experience gained by working at meets is the only real teacher. Only experience can build the confidence the stroke and turn judge requires before his or her performance becomes "automatic." Even then, a continuing review of the rules and regular attendance at retraining sessions are essential.