

# **TIMEKEEPER**

You want to become a Timekeeper.

To help you, these few pages will cover the relevant points and some general information about the structure of the sport of swimming.

## **FINA:**

FINA is the international controlling body of swimming to which New Zealand is an affiliated member. We fully comply with the constitution of FINA and Swimming New Zealand and adhere to their swimming rules.

## **SWIMMING NEW ZEALAND**

Swimming New Zealand is an association of members of all clubs and regional associations throughout New Zealand who are all affiliates to SNZ. It should be noted that all these affiliates are deemed to be members of FINA. SNZ recognises FINA as the world governing body for swimming.

Within the framework of SNZ there are various bodies who operate independently with their own chairperson and committee and the one that you will be controlled by Swim Sport.

One of the sub committees of Swim Sport is the Technical panel which is made up of five appointed persons, one from the Northern region, one from the North Central region, one from the Central Region, one from northern South Island and one from southern South Island, with a Chairperson (who can be from any of the regions).

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THIS PANEL WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

1. To conduct National examinations.
2. To conduct Technical Officials seminar.
3. To answer questions of a technical nature regarding interpretation of intent of the rules.
4. Appoint all Technical Officials for all National Championships and other such meets as Swim Sport may decide.
5. The designation of fixtures at which national examinations will be conducted.
6. The periodic up-dating of the National Officials list to delete those who are no longer active either at Regional or National level.
7. To regrade Nationally qualified referees in accordance with the criteria set out by the Technical Panel.
8. To select from applications national examiners.

Next we will cover the points that all timekeepers should know. In spite of what some people think there will always be a place for manual timekeeping in New Zealand.

The larger regions have electronic timing for their major meets but still use manual timing at a lot of club meets. There are still a large number of smaller regions that don't have electronic timing and due to cost probably never will have. Even at major meets with electronic timing they still need manual as a back up in case of failure.

**The fundamental principle of competition swimming is the time.**

Just as important to the club swimmer as it is to the Olympic swimmer a time, now measured to one hundredth of a second, a blink of an eye time can determine the world champion from the also ran or the breaking of a record.

At club level competition for the swimmer in the water, their time may in the first instance enable them to swim in a final and from that final achieve a time that will allow them into a regional or New Zealand championship.

It is obvious that the timekeeper's job is important so concentration is required at all meets.

### **YOU HAVE BEEN ASKED TO TIMEKEEP:**

You should be at the pool 30 minutes before the start and report to the Chief Timekeeper. (At National meets on the first day you should report one hour before the start.) You should have with you a digital stop watch that reads to one hundredth of a second, a spare battery (if it doesn't require a watchmaker to replace it) or spare watch, a pad and pen or pencil. If the meet is an outdoor one and the weather looks doubtful a good idea is to take a plastic bag to keep paper dry if it rains.

### **CHIEF TIMEKEEPERS DUTIES:**

Arrive at the pool one-hour before start time; ensure there are sufficient timekeepers. Instruct timekeepers of the procedure should a watch malfunction. Allocate lanes and chief lane timekeepers who should be the most experienced on the lane. (At National meets the procedure is different – the Chief Lane Timekeepers are already named.) Issue deck cards or pads for recording the times. Check that all watches are running at the start and replace anybody whose watch has not started or malfunctions during the course of the race. Time the first swimmer to finish (at the end of the pool not from the side). Check timeslips and names and then take them to the recorders. Check for any records and if there are check the three watches. Signal to the referee that all is clear to start the next race. At the end of the meet sign any record applications.

### **CHIEF LANE TIMEKEEPER:**

If lane pads are used fill in event number, lane number and heat number or final. If deck cards are used this information is already filled in (except for times). Report any consistent irregularities to the Chief Timekeeper for them to take any action. Check the right swimmer is in their lane and enter the official time and sign the slip before handing to the Chief timekeeper. Record the three times (as minutes, seconds and hundredths of a second, e.g. 01 min 07.91 sec. Not 67.91). Always ensure you sign the other two watches.

### **THE START:**

Do not watch the Starter (as this may cause you to anticipate). Listen for the sound, which can be from a gun, hooter, horn or strobe light etc. Once the race has started check to make sure your watch is running.

Start and stop with finger or thumb movement only. A sweeping movement with the arm looks very dramatic but can only lead to inaccuracy. If you have a malfunction at the start or during the race or if you think you were late or early starting your watch raise your hand or stand immediately and the Chief Timekeeper will put in a replacement for that race.

