

OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES

All Swimming Australia Ltd (SAL) Open Water Swimming Championships and Open Water Swimming competitions shall be governed by SAL's *Rules and By-Laws*, as determined from time to time, with the following exceptions and additions.

All World Championships, World Cups and FINA competitions shall be governed by the rules FINA with the following exceptions and additions and are found on the FINA website <http://www.fina.org>.

OWS1 OPEN WATER SWIMMING

AOWS1.1.1 OPEN WATER SWIMMING shall be defined as any competition that takes place in rivers, lakes, oceans or water channels, dams, or rowing courses except for 10km events.

OWS1.1.1 MARATHON SWIMMING shall be defined as any 10km event in open water
FINA OWS1.1.1 competitions.

OWS1.2 The age limit for all SAL Open, Open Water Swimming events must be at least 14 years of age.

AOWS1.3 The age limited for all SAL Age Open Water Swimming events must be at least 14 years of age for the 10km event and 13 years of age for the 5km event.

AOWS2 THE VENUE

AOWS2.1 The SAL Open Water Swimming Championships shall be conducted at a venue as approved by the Board.

OWS2.2 The course shall be in water that is subject to only minor currents or tide and
FINA OWS5.2 may be salt or fresh water.

OWS2.3 A certificate of suitability for use of the venue shall be issued by the
FINA OWS5.3 appropriate local health and safety authorities. In general terms the certification must relate to water purity and to physical safety from other considerations.

OWS2.4 The minimum depth of water at any point on the course shall be

- FINA OWS5.4 1.40 metres.
- OWS2.5 The water temperature should be a minimum of 16°C. It should be checked
- FINA OWS5.5 the day of the race, 2 hours before the start in the middle of the course at a depth of 40cm. This control should be done in the presence of a Commission made up of the following persons present: a Referee, a Member of the Organising Committee and one Coach from the Teams present designated during the Technical Meeting.
- OWS2.6 All turns/ alterations of course shall be clearly indicated.
- FINA OWS5.6
- OWS2.7 A clearly marked craft or platform, containing a Turn Judge, shall be
- FINA OWS5.7 positioned at all alterations of course in such a manner as not to obstruct a swimmer's visibility of the turn.
- OWS2.8 All feeding platforms, turning apparatus and Turn Judges' craft /platforms
- FINA OWS5.8 shall be securely fixed in a position and not be subject to tidal, wind or other movements.
- OWS2.9 The final approach to the finish shall be clearly defined with markers of a
- FINA OWS5.9 distinctive colour.
- OWS2.10 The finish shall be clearly defined and marked by a vertical face.
- FINA OWS5.10

OWS3 OFFICIALS

- OWS3.1 The following officials shall be appointed at Open Water Swimming
- FINA OWS2 competitions:
- A Chief Referee,
- Referees,
- A Chief Judge,
- Chief Timekeeper plus 2 Timekeepers,
- Chief Finish Judge plus 2 Finish Judges,

Safety Officer,
Medical Officer,
Course Officer,
Clerk of the Course,
Recorder,
Race Judges (one per swimmer) except for events of 10km or less,
Turn Judges (one per alteration of Course),
Starter, and
Announcer.

AOWS3.2 For events of 10km or less the Safety Officer and Course Officer's positions and duties are combined.

OWS4 DUTIES OF OFFICIALS

FINA OWS3

The **CHIEF REFEREE** shall:

OWS4.1 have full control and authority over all officials and shall approve their

FINA OWS3.1 assignments and instruct them regarding all special features or regulations related to the competition. The Referee shall enforce all the rules and decisions of FINA, and SAL and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the competition, the final settlement of which is not otherwise covered by these Rules;

OWS4.2 have authority to intervene in the competition at any stage to ensure that the

FINA OWS3.2 Rules are observed;

OWS4.2.1 In case of hazardous conditions that jeopardise the safety of the swimmers and the officials, in conjunction with the Safety Officer he can stop the race;

OWS4.3 adjudicate on all protests related to the competition in progress;

