

Aligning Officiating Best Practices Across the Province – Delivered by the Alberta Officials & Competitions Committee (AOCC)

Referee Professional Development Day – Canmore, AB - September 29, 2019

1) Backstroke ledges - toes on wall rule

Backstroke Rule SW 6.1 states the toes must be in contact with the wall.

“When using a Backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad.”

Inspector of Turns SW 2.6.2 states their role begins from the start.

This rule is interpreted by both Swim Canada and by FINA as giving the Inspectors of Turns jurisdiction to report incidences of toes of both feet not being in contact with the touchpad/wall to the referee.

Some Referees have interpreted the “from the start” SW 2.6.2 as if it meant “after the start”. This interpretation is inconsistent with the Swimming Canada’s interpretation and the interpretation of FINA. Further, even if the “from” were to be interpreted as meaning “after”, SW 2.1.1 would give the referee the authority to instruct the inspectors of the turns to report toe infractions on the start of backstroke

“The Referee has full control and authority over all officials, approve their assignments, and instruct them regarding all special features or regulations related to the competitions.”

The wording from the Swim Alberta session briefing notes is below.

“Prior to the start of each heat, the IT or timer will ensure the straps are free of any twists or knots. Once the athlete arrives behind the block the IT or timer will ask the athlete if they will use the ledge. If “yes”, then the IT or timer will place the footrest into the water. The swimmer will then adjust the level of the ledge. On the referee’s first long whistle the IT must stand. On the second-long whistle, the IT must step forward to confirm that the swimmer’s toes are in contact with the wall (or touch pad). If so then the IT is to stand straight. If not, then the IT must raise their hand. The Starter will request the swimmers to relax and remind all swimmers to place their toes on the wall or pad. The swimmer will only have one chance to fix the position of their toes. After the announcement by the starter the referee will blow another long whistle. The IT must look again at the toes. If the toes are not in contact with the touchpad or the wall, this is an infraction. The IT should use the procedure outlined in the briefing to report the infraction to the referee at the conclusion of the race. At no time should the IT speak to the swimmer regarding the positioning of their toes.”

a. Additions from Session: Backstroke Ledges

- i. Bring a backstroke ledge to your briefing.
- ii. An addition to the Meet Manager checklist is for the meet manager to prepare the backstroke ledges.
- iii. The Swimmer will adjust it themselves to ensure the official is not responsible for a 'bad start'. An official may show a new swimmer then let the swimmer do it themselves.
- iv. A swimmer may ask for the ledge to be removed.
- v. There is no right-way for a swimmer's feet to be on a wall. They can be in any position as long as some part of the toes are touching the wall.
- vi. Meet Managers should carry an Allen key to calibrate ledges in case of emergency.
- vii. The Referee is to ask the Meet Manager before every meet about the ledges.
- viii. If there is a disruption during the start due to a ledge failure, such as the ledge falling in, it is appropriate to allow the swimmer to re-swim.
- ix. Ledge Placement after the start
 1. 50m Long Course
 - a. No action required
 2. 50m Short Course, 100m Long Course (or longer)
 - a. Place the ledge behind the wedge on the starting block
 3. Relays
 - a. Remove the backstroke ledge completely, placement and location to ensure it can be installed easily for the next race.
- x. Starter Statement:
 1. Toes of both feet must be in contact with the wall.

2) Signed heat sheets - I still show up at meets to see not only unsigned heat sheets floating around deck but also different versions of the same heat sheet being used on deck in the same session

New heat sheets should not be printed after the master has been printed. Preliminary and Timed Final heat sheets do not need to be signed. Any printing of heat sheets should be copies from the master heat sheet.

- Follow the time stamp on the master sheet.
- Referee's and Starters will manually scratch swimmers on their sheets instead of having new ones printed every time.
- Clerks of Course need to know that a 'late scratch' is still a no-show.
- Make sure that Timers are instructed in the briefing to get the name of the swimmer if they don't know who is supposed to be there to give to the Referee after, so no swimmer is missed.

