

Clarification of Starting Protocol

To ISOA Members:

At a recent clinic, some discussion took place around a consistent application of the starting protocols being used throughout the state. As a reminder, Illinois has adopted the “Use of Whistles as Preparatory Commands” protocols found in Appendix A of your rule book.

For those of you using the 2017-18 rule book, these procedures are found on pages 96-97.
For those of you using the 2018-19 rule book, these procedures are found on pages 102-103.

Use of these procedures is approved by the IHSA. This is found on Page 1 of the Rules Bulletin, which is available on both the Boys Swimming and Girls Swimming pages of the IHSA website. A link is also given below:

<https://www.ihsa.org/documents/sw/2018-19/Swim%20Bulletin.pdf>

Lately however, there seems to be some confusion over how the Referee is to turn the heat over to the Starter. Many officials use the phrase, “Mr. Starter” or “Miss Starter” or “Madame Starter.” This is considered a “best practice” in applying the starting protocols.

Some officials also use hand/arm signals, especially if there are hearing-impaired swimmers in the meet. This is also acceptable; however, the hand/arm signals **must** be accompanied by one of the three phrases mentioned above.

There are three reasons for this, the first one being key:

1. *It allows the Starter's attention to be 100% on the swimmers, and only the swimmers. If the Starter is forced to look for/at the Referee for a signal, his/her attention is taken away from where it should be – which is on the swimmers.*
2. Consistency for the swimmers. It is fair for the swimmers to expect the same procedures to be used at all of their meets. If one official does it one way and another official does it differently at their next meet, the swimmer is confused.
3. It makes us as officials consistent. Acting consistently will make us look more professional to swimmers, coaches and spectators.

These procedures are endorsed as best practices and are taught by all Swimming & Diving clinicians in Illinois and have been for several years. If you're not using “Mr. Starter, Miss Starter or Madame Starter” currently, please begin doing so.

To review – hand/arm signals may or may not be used, depending upon meet circumstances, but a verbal command of “Mr. Starter, Miss Starter or Madame Starter” must always be used.

Thank you for your attention to this.

