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## **Background**

The Olympic 10K Marathon Swim was added to the Olympic swimming program in 2008 where it was conducted in a rowing basin outside of Beijing. The 2012 Olympics will feature a flat-water 10K course in Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park in central London. Over 100,000 spectators are expected to watch this race. The 2016 Olympics will feature an ocean 10K course in Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, where an estimated 300,000 people are expected to watch the open water swimmers.

The goal of this rules book is to educate swimmers, coaches and administrators at the 2011 World Summer Games in Athens, Greece and all future open water swimming events.

Rules for open water swimming are significantly different than pool swimming rules.

## **1.0 Overall Safety**

- 1.1 Open water swimming athletes, coaches, administrators, parents and officials must “Expect the Unexpected” and be flexible at all times in the dynamic environment of the open water where anything can happen.
- 1.2 Everyone must also react and anticipate things to provide for the safety of the athletes.
- 1.3 The Organizing Committee must declare in the meet information its policy for postponement or abandonment of the competition.

## **2.0 Distance and Venue**

- 2.1 Recommended individual events can be of any distance in an open body of water.
- 2.2 Standard distances such as 1 kilometer, 1.5 kilometers, 2 kilometers, 3 kilometers and 5 kilometers are recommended.
- 2.3 Open water swimming events can be conducted in any natural or man-made body of water including oceans, bays, seas, lakes, rivers, dams, reservoirs, lidos, lagoons, lochs, ponds, creeks, estuaries, straits, channels, lidos, canals and rowing basins.

## **3.0 Equipment**

- 3.1 Wetsuits and other technical swimsuits that may offer buoyancy, additional protection from the cold or elements may be used.
- 3.2 If there shall be a separate classification for wetsuit swimmers, it shall be clearly stated in the meet information and on the accompanying entry form.
- 3.3 No swimmer shall be allowed to use or wear any device that may be an aid to his/her speed or endurance such as fins, hand paddles, pull buoys or floats of any kind.
- 3.4 A maximum of two swim caps may be used.
- 3.5 A reasonable application of body grease, lanolin or petroleum jelly are allowed.

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3.6 Nose clips, ear plugs and goggles are permitted.

### **4.0 Swimming Style**

- 4.1 All open water competitions shall be freestyle events, although athletes may swim any stroke, including breaststroke, backstroke or sidestroke.
- 4.2 During the race, athletes may stand, rest, tread water and touch piers, boats, paddleboards, kayaks, cables, ropes and safety personnel in the water if they are tired, nervous or in need of help or encouragement.
- 4.3 Athletes may walk, jog or run in the water if the water level is higher than their waist.
- 4.4 Athletes may walk, jog or run in the water if they are heading to the finish area.
- 4.5 Athletes may push off, walk, jog or run at the start or at the finish where an on-shore start and finish are used.
- 4.6 Athletes may receive aid from a non-competing person in the form of pacing or swimming nearby.
- 4.7 Athletes may draft off of one another at any distance.

### **5.0 The Start**

- 5.1 Events may be started either
  - (1) In-water where athletes stand or tread water in a depth sufficient for them to commence swimming on the start signal; or
  - (2) From the beach where athletes line up and run into the water from the shore on the Starter's signal; or
  - (3) From a fixed platform where athletes' positions on the platform are determined by random draw and they commence racing on the start signal.
- 5.2 The start signal shall be both audible and visible.
- 5.3 When the start for Men's and Women's competitions is staggered, the Men's events shall always start before the Women's events.
- 5.4 If, in the opinion of the Head Referee, an unfair advantage has been gained by someone at the start, that swimmer may be disqualified.
- 5.5 Prior to the start all escort safety crafts shall be stationed so as to avoid interference with any competitor. If catching up to their swimmers from behind, the craft shall navigate in such a way as to avoid maneuvering through the field of swimmers.
- 5.6 The start line shall be clearly defined by either overhead apparatus or by removable equipment (e.g., rope, banner, lane lines, buoys) at the water level.