FINA OWS3.3

OWS4.4 give a decision in cases where the Judges' decision and times recorded do

- FINA OWS3.4 not agree;
- OWS4.5 signal to swimmers, by raised flag and short blasts on a whistle, that the start
- FINA OWS3.5 is imminent and when satisfied indicate by pointing the flag at the Starter that the competition may commence;
- AOWS4.6 disqualify any swimmer for any violation of the Rules that he personally observes or which is reported to him by other authorised officials. Notwithstanding the provisions of OWS6.3 hereof the Referee may decide to enforce the disqualification at the end of the race.
- OWS4.7 ensure that all necessary officials for the conduct of the competition
- FINA OWS3.7 are at their respective posts. He may appoint substitutes for any who are absent, incapable of acting or found to be inefficient. He may appoint additional officials if necessary;
- OWS4.8 receive all reports prior to the start of the race from the Clerk of the Course,
- FINA OWS3.8 Course Officer and Safety Officer;
- The **REFEREES** shall:
- OWS4.9 have authority to intervene in competition at any stage to ensure that FINA Rules are observed.
- OWS4.10 disqualify any swimmer for any violation of the Rules that he personally observes.
- The **STARTER** shall:
- OWS4.11 start the race in accordance with OWS5 following the signal by the Chief Referee;
- FINA OWS3.11
- The **CHIEF TIMEKEEPER** shall:
- AOWS4.12 assign each Timekeeper to their positions for the start and finish;
- OWS4.13 ensure that a time check is made to allow all persons to synchronise their
- FINA OWS3.13 watches with the official running clocks fifteen (15) minutes before start time;

OWS4.14 collect from each timekeeper a card showing the time recorded for each swimmer, and, if necessary, inspect their watches; and

FINA OWS3.14

OWS4.15 record or examine the official time on the card for each swimmer.

FINA OWS3.15

TIMEKEEPERS shall:

OWS4.16 take the time of each of swimmer assigned. The watches must have memory

FINA OWS3.16 and print out capability and shall be certified correct to the satisfaction of the Management Committee;

OWS4.17 start their watches at the starting signal, and only stop their watches when

FINA OWS3.17 instructed by the Chief Timekeeper;

OWS4.18 promptly after each finish record the time and swimmer's number on the time

FINA OWS3.18 card and turn it over to the Chief Timekeeper.

NOTE:

When Automatic Officiating Equipment is used, the same complement of hand timers is to be used.

The **CHIEF JUDGE** shall:

OWS4.19 assign each Judge to a position;

FINA OWS3.19

OWS4.20 Record and communicate any decision received from the Referees during the

FINA OWS3.20 competition

OWS4.21 collect after the race, signed results sheets from each Judge and establish the

FINA OWS3.21 result and placings which shall be sent directly to the Chief Referee.

FINISH JUDGES, (three) shall:

OWS4.22 be positioned in line with the finish where they shall have, at all times, a clear

FINA OWS3.22 view of the finish;

OWS4.23 record after each finish the placing of the swimmers according to the

FINA OWS3.23 assignment given.

NOTE:

Finish Judges shall not act as Timekeepers in the same event.

EACH RACE JUDGE shall:

OWS4.24 be positioned in an escort safety craft (where applicable), assigned by random draw prior to the

FINA OWS3.24 start, so as to be able to observe, at all times, his appointed swimmer;

OWS4.25 ensure at all times that the Rules of competition are complied with, violations

FINA OWS3.25 being recorded in writing and reported to a Referee at the earliest opportunity;

OWS4.26 have the power to order a swimmer from the water upon expiry of any time

FINA OWS3.26 limit so ordered by the Referee;

OWS4.27 ensure that his appointed swimmer does not take unfair advantage or commit

FINA OWS3.27 unsporting impediment on another swimmer and if the situation requires instruct a swimmer to maintain clearance from any other swimmer.

TURN JUDGES shall:

OWS4.28 be positioned so as to ensure all swimmers execute the alterations in course

FINA OWS3.28 as indicated in the competition information documents and as given at the pre-race briefing;

OWS4.29 record any infringement of the turn procedures on the record sheets provided

FINA OWS3.29 and indicate the infringement to the Race Judge at the time of infringement by blasts on a whistle;

OWS4.30 promptly upon completion of the event deliver the signed record sheet to the

FINA OWS3.30 Chief Judge.

