

# Prince-Mont Swim League

## Starters Clinic

2010

(updated 5/30/2010)

### I. Philosophy of Starting

#### A. Significance of the position

1. This position is the only position with consistent interaction with the swimmers.
2. The Starter sets the tone and the tempo of the meet.
3. Starter is the second in command of the meet.
  1. Should something happen to the Referee, the Starter must step in.
  2. Also, the Starter may have to fill in as a Stroke & Turn official if short-handed.

### II. Characteristics/attributes of a good starter

#### A. Outwardly calm

1. Even when things aren't going your way

#### B. Project confidence

1. Lack of confidence is infectious to swimmers (and the referee!)

#### C. Be professional at all times

1. The Starter's job is no place for casualness, or sloppiness.
2. Be aware of tendency to get tired toward end of meet.
3. Arrive early to assist the referee.
4. Dress professionally.

#### D. Be totally focused and alert during the whole meet, but especially at "the start"

1. Make sure you are positioned where you want to be.
  1. Must be within 10 feet of starting end.
2. Make sure that you can see the whole field.
  1. Clear the starting area of lingering swimmers, or timers, that might be a distraction.
3. For backstroke starts, position yourself even with the swimmers so that you can see the swimmers' toes (under/over the water)

#### E. Don't involve yourself with matters, concerns, controversies, etc., that do not involve you.

#### F. Be FAIR

1. Be consistent (call it the same throughout the entire meet).
2. Give the swimmer the benefit of the doubt
  1. A "false start" may have been caused by some external cause.

#### G. Be patient, particularly with the swimmers.

1. Allow for goggles to be adjusted.
2. Allow for impaired swimmers.
3. Stand up swimmers if they are too restless.
4. Do not rush the swimmers.
  1. Remember, your sole purpose is to ensure that all competitors get a crisp and fair start.
  2. Give the swimmers adequate time after, "take your mark", to settle down into their starting position.

- H. Not all individuals can be good starters.
1. Need a calm, confident voice
    1. Tone should be conversational, not strident: crisp and concise
      - a. “Invite” the swimmers to swim. Don’t “order” them to swim.
  2. If you get flustered easily, this job may not be for you.
  3. Don’t be too wordy.
    1. Use the least amount of verbiage possible.
    2. Use standard, consistent commands.
    3. Remember, your voice is an audio queue to the swimmers that “it’s time to swim”. If they hear it too much, it loses its effect. You are not the “announcer”. If an announcement needs to be made, let the Announcer, or the Referee make it.
  4. Develop the proper “inflection” to your commands.
    1. Never, “Take your mark!!” Remember, conversational.
  5. Practice the commands:
    1. “Take your mark”
    2. “Ladies (or gentlemen), positions please”
    3. “Step in”, or “step up”, or “step down”
    4. “Place your feet”
    5. “Stand”, or “stand, please”, or stand down”
    6. “Clear the pool, please”, (gentlemen/ladies”)
    7. “Gentlemen (ladies), lane X is attempting a lead-off split of 50 meters”
  6. Don’t develop a pattern to your starting cadence (“take, your, beep”
    1. This encourages the swimmers to anticipate the start.

### III. Starting protocol for Prince-Mont

- A. With an Announcer
1. After the chirps, the Announcer should announce the event #, age group, gender, and perhaps the heat #, including the # of heats in the event.
  2. Only the heat # after the initial event/heat announcement
    - a. Clarify this with the Announcer before the meet begins.
    - b. Be consistent with this protocol.
- B. Without an Announcer
1. The Starter should assume the role of the Announcer, by stating the same above information.
    - a. The full announcement just at the beginning of the event.
    - b. Just the heat number before all subsequent heats.
  2. The Referee will issue a series of short chirps on his/her whistle.
    - a. This indicates to the swimmers the need for them to disrobe of any extraneous clothing and to approach the starting line.

3. The Referee will then blow a long whistle. (This is the equivalent of telling the swimmers to step up on the blocks in USA swimming.)
  - a. Referee then raises his/her arm towards the Starter. This raised arm turns the start over to the Starter, --- and closes off the heat.
4. For backstroke starts, there will be two (2) long whistles, the first to invite the swimmers to enter the water, the second to have the swimmers place their feet on the wall.
  - a. **The start now belongs to YOU!**
  - b. Announce the:
    1. **Distance**, (“25 meter”)
    2. **Stroke**, (“breaststroke”)
    3. **Number of lengths**, (“One length of the pool”)
  - c. Pause. Take a breath.
  - d. “Invite” the swimmers to **“Take your mark”**.
  - e. Allow the swimmers to take their starting position, at a “reasonable” pace.
    1. If one of the swimmers takes a significantly longer time to do so, -- “stand” -- the field up.
      1. Don’t want any single swimmer to “control” the start.
    2. Swimmers must have at least one foot at the front edge of the pool.
    3. Backstrokers may have toes out of the water as long as they are not curled over the edge, or gutter.
    4. If there seems to be too much movement, --- “Stand” them up.
    5. If there is too much noise or a distraction, “Stand” them up.
  - f. Remember, you are not there to command them, as to get them off to a fair and equitable start.
  - g. Once all of these conditions have been met, (the swimmers are set, and “stationary”), push the starting button!
    1. “Motionless” has been revised to “stationary”
    2. Keep your finger over the button just in case there is reason to call them back.
    3. OK to issue a recall if there has been some outside distraction just prior to the start.
      1. Try to catch the swimmers in the air.
      2. No false start is to be charged.
      3. Stay on the recall a reasonable length of time. Otherwise, if swimmers keep swimming, try to catch them at the next wall.
        - a. Don’t panic if they swim too far. There are procedures for a re-swim.
        - b. NEVER encourage another swimmer to jump in after a swimmer!!!

