



STROKE JUDGE -- TURN JUDGE

INTRODUCTION

Well run meets and good competitive results are directly related to high-quality officiating. To become a first-class official, you must know the rules and apply them fairly and consistently. Confidence can only be attained by studying the rules, attending training sessions and working regularly at meets.

Officials must never overlook one important fact—swimmers have worked hard to establish their positions and deserve an equal chance. Therefore, officials must ensure that they (the officials) do not, either by inaction or irresponsible decisions, disrupt the equity and spirit of competition to which every competitor is entitled. Officials must apply the rules intelligently at all times, using common sense and good judgment.

Swimming rules are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition. Their effectiveness can only be measured by a proper interpretation and fair application of them by the officials. It is imperative, therefore, that officials work hard to understand the rules and their responsibilities in applying them.

Like the Referee and Take-off Judge, the authority of Stroke Judges and Turn Judges to recommend a disqualification of a competitor make these positions particularly important. To function properly, one dominant principle must prevail:

Fairness to all competitors, giving the benefit of the doubt, in every instance, to the swimmer

Remember that rules are actually standards of competition and, since competitors are humans and not computers, a swimmer's form is relative, not absolute. Decisions regarding the form of strokes and turns must, therefore, be subject to flexible judgment and common sense.

BASIC CONCEPTS

Take officiating seriously and work hard at it. Competitors have a right to expect officials to know the rules and interpret them correctly, fairly and courteously.

- Study the NVSL Rules book and U.S. Swimming's official Rules book.
- Uniformly interpret and apply rules.
- Call violations as seen; don't guess or anticipate.
- Be fair and consistent; always give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt.
- Disregard club affiliation.
- Exercise good judgment.

Work regularly at the job.

- Attend the pre-meet stroke briefing.
- Officials need practice, just as competitors do.
- Working regularly builds confidence.
- Attend training sessions regularly to keep up with rule changes and new interpretations.
- There is no substitute for experience.

Be professional in manner:

- Fairness to all competitors must dictate actions.
- Dress properly.
- Make decisions quickly and decisively.
- Don't smoke or eat on deck.
- Avoid coaching swimmers.
- Refrain from cheering--control your emotions.
- Don't fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators during competition.
- Admit a mistake if wrong; competitor's welfare is more important than your own.

Uniform:

- Men: navy blue (no denim) slacks or shorts, white shirt and rubber soled shoes.
- Women: navy blue (no denim) skirt, slacks or shorts with white blouse and rubber soled shoes. (Officials look much more "official" if dressed properly.)

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **STROKE JUDGE**—ensures that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed.
- **TURN JUDGE**—ensures that, when turning or finishing, the swimmer complies with the turning and finishing rules applicable to the stroke used.

In the NVSL, the Referee assigns and instructs Stroke and Turn Judges. Before the competition begins, the Referee determines the respective areas of Stroke and Turn responsibility and jurisdiction. These may include joint, concurrent, or coordinated responsibility and jurisdiction. The Referee's overall consideration must ensure that all swimmers are judged fairly, equitably, and uniformly.

The Referee will assign each Stroke and Turn Judge an area of responsibility before the

competition begins. This will include how and when the Referee wants the judges to move to different areas. The Judges' responsibilities do not begin until after the start. Any action prior to the start is the Starter's responsibility. Each Stroke and Turn Judge duties commence immediately *after* the start.

The NVSL primarily (A Meets) uses only combined "Stroke and Turn Judges" who position themselves over the ends of the pool to judge both the stroke and turn. If more than four Stroke and Turn Judges are available for a meet (normally during Divisionals and All Stars), the Referee may assign judges as Stroke Judges and Turn Judges.

If assigned by the Referee, Stroke and Turn Judges must, also, clearly be in position to watch to ensure that heads surface by the 15-meter mark for all strokes but breaststroke. It is important that judges observing the 15-meter mark move swiftly to the ends of the pool to observe the turn or finish of the lead swimmer in their jurisdiction.

Turns and finishes are best judged from the end of the pool, slightly to the side of, not directly over, the swimmer. It is recommended that judges initially stand over the second lane rope in from each side of the pool, so the judge can see both the center lane(s) as well as the outside lane(s) in their sector. Since judges in this league must usually observe more than one lane, the official will have to adjust their position to best observe *all* assigned lanes.

