

## NOTICE TO ALL USMS MEMBERS FROM THE USMS RULES COMMITTEE

The following notice bears important information for all USMS members regarding:

1. Breaststroke: initiation of the first arm pull
2. Backstroke: disqualification language for the turn
3. Dual sanction agreement between USA Swimming and USMS: how to run such meets

### BREASTSTROKE

USA Swimming has issued an updated interpretation of the initiation of the breaststroke arm pull to conform to the FINA interpretation. USMS Swimming Rules: Part 1 of the USMS Rule Book are based in part upon article 101, “Individual Strokes and Relays”, of the USA Swimming Technical Rules which includes the breaststroke. **The updated interpretation will apply to USMS competition (USMS article 101.2.3).** See the following text published by Bruce Stratton, Chair of the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee, December 8, 2008:

#### **Text from USA Swimming:**

“In 2005, FINA made changes to the technical rules for breaststroke which allowed a single downward butterfly kick during or at the end of the first arm pull after the start and after each turn. As required by USA Swimming Rules, we changed our technical rules for the breaststroke to conform to the changes made by FINA.

During the time since the change, there has been much confusion about what constitutes the beginning of the first arm pull. Based upon the (USA-S) Rules & Regulations Committee understanding of FINA’s interpretation and actual practice in international competition, our guidance has been that the mere separation of the hands or arms does not necessarily constitute the beginning of the first arm pull.

However, we have been informed that FINA’s interpretation is now different from our previous understanding of what constitutes the beginning of the first arm pull. In order for our interpretation to conform to that used by FINA, the following interpretation is being made, effective immediately.

For purposes of Article 101.2.3, as it relates to what constitutes the initiation of the first arm pull and the allowed single downward butterfly kick, the following applies:

After the start and after each turn, any lateral or downward movement of the hands or arms is considered to be the initiation of the first arm pull.

**Here ends the text from USA Swimming.**

For any questions about the interpretation of the initiation of the first arm pull contact:  
Kathy Casey, Chair  
USMS Rules Committee  
[rules@usms.org](mailto:rules@usms.org)

## **BACKSTROKE TURN: DISQUALIFICATION LANGUAGE**

**There has been NO change in the interpretation of the backstroke turn rule.** Recently, USA-Swimming advised its officials that they should alter the wording typically used to report backstroke turn disqualifications. In 2005 USA Swimming deleted the following sentence from the backstroke turn rule: “Once the body has left the position on the back, any kick or arm pull must be part of the continuous turning action.” Deleting that sentence did not constitute a change in the interpretation of the turn because the previous sentence addresses initiating the turn. However, officials continued to use the statement “noncontinuous turning action” on disqualification slips. Since the USA Swimming rule no longer refers to “continuous turning action”, USA Swimming officials have been encouraged to use language such as “failure to initiate the turn after the arm pull” or “failure to initiate the turn after turning toward the breast” rather than “noncontinuous turning action”.

However, USMS did NOT delete the “continuous turning action” sentence from its backstroke turn rule (USMS article 101.4.3). The USMS Rules Committee deemed that sentence a good clarification for USMS members and retained the sentence. Therefore, **any of the statements listed above for describing infractions of the turn rule, including “noncontinuous turning action”, are acceptable for USMS competition.**

For any questions about backstroke turn infraction language contact:

Kathy Casey, Chair  
USMS Rules Committee  
[rules@usms.org](mailto:rules@usms.org)

or

Charlie Cockrell, Chair  
USMS Officials Committee  
[officials@usms.org](mailto:officials@usms.org)

## **DUAL SANCTION AGREEMENT BETWEEN USA SWIMMING and USMS**

Combining USA Swimming and USMS meets is now an official option as a result of an agreement signed by USA Swimming and USMS July 30, 2008. A number of inquiries have been received asking how to run such combined meets. Below is “Attachment A” from the signed agreement that describes three methods for running combined meets. Note that the term “organization” refers to USA Swimming and/or USMS throughout the document.

### **ATTACHMENT A**

#### **COMBINED, PARALLEL, and INTERWOVEN MEETS**

The number of inquiries as to what mechanisms are available for combining USA Swimming and USMS swimming meets has been increasing. The reasons for combining these meets are many, ranging from the limited availability of pool time and officials to the desire to promote the sport as a lifelong activity. There are several ways of accomplishing this goal within the rules and insurance policies of each organization. This document outlines these options.

It is assumed that all competitors are a member of either USA Swimming, USMS, or both. Those that are members of both must select one organization with which to compete for the entire meet. Dual membership cannot be used to exceed the daily event limits imposed by either organization. Automatic recognition of times achieved by a USMS swimmer competing in the USA-S portion is still available.

Any of the joint meets described below must have sanctions from both USA Swimming and USMS. Both sanctions must be held by the host organization. The host organization cannot be required to accept a participant from either USMS or USA Swimming that would otherwise be barred from participation by their respective organizations.

USMS Record and Top Ten submissions must comply with all USMS documentation requirements.

### **Combined Meets**

With the consent of all (co-)hosting teams and the LSC and LMSC, a combined meet may be sanctioned by both USA Swimming and USMS and all swimmers competing according to USA Swimming rules. This mechanism allows the meet host(s) to seed the event as they normally would, based upon times, with USA Swimming and USMS members combined in heats without specific lanes allocated to one organization or the other. There are restrictions however. A divider must separate members of each organization. A lane line is sufficient to achieve the separation. This does preclude, for example, swimming two-to-a-lane with a member of each organization in the same lane. Warm-up and warm-down should be conducted in separate lanes. Relay teams must consist of members of the same organization.

### **Parallel Meets**

The two meets may be swum in parallel by assigning some number of lanes to USMS competitors and a different set to USA Swimming competitors. If possible, separate stroke and turn officials for each set is preferred. It is permissible to adjust, for example, the makeup of the USMS heats so that competitors in a given heat have approximately the same seed times. Each organization's rules would apply to their members.

### **Interwoven Meets**

The two meets may be swum with complete heats of swimmers from both organizations alternating. There would be no need for separate stroke and turn officials. Each organization's rules would apply to their members.

For any questions about combined meets contact:  
Kathy Casey, Chair  
USMS Rules Committee  
[rules@usms.org](mailto:rules@usms.org)