

THE STARTER:

The General Requirements apply to the Starter's appointment. As a Starter for Open Water Swimming Events you will find that your appointed activity is usually completed within the first 15 minutes of the day! Unless the Organising Committee has events that are programmed to Start at various times over the Meet. Unless there are multiple event starts – this is becoming more prevalent due to increased participation in OWS events.

Is that hooray that I hear? Don't think that you will get away that easily. Usually you get to double up as a Finish Judge, relief Timekeeper for part of the event, Runner, Assistant Announcer or Recorder, Course Officer, or, out on the water with one of the Referees assisting and learning how to be a Race Judge, Turn Judge or getting practical knowledge for the position of Referee. There's plenty to learn and never ever enough opportunities to hone those acquired skills.

It is most important that you contact the Organising Committee prior to Race Day and inquire what type of starting device is to be used. It's no good turning up on the day expecting to find one supplied for your use only to be advised that the Organising Committee expected you to bring your own. The use of a whistle is permitted; however, it's inappropriate for a State or National event.

The Starter needs to comply with the General Requirements. You'll also need to:



- ⊙ Inspect the Start Area;
- ⊙ Find out where the Ready Area is for the pre-race briefing (if it hasn't already been done);
- ⊙ Find out if the swimmers have been issued with pre-race information;

- ⊙ Check with the Course Officer for the layout of the course;
- ⊙ If a Course Officer has not been appointed, then you may be instructed by the Referee to instruct the swimmers as to the rounding of buoys or other objects that denote the course as part of your starting instructions (you may have to inspect the course to have an understanding of its configuration);
- ⊙ Ensure that the starting equipment is operative and that you are familiar with its operation;
- ⊙ From the Chief Recorder be advised of the number of swimmers for the event(s);
- ⊙ Check with the Referee for any special instructions.

What to bring?



- ⊙ Whistle, wristwatch, two flags (one red, the other white); your own starting device (pistol, ammunition, electronic starting device, or horn), clipboard note paper/writing pad and pencils (HB or softer).
- ⊙ Experience has shown that most swimmers appreciate the use of a gun for the start together with the visual flag. This means that your ammunition must have a loud report. You can purchase crimped blanks that are extremely loud and that emit a good amount of smoke. **In NSW to use the pistol you must be licensed for that calibre pistol.**
- ⊙ ***If you use a pistol please ensure that you have your own personal protective equipment (PPE), such as, ear plugs or muffs, wrap around protective glasses. Never point your pistol at any person whether it's unloaded or not. Be aware of your***

ammunition, blank fire ammunition is dangerous and sometimes can cause injuries if inappropriately used.

What to do?

The Starter shall:

- ⊙ Be stationed in such a position as to be clearly visible to all swimmers;
- ⊙ on the signal of the Referee raise a distinctive flag to the vertical position;
- ⊙ simultaneously bring the flag holding arm down, with arm kept straight and activate an audible signal (fire the gun, blow the whistle, sound the hooter/horn, give the command);
- ⊙ If in the opinion of the Referee unfair advantage has been gained at the start the competitions shall be stopped and restarted. In that situation the Starter will resound the starting device and blow his/her whistle continuously until all swimmers have stopped and are recalled to their starting positions;
- ⊙ Once all swimmers are behind the start line the starter shall caution the swimmers as to the consequences of starting before the starting signal is given and issue the precautionary command "Second Start";
- ⊙ On the Referee's signal the Starter shall restart the race.

In addition the Starter will:

- ⊙ Explain start and false start procedures;
- ⊙ Line up swimmers at the starting line.

The Start:

All open water swimming events start with the swimmers standing or treading water in a depth sufficient for them to start swimming on the start signal. At the 2007 World Swimming Championships FINA Bureau accepted an interpretation that the word "standing" includes swimmers standing on a platform/pontoon that enables the race to start with a "dive". A dive start from a platform/pontoon was therefore permitted under the existing FINA Rule OWS4.1 (SNSW OWS5.1).

The Clerk of the Course keeps swimmers and Officials informed of the time remaining to the Start at suitable intervals and at one minute intervals for the last 5 minutes.

Swimmers assume their start positions behind the starting line. Sometimes a rope may be positioned between two points and the swimmers are obliged to hang on to the rope with one hand until the starting signal is given, or a pontoon, wharf or jetty may be used for a dive start, but the height of these items must meet the standing platform height above water surface requirements and the depth of water must be sufficient to meet current diving requirements for the start of races/competition.

When the number of entries dictate it (40+ swimmers, but use common sense if there are 39/40 of one sex and only two of the other let them go together), the start is segregated into the Men's and Women's' competitions. The Men's event always starts before the Women's event (FINA OWS4.3/SNSW OWS 5.3) with a start lapse of 10 minutes or more following the Men's start depending on the race distance and other considerations.

The start line shall be clearly defined by either overhead apparatus or by removable equipment at water level or a projected line between two buoys or the shore and a buoy or other fixed object.

If in the opinion of the Referee unfair advantage has been gained at the Start the swimmers shall be stopped and the competitions restarted.

All escort safety craft are stationed prior to the Start so as not to interfere with any swimmer, and if picking up their swimmer from behind navigate in such a way as not to manoeuvre through the field of swimmers.

Some further comments:

Normally it is rare to find overhead apparatus or removable equipment at water level that denotes the start line. The use of a rope between two fixed points is becoming popular. The swimmers are instructed to hold the rope with one hand until the signal to start is given. A little like holding the starting grips in backstroke events. It makes it very easy to see that all the swimmers are in position.

Usually the swimmers are between two fixed points. If some swimmers have crept a few centimetres then it's not going to mean a great deal after they have raced 5, 10, 15, 25 or more kilometres. Only recall the swimmers for a false start where an unfair advantage has been obtained or when the instructed by the Referee.

If the Rules have not been complied with by the swimmer(s) then the Rules must be applied.

If a swimmer swims in the wrong direction from the start, as long as your instructions or those given at the pre-race briefing have been clear and unambiguous, then there is no need to recall the swimmers.

If a swimmer has started before the starting signal has been given and the starting signal is sounded do not recall the swimmers. You report the infraction to the Referee in the normal manner. Be sure that you have the offending swimmer's number, as there's no point in recommending a disqualification of the swimmer "third from the left" or "that one in the middle" or "I think that was him"!



RULES: The following rules relate to the Starter's responsibilities and duties:

FINA

OWS3.10

OWS3.11

OWS3.12

and the Start

OWS4.1 to OWS4.10

SNSW

OWS4.10

OWS4.11

OWS4.12

and the Start

OWS5.1 to OWS5.10