### **6.0 The Finish**

- 6.1 Where an in-water finish system is not available, an on-shore finish where athletes run from the water to a finish point is permitted.
- 6.2 It is recommended, but not required, that the finish should be filmed and recorded by video system with slow motion and recall facilities including timing equipment.
- 6.3 The final approach to the finish shall be clearly defined with markers or lane lines or rope of a distinctive color. The area leading to the finish apparatus

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should be clearly marked by rows of buoys which narrow as they get closer to the finish wall. Escort safety craft should be stationed at the approach to and entrance of the finish lane to ensure that only the escort craft authorized to do so enter or cross this entrance.

- 6.4 The finish line depends on the venue itself. It can be on shore, at the water's edge or in the water. The finish line shall be clearly defined and marked and, where possible, should be stationary and securely fastened in place so as to not be moved by wind, tide, or force of the swimmer striking or running over it.

### **7.0 Escort Safety Craft**

- 7.1 Escort safety craft shall maintain a constant position at the sides of their swimmers and shall maneuver so as to avoid obstructing or placing themselves directly in front of another swimmer.
- 7.2 Each escort safety craft shall contain a race official and the minimum crew required to operate the escort safety craft.
- 7.3 Recreational or non-official watercraft shall not be permitted on the course during warm-up or during the race until the last swimmer has been removed from the course.
- 7.4 Coaching and the giving of instructions by a swimmer's coach or representative from an escort safety craft, feeding platforms, pier, dock, jetty or shoreline is permitted. No whistles or air horns may be used by coaches.
- 7.5 Time limits shall be published in the meet information and shall apply as follows from the finish time of the first swimmer. For events under 3K, the time limit shall be not less than 60 minutes. For events over 3K, the time limit shall not be less than 120 minutes.

### **8.0 Marking**

- 8.1 Prior to the start, athletes shall be marked with their race numbers on both upper arms and their backs.
- 8.2 Paddlers and escort boats for individual swimmers shall also be marked on both sides with the swimmer's race number so it is easily seen from either side.

### **9.0 Disqualifications**

- 9.1 A swimmer shall be disqualified for:
- 9.1.1 Willfully or intentionally delaying or impeding the progress of another swimmer. Note: Incidental contact, especially at the start of the event and around the turn buoys, shall not be a basis for disqualification.;
  - 9.1.2 Failing to swim or complete the prescribed course. Competitors who do not finish the course within the time limit shall be removed from the water except that the Referee may allow a competitor outside the time limit to complete the course but not participate in any points or prizes awarded.;
  - 9.1.3 Receiving propulsive aid from anyone in boats or other escort craft of any kind;
  - 9.1.4 Violating the equipment rules.



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- 9.1.5 Actions of his/her escort safety craft or coach that interfere with another swimmer's progress or for failure of his/her craft or coach to heed the instruction of an assigned official;

### 10.0 Disqualification Procedures

- 10.1 If, in the opinion of the Referees, any swimmer or escort safety craft commits any of the infractions on this section, the following procedure shall apply:
- 10.1.1 First Infraction – A yellow flag and a card bearing the swimmer's number shall be raised by the Referee to indicate and to inform the swimmer that he is in violation of the Rules. Whistles may be used by the Referee to get the swimmer's attention.
- 10.1.2 Second infraction – A red flag and a card bearing the swimmer's number shall be raised by the Referee to indicate and to inform the swimmer that he is, for the second time, in violation of the Rules. The swimmer shall be disqualified. He must leave the water immediately and be placed in an escort craft and take no further part in the race, Whistles may be used by the Referee to get the swimmer's attention.
- 10.2 The Referee may disqualify a swimmer without prior warning if in his opinion the action of the swimmer or escort craft is deemed to be unsportsmanlike. Examples of unsportsmanlike conduct include intentionally striking another swimmer and refusal to re-round a turn mark after being advised the mark was missed.

