
2023
U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING
CODE OF REGULATIONS
AND
RULES OF COMPETITION

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Edited by the USMS National Office with assistance from the Rules, Legislation, Long Distance, Records and Tabulation, and Championship Committees.

This is an official publication of United States Masters Swimming Inc., the national governing body for Masters Swimming in the United States. Additional copies of this book may be purchased at a cost of \$10 per copy for shipping and handling from the USMS National Office at the above address.

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On the Cover: Top: Donald Miralle. Middle: Peter H. Bick. Bottom: Laura M. Hamel

Rule Book Dedication

Teri White began officiating in 1991, when her youngest child was 5 years old and their local swim team asked if she could help. She agreed, preferring that to sitting in the bleachers just watching. She spent the next three decades volunteering on pool decks in the Pacific Northwest and across the country.

As many USA Swimming officials do, when her kids left the sport, she kept right on officiating, eventually winding up at U.S. Masters Swimming meets in addition to USA Swimming meets. White has worked nearly every USMS pool national championship and several World Aquatics World Championships since 2014.

White has served on the USMS Officials Committee since 2015, including as vice chair in 2017, and has chaired the committee since 2018. She's also served as an ex-officio member of the USMS Rules Committee since 2018.

Her dedication was recognized in 2020 with a U.S. Masters Swimming Dorothy Donnelly Service Award.

After the coronavirus pandemic shut down events in 2020, she helped work through the challenges of running the 2021 Spring National Championship

in Greensboro, North Carolina, with new social distancing protocols to create a safe space for all participants and meet staff.

One of the things White is best known for is expanding and professionalizing the USMS officials training and certification program. Her being well organized and strategic helped her do that, but those who work with her say her secret is her unfailingly positive and motivational approach with everyone. Her zest for having fun while performing the critical role of officiating at swim meets is infectious, and she has a knack for persuading others to have as much fun as her while delivering excellent service to athletes of all ages.

As the Officials Committee chair, she reminds her fellow officials how important their roles are and how important it is to support one other. She's also gifted at gently pushing people to be better by believing in and supporting them.

USMS cannot have swim meets without officials, and her years of dedication and service have made an incalculable impact on our ability to provide one of the premier benefits of being a USMS member. The 2023 Rule Book is dedicated to Teri White with our deepest gratitude and respect.



Teri White

Previous Rule Book Dedications

1989	June Krauser	2007	Pacific Masters XI FINA
1992	Mary Lee Watson		World Masters
1993	Kathrine Casey and Gail Dummer		Championships Organizing Committee
1994	All USMS volunteers	2008	Steve Schofield
1995	E. Kevin Kelly	2009	Meg Smath
1996	Dorothy Donnelly	2010	Bill Volckening
1997	Jack Geoghegan	2011	Tracy Grilli
1998	USMS All-Americans	2012	Esther Lyman
1999	F.H. "Ted" Haartz	2013	Rob Copeland
2000	Jim Matysek	2015	June Krauser
2001	Gene Donner and the staff of Gateway Printing	2016	Rob Butcher
2002	Nancy Ridout	2017	Tom Taylor
2003	Tom Boak	2018	Anna Lea Matysek
2004	Joanne Tingley	2019	Jeffrey Roddin
2005	Walt Reid	2020	Ralph Davis
2006	Pieter Cath	2021	Ray Novitske
		2022	Ted Haartz

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Organizing Principles

Preamble

United States Masters Swimming is an organization of sportswomen and sportsmen founded in 1970 and dedicated to the premise that the lives of participants will be enhanced through aquatic physical conditioning. USMS supports and encourages competitions among its members and those of other nations. This book establishes certain rules and regulations for the conduct of the organization, the participants, and the competitors in the spirit of good sportsmanship.

Mission Statement

To promote health, wellness, fitness, and competition for adults through swimming.

Vision Statement

USMS will be the premier resource for adult aquatic fitness in the United States and will make fitness through swimming available for as many adults as possible.

Goals and Objectives

- A** To encourage and promote improved physical fitness and health in adults.
- B** To offer adults the opportunity to participate in a lifelong fitness and/or competitive swimming program.
- C** To encourage organizations and communities to establish and sponsor Masters Swimming programs.
- D** To enhance fellowship and camaraderie among Masters swimmers.
- E** To stimulate research in the sociology, psychology, and physiology of Masters swimming.

Core Objectives

Service the membership.
Educate the membership.
Build the membership.

Major Changes for 2023

Meet Announcement: Terminology has been updated to consistently use “meet announcement” instead of “meet information” and “entry forms.” Clarified the required timeline for release of the meet announcement following the issuance of the sanction, but no later than one week prior to the entry deadline.

Club Affiliation: Clarified that a swimmer’s club affiliation as stated on the entry form shall apply throughout the meet. A swimmer may provide proof of a change in club affiliation or declare unattached status prior to the first event in which the swimmer competes in the meet.

