

**EMSOA ASSOCIATION 2020-2021**

**STARTING PROTOCOL**

Starting a race is a developed skill, some say even an art. Please practice and take every start seriously. Focus on the swimmers and remember that you are there to ensure a fair start for every swimmer, every heat.

**Determine before the meet who will be the referee and who will be the starter.** Once the meet begins, the referee will signal the start of the events by blowing his or her whistle with 4-5 short blasts. The starter will then announce the event, such as “200 Medley Relay”. Next the referee will blow one long whistle, signaling the swimmers to step up (or step in for backstroke starts). The referee and the starter will be observing that the swimmers quickly assume their places on the blocks or in the water.

**The referee will turn the race over to the starter by extending his or her arm with an open hand** signaling the starter may begin. The starter begins with the command “Take Your Mark”. This is an important part of the start. The words should be said calmly and in an even tone of voice. These words should be considered an invitation to swim. Your voice will set the tone. It should not be hurried, shouted, or spoken as a question. Each word is spoken separately, such as “Take – Your -Mark.” Try not to emphasize one word over another.

The next split second is filled with focus and speedy observation. You are allowing the swimmers to assume a legal starting position. This should be done quickly and without extra movements on the swimmers’ part. It is fast, but every swimmer deserves the chance to assume their motionless position. Once the starter sees that every swimmer is set, he or she gives the starting signal (Press electronic start or blow crisp loud whistle blast.)

If it seems that any swimmer is not settling on the block or that there is going to be an unfair disruption or advantage, the starter may command the entire field to “Please stand.” This should not be an overused technique but it can be an important tool to get a fair start for all.

Once the starting sound has been delivered, be sure that no swimmer left or moved before the sound. If you see an early or false start, write down the lane number. If you are unsure which lane left early, you cannot declare it a false start. False starts need dual conformation with the referee, before disqualification.

As the starter, you have an important role in giving everyone a fair start for a fast swim. A poor starter can be a disadvantage for the swimmers. Work on making every start a calm and steady invitation to swim.