### 11.0 Officials

- 11.1 The Meet Director shall determine the course for an open water event.
- 11.2 There should be no fewer than the following officiating positions filled.
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Head Referee   | Assistant Referee                      |
| Announcer  | Safety Officer                         |
| Medical Officer  | Course Officer                         |
| Clerk of Course  | Starter                                |
| Chief Timer and 3 timers                                       | Chief Finish Judge and 2 finish judges |
| Race Judge (one per competitor in escorted races)              |  |
| Turn Judge (one at each change in the direction of the course) |  |
- 11.3 The positions of Referee, Safety Officer, Finish Judge and Timer shall not be combined with the duties of any other official.

### 12.0 The Referee

- 12.1 The Referee shall
- 12.1.1 Ensure that all participants, coaches, and event support personnel are briefed about the course, safety procedures and any site-specific rules applying to the event;
- 12.1.2 Have the authority to stop the race or to change the distance and/or race course due to safety concerns or unforeseen circumstances;
- 12.1.3 Have the authority to use any video or electronic or mechanical judging devices in judging the finish order or in making other rulings.

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- 12.1.4 Signal by a raised flag and a series of short blasts on a whistle that the start is imminent and when satisfied that the swimmers are ready, indicate by pointing the flag at the Starter that the competition may commence;
- 12.1.5 Signal by a raised flag and a series of short blasts on a whistle that the start is imminent and when satisfied that the swimmers are ready, indicate by pointing the flag at the Starter that the competition may commence;
- 12.1.6 May elect to start the race in waves whereby each wave (heat) is separated at the start from the previous wave by a set time interval. Swimmers' times shall be adjusted by the starting time interval and their order of finish shall be determined on the basis of the adjusted time;
- 12.1.7 May segregate competitors into the men's and women's or other classifications (e.g., by age group), either by the position at the starting line or by separate time of start.

### **13.0 The Assistant Referee**

- 13.1 The Assistant Referee shall perform all duties assigned by the Referee.

### **14.0 The Safety Officer**

- 14.1 The Safety Officer shall
  - 14.1.1 Be responsible to the Head Referee for all aspects of safety related to the conduct of the competition;
  - 14.1.2 Ensure that each escort craft is suitable;
  - 14.1.3 Check that the entire course and especially the start and finish areas are safe and free of all obstructions;
  - 14.1.4 Ensure that a sufficient number of powered craft are available during the competition to provide safety backup for the escort boats;
  - 14.1.5 When applicable, shall provide to all swimmers a tide and/or current charts indicating the time of tide changes on the course and showing the relationship between tides or current and swimmers' progress along the course; and
  - 14.1.6 In conjunction with the Medical Officer, shall advise the Head Referee if conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and/or make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

### **15.0 The Medical Officer**

- 15.1 The Medical Officer shall
  - 15.1.1 Be responsible to the Head Referee for all medical aspects related to the competition and competitors;
  - 15.1.2 Inform the local medical facilities of the nature of the competition and ensure that all casualties can be evacuated to them at the earliest opportunity;

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- 15.1.3 Advise the Head Referee in conjunction with the Safety Officer, if conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and/or make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

### **16.0 The Course Officer**

- 16.1 The Course Officer shall
  - 16.1.1 Be responsible for the accuracy of the survey establishing the distance of the course;
  - 16.1.2 Prior to the commencement of competition, shall inspect with the Head Referee and Safety Officer the course to ensure that all points are correctly marked and all equipment has been correctly installed and is in working order;
  - 16.1.3 Ensure that Turn Judges are in position prior to the start of the competition and report this to the Assistant Referee; and
  - 16.1.4 Serve as pilot in the lead boat when one is used.

