



Take Your Mark!

Potomac Valley Swimming
Parents Newsletter

December, 2018

How is My Child's Official Time Determined?

"The scoreboard didn't stop when my child touched the wall. By the time it stopped three more seconds had gone by!"

"The scoreboard didn't have a time for my child. It just had a blank!"

"The scoreboard said my child's time was 1:14.85. But the posted results say it was 1:13.10. Which one is correct?"

As you've probably guessed by now, the time shown on the scoreboard is not necessarily the official time. USA Swimming has very specific rules regarding how your child's official time is determined. Let's take a look at the process.

At a meet sanctioned by USA Swimming, your child is timed with one of the following systems:

Fully Automatic - Touchpads are the primary timing system. Timers are required to operate the plunger buttons and at least one stopwatch as backup.

Semi-Automatic - The plunger buttons are the primary timing system. A minimum of two buttons is required, each operated by a separate timer. A backup consisting of at least one stopwatch is also required.

Manual - This type of timing uses stopwatches only. When using Manual timing, three timers per lane are required, each operating a stopwatch.

When your child finishes the race, the time is recorded by both the primary and the backup systems, and the results are reviewed by the official who is responsible for determining the official time: the **Administrative Official**, or **AO**. This person compares the time recorded by the primary timing system with the time recorded by the backup systems. If the backup devices support the time recorded by the primary timing system, the AO certifies the primary time as official. But if the difference between the primary and any backup device is .30 second or greater, the Administrative Official's job gets complicated. He/she tries to determine the reason for the discrepancy: Did the swimmer miss the touchpad? Was it a soft touch? Did the touchpad (or button or watch) malfunction? Was the timer distracted or interfered with? The AO gathers as many facts as possible, and then determines the official time according to very specific rules found in the USA Swimming rulebook.

As you can see, the Moms and Dads serving as volunteer timers on deck are absolutely essential to the process of determining the official time for each and every swimmer in each and every heat!

Sometimes the official time is not the time seen on the scoreboard. This may be due to a missed touchpad, a soft touch, or a malfunction. Regardless, if your child has swum the prescribed distance legally, he/she will have an official time, which will be published in the posted results.



SWIMS: The National Database of Times

The USA Swimming **SWIMS** database is the official database of USA Swimming. It is the registration database for USA Swimming and contains all sanctioned swims, including all sanctioned USA Swimming meets, many observed swims (e.g. H.S. and College Championship observed swims), all approved meets (e.g. the Black History Meet).

This database includes all meet results from PVS meets from October 2003 to the present and provides an easy way for parents and swimmers to view their times for each event. You can easily search for your child's (or any swimmer's) top times, his/her rank within an event, or all swimmers' ranks within an event by LSC, Zone, or nationally.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/Home/times/individual-times-search>

The database also includes something called the **Power Point Calculator**. Every swim listed in the USA Swimming database includes a Power Point value. This point system allows for comparison of the quality of performances across strokes, distances and events, as well as between age groups.

So how exactly does the power point system work? The power point scale ranges from 1 to 1100 points. The higher the points, the stronger you are in that event. These points are used to rank swimmers and their clubs in IMX and Virtual Club Championships programs.

Why would you and your child be interested in these points? Ever wonder how your long course times compare to your short course times? Wonder no more. Comparing your season swims is just one way Power Points can be of use to you. Here are some other suggestions for using it:

So you're pretty decent in your events across the board, but you want to know which events are stronger for you on a national scale. Use Power Points. For example, you can compare your score in the 100 back vs. the 200 back or across several freestyle distances such as the 100, 200, and 400.

Look at the strength of one stroke vs. another stroke. For example, compare your freestyle to your breaststroke. Determine the quality of you short course vs. long course swims. This comparison is a great way to measure progress from the end of the short course season through the long course season.



Links to some intriguing articles for swim parents:

What to Eat at a Meet

<https://www.usaswimming.org/news-landing-page/2017/08/09/what-to-eat-at-a-meet-a-swimfasterfood-ga-with-our-nutrition-expert>

What Should I Say After Races?

<https://swimswam.com/ask-swim-mom-what-should-i-say-after-races/>

5 Reasons to Be a Timer

<https://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/5-reasons-to-be-a-timer>

What Do You Do If Parents Around You are Losing Control?

<https://www.parentsinsport.co.uk/2017/10/22/what-do-you-do-if-parents-around-you-are-losing-control/>



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Jack Neill, Editor: jjneill@gmail.com

Potomac Valley Swimming

Tom Ugast, General Chair: tugast@nationscapitalswimming.com