At the start, a combined Stroke and Turn Judge should be at the starting end of the pool to observe the first kick and arm pull, then assume the previously described position for judging the strokes. NOTE: A judge in this situation should stand immediately behind the swimmers prior to the start and then step forward to the edge of the pool when the starting device is sounded. A Stroke and Turn Judge should not block the Starter's view of the swimmers.

Finally, where limited personnel or the pool's configuration does not permit the ideal

arrangement of officials, *common sense must prevail*. As mentioned earlier, the Referee is responsible for deciding on the best placement of the Stroke and Turn Judges to ensure that all swimmers are viewed in a fair and equitable manner throughout the race.

Reporting violations:

- Only the Referee or a Stroke and Turn Judge (with the Referee's concurrence) can disqualify a swimmer for stroke, turn, or finish violations. A **Take-off Judge** can disqualify for an infraction of the relay take-off rule only and is the only official, other than the Referee, who may call the early take-off.
- Upon observing an infraction in their jurisdiction, Stroke, & Turn Judges shall immediately raise one hand **OVERHEAD** with open palm. (This requirement is intended to encourage officials to act decisively and to preclude consultation with other officials or reflection on the consequences of a call.) If the official does not raise his hand immediately following an infraction, the Referee should not allow the disqualification unless the Referee personally observed it.
- Report violations, in writing, to the Referee, detailing the event, heat number, lane number and violation for Referee concurrence and signoff.
- For dual meets and divisionals, NVSL rules require the Referee to provide one copy of any disqualification to the **Team Representative** of the disqualified swimmer. (During All Star meets, a copy of the DQ slip is normally provided to the Division Coordinator of the team/individual involved. That individual, in turn, will get the slip to the appropriate team rep.)
- No official should ever try to be "helpful" by suggesting that a swimmer "came close" to being disqualified; "close" is perfectly legal! (NOTE: As a general practice,

officials should never give advice or talk to swimmers or coaches during competition; explanations of a disqualification actually cited should be provided only to the team rep.)

Disqualifications:

- Can be made only by the official within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed.
- Judges must personally observe the infraction.
- The swimmers must be given the benefit of any doubt.
- The judge must disregard the opinion of others.
- ***BE SURE A VIOLATION OCCURRED, UNDERSTAND CLEARLY WHAT IT IS, AND BE PREPARED TO EXPLAIN IT.***
- Any swimmer who acts in an unsafe or unsportsmanlike manner may be considered for disciplinary action at the Referee's discretion.
- Swimming across lanes does **not** disqualify a swimmer unless interference occurs (Referee discretion); however, the swimmer must start and finish in the same lane.
- Standing on the pool's bottom during a **freestyle** race shall not disqualify a swimmer unless the swimmer leaves the pool or walks or springs from the bottom. (NOTE: standing on the bottom after the start and before the finish of any *other* stroke **shall** constitute a disqualification.)
- A swimmer not entered in a race that enters the pool in the area in which a race is being conducted before all swimmers have completed the race shall be barred from the next individual event in which the swimmer is entered that day. Dipping goggles in the water or splashing water on the face or body

shall not be considered “entering the pool” unless the Referee concludes such an action interferes with the competition.

- No swimmer may wear or use any device or substance to help speed or buoyancy during a race. Goggles may be worn and rubdown oil applied if not considered excessive by the Referee.
- Should a foul endanger the chance of a swimmer, the Referee may allow the swimmer to swim in the next round or, if the foul occurs in the final, the Referee may order it re-swum. In case of collusion to foul another swimmer, the Referee may, at their discretion, disqualify the swimmer for whose aid the foul was committed as well as the swimmer doing the fouling.

Relay Disqualifications:

(NOTE: all these calls are Referee's or, in some cases, Relay Take-off Judge's decisions)

- No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event.
- A swimmer other than the first swimmer shall not start until his/her teammate has concluded his/her leg.
- Any relay team member and his/her relay team shall be disqualified if a team member, other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg, shall jump into or enter the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.
- Relay teams shall be disqualified for delays in leaving the water only when an exiting swimmer does not leave the water before another team member touches at the exiting swimmer's end of the pool.
- The team of a swimmer whose feet have lost touch with the starting platform (ground or deck) before his preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified.