### **17.0 The Clerk of Course**

- 17.1 The Clerk of Course shall
  - 17.1.1. Assemble and instruct the competitors prior to the competition and ensure proper reception for the competitors at the finish;
  - 17.1.2 Ensure that each competitor is correctly marked with his/her race number and that all swimmers have trimmed fingernails and are not wearing any jewelry including watches;
  - 17.1.3 Be certain all swimmers are present, in the assembly area, at the required time prior to the start; and
  - 17.1.4 Keep competitors and officials informed of the time remaining before the start at suitable intervals and at one minute intervals for the last five minutes.

### **18.0 The Starter**

- 18.1 The Starter shall
  - 18.1.1 Assume a position clearly visible to all competitors;
  - 18.1.2 On a signal from the Head Referee, shall raise a distinctive flag to a vertical position; and
  - 18.1.3 Holding the arm straight, shall raise a distinctive flag to a vertical position before starting the race.

### **19.0 The Race Judge**

- 19.1 The Race Judge shall
  - 19.1.1 Be positioned in the escort boat so as to be able to observe his or her appointed swimmer at all times to ensure compliance with the rules of competition and that any violations are recorded and reported to the Head Referee;



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- 19.1.2 Have the authority to order a swimmer from the water upon expiration of the time limit or when so ordered by the Head Referee;
- 19.1.3 Ensure that the assigned swimmer does not take unfair advantage or commit unsportsmanlike impedance of another swimmer and, if the situation requires, instruct the swimmer to maintain clearance from any other swimmer; and
- 19.1.4 Immediately inform the Head Referee if the assigned swimmer withdraws from the event and shall record the completed distance and the time of the withdrawal.

### **20.0 The Turn Judge**

- 20.1 The Turn Judge shall
  - 20.1.1 Be positioned so as to ensure that all swimmers comply with the turn and other change-of-course procedures;
  - 20.1.2 Record any violation of the turn procedures and indicate to the Referee any infraction at the time it is observed.

### **21.0 The Chief Timer**

- 21.1 The Chief Timer shall
  - 21.1.1 Assign at least three Timers to their positions for the start and finish;
  - 21.1.2 Brief the Timers on their duties and the details of their assignment;
  - 21.1.3 Ensure that a time check is made to allow all persons to synchronize their watches with the official race clock, if applicable, at least 15 minutes before start time; and
  - 21.1.4 May arrange for the use of automatic or semi-automatic timing devices in addition to watches.

### **22.0 The Chief Finish Judge**

- 22.1 The Chief Judge shall
  - 22.1.1 Assign each Finish Judge to a position;
  - 22.1.2 Brief Finish Judges on their duties and the details of their assignment; and
  - 22.1.3 After the race, shall collect the signed results sheets from each Finish Judge and determine the order of finish and deliver the results to the Referee or his or her designee.

### **23.0 The Finish Judges**

- 23.1 The Finish judges shall
  - 23.1.1 Be positioned in line with and where he/she can have a clear view of the finish, and
  - 23.1.2 Record the finish place of each swimmer.

### **24.0 The Recorder**

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- 24.1 The Recorder shall record withdrawals from the competition, enter results on official forms, and maintain the record for team awards as appropriate.

### **25.0 The Venue**

- 25.1 The course shall be measured as accurately as possible with the available navigational or survey equipment, but Global Positioning System (GPS) tools are recommended.
- 25.2 The course shall be in water that is subject to only minor currents or tide and may be salt or fresh water.
- 25.3 With the exception of beach starts and beach finishes, the minimum depth of water at any point on the course is recommended to be one meter.

### **26.0 Water Temperature**

- 26.1 The water temperature should be a minimum of 16°C (60°F), measured both near the start of the race and at the point furthest from the start.

### **27.0 Turns and Changes in the Course**

- 27.1 All turns and other changes in direction on the course shall be clearly indicated.
- 27.2 A clearly marked craft or platform for a turn judge shall be securely fixed in position at all locations where alterations in direction on the course occur and in such a manner as not to obstruct the swimmers' view or negotiation of the turn, while providing a clear view of the swimmers' turns for the officials.