The **SAFETY OFFICER** shall:

OWS4.31 be responsible to the Referee for all aspects of safety related to the conduct

FINA OWS3.31 of the competition;

OWS4.32 check that the entire course, with special regard to the start and finish areas,

- FINA OWS3.32 is safe, suitable, and free of any obstruction;
- OWS4.33 be responsible for ensuring that sufficient powered safety craft are available
- FINA OWS3.33 during the competition so as to provide full safety backup to the escort safety craft;
- OWS4.34 provide prior to the competitions to all swimmers a tide/current chart clearly
- FINA OWS3.34 indicating the time of tide changes on the course and showing the effect of tides or current on a swimmer's progress along the course;
- OWS4.35 in conjunction with the Medical Officer advise the Chief Referee if, in their opinion,
- FINA OWS3.35 conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

The **MEDICAL OFFICER** shall:

- OWS4.36 be responsible to the Referee for all medical aspects related to the
- FINA OWS3.36 competition and swimmers;
- OWS4.37 inform the local medical facilities of the nature of the competition and ensure
- FINA OWS3.37 that any casualties can be evacuated to medical facilities at the earliest opportunity;
- OWS4.38 in conjunction with the Safety Officer, advise the Chief Referee if, in their opinion,
- FINA OWS3.38 conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

The **COURSE OFFICER** shall:

- OWS4.39 be responsible to the Management Committee for the correct survey of the
- FINA OWS3.39 course,
- OWS4.40 ensure the start and finish areas are correctly marked and all equipment has
- FINA OWS3.40 been correctly installed and, where applicable, is in working order;
- OWS4.41 ensure all course alteration points are correctly marked, and manned prior to

- FINA OWS3.41 the commencement of the competition;
- OWS4.42 with a Referee and Safety Officer inspect the course and markings prior to
- FINA OWS3.42 the commencement of competition;
- OWS4.43 ensure that Turn Judges are in position prior to the start of the competition
- FINA OWS3.43 and report this to the Referees.

The **CLERK OF THE COURSE** shall:

- OWS4.44 assemble and prepare swimmers prior to each event and ensure proper
- FINA OWS3.44 reception facilities at the finish are available for all swimmers;
- OWS4.45 ensure each swimmer is identified correctly with their race number and that all
- FINA OWS3.45 swimmers have trimmed fingernails and toenails and are not wearing any jewellery, including watches;
- OWS4.46 be certain all swimmers are present, in the assembly area, at the required
- FINA OWS3.46 time prior to the start;
- OWS4.47 keep swimmers and officials informed of the time remaining before the start at
- FINA OWS3.47 suitable intervals until the last five minutes, during which one minute warnings shall be given;
- OWS4.48 be responsible for ensuring that all clothing and equipment left in the start
- FINA OWS3.48 area is transported to the finish area and kept in safekeeping;
- OWS4.49 ensure that all swimmers leaving the water at the finish have the basic
- FINA OWS3.49 equipment required for their well being should their own attendants not be present at that time.

The **RECORDER** shall:

- OWS4.50 record withdrawals from the competition, enter results on official forms, and
- FINA OWS3.50 maintain record for team awards as appropriate.
- AOWS4.51 Report any violation to the Chief Referee on a signed card detailing the event, *the swimmer's number* and rule infringement.

OWS5 THE START

- OWS5.1 All Open Water competitions shall start with all swimmers standing on a fixed platform or in water depth sufficient for them to commence swimming on the start signal.
- FINA OWS4.1
- OWS5.1.1 When starting from a fixed platform swimmers shall be assigned a position on the platform, as determined by random draw.
- FINA OWS4.1.1
- OWS5.2 The Clerk of the Course shall keep swimmers and officials informed of the time before start at suitable intervals and at one minute intervals for the last five minutes.
- FINA OWS4.2
- OWS5.3 When the number of entries dictate the start shall be segregated in the Men's and Women's competitions. The Men's event shall always start before the Women's event.
- FINA OWS4.3
- OWS5.4 The start line shall be clearly defined by either overhead apparatus or by removable equipment at water level.
- FINA OWS4.4
- OWS5.5 The Referee shall indicate by a flag held upright and short blasts on a whistle when the start is imminent and indicate that the competition is under Starter's orders by pointing the flag at the Starter.
- FINA OWS4.5
- OWS5.6 The Starter shall be positioned so as to be clearly visible to all swimmers.
- FINA OWS4.6
- OWS5.6.1 On the Starter command "Take your marks" they shall take up a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the platform
- FINA OWS4.6.1
- OWS5.6.2 The Starter will give the starting signal when he considers all swimmers are ready
- OWS5.7 The start signal shall be both audible and visual.
- FINA OWS4.7
- OWS5.8 If in the opinion of the Referee unfair advantage has been gained at the start the offending swimmers will be given a yellow or red flag in accordance with OWS 6.3.
- FINA OWS4.8

OWS5.9 All escort safety craft shall be stationed prior to the start so as not to interfere with any swimmer, and, if picking up their swimmer from behind shall navigate in such a way as not to manoeuvre through the field of swimmers.