Mental Traps: It is not very difficult to acquire the technical knowledge required to judge the strokes and turns or finishes. A judge will gain that knowledge and become proficient with practice. The challenge, however, is to apply that knowledge **professionally**. Whether we recognize it or not, all of us, as human beings, are influenced by a wide variety of factors when we try to make judgments. We have this marvelous thing called a brain, which allows us to apply “reason” whenever we make judgments. Yet, when using this capacity, we have to be careful not to apply human reason in such a way that it causes us to make poor or “sloppy” judgments. Over the years, various examples of this, often stemming from well intentioned but misguided rationale, have surfaced. Some examples of the “mental traps” that have surfaced in stroke and turn officiating over the years are:

—*Advantage or disadvantage* (as a basis for making a judgment)? The question of whether a swimmer has an advantage/disadvantage should influence the official judgment of stroke, turn and finish violations has been the subject of many debates. Some authorities have used the term, “unfair advantage,” in decisions relating to specific situations. Unfortunately, this has also caused considerable apprehension and/or misinterpretation about the intent of this phrase. There is **no** intent that this concept be applied broadly to all situations, thus justifying inaction by officials in **not calling** violations such as missed turns, touches, etc., because “no advantage was gained.” This type of negative interpretation only leads to “sloppy” officiating and, unfortunately, gives an official an excuse for inadequate performance. Obviously, “unfair advantage” may be used to **explain** one reason why an action is an infraction. Still, a violation of the rules should be noted and the competitor disqualified whether an advantage is gained or not. Therefore, caution should be exercised in any application of this rationale, to preclude its use as a “crutch” for poor officiating.

—*The "Twice Theory."* Some judges feel they should wait until an infraction happens more than once before they call it. They rationalize

this position in all sorts of ways (e.g., “That clears up any doubt.” “That confirms that it wasn’t a simple mistake by the swimmer.”) Frankly, all of these, again, are crutches and excuses for uncertain and poor officiating. There is no basis for waiting to see an infraction happen twice and, in fact, it often won’t. The official must simply be certain of what he/she saw and make the call as soon as it is observed. If there is any doubt about the violation, then *don’t make the call!* (Remember that the swimmer gets the benefit of any doubt.) But, by the same token, don’t then concentrate on that one swimmer to see if the swimmer commits the suspected infraction again. Continue to give all the competitors uniform coverage in observing their performance.

—“*We don’t disqualify 8 & Unders*” (the age group may change to 10 & Unders). People who take this position often rationalize it by saying they don’t want to cause “mental trauma” to a youngster. They usually go on to say they have no problems “socking it to a 13 & Older.” While this may sound good, it is grounded in some clearly erroneous and extraneous beliefs. First, it views the judge’s role as punitive. That’s completely wrong. Rather, a disqualification should be viewed as: a) “protecting the other athletes” in the competition, and b) “educating” the athlete who commits the infraction so he/she won’t do it again. Secondly, it assumes that everyone in the identified age group is a “beginner” while those in the older age groups are “experienced” and, therefore, should be held to a stricter standard. Yet, this is also often erroneous. Athletes enter the sport at various ages and some 8 & Unders (having competed for a year or more) are far more “experienced” than some teenagers who are just entering the sport. In any event, experience is irrelevant. Finally, the idea that disqualifying an 8 & Under will “traumatize the child’s psyche” is ludicrous. It clearly ignores the fact that youngsters are constantly being corrected during their early, formative years; that’s how they learn.

—“*Don’t ask me to judge my child.*” Advocates of this usually fall into one of two categories.

First, “I don’t want anyone to think my child got by with some infraction because I was judging.” Second, “I don’t want to have to explain to my child why he/she was disqualified.” Yet, this goes to the central element of being a “professional” judge. The Referee must know that the judge treats everyone in the field the same— “fairly and equitably”—all the time. The Referee must be confident that a judge will identify an infraction regardless of the effect upon their child, their team (club). This is probably the ultimate test of the judge’s impartiality, and referees should not let judges “off the hook” on this basis. To the judge, this is the time when he/she must separate from their parental role and accept the responsibility of being a NVSL judge.