### **28.0 Records**

- 28.1 Because of differences in course, currents and other physical factors, records for open water events are not maintained.

### **29.0 Abandonment**

- 29.1 Where emergency conditions require a race to be halted before it is completed, the race should be re-started at the earliest possible time and the full distance completed.
- 29.2 If the race is over 5 kilometers and the race is abandoned prior to the lead swimmer reaching the 2.5-kilometer point, the race should be re-started and the full distance completed at the most appropriate time as decided by the meet committee. If the race is abandoned after the 2.5K point, the race shall be considered complete. The final placings of all swimmers shall be determined by the Meet Referee.
- 29.3 Situations not covered above shall be determined by the Head Referee.

### **30.0 Results**

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- 30.1 Official results shall be submitted to the Special Olympics and posted online as soon as possible after the race is completed.

### **31.0 Awards**

- 31.1 Individual champions shall be determined and awarded in women's and men's competitions. Medals shall be awarded to all first through eighth place finishers in each individual event.

### **32.0 Eligibility**

- 32.1 Eligibility in the form of qualifying times, experience and/or other qualifying criteria may be established, if necessary, by the host Organizing Committee.

### **33.0 Pool Open Water (POW)**

- 33.1 What is Pool Open Water (POW) is open water swimming in a pool or other enclosed structure (e.g., lido, salt water natatorium). While traditional open water swimming is conducted in man-made or natural bodies of water, POW can introduce the fun and challenge of traditional open water swimming to the pool.
- 33.2 POW is an enjoyable and educational means to introduce athletes to open water swimming and is analogous to short-track open water swimming. The registration, starts, racing and finishes can replicate what is happening in traditional open water swimming events so the athletes can become accustomed to the procedures and protocols of open water events.
- 33.3 POW is conducted in a pool by removing some or all of the lane lines and setting two or four turn buoys near the ends or corners of the pool. The actual course configuration is flexible and can be determined by each Race Director.

### **34.0 Pool Open Water Courses**

- 34.1 The athletes can swim around the course in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, doing either left-shoulder turns or right-shoulder turns around the turn buoys.
- 34.2 The Race Director can decide the number of loops the athletes swim around the pool.
- 34.3 For beginner swimmers, one- or two-loop POW courses are recommended. In a 50-meter pool with turn buoys near each of the corners of the pool, the total distance is between 120 – 130 meters for each loop.
- 34.4. For intermediate and more advance swimmers, a greater number of loops are recommended.
- 34.5 POW relays can also be conducted with two, three or four relay members where each swimmer does one or two loops in succession.
- 34.6 A 50-meter pool is preferable, but any pool can be used.
- 34.7 When all the lane lines are remove, the standard POW course has four turn buoys and is rectangular in shape. Turn buoy #1 is set near the intersection

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of lane 1 and the backstroke flag on one end of the pool. Turn buoy #2 is set near the intersection of lane 1 and the backstroke pool on the other end of the pool. Turn buoy #3 is set near the intersection of lane 8 and the backstroke flag on the same end of the pool. Turn buoy #4 is set near the intersection of lane 8 and the backstroke flag at the other end of the pool. A similar set-up would be used in different length or width pools.

- 34.8 If only two turn buoys are available, then the turn buoys can be set near the intersection of the backstroke flags and lane 1 at either end of the pool. In this case, the course is up-and-back, not rectangular.
- 34.9 Depending on number of swimmers, warm-up can be designated by heats, gender, age group or speed. Alternatively, warm-up can be conducted when the POW races are being conducted. However, in this case, the officials should be watching and managing the warm-up area, which is in the middle of the pool away from the POW course between each of the turn buoys.

