



## Declared False Start

### Relevant Rules:

- 1) Rule 101.1.3F. Declared False Start (USAS 2009 Rules and Regulations, page 18).
- 2) Rule 207.12.6D(1). No Declared False Start in Finals (USAS 2009 Rules and Regulations, page 73).
- 3) Rule 207.12.6E. Exceptions for failure to compete (USAS 2009 Rules and Regulations, page 74).

A declared false start should not be used as an alternative to following established procedures for scratches, but a swimmer is entitled to decide not to swim in a preliminary or timed final event after the scratch deadline, without a penalty, by declaring a false start under the provisions of Article 101.1.3F. A declared false start is a disqualification for the swimmer. The declaration can be made to the Administrative Referee, Deck Referee or Meet Referee at any time prior to the start of a heat in which the swimmer is seeded. It releases the swimmer from their obligation to compete in an event for which they have checked-in or have failed to scratch during a preliminary sessions of a meet with both preliminaries and finals. The declared false start is not meant to be used as a second scratch deadline for swimmers. The purpose of the Positive Check-In process is to:

- maximize full heats and avoid empty lanes in the circle seeded heats (and potential reseeds)
- provide a more competitive environment.

A declared false start for frivolous purposes negates the benefits of the Positive Check-In process, and is a disservice to the other swimmers and coaches.

### **Preliminary Events:**

- In a preliminary event, no explanation for the declared false start is warranted, and all requests should be granted.
- Penalty: none.
- The Referee may ask if there is an illness, injury or unusual circumstance, but it is not required and unnecessary.

### **Finals Events:**

- A declared false start is not permitted, except for certain circumstances, and if the swimmer fails to compete in the finals events, it is then referred to as a failure to compete.
- Penalty: barred from the remainder of the meet.
- Alleviating circumstances:
  - injury or illness (must rely on the integrity of the coach and swimmer. “The benefit of the doubt belongs to the swimmer”).
  - declaration of final intention to scratch within 30 minutes of their last individual event
  - referee determines there is a circumstance beyond the swimmer’s control.

**Process:**

- fill out Disqualification slip for a Declared False Start
- submit after the start of affected heat; swimmer may reverse their decision until the start of the heat
- check if swimmer is withdrawing from any additional sessions, or the meet
- if unsure of the appropriate decision, consult with other senior officials present or convene the Meet Committee for final resolution.

**Timed Finals:**

- Declared False Start is allowed in Timed Finals
- Declared False Start is allowed for swimmers in the fastest heat swimming with Finals.

The Meet Referee should discuss the declared false start process as outlined during the coaches' meeting. This will serve to educate coaches and ensure that the coaches and officials have a uniform understanding of the process. Ultimately, this will lead to less confusion and misunderstanding.

Always keep in mind, the swimmer receives the benefit of the doubt, but a consistent, safe and equitable meet environment must be maintained.

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Wisconsin Swimming Officials Chair

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