

**Changes to the USMS Rules of Competition as a Result of
Actions Taken by FINA and USA-Swimming
September 22, 2005**

Actions taken by USA-Swimming during and after the recent annual meetings of USA-Swimming and USMS in response to actions taken by FINA have caused changes to the USMS Rules of Competition as described in Section 601.4.6 of the USMS Code. The House of Delegates accepted portions of these changes at last week's meeting. The rules as they now stand are shown below. Those that occurred after the meeting are also shown in the standard form to show differences. These rules were effective September 21, 2005.

101.2 Breaststroke

101.2.1 – Start

The forward start shall be used.

101.2.2-Stroke

From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time. Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement. The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water. The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish. The hands shall be brought back on or under the surface of the water. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn. During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of the water. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.

101.2.3- Kick

After the start and after each turn, a single downward butterfly (dolphin) kick followed by a breaststroke kick is permitted while wholly submerged. Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement. The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. A scissors, flutter or downward butterfly (dolphin) kick is not permitted except as provided herein. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly (dolphin) kick.

101.2.4- Turns and Finish

At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or below the water level. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.

INTERPRETATION: The official interpretation for the changes to the breaststroke (101.2) is that during, or at the end of the arm pull-down of the first stroke after the start and after each turn, a single downward butterfly kick is allowed, but not required, followed by a breaststroke kick. During the pull-down, if a downward butterfly kick is taken, it must be followed by a breaststroke kick. It is not permissible to take only a downward butterfly kick without then taking a normal breaststroke kick. The downward butterfly kick is **not** permissible prior to the arm pull-down. In addition, there is now a requirement for all movements of the legs to be “in the same horizontal plane and without alternating movement”. This was previously not included in our rules. **NOTE:** This interpretation is subject to change based upon further consultations with FINA at a meeting scheduled for October.

The updated version of the backstroke rules are shown below:

101.1.2 Backstroke Start

B All courses—The swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes over the lip of the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter before or after the start is prohibited. A backstroke starting block may not be used.

101.4 Backstroke

101.4.2—Stroke

Standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter immediately after the start is not permitted. The swimmer shall push off on the back and continue swimming on the 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, at the finish, and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.

101.4.3—Turns

Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. During the turn the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast, after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to execute the turn. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.

Note: The swimmer who turns past vertical and, in a continuous motion, grabs the wall before pushing off with the feet while on the back is considered to have executed a “continuous turning action.”

101.4.4—Finish

Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.

INTERPRETATION: The official interpretation for the change to the backstroke rules is that the toes are no longer required to be under the surface of the water at the start. However, the toes are still not allowed to be above the lip of the gutter or curled over the lip of the gutter. The change was made so that when full-face pads are used (pads that extend above the gutter) there is no requirement to have the toes under the water. From a practical standpoint there is no change when using touch pads that hang on the pool gutter.

Changes to 101.3.2, 101.4.3 and 101.4.4 simply incorporate the language used by FINA and do not represent any changes to the stroke or to the manner in which is currently being judged.

The changes to the backstroke rule enacted since convention are shown below with underlined text being new and text removed being lined out:

101.1.2 Backstroke Start

B All courses—The swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips. ~~Prior to the command “Take your mark,” and until the feet leave the wall at the starting signal, the swimmers’ feet including the toes shall be placed under the surface of the water.~~ Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes over the lip of the gutter or

bending the toes over the lip of the gutter before or after the start is prohibited. A backstroke starting block may not be used.

101.4.2—Stroke

Standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter immediately after the start is not permitted. The swimmer shall push off on the back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it ~~shall be~~ is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, at the finish, and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.

101.4.3—Turns

Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. During the turn the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast, after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to execute the turn. ~~Once the body has left the position on the back, any kick or arm pull must be part of the continuous turning action.~~ The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.

Note: The swimmer who turns past vertical and, in a continuous motion, grabs the wall before pushing off with the feet while on the back is considered to have executed a “continuous turning action.”

101.4.4—Finish

Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. ~~The body may be submerged at the touch.~~

Leo Letendre, Chair
USMS Rules Committee