### **35.0 Pool Open Water Racing**

- 35.1 The start shall be in the water with all swimmers behind a start rope, behind turn buoy #1 or under the backstroke flags. If a false start rope is used, all the swimmers must be touching the rope or behind it in the water.
- 35.2 After the starting signal, the swimmers pass under the rope. Race Countdown: A 1-minute, 30-second or 10-second warning can be given by the Race Starter.
- 35.3 POW races can be conducted in any direction, but counter-clockwise direction is recommended because most swimmers are right-handed. The swimmers must keep all turn buoys off of their left shoulder around each turn buoy.
- 35.4 As the first swimmer starts the last loop of a POW race, the Referee can ring a bell to indicate one loop remains.
- 35.5 The finish is in the water and is determined by the swimmers touching the wall. The order of finish is determined by the Referee.
- 35.6 Races can be mixed gender or separated by other criterion determined by the Referee.
- 35.7 The recommended heat sizes are best determined at the local level by the Referee and Organizing Committee. However, it is usually not recommended to have more than 15 swimmers in one heat. But, more than one heat can be swimming at the same time. For example, when the first swimmer of heat #1 reaches turn buoy #2, the second heat can be started, so there are two heats along the course at the same time. The different heats can be designated by different colored swim caps.
- 35.8 The warm-up and warm-down area can be in the middle of the pool while the other swimmers are competing, if this is requested by the athletes or coaches. It is the responsibility of the swimmers who are warming up or warming down to stay out of the way of swimmers who are racing.
- 35.9 The seeding of the athletes can be done by either their best time for the 100- or 200-meter freestyles.

### **36.0 Pool Open Water Disqualifications**

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- 36.0 Disqualifications procedures and rules are the same for POW racing as they are in traditional open water races. That is, swimmers can be disqualified for making intentional contact, obstruction or interference with another swimmer. Such unsportsmanlike conduct is judged by the Referees.
- 36.1 The Referee can walk along the pool deck in order to watch for any infractions or to give warnings.
- 36.2 An initial warning can be given by a whistle. At the first rule infraction, the official will show a yellow card to the swimmer. For the second infringement, swimmers are shown a red flag and can be asked to immediately leave the pool.

### **37.0 Pool Open Water Equipment and Logistics Pool Equipment**

- 37.1 Four orange turn buoys with anchors of some sort
- 37.2 A start rope
- 37.3 Bell
- 37.4 Air gun or horn
- 37.5 Whistle for Referee

### **38.0 Administrative Equipment**

- 38.1 Hy-Tek Meet Manager or similar timing equipment
- 38.2 A public announcing System
- 38.3 A computer or documents to record the finish placings and times.
- 38.4 A printing stopwatch (if available)
- 38.5 Clip boards, pens, pencils, stapler, marker pens (to write race numbers on the swimmers' shoulders)
- 38.6 Results sheets and, if necessary, lap counter sheets
- 38.7 Red and yellow cards (laminated colored paper)

### **39.0 Pool Open Water Officials**

- 39.1 Officials can include a Starter, Turn Judges, Finish Judges, Lap Judges, Clerk of Course (to handle registration and numbering of athletes), Warm-up area Safety Marshal, Announcer and Timing Operator.
- 39.2 These officials can gain experience conducting a POW event so they are accustomed to the duties and responsibilities when they volunteer for or work at a traditional open water swimming event.

### **40.0 To Set Up a Pool Open Water Event**

- 40.1 Set up the meet on the computer.
- 40.2 Follow the instructions on Hy-Tek for setting up an open water race.
- 40.3 Enter athletes into meet database, then seed.
- 40.4 Athlete numbers will be assigned by Hy-Tek.
- 40.5 Number athletes with the marker on right arm and shoulder. Numbers go down the arm and left to right on the shoulder.
- 40.6 After each heat, the Recorder writes the number of each athlete as he/she finishes.





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- 40.7 The Timers match the swimmer's number with his/her recorded times.
- 40.8 The results are entered into Hy-tek and are submitted for online posting.  
Hy-tek has instructions for setting up an Open Water competition.