3) Proposal for Approval of Taping at Alberta Swim Meets

The swimming rules regarding taping are:

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, power bands, or adhesive substances. Goggles may be worn. Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by FINA Sport Medicine Committee.*

CSW 10.8.1 *In Canada, any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by Referee.*

(From the Swimming Canada Officials April 2017 Bulletin)

Taping

The rule on taping, as approved by FINA in 2009, clearly states that taping is not permitted as stated in rule SW 10.8. As technical officials, we always consider the “intent” of the rule when making a decision. Any references to legal swimming attire in the FINA rulebook makes specific reference only to the swimsuit itself. There is no mention of jewelry, bracelets, etc.

Medical Notes

As for medical notes or certificates, (ex: taping; band-aids, etc.), they can be presented at a meet to the referee, but this does not necessarily mean that the taping is permitted at the meet, (ex; a medical note may state that a swimmer needs 3 fingers taped to assist in the healing process, but it would not necessarily mean that it would be permitted according to our interpretation of the swimming rules in terms of assisting the athlete in terms of speed, endurance or buoyancy. In all medical exemption situations, the final decision rests with the referee.

A medical opinion or doctor’s note addressing the benefit of taping for an athlete is in itself just that, a medical opinion as to the need for taping. So, a medical opinion can correctly state that the athlete needs taping to avoid further injury or for the purpose of giving support or strengthening muscles or joints. This opinion we need to consider and take very seriously, but it does not automatically give the athlete permission to swim in a competition wearing that tape.

It is then the duty of the Referee as a Technical Official to determine whether that “taping” is legal in a swimming competition, and whether that “taping” benefits the athlete in terms of such areas as speed, buoyancy or endurance during a race. The referee must always adhere to the FINA rules when making a decision, and in this case consider the intent of rule SW 10.8.

Examples taping that can be approved are:

- Tape to support a joint

- Tape to support a fractured finger. In this case tape may be used to tape 2 fingers together (Taping 2 fingers together will not aid the speed or buoyancy of a swimmer)

Tape prescribed by a physiotherapist or chiropractor will not be allowed.

It is expected that the coach or swimmer will notify Meet Management prior to the start of the meet with a request for a medical approval for taping along with a letter supporting the request from a physician.

For multi-session competitions, the Advisory Referee has the authority to make the decision on taping.

Prior to the meet coaches should contact the meet manager to advise of their swimmers taping. If the swimmer not permitted to swim due to taping, they may be permitted to swim as exhibition although achieving qualification times should be considered.

The Referee should physically see the tape on the swimmer prior to racing each day of the competition.

4) Clarification around role of the Advisory Referee.

The role of the advisory referee is intended to provide mentorship to all officials and also to be a resource to help ensure consistency over the course of a competition.

- The Advisory Referee shall mentor all first-time senior officials. If there are slow periods during the session, the Advisory Referee is encouraged to walk around the pool deck and check in with officials new to their roles. This should be discussed and agreed upon by the session referee prior.
- The Advisory Referee may fill in for the Referee and Starter if the Referee or Starter need to step away from active duty, when asked.
- The Advisory Referee should ensure that a short briefing takes place between the Referee(s), Starter(s) and CFJ/CJE prior to the start of each session. The Advisory Referee will be a resource for interpretation and clarity of protocols and provide consistency in their delivery over the course of the meet.
- The Advisory Referee should attend the general briefing and ensure that the Referee(s) covers all essential points.
- While the Referee is arbitrator of the swim rules, if asked, the Advisory Referee will provide guidance so that the Referee can make their own decisions. In an exceptional circumstance, if a decision made by a senior official puts someone at risk or compromises the integrity of the meet, the advisory referee may step in and replace the official. Any instance of a senior official being replaced during a meet shall be reported to Swim Alberta and will be subject to review.

- An advisory referee is there to advise not to decide.

Role of the Advisory referee link found here for reference: https://swimalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/role_of_the_advisory_referee-nov_28_2017.pdf

5) The practice on not giving out DQ slips and requiring S&T officials to come to the referee to verbally report the infraction and then write it up.