—*Don’t Infer (Extrapolate)*. Succinctly put, this simply means you can only call what you see, NOT what you deduce. You must actually see the swimmer miss the wall with the right hand on the turn, not assume the swimmer missed it because, by the time you looked, the swimmer was touching the wall with the left hand and was already turning. You must actually see the breaststroker take the second arm pull and be past the widest part of that second stroke before the head surfaces, not assume that it took two pulls to get that far out in the pool when you saw the head surface. Another way of putting this is don’t look for reasons to disqualify. If you see the infraction and it is clear, report it, but if you are uncertain, remember that the benefit of any doubt must go to the athlete.

Conduct:

- No outward manifestations during race regarding illegality of competitor except raised hand.
- Do not cheer, coach, or swap disqualifications; control your emotions.
- Do not fraternize with swimmers, coaches or spectators; disregard club affiliation and personal relationships.

- Do not concentrate on frequent violators to the exclusion of others.
- Give undivided attention—start to finish.
- If uncertain of role, consult with the Referee.

RULES FOR SWIMMING COMPETITION

FREESTYLE:

Start —Forward start shall be used. The head must break the surface of the water by the 15-meter mark.

Stroke —Use of any swimming style. (NOTE: unlike USA Swimming rules, this definition also applies to the freestyle legs of the IM and the Medley Relay.) The “Crawl” stroke is used most commonly.

Turns —Upon completion of each length, the swimmer must touch the wall at the end of the course with *some* part of their body. (NOTE: a “hand touch” is NOT required!)

Finish—when *any* part of the swimmer touches the solid wall at the end of the pool. Once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged.

Common violations:

- Failure to touch at the turn. (NOTE: swimmer *may* reach back and make a legal touch or may come back if the swimmer missed the wall.)
- Finishing in the wrong lane.
- Walking or springing from the bottom of the pool.
- Getting artificial assistance (e.g., pulling forward on the lane lines; pushing forward off side walls.)

BACKSTROKE:

Start —Swimmer will start in the water facing the start end of the pool.

Stroke:

- Standing in or on the gutter immediately *after* the start is not permitted.
- Swimmer must push off on back and continue swimming on back throughout the race.
- Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, and for a distance of no more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the water surface.

Turns:

- Upon completing each length, some part of the swimmer's body must touch the wall.
- For the turn, the shoulders *may* turn past vertical toward the breast.
- If the swimmer turns past vertical, an immediate continuous single arm pull or a simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn.
- The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.

Finish:

- When any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall at the end of the course.
- The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.
- Once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the 5-meter mark immediately prior to reaching the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch.

Common violations:

- *After the starting signal*, standing in or on the gutter.
- Swimmer submerged after start or turn and head surfacing *beyond* 15 meters (16.4 yards).
- Getting artificial assistance (e.g., grasping and pulling on the lane lines to assist forward motion; pulling or pushing off side walls.)
- Turning shoulders past vertical on the turn and, *after* pulling forward with arm already in motion, *then* either gliding some more or taking additional kicks/pulls to bring swimmer closer to the wall before initiating the somersaulting action. (Note: a pause in the turning action!)
- When shoulders have turned past vertical on the turn, swimmer misses touch on the wall and sculls back to touch.
- Failure to return to, or past, vertical toward the back upon the feet leaving the wall after the turn.
- Turning shoulders past the vertical towards the breast at the finish.

The USA Swimming Rules Committee is emphasizing that, “The key to a proper interpretation of the backstroke turn is to look for a uniform, unbroken motion with no pauses. After the upper shoulder rotates beyond the vertical toward the breast, a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. When the arm(s) complete the pull some portion of the upper body must begin the turning motion, this includes movement of the head to initiate the turn.”

BREASTSTROKE:

Start —Forward start shall be used.

Stroke:

- a. From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body must be kept on the breast.