Meet Committee: Redefined the membership and responsibilities of the meet committee to better reflect current practices and also clarified the responsibilities of the meet director, meet committee, and meet referee with respect to postponement, cancellation, and protests.

National Championship Meets: Removes the rules regarding awarding and post-meet reporting of national championship meets and assigns these duties to the Championship Committee.

Virtual Meets: Virtual meets may be held as competitions at multiple venues (sanctioned by each respective LMSC) with the same order of events and all results merged. Virtual meets may be held on different days at the multiple venues. All of the events must be completed within a maximum 10-day period in the same calendar year. The age determining date shall be the same for the entire meet and in accordance with article 102.2.

Dual-Sanctioned Meets: Updated the guidelines for hosting USMS-sanctioned meets as dual-sanctioned meets with USA Swimming in Appendix B to clarify that USMS administrative regulations and rules apply to the USMS portions of the competition.

Name Change: FINA (Fédération Internationale de Natation in French; International Federation of Swimming in English) has changed its name to World Aquatics.

Glossary

Administrative Referee—an official certified as an administrative referee who supervises entries, seeding, determination of official times, results, and meet personnel assisting with these duties.

Aggregate Time—times achieved by four individuals in separate starts that are added together to arrive at a relay time for entry purposes.

Anchored (Starting Platform)—stable at all times without human aid.

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

Bulkhead—moveable end wall of a course.

Cable Swim—a type of straightaway swim defined by a cable.

Club—an organization or group of permanent character that is a member of USMS, and that actively promotes and/or participates in Masters Swimming.

Code—the *USMS Code of Regulations and Rules of Competition*, including Parts 1–6 and the Organizing Principles.

College Club Swimming (CCS)—A swimming program administered by USMS. CCS is the organization that unifies college club swimming programs across the country. CCS provides the rules, calendar of events, results database, and communications for CCS registered individuals and clubs.

Corporation—United States Masters Swimming Inc. (USMS).

Course—designated distance over which the competition is conducted.

Long Course—50 meters.

Short Course—25 yards or 25 meters.

Deck-Entered—all entries are accepted on the first or later day of that meet and subsequently seeded into events.

Deck-Seeding—with or without check-in, events seeded at the time of the event using entries received prior to or at the meet.

Drafting—in open water and long distance events, an individual swimming behind or next to a single swimmer or support craft for the purpose of taking advantage of the reduced water resistance.

Dual Meet—competition between two clubs.

Dual-Sanctioned Meet—A USMS sanctioned meet held in conjunction with a USA Swimming sanctioned meet in which swimmers from both organizations are competing together in the same session(s).

Electronic Timing Chip—used to trigger the timing system and may not be used as an audible pacing device in swimming.

End of the Course—designated wall for racing turns or finishes.

Escort Craft—boats or paddle boards that accompany swimmers in an open water swim for safety and logistical support, including the person or people that staff them.

Event—any clinic, demonstration, series of races in a given stroke and distance, or meet: including pool, long distance, and open water.

Event Director—the person responsible for the administration and conduct of the event.

Ex Officio Member—a committee member, appointed by virtue of an office or position held, who has participatory rights of membership but no vote.

FINA—see World Aquatics

Finish—the instant that a swimmer touches the wall at the end of the prescribed distance.

Finish Point—the physical location where the race terminates.

Fitness Events—events designed to encourage and enhance fitness.

First Day of Meet—day on which first competitive swimming event is conducted.

Foreign Swimmer—athlete member of a World Aquatics Member Federation other than USMS.

Forward Start—an entry made while facing the course or a start made while in the water either facing the course or not facing the course.

Foul—an instance of obstruction, interference, collision, or equipment malfunction that prevents the successful completion of a race.

Gender—a competition category defined as male or female for the purpose of athlete swimming eligibility for official times, places, records, and other forms of recognition.

Gender Identity—an individual's concept of self, which may be male, female, a blend of both, or neither.

Grease—a substance used by swimmers to reduce friction or reduce the loss of body heat during a swim.

Heat—a division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time.

Heat Sheet—a list of events with names of swimmers, heat assignments, lane assignments, ages, affiliations (e.g., club, workout group, and/or LMSC), and seed times.

Horizontal—parallel to the level surface of the water.

Housekeeping—changes to the *USMS Code of Regulations and Rules of Competition* to correct errors of deviation from adopted language, non-conformity with the *USMS Publications Style Guide*, consistency of wording between multiple articles, or accuracy of numerical article and page references.

IOPC—International Olympic and Paralympic Committee.

Initial Distance—that first portion of a race for which an official time may be recorded but which is not itself a completed event.

Lane—the specific area in which the swimmer is assigned to swim.

Lane Line—continuous floating markers attached to a line stretched from one end of the course to the other for the purpose of separating adjacent lanes.

