



## **New Rule Implementation: False Starts Prior to the Start of the Race**

A false start, in general, is when the swimmer takes their mark and then has a forward or backward motion prior to the Starter sounding the starting horn. The most common form of this is when the action occurs just before the Starter sounds the horn and the race is started and allowed to continue. The least common form of this is when the action occurs and the Starter never sounds the horn; this is what we commonly refer to as a false start prior to the start of the race. With the former, the race continues, and the offending swimmer(s) is/are disqualified for having false started. With that latter, the handling of the false start will change due to a recently adopted rule.

### ***What was the old process:***

The process for handling a false start prior to the start of the race before the rule change was:

1. Starter issues the command “take your marks”
2. Swimmer(s) takes their marks but then proceeds to have a forward or backward motion
3. Starter stands the heat but the offending swimmer(s) fail to remain on the pool deck and enter the water
4. The call is adjudicated
  - a. Referee and Starter independently observe what just happened and note on their meet program the lane(s) of the offending swimmer(s)
    - i. This must be done prior to any subsequent attempt to start the race
  - b. If the Starter noted any potential false starts they approach the Referee and, without any discussion, show their meet program to the Referee
    - i. The Referee shall never initiate a potential false start call
  - c. The Referee compares the lane(s) indicated on the Starters meet program to those indicated on their own
  - d. Any lanes that matched are then considered to have false started
  - e. Before charging the offending swimmer(s) with a false start
    - i. The Referee may ask the swimmer a non-leading question such as “what happened?”
      1. This is the swimmer’s chance to explain themselves
    - ii. Based on the swimmer’s response the Referee will further investigate

1. If the swimmer says something like they heard a noise and can describe it, and the Referee also heard the same noise, the swimmer may be relieved of the false start and allowed to swim
  - a. If the Referee did not hear any noise, or did not hear the same noise, then they would talk with the Stroke and Turn in that quadrant, and possibly even the timers, to see if they heard any noise. If they can confirm there was a noise, then the swimmer may be relieved of the false start.
2. If the swimmer says something like “I thought it was time to start”, or if the noise they say they heard was not observed by anyone else, then the swimmer will be charged with a false start
5. Any swimmer charged with a false start is not allowed to swim in that race
  - a. The swimmer leaves the pool deck
  - b. A DQ slip is written and given to the Team Rep prior to the next attempt to start the race
6. The race is then restarted with the remaining swimmers

***What is the new process:***

With the passing of the new rule, a swimmer that is charged with a false start, even if it was for false starting prior to the start of the race, will still be allowed to swim the race. The swimmer will be disqualified and their time will not be official.

The new process for handling a false start prior to the start of the race is:

1. Starter issues the command “take your marks”
2. Swimmer(s) takes their marks but then proceeds to have a forward or backward motion
3. Starter stands the heat but the offending swimmer(s) fail to remain on the pool deck and enter the water
4. The call is adjudicated
  - a. Referee and Starter independently observe what just happened and note on their meet program the lane(s) of the offending swimmer(s)
    - i. This must be done prior to any subsequent attempt to start the race
  - b. If the Starter noted any potential false starts they approach the Referee and, without any discussion, show their meet program to the Referee
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- e. Before charging the offending swimmer(s) with a false start
  - i. The Referee may ask the swimmer a non-leading question such as “what happened?”
    - 1. This is the swimmer’s chance to explain themselves
  - ii. Based on the swimmer’s response the Referee will further investigate
    - 1. If the swimmer says something like they heard a noise and can describe it, and the Referee also heard the same noise, the swimmer may be relieved of the false start and allowed to swim
      - a. If the Referee did not hear any noise, or did not hear the same noise, then they would talk with the Stroke and Turn in that quadrant, and possibly even the timers, to see if they heard any noise. If they can confirm there was a noise, then the swimmer may be relieved of the false start.
    - 2. If the swimmer says something like “I thought it was time to start”, or if the noise they say they heard was not observed by anyone else, then the swimmer will be charged with a false start
- 5. The race is restarted with all swimmers, to include any that have now been charged with a false start
- 6. Any swimmer for which it was determined to have false started prior to the start of the race will be charged with a false start
  - a. A DQ slip will be written and given to the Team Rep at the conclusion of the race

Note that the adjudication of the disqualification will happen immediately but the actual recording of the false start, writing up the DQ slip, and the informing of the Team Rep will not happen until after the race has been concluded (because the Referee has other responsibilities during the race).

### ***Additional Considerations***

As we are now allowing a swimmer that has been disqualified from the race to still swim in the event, albeit not for a time, we must also address the possibility that the swimmer attempts to disrupt the normal flow of the event and/or cause others to get disqualified. As such, any disruptive or unsportsmanlike behavior may result in the swimmer being disqualified from the remainder of the meet.

