



Virginia Swimming, Inc.
Officials Committee
RECOMMENDED PRACTICE



HANDLING MISSED HEATS

SUMMARY

Referees will manage the deck at swim meets in a manner designed to reduce congestion and confusion behind blocks so as to afford swimmers every opportunity to recognize when their heat is called. Nevertheless, confusion and congestion alone cannot relieve a swimmer of responsibility for missing his or her assigned heat.

ISSUE

In order to achieve reasonable consistency on how to treat swimmers who miss their heat, the VSI Officials Committee discussed various alternatives at its recent meeting. Often, referees take individual approaches to handling swimmers who miss their heat. This results in different treatment of swimmers from meet to meet and even from session to session. This is not acceptable since athletes, coaches, parents and officials have a right to expect consistent treatment at similar meets.

TRIAL

This practice has been in place since the 2001-02 Short Course season and where consistently implemented has achieved the intended results.

COMMITTEE DECISION

The Virginia Swimming Officials Committee is publishing this recommended practice on how Rule 102.14.7B1 should be implemented at all meets to take effect throughout the LSC commencing with the 2002 Long Course season:

- 1. The referee must ensure that conditions and staffing at a meet allow swimmers to be properly behind their blocks when they need to be there. In part, this means that conditions behind the blocks remain orderly so that swimmers can hear and respond to the whistles and commands. In*

¹ Rule 102.14.7 B reads: "Swimmers who fail to appear at the starting platform ready to swim in time for the initial start of their heat shall be disqualified by the Referee."

addition, at age group meets with BB and lower-classification swimmers, a clerk of course should be present and functioning. Normally, this will ensure that swimmers report to the blocks in a timely manner. Please note that Rule 102.12.3 lists a Clerk of Course as a required official at all meets.

- 2. Referees should not rush swimmers onto the blocks and hurriedly close heats, time lines notwithstanding. Referees should be conscious that there might be swimmers still making their way to the block through human congestion behind the blocks (see paragraph 1). In addition, there may be swimmers who do not initially step up on the block at the long whistle. All of these swimmers should be given latitude prior to the heat being closed. For the most part, late step-ups that do not disrupt the start should not be disqualified.*
- 3. When swimmers do miss heats and then ask the referee for permission to swim, reasonable efforts should be made to determine why the swimmer missed his/her heat. If it is discovered that the swimmer was hindered, misinformed or misdirected by any individual acting in an official capacity, i.e., official, timer, marshal, runner, clerk of course guide, etc., that athlete **must** be given an opportunity to swim. In consultation with the athlete's coach, this opportunity may mean that the swimmer is placed in an empty lane of a later heat of the same event, or in an empty lane of the same stroke and distance, but in a different gender or age group or, if appropriate, in an added heat.*
- 4. If it is determined that a swimmer missed a heat through their own fault and no extenuating circumstances exist, the referee should generally not allow the swimmer to make up the missed swim. Nevertheless, if some extenuating circumstance is found to exist or if the swimmer is allowed to compete in the interest of ensuring fair and equitable competition, notation must be made in the Referee Pass-Down report so that subsequent sessions can maintain consistency.*

The Officials Committee welcomes thoughts, comments, concerns, and experiences with this procedure from the VSI officiating and coaching community.

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