Sometimes split times are asked for especially in 800m or 1500m races and these should be recorded separately. Also, if the first swimmer in a relay wants to be timed so additional timekeepers have to be appointed.

Timekeepers must keep count of the laps and periodically during the race check their watch (especially long distance ones to verify their counting).

## **THE FINISH**

During the last few metres don't watch the swimmer coming toward you. Look straight down at the end of the pool and when they touch (no matter how) stop your watch. If the touch is incorrect that is not your concern. As a Timekeeper do not at any stage step back to avoid getting wet (that is one of the hazards of timekeeping). Times must be taken from the end not from the side of the pool. Once you have taken the time return to your seat without delay. (Don't stand on the deck to discuss the times.) Write your time on your programme as after you have zeroed your watch a time may need to be checked. Chief Lane Timekeeper will check each watch and enter the times and write in the official time (in clear numbers so that the recorders can understand). To determine the official time – if two of the watches have the same time and the third disagreed – the two identical shall be the official time. If all three disagree the watch recording the middle time shall be the official time.

If for any reason there is a malfunction with one of the watches and there is not enough time left to call up a replacement then the times of the other two watches will be averaged and that will be the time for that lane. However, this time will be recorded in the results with an asterisk and the time cannot be used to claim a record.

Should a swimmer ask for their time just give the minutes and seconds but make it clear that it is unofficial.

When electronic timing is being used make sure you are clear of the pads when taking your time as touching them may activate them prematurely.

When automatic timing is used in any competition times so determined will take precedence over manual times. Timekeepers used in conjunction with automatic timing are there in the role of back up with buttons and watches in case of a malfunction with the automatic equipment.

You must start your watch on all races even if you don't have a swimmer in your lane, the time slip should be so marked – N/S.

The only people permitted to check your watch are the Chief Lane Timekeeper, the chief Timekeeper or the Referee.

For record purposes there must be three times for the lane and should a record be broken the Chief Timekeeper should inspect the watches to verify the times.

Because you are on one of the outside lanes don't think your times are not that important – they are. Always remember that in open events you could have age group swimmers and the last swimmer home could break an age group, regional association or club record.

In some of the big meets where there are over the top starts because of the number of entries you may not have time to record times on the deck card before the next race starts. In this case write your time on your programme and the deck card can be filled in while the next race is in progress. Don't rely on your memory. All timekeepers note their time on the programme at all meets. This is essential.

If one watch is consistently out then use another watch. If this doesn't solve the problem then maybe the Timekeeper needs to be checked, or moved to another lane.

Watches to be zeroed on the Referees whistle for the start of the next race. This practice is universally accepted unless otherwise instructed by the Chief Timekeeper. Make sure that your watch has gone back to zero.

As we no longer use place judges except at a meet where you only have two timekeepers per lane, the places are determined on times, which makes your job even more important. With this in mind you need to concentrate at all times.

Always remember that as an official we need the swimmers and the swimmers need us. But as volunteers we do not have to listen to foul language when a swimmer does a poor time. If it offends you then tell the Chief timekeeper who in turn will inform the Referee.

At a Technical Seminar a few years ago some comments were made which are worth printing as they are relevant to all technical officials.

### **ETHICS**

1. To be fair and honest in all decisions.
2. To be consistently knowledgeable about the rules.
3. To be aware of the tendency to be biased.
4. To refrain from discussing results until after the end of the race.

### **PERSONALITY**

1. Every official should use his or her own intelligence.
2. It helps to have a good memory.
3. It is essential to be able to concentrate.
4. You must be positive in the way you think about rules.
5. You must be consistent.
6. You must be accurate.

### **MOTIVATION**

1. Every official must be interested in swimming.
2. To ascertain that young people have a fair go when competing.
3. Personal achievement and satisfaction.
4. Friendship.
5. The challenge.

### **TOLERANCE TO STRESSFUL SITUATIONS**

1. If you are tired you cannot do your best.
2. Physical discomfort.
3. Emotions.
4. Air temperature.
5. Spectator reaction.
6. Length of programme.

Finally I make this comment. You start your watch when you hear the sound to start and stop it when you see the swimmer touch the end of the pool. Once you have topped your watch that will be the time taken by your watch and you cannot alter it. If you start to worry that you don't agree with the other timekeepers you may as well give it away. But bear in mind that yours may be the right time and they could be wrong. All human reactions are different.

We now urge you to think about doing your regional timekeeper's exam and at a later date do your National exam. Get hold of a FINA handbook or Swimming New Zealand one and study the rules.