



HANDICAPPING NOTES

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Technical Officials Resources

HANDICAP EVENTS

Handicap Races are not swum at SNSW State Meets but a Recorder may encounter handicap events as relay or individual events at District or Club meets. The principles and procedures applicable to Handicap events are included in the following notes. The Recorders have particular responsibilities in Handicapping so it is important that all Recorders understand the rules and their application.

HANDICAPPING

For the purpose of establishing a standard method for handicapping, Clubs are required to handicap their members on the basis of the swimmers best time achieved during the current season and recorded by the Club, for the nominated stroke and distance. Entry times are rounded to the nearest second to facilitate handicapping. In interclub handicap events the Referee and the Handicapper, shall have the power to alter any swimmer's handicap after each qualifying round, based on the time achieved by the swimmer in the previous round. Swimmers are then re-handicapped using their best time in subsequent rounds

The Referee shall disqualify a swimmer from an event if he breaks his handicap time by more than:

- 2 seconds in events up to 50 metres
- 4 seconds in events up to 100 metres
- 6 seconds in events up to 200 metres
- 10 seconds in events up to 400 metres
- 20 seconds in events up to 800 metres
- 40 seconds in events up to 1500 metres.

Any person who is proved to have wilfully given incorrect information on a handicap entry form or to have withheld information which is required by the Rules to be disclosed, shall be deemed to be guilty of misbehaviour or unfair practice in connection with swimming, and the entrant shall be disqualified from the event. Such entrant so disqualified shall be liable to suspension or disqualification in accordance with the Constitution.

Normally the Promoting Body would advance the heat winners, plus whatever number of major placegetters they decide, to the succeeding rounds. Those entitled to swim in later rounds should be stated in the program, or notified by public announcement.

The basic theory and the principles of Handicap Swimming are generally not known in the detail required by many Club Officials as the majority of Clubs now have adopted graded or scratch systems of competition. The following explanations of the Handicap system of swimming will clarify some common misconceptions.

(A) DEFINITIONS

(AUTHORITY - THE NEW SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY).

- (1) HANDICAP RACE - any race or competition in which the chances of an inferior swimmer are made more equal by some means, as by giving a head start etc.
- (2) SCRATCH - a line or mark from which swimmers race, especially those not receiving a handicap start.
- (3) SCRATCH MAN/SCRATCH - Swimmer in handicap receiving no start.
- (4) LIMIT MAN/LIMIT - Swimmer who receives the longest start allowed in a handicap.

(B) HANDICAPPING PRINCIPLES

The following guidelines are provided to ensure uniform handicapping and conduct of handicap events.

In Handicap swimming, the swimmers are "equalised" by commencing their start at different time intervals based on entry times submitted for a determined style and distance. It would be anticipated that if each swimmer swam to his submitted time (or swam to his "handicap") that all swimmers in that race would arrive at the finishing line at the same time.

In practice the SLOWEST swimmer (also called the Limit Swimmer), based on his submitted time (or handicap), starts FIRST at the command "GO". The other swimmers leave the starting platform when their STARTING NUMBER is called, until the last swimmer (also called the Scratch Swimmer), who has the FASTEST submitted time (or handicap), has his starting number called and he commences the race.

SETTING UP HANDICAP EVENTS

The actual STARTING NUMBER for each swimmer is calculated as the difference between the slowest (limit) swimmer's handicap (or submitted time) and the handicap times (or submitted times) of each of the other swimmers in that particular heat. Entry times are rounded to the nearest second. For clarification let us consider the following example for a 50 metre event:

Heat 1 **Freestyle 50m**

<i>Lane</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Entry Time</i>	<i>Handicap</i>
1	A Green	40	GO
2	B Blue	39	1
3	C Charlie	38	2
4	D Dark	36	4
5	B Black	34	6
6	F Brown	33	7
7	G Bloggs	31	9
8	H Jones	30	10

(C) HANDICAPPING APPLICATION

STARTING

The Start in Handicap events is distinguished from Scratch events by a different sequence of commands. The Referee may still give the long crescendo whistle to alert Timekeepers at the far end of the pool.

The Starter gives the command "Get Ready" as not all swimmers need to be ready at the command "Go". The Starter then gives the command "Go!", at the same time starting a stopwatch (or refers to the scoreboard clock) and begins to count "one, two, three, four..." as the seconds elapse until the scratch (last) swimmer's handicap number is called. The Check Starter walks across the pool behind the starting platforms ensuring that the swimmers are stationary at the call of their number.