- b. The arms must move simultaneously without any alternating movement.
- c. The hands must be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water and must be brought back on or under the water surface.
- d. The elbows shall be under the water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn, and for the last stroke at the finish of the race.
- e. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hipline except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.
- f. Some part of the swimmer's head shall break the water surface at least once during each complete cycle of one arm stroke and one leg kick, *in that order*, except during the first cycle after the start and each turn.
- g. The swimmer's head must break the water surface before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.
- h. During the first cycle after the start and each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs, may initiate one butterfly kick followed by one leg kick while wholly submerged.

(NOTE: Either a complete or incomplete movement of the arms or legs from the starting position is considered as one complete stroke or kick.)

Kick:

- a. All vertical and lateral movements of the legs shall be simultaneous.
- b. The feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick movement.
- c. A scissors, flutter, or downward butterfly kick is not permitted except during the first complete cycle on the start or turn where the swimmer MAY use one “downward” butterfly kick **PRIOR** to the breaststroke kick.

- d. Breaking the surface with the feet shall not merit disqualification unless followed by a downward butterfly kick except as noted in paragraph c, above.

Turns and Finish:

- a. The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface (but the two hands need not be on the same level). The hands must be separated at the touch. *“Separated” means that the hands cannot be stacked one on top of the other. It is not necessary to see space between the hands. Incidental contact at the fingers is not concern.*
- b. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the water surface at some point during any part of the last complete or incomplete stroke cycle preceding the touch.
- c. (Turns only) Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired.
- d. (Turns only) The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.
- e. (Turns only) The prescribed form must then be attained from the **beginning** of the first arm stroke.
- f. In the IM, the completion of the breaststroke leg is judged as a finish, NOT a turn!

Common violations:

- At the start or after any turn, head still below the water surface **when the hands begin to turn inward at the widest part of the second arm stroke.**
- Over-the-water recovery with elbows above (not touching) the water surface.
- Non-simultaneous or one-hand touch on turns or finishes. (Need not be on the same level.) On the turns, be alert for a legal, “quick” touch, which can be mistakenly interpreted as a one-hand touch.
- Sidestroke or scissors kick (any alternating movement).

- Body not at, or past, vertical towards the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall after a turn.
- Getting artificial assistance.

SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF JUDGING BREASTSTROKE

The first arm pull after the start and each turn may be all the way back to the legs. Thereafter, it can be no further than the hipline. What constitutes the “hipline,” however, is unclear. Therefore, judges should allow swimmers to pull to any place in the general area of the hips. The intent is to ensure that, throughout the race, the swimmer does not glide underwater with the hands flat or nearly flat against the side of the body, as is normal after the initial pull at the start and after each turn. The swimmer should be given the benefit of any doubt relating to the position of the “hipline.”

After the first stroke and kick on the start and after each turn, the head must break the water surface **before the hands turn inward at the widest part** of the second arm stroke.

The hands do not have to stay in the water on the recovery. They may be recovered over the water; however, they must still be pushed forward together from the breast and the elbows must, at least, touch the water surface, except when reaching for the wall at the finish or turn. The head does not have to stay above the water level throughout the race. After the first underwater arm stroke and kick, the head need only come above the water once during each stroke cycle, but it actually has to **break** the water surface rather than just coming above the calm water level with the possibility of a wave covering the top of the head. The swimmer is permitted to “dive” under the water during each cycle, as long as a butterfly kick is not used to facilitate the action **except at the start or turn as discussed earlier.**

On turns or at the finish, swimmers do not have to touch with both hands at the same level (this also applies to the butterfly). The hands must, however, touch simultaneously and separately.

BUTTERFLY:

Start:

- a. Forward start shall be used.
- b. After the start and each turn, the swimmer must remain on the breast.
- c. One or more leg kicks are permitted but **only one arm pull underwater**, which must bring the swimmer to the surface. The head must break the water's surface by the 15-meter mark

Stroke:

- a. Both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously.

Kick:

- a. All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous.
- b. The position of the legs and feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. (The feet may move vertically, provided they move together. They may actually be crossed, or one may be higher than the other, **provided no alternating action is introduced**. As long as any change is caused by a "drifting" of the legs rather than by a propulsive action, no infraction should be called.)
- c. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is **not** permitted.

Turns and Finish:

- a. The body shall be on the breast.
- b. The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously and separately (need not be on the same level).
- c. A legal touch may be made at, above or below the water surface.
- d. (Turns only) Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any

manner desired, but the prescribed form must be attained from the beginning of the first arm stroke.