This process is used at National competition where the number of DQ's is very low.

- The process is very inefficient at lower level meets where the referee is dealing with numerous infractions.
- As a teaching tool it is suboptimal for S&T officials. Individual officials learning is improved by writing up the infraction themselves and then discussing it with the referee rather than being told what to write by the referee.
- Ideally DQ slips should be written by the official before communicating with the referee. If you have a question, please ask.

6) Do we need to do a second deck check (Competition safety checklist) if the pool is not used in between sessions?

The simple answer is yes, a deck check must be completed prior to the start of each session. Sessions in general, including the warm-up period, are approximately four to five hours in duration. While most physical set-up items will remain unchanged, during this time frame the air temperature, water level, water temperature and water chemistry may change. The water level may revise the calibration to the backstroke ledges. The air temperature, water temperature and water chemistry should be recorded due to the potential impacts of significant changes. In addition, there are often different events and volunteers during each session, such as distance events that require bells and different safety marshals who must be briefed by the referee.

A referee may determine that a second check is not required should the following criteria be met.

- Session length, following warm-up, is under two hours in length and the next session begins immediately with the same officials and safety marshals.
 - *(break of 20 minutes or less while volunteers still on deck)*

7) Chief Timekeeper – some meets with fully automatic equipment (pads/plungers) still have a chief timekeeper with a stopwatch around the neck standing off to the side – I'm not sure what this is accomplishing.

The AOCC would like to see a chief timekeeper at meets. At a fully electronic meet the CT does not need to have a stopwatch. Their job is to oversee all timers; ensure they are plunging properly, ringing bells properly and managing the ledges (if asked) properly. They

may be asked by the referee or CJE to address any problems as per the above with individual timers.

- 8) Identification of best practices for managing the process of inserting alternates into finals where you find out after the heat sheets for finals have been finalized that you will have a no show. Example if there are multiple days of finals happening with different referees each day. One referee using the practice of stepping the swimmers under onto the blocks then stepping them down and putting the alternate in place and another referee placing alternates before any of the finals begin and telling them which lane, they will be in.**

The appropriate practice is to call the swimmers up, step them down and put the alternate in place to ensure there are no additional surprises. The temptation to shortcut this process to save time creates a high chance of other issues should the event have an additional, unexpected 'no-show'. Following this formal process also prepares younger swimmers for higher level meets in the future.

- 9) Printing of Data – Edmonton prints everything from quantum and Calgary prints only exceptions – it would be great to see consistency on what is printed and a discussion as to the why we print;**

Printing is recommended depending on your level of comfort with the team you are with. Consistency of printing does not impact the competition; the printing requirements are to support the needs of the referee on deck based on their experience and comfort.

Additional Topics

- 1) Are deck entries always exhibition swims?**

The swimming rule below refers to 'local' provincial meets (ie. club invitationals) and not provincial championships

CSW 3.6 Scratches, Substitutions, & Deck Entries (applies to local Provincial Meets)

CSW 3.6.5 Late or Deck Entries may be allowed at the discretion of the Meet Manager and shall be classified as Exhibition swims.

Therefore, in the case of club invitationals, as per CSW 3.6.5 late or Deck Entries are required to be classified as Exhibition Swims. In theory, with Provincial Meets, whether deck entries are classified as Exhibition Swims will be dependent upon the wording of the meet package. However, in practice Swim Alberta's meet packages currently exclude the possibility of exhibition swims.

2) Is the scratch deadline 30 minutes after the last event in the morning session? Or 30 minutes after the last prelim event when there are timed finals after that?

The Swim Alberta Scratch Rule states the following:

Scratch Deadline and Penalties for Finals:

- *Scratches are to be submitted to the clerk of course 30 minutes after conclusion of the preliminary session. The conclusion of the preliminary session will be the completion of the final race of the session or when the 800/1500 are the last events of the session, the scratch deadline shall be 30 minutes after the completion of the last race immediately preceding the start of the 800/1500.*