

WHAT IS A FALSE START? Adopted from USA Swimming April 2012 newsletter and expanded from the Officials Committee of NC Swimming 7/5/12.

Our job as starters is to ensure that all swimmers achieve a fair start. We need to remember to be patient before the TYM command to allow the field to be ready to hear the command. After the TYM command, we need to be patient to allow the swimmers to achieve their starting position. This requires us to take just that small amount of extra time (that will seem like forever to us) to allow the field to be ready for the starting signal. Please remember that the referee's job is to turn over the heat to you when he/she recognizes that all swimmers are present. This doesn't mean that you need to immediately send them. It **ONLY** means that they are in your jurisdiction to do the above.

The rules state... "When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal" (101.1.2.C) and "Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation" (101.1.3A).

So what constitutes a false start and what does not? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position with a forward starting motion prior to the starting signal and continues into the pool as the starting signal is given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position with a forward starting motion prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start. The starter should immediately release the swimmers remaining on the blocks with "stand please". Assuming the referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the referee should inform the swimmer(s) who entered the pool prior to "stand please" that they will not be able to compete in that event.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says ~~stand please~~ immediately after the first swimmer leaves the set or stationary position with a forward starting motion. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said ~~stand please~~ before the offending swimmer entered the pool but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the "stand" command is for the benefit of the other swimmers who remain on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the swimmers have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He went into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start. In this case, assuming the referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the referee should inform the offending swimmer that they will not be able to compete in that event.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command %stand please+is issued, the offending swimmer struggles but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is NOT a false start.** Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and did not enter the pool.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the %stand please+ command a swimmer(s) **other than the offending swimmer** instantly bolts or falls from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly reacted to the %stand+command. **This is NOT a false start for the second swimmer however it is still a false start for the first swimmer if he goes into the pool and the starter and referee independently observe and confirm this.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command %take your mark+, starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any forward starting action. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #7

The swimmer, upon hearing the command %take your mark+takes a set or stationary position. The back of the swimmers foot is twitching at the start. **This IS NOT a false start.** Rule 101.2C only requires that a swimmer be stationary, not motionless. Muscle tics, twitches or other body movements that do not change the relative position of the swimmer on the blocks do not result in a false start.

FALSE START SCENARIO #8

Swimmer sets in a stationary position but leaves the set or stationary position in a forward starting motion prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion catches himself/herself and becomes stationary again before the starting signal is given. **This is NOT a false start because the swimmer was stationary and did not start before the starting signal was given as required by the rule. The starter is in control and should know when to be patient to allow everyone to become stationary before the signal.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #9

After the start a swimmer comes running up and dives into the lane he/she was supposed to swim in. This is considered a NO show rather than a false start since the swimmer did not appear at the starting platform ready to swim in time for the initial start of his/her heat as required in rule 101.1.5 Dual confirmation is not required in this scenario. All administrative rules would then apply for anyone missing their heat.

FALSE START SCENARIO #10

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position in a backward motion prior to the starting signal. **This is a false start.** The direction of movement is wholly irrelevant; this swimmer had left his stationary position before the starting signal and should be charged with a false start.)

When should a Referee extend his hand?

A Referee should put out his/her hand (turn control over to the starter) as soon as all swimmers present to swim in the heat have stepped on the block. Starters are being trained to watch for when the entire heat is ready to take their marks and start.