Where the Timekeepers are using manual stopwatches the Starter must use a 'handicap signalling device' (flag or other device) to indicate the start to the Timekeepers. The Starter must arrange with the Chief Timekeeper, prior to the event, the manner in which the starting signal will be given. For example, if using a flag, the Starter might hold the flag over his head on the command "Get Ready", and lower it to his leg, with the command "Go!" issued as the handicap signalling device touches his leg.

There are no False Start recalls in Handicap events, unless there is a malfunction in the timing system being used. Any swimmer starting before their starting number (allocated handicap) will be disqualified unless they redeem themselves by returning to the place of starting and commence again after their starting number is called.

TIMEKEEPING

In Handicap events, **all** the Timekeepers start their manual watches on the command "**Go!**" (or at the prearranged position of the Starter's handicap signalling device). Where Automatic or Semi Automatic timing is used, the Starter may activate the timing system at the command "Go!" **Each** Timekeeper will stop their watch the instant any part of the body of the swimmer in their lane makes contact with the finishing wall.

The total elapsed time (*Gross Time*) on the Timekeeper's watch is recorded by the Timekeepers.

RESULTS

The Recorders, on receipt of these times, subtract the swimmer's *Starting Number* from the time recorded by the Timekeepers, and this *Net Time* is then used for recording purposes in subsequent rounds.

Heat 1 **Freestyle 50m**

Lane	Name	Entry Time	Handicap	Gross Time	Net Time	Placing	Place
1	A Green	40	GO	41.30	41.30	7	
2	B Blue	39	1	43.00	42.00	8	
3	C Charlie	38	2	39.50	37.50	4	3
4	D Dark	36	4	39.65	35.65	5	
5	B Black	34	6	41.00	35.00	6	
6	F Brown	33	7	38.72	31.72	2	1
7	G Bloggs	31	9	38.78	31.78	3	2
8	H Jones	30	10	37.00	27.00	1	DQ- time

(D) DISQUALIFICATION IN HANDICAP RACES

ZERO TIME AND BREAKING TIME

Because the basis of success in handicap swimming is swimmer improvement, there needs to be some protection against the submission of slower times than the swimmer can achieve. Limits are set, defined on a time basis, by which a swimmer is allowed to improve (or "break") his submitted time (or handicap) and still not risk disqualification for breaking his handicap. A swimmer shall be disqualified if he "breaks" his handicap *by more than* the time provided for the distance of the race (See page 1).

The Referee has the power to disqualify a swimmer from an event for "breaking" their handicap. However, this authority is normally delegated to the Chief Recorder, both for convenience of operation, and to alleviate continual disruption of the Meet where each "break" of handicap is referred to the Referee for disqualification.

For example, if a swimmer's handicap (submitted time) is 0:35.00 seconds for 50 metres, that swimmer can record the *NET* time of 0:33.00 seconds without disqualification (i.e. *not more* than 2 seconds). Note that swimmer, H. Jones, in the example above has broken their handicap (submitted time) by 3 seconds in a 50 metre event and is, therefore, liable to disqualification.

NOTE: - *Up to 50 metres* includes all intermediate distances (i.e. 25 metres and 50 metres).

Where there is evidence of wilfully giving incorrect information on a handicap entry form or card, the Chief Recorder would initially refer this to the Referee for action.

STROKE DISQUALIFICATION

Apart from the above exceptions as to the Start, all the other Rules of Swimming are applicable.

(E) QUALIFYING ROUNDS OF HANDICAP RACES

When qualifying rounds or heats and finals are conducted in Handicap events, the Handicapper (or in his absence, the Referee) shall have the power to alter any swimmer's handicap for *each* qualifying round of heats (or from heats to finals).

Where three swimmers from the above heat are to advance into the final the entry time for the final is derived from the Net Time achieved in the heat, or from the original entry time, whichever is faster.

Advancement of swimmers to succeeding rounds is based solely on placings achieved in their heat. The number of swimmers to advance will generally be calculated on the following requirements:

- The number of heats in the round;
- The number of lanes in the pool; and
- The number of heats in the next round.

The aim is to have each lane occupied in the final