Lane Markers—the guide lines on the bottom of the pool and in the center of the lanes running from one end of the course to the other.

Last Day of the Meet—day on which last competitive swimming event is conducted.

Leadoff—the first part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

Leg (Relay)—the part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

Length—the extent of the course from end to end.

LMSC—Local Masters Swimming Committee.

Manual Start—the start of any timing device by an individual in response to the same starting signal given to the swimmers.

Mark—(take your) starting position.

Masters Swimming—a program including training, competition, and other activities affiliated with United States Masters Swimming through the participation of USMS members or through a USMS sanction.

May—permissive, not mandatory.

Medical Identification Item—an item worn by a swimmer that identifies medical conditions, emergency contacts, or other information necessary to protect the health of the swimmer. Medical identification items are not considered part of swimwear.

Meet—an event or series of events held under sanction or recognition and conducted within 10 consecutive days at the same venue or multiple venues for virtual meets. Postal meets may be conducted over periods longer than 10 days.

Meet Announcement—document that sets forth required information about the meet, including the starting times, order of events, entry procedures, and other meet procedures as required by the rules and regulations.

Meet Program—information provided to swimmers, coaches, and officials pertinent to the operation of a meet, which should include entry lists with names, ages, and affiliations (e.g., club, workout group, and/or LMSC), but may also include heat sheets and/or other information.

Member—an individual, club, or organization registered with USMS.

Must—mandatory.

Official time—a time achieved in a USMS-sanctioned or -recognized competition in accordance with USMS rules.

On the Back—position of the body when the shoulders are at or past the vertical towards the back.

On the Breast—position of the body when the shoulders are at or past the vertical towards the breast.

Paddler—a person on a paddle board or manually propelled craft who supports a swimmer or group of swimmers.

Pool—the physical facility in which the competition is conducted.

Preliminary Heats—competition in which a number of heats are swum to qualify the fastest swimmers for the finals.

Preseeding—events are seeded prior to the day of competition.

Propulsive—having the power to propel.

Recognized Events—the written acknowledgment by an LMSC for a designated competition conducted in conformance with relevant USMS rules, or a demonstration, clinic, or exhibition conducted by USMS member clubs, individual members, or organizations other than USMS in which both members and nonmembers may participate. Times or distances achieved by members at recognized competitions will be considered for recording purposes by USMS.

Register—enroll as a member of USMS.

Safety Plans—written plans for the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency or need for medical intervention.

Sanction—the written authorization of an LMSC to permit members to participate in a specific competition, demonstration, clinic, exhibition, or Swim-A-Thon.

Scissors 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.

Scratch—withdraw an entry from an event or fail to report to the assigned lane in the assigned heat.

Seeding—distributing swimmers among the required number of heats and/or lanes, based on submitted times.

Session—any portion of a pool meet distinctly separated from other portions of the meet by locale, time, day, or type of competition; i.e., first day and second day, morning and evening, etc., exclusive of a short break between events such as before the start of distance events or relays.

Shall—mandatory.

Should—recommended but not mandatory.

Soft Touch—a swimmer's touch that does not register a time at the point of

contact with the touchpad.

Split Time—time recorded from official start to completion of an initial distance within a longer event.

Still Water—water contained within four walls or landlocked, having no perceptible current or movement other than that caused by wind or by swimmers.

Straightaway Swim—any swim of any length where the course shall be a straight, measured distance in stationary open water and defined by a cable with floats or a continuous marking system visible to the swimmer.

Submitted Times—those filed with an entry as having been previously achieved or reasonably estimated; also known as seed times.

Time Trial—a timed heat conducted within a meet where the swimmer races against the clock to establish an official time.

Timed Finals—competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by the times achieved in the heats.

Touch—contact with the end of the course.

Turn—a point on the course where the swimmers reverse or change direction of the swim.

USA-S—USA Swimming Inc.

USAS—United States Aquatic Sports Inc.

USMS—United States Masters Swimming Inc.

Valid Time—a time reported by a designated timing system without a confirmed malfunction and determined by the meet referee or designee to be accurate based on analysis of all reported times, observations by officials, and other relevant data.

Venue—geographical area and environs where a swim event is conducted.

Virtual Event—a swimming competition conducted in multiple pool locations with results compiled in a central location.

Wall—the vertical portion of the pool, the contiguous surface of the deck and overflow gutters, the front portion of the starting block or platform, or the touchpad at the end of the course.

Warning Signal—a bell, whistle, air horn, or other appropriate audible device.

Wave—the second or subsequent start used if the start area cannot accommodate all contestants at the same time.

Will—consent to do, an expectation.

Workout Group—a subordinate organization (subgroup) of a USMS-registered club.

World Aquatics—(Formerly known as FINA).

Zone—a geographic section of the country that includes all LMSCs within

that section.