#### IV. What to do when all does not go well!

- A. When swimmer goes into water before the starting signal (ie. signal is not given)
1. First, "Stand" the rest of the field up. Have them step back, (or down).
  2. Then determine in your own mind, why the swimmer entered the water.
    - a. If swimmer tried to anticipate the signal, --- False Start.
    - b. If swimmer's continuous forward motion caused him/her to fall in, --  
- False Start.
    - c. If swimmer reacted to another swimmer's movement, ---  
False Start.
    - d. swimmer slipped, --- no False Start.
    - e. If swimmer reacted to outside influences (camera, noise), --- no False Start.
    - f. If swimmer has reacted to "Stand" command, --- no False Start.
  3. Swimmers charged with a False Start before the horn goes off must be notified promptly by the Referee.
    - a. This allows for the swimmer to provide input, if any, as to the reason.
  4. When swimmer is in motion prior to starting signal (and signal has been given)
    - a. No recall!
    - b. Make immediate note of the correct lane.
    - c. Starter must initiate the call with the Referee
      1. Referee must concur.
    - d. Starter writes up DQ slip.
  5. Swimmers may be recalled if Starter is not comfortable with the start.
    - a. No False Start is charged.

#### V. After the start

- a. Starter's duties do not end after each start
- b. Help referee keep track of swimmers' progress in the pool
- c. Help referee pay attention for S&T calls
- d. Observe next heat
- e. For any late-arriving or missing swimmers
- f. For any overly "quirky" swimmer's nervous habits

#### VI. Special situations

1. Starting protocol for hearing-impaired swimmers
  1. Use arm signals
2. In-water starts
  1. Required for water depth of less than 4 feet.
  2. Initial start (at start end)
    - a. Swimmers shall step in feet first at the long whistle (like back stroke).
    - b. Second long whistle to get swimmers to the wall.
    - c. Starting position is one hand on the wall or deck, and one or both feet on the wall.
    - d. Wait for swimmers to become motionless after the take your mark.
    - e. . At the start the swimmers will push off the wall.

3. Relay in-water starts
  - a. Swimmers should (will) step in after the start or after the swimmer from the other end has entered the water (getting in early is not a DQ unless interference with a swimmer).
  - b. The swimmer should observe the swimmer coming at them and move accordingly.
  - c. At the beginning of the exchange the outgoing swimmer will have one hand on the wall or deck, and one or both feet on the wall. The outgoing swimmer may be in motion, and may release the hand so long as one or both feet remain in contact with the wall. However, if a swimmer breaks contact with the wall while waiting for the inbound swimmer, but reaches back to propel off the wall (presumably with the feet), this would not be a violation, as long as the inbound swimmer has touched by that time.
    1. Rules of proper stroke form must be followed even for this situation.
  - d. Some part of the outgoing swimmer must be in contact with the wall or deck until the incoming swimmer has touched.
  - e. The outgoing swimmer may not push off from the bottom of the pool.
  - f. To judge the take off, the take off judges should (will) watch the outgoing swimmer, when the outgoing swimmer loses contact with the wall or the deck. Check that the incoming swimmer has touched.
  - g. This may be difficult to see from the side. Any doubt, the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer.
  - h. Stroke & Turn Judges will be responsible to make sure swimmers push off the wall and not the bottom. This is not a Take-Off Judge call.
  - i. Other considerations
    1. Legs will not be allowed for forward in water starts or relay exchanges. They really are not needed for a forward start, and it would impede the outgoing swimmer in moving to avoid the incoming swimmer.
    2. Towels will not be allowed for forward in water starts or relay exchanges. They are not needed for forward start, they would tend to drift out and obscure observation, and make movement to avoid the incoming swimmer more difficult. It would also make it difficult to tell when the incoming swimmer has actually touched.
    3. Sitting on edge of pool for take off will not be allowed. This would probably result in a form of forward start off the deck and we do not want any form of forward start.

## **VII. Equipment**

- A. Know how to set up starting equipment