

Being a Starter at a Swim Meet

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1. In my opinion, the starter is the most important official at a swim meet. The ultimate goal is to ensure that every swimmer gets a fair start. To be a good starter requires absolute focus on many things happening simultaneously. In other words, being a starter is mentally exhausting.
2. It is the responsibility of the starter to check the starting system and to adjust its location.
3. At most dual meets, the starter is responsible for explaining to the back-up timers their job.
4. The starter needs to focus on the referee and be ready for the referee to turn the race over to the starter.
5. Does the starter announce the event? In some cases yes, this should be discussed with the referee.
6. The final responsibility of noise control is with the starter.
7. The starter needs to watch for illegal uniforms, unauthorized taping, and other uniform and attire violations.
8. The starter needs to be aware of late arrivals and swimmers that appear to be stepping up in the wrong heat and/or the wrong lane. The starter is the second set of eyes for the referee.
9. The voice of the starter should be loud enough to be heard, but speaking in an ordinary distinct manner.
10. The starter states "take your mark". The starter does not state "swimmers take your mark". The starter does not state "back stroke swimmers take your mark". The starter does not state "place your feet".
11. Where the starter stands is somewhat of a personal choice, but it is my opinion that the starter will be more effective standing slightly out in front of the line of swimmers rather than being even with the line of swimmers.
12. When the starter states "take your mark", the starter must look down the line of swimmers to verify that all swimmers are in a legal position, whether the swimmer is on the blocks, on the deck, or in the water. (There are some cases where you could see all three in the same heat.)

13. Once the starter states "take your mark", the starter needs to watch for the requirement that each swimmer is stationary. There is a difference between being stationary and motionless.
14. It is the responsibility of the starter to decide when to stand up the field and/or to speak to an individual swimmer. In either case, swimmers, for safety reasons, should not step off the starting blocks.
15. Since every single race is slightly different, a starter, to the best of his or her ability, has to know when to hit the button. It is not good to be either too fast or too slow.
16. The rule book is very clear that the preference is not to recall the field once the button is hit. That should only happen in unusual situations.
17. It is the responsibility of the starter to write down the lane number for those swimmers the starter considers to be guilty of a false start when dual confirmation is being used.
18. In a dual meet, the starter is also responsible for stroke and turn violations. When a violation is observed, like any other stroke and turn violation, the starter raises his/her hand immediately and then writes down a brief note of the lane number, the cause of the observed infraction, and when it took place.
19. Since the starter has multiple roles in a dual meet, the starter should focus on the race after it is started, and the starter should not immediately focus on hanging up the microphone.
20. The referee and starter should talk before the start of the meet as to whether they will be walking along their side of the pool.
21. In dual meets, it is the responsibility of the starter to watch relay exchanges and touches. The starter should immediately focus on the feet of the swimmer taking off and then look down at the touch of the swimmer who is finishing. For an observed violation, who raises his/her hand and when is the hand raised, for a relay exchange infraction?
22. What method do you use to keep track of the swimmers in the relays?
23. In dual meets, the starter is responsible for watching legal finishes in his//her lanes. The starter needs to watch for a pad touch.
24. It is the responsibility of the starter to keep the order of finish.
25. The starter should compare his/her order of finish with the order appearing on the board.
26. The starter should walk or report to the referee for violations or issues.

27. The starter should keep score of the meet, as a backup to assist the referee.
28. The starter should track the laps in the 500 yard freestyle.
29. Besides keeping track of the lengths swum in the 500 yard freestyle, the starter should try to determine if the lap counters are accurate.
30. Prior to starting the 500 yard freestyle, does the starter announce that a bell or a buzzer will go off for the lead swimmer at 2 lengths plus 5 yards remaining?
 - a. When does the starter hit the buzzer or ring the bell?