- e. (Finish only) Once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged.
- f. These criteria also apply to the butterfly leg of the IM or medley relay.

Common violations:

- Hands touch not simultaneous or one-hand touch. (NOTE: Hands need not be at the same level on either turns or the finish.) Be alert for a legal, "quick" touch, which can mistakenly be interpreted for a one-hand touch.
- Arm recovery not over the water after pull on the turn or finish (usually characterized by short pull and an underwater, stabbing touch).
- Alternating kicking movement, such as flutter kicks.
- Scissors or breaststroke kicking movement.
- Getting artificial assistance.

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY:

Order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. (In the NVSL definition of the IM, "freestyle" means any "manner or style.")

Rules pertaining to individual strokes govern disqualifications. (NOTE: when turning from the butterfly to the backstroke, after a legal touch, the swimmer's shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.)

The turns from one stroke to another are considered **finishes**, **NOT turns**, and are to be judged accordingly. The significant part here is that, when going from backstroke to breaststroke, the swimmer's shoulders in the backstroke may not turn past vertical prior to the touch of the wall!

RELAYS:

Freestyle—any desired stroke or combination of strokes; swimmers usually do the Crawl.

Medley—order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. (*In the NVSL in the medley relay or an individual medley event, the freestyle leg may be swum in any manner or style.*)

Rules pertaining to individual strokes govern disqualifications.

No competitor may swim more than one leg.

As in the IM, *finish* rules, rather than turn rules, apply at the end of each stroke.

Except for the last swimmer, relay swimmers must leave the water immediately upon finishing their leg.

Common Relay Disqualifications:

- Stroke violation.
- Failure to swim proper order of strokes.
- Failure to swim required distance.
- Take-off violation (decision only by Referee/ Relay Take-off Judge).

Entering the water (Referee call): whole team is disqualified if any member, other than the swimmer designated to swim, enters the pool before *all other competitors* have finished!

JUDGING SWIMMERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

1. Judge, in accordance with USA Swimming rules, any part of the body that is used.
2. Do not judge a part of the body that cannot be used.
3. Base your judgment on actual rule, not the swimmer's technique.

BREASTSTROKE & BUTTERFLY INTERPRETATION

At its Congress in 2013, FINA adopted rules changes requiring the swimmer's hands be separated at turns and the finish touch in both breaststroke and butterfly. Since the word "separated" is subject to interpretation, for purposes of the turn and finish rules in both breaststroke and butterfly the following shall be determinative

• (1) "Separated" means that the hands may touch each other at the thumbs (no visual separation required) but there can be no overlap or interlocking of the hands, including thumbs and fingers, whatsoever

• (2) A swimmer who simultaneously has the thumbs touching and the tips of the index fingers (picture a little triangle) is legal. Likewise, a simultaneous two hand touch with only the tips of the index fingers touching each other is legal

• (3) Separated means that the hands cannot be stacked one on top of the other. It is not necessary to see space between the hands. Incidental contact at the fingers is not a concern.

• (4) It is legal to touch with the fingers and have the thumbs under the hand or pointing downward, in which case the index fingers may be touching

• *A little common sense will go far in applying this rule if one remembers that the goal is for the swimmer to touch with both hands separately and not joined in any way that could be construed as creating a single unit.*

CONCLUSION

Officiating can be an enjoyable experience. It is not designed to win popularity contests; however, the self-satisfaction of having participated and having done a good job is very rewarding. Unfortunately, “sloppy” and uninformed officials rarely recognize their inadequacies, but be assured that fellow officials, coaches, and swimmers do. Consequently, all officials must continually reassess their own performances. This can best be done by regularly reviewing the rules and training material and by attending retraining sessions.

The new or inexperienced official often asks, “How long will it take me to become a good Stroke and Turn Judge?” Obviously, it depends upon the individual but rest assured it won't happen overnight or without effort. Knowing the rules and attending training sessions are very important, but experience gained by working at meets is the only real teacher. Only experience can build the confidence the S&T Judge requires before his or her performance becomes “automatic.” Even then, a continuing review of the rules and regular attendance at retraining sessions is essential.