



From: Officials News officials.news@swimmingresults.org  
Subject: Practical Guidance - Backstroke starts
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NO

Please see below for guidance on a scenario that has arisen around backstroke starts.

Scenario

A swimmer is disqualified for a Backstroke start for having their toes in the gutter. (SW 6.1) They moved their toes on to the gutter after the start signal had been given and then started their race using the gutter to maximise their start. The coach questions the disqualification pointing out that SW 6.1 refers to "prior to the signal" and stating that their swimmer moved into the gutter after the signal and thus should not have been disqualified.

FINA Rule

SW 6.1 states Prior to the starting signal, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited. When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad. Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.

Practical Guidance

The first sentence is what the swimmer should do before the start is given and this is rounded off with the full stop. The second sentence gives further instruction as to what the swimmer can't do. Therefore it's a new set of instructions/prohibitions and is not prefaced with "prior to the start" and therefore should be read as "at any time". The "any time" proviso should also be carried forward through the rest of the rule.

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