OWS5.10 Although they may start together, in all other respects the Men's and

FINA OWS4.10 Women's competitions shall be treated as separate events.

OWS6 THE RACE

FINA OWS6

OWS6.1 All Open Water competitions shall be Freestyle events.

FINA OWS6.1

OWS6.2 Race Judges shall instruct any swimmer who is, in their opinion, taking unfair

FINA OWS6.2 advantage by pacing or slip streaming with the escort craft to move clear.

OWS6.3 Disqualification Procedure

FINA OWS6.3

AOWS6.3.1 If in the Opinion of the Chief Referee or Referees, any swimmer, or

FINA OWS6.3.1 swimmer's approved representative, or escort safety craft takes advantage by committing any violation of the rules by making intentional contact with any swimmer, the following proceeding shall apply:

1st Infringement:

A yellow flag and a card bearing the swimmer's number shall be raised to indicate and to inform the swimmer that he is in violation of the Rules.

2nd Infringement:

A red flag and a card bearing the swimmer's number shall be raised by the Referee (OWS4.6) 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.

AOWS6.3.2 If in the opinion of the Referee, an action of a swimmer or an escort safety craft, or a swimmer's approved representative is deemed to be "Unsporting"

FINA OWS6.3.2 the Referee shall disqualify the swimmer concerned immediately

- OWS6.4 Escort safety craft shall manoeuvre so as not to obstruct or place themselves
FINA OWS6.4 directly ahead of any swimmer and not take unfair advantage by pacing or slip streaming.
- OWS6.5 Escort safety craft shall attempt to maintain a constant position so as to
FINA OWS6.5 station the swimmer at, or forward of, the mid point of the escort safety craft.
- OWS6.6 Standing on the bottom during a race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but they
FINA OWS6.6 may not walk or jump.
- OWS6.7 With the exception of OWS6.6 swimmers shall not receive support from any
FINA OWS6.7 fixed or floating object and shall not intentionally touch or be touched by their escort safety craft or crew therein.
- OWS6.7.1 Rendering assistance by an official medical officer to a swimmer in apparent
FINA OWS6.7.1 distress should always supersede official rules of disqualification through “intentional contact” with a swimmer (OWS6.7)
- OWS6.8 Each escort safety craft shall contain: a Race Judge, a person of the swimmer’s choice and the minimum crew required to operate the escort safety craft.
- OWS6.9 No swimmer shall be permitted to use or wear any device which may be an
FINA OWS6.9 aid to their speed, endurance or buoyancy. Goggles, a maximum of two (2) caps, nose clip and earplugs may be used.
- OWS6.10 Swimmers shall be allowed to use grease or other such substances providing
FINA OWS6.10 these are not, in the opinion of the Referee, excessive.
- OWS6.11 The pacing of a swimmer by another person entering the water is not
FINA OWS6.11 permitted.
- OWS6.12 Coaching and the giving of instructions by the approved swimmer’s representative on the feeding platform or in the
FINA OWS6.12 escort safety craft is permitted. No whistle shall be allowed.
- OWS6.13 When taking sustenance swimmers may use Rule OWS6.6 provided Rule
FINA OWS6.13 OWS6.7 is not infringed.

OWS6.14 All swimmers shall have their competition number clearly displayed in

FINA OWS6.14 waterproof ink on their upper back, arms and hands.

OWS6.15 Each escort safety craft shall display the swimmer's competition number so as to be easily seen from either side of the escort safety craft and the national flag of the swimmer's Federation.

AOWS6.16.1 In all events, time limits shall apply as follows from the finish time of the first

FINA OWS6.16.1 swimmers:

Events under 25km 30 minutes

Events of 25km 60 minutes

Events over 25km 120 minutes

OWS6.16.2 Swimmers who do not finish the course within the time limits shall be removed

FINA OWS6.16.2 from the water except that the Referee may allow a swimmer outside the time limit to complete the course but not participate in any points or prizes awarded.

OWS6.17 Emergency Abandonment

FINA OWS6.17

OWS6.17.1 In cases of emergency abandonment of races of 10km or less, the race will be

FINA OWS6.17.1 restarted from the beginning at the earliest possible moment.

OWS6.17.2 In cases of emergency abandonment for any race of longer than 10km, where

FINA OWS6.17.2 the lead swimmer has accomplished at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the race, the final ranking will be as reported by the Chief Referee. If the lead swimmer has not completed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the race, it will be restarted from the beginning at the earliest moment possible.

OWS7 THE FINISH OF THE RACE

OWS7.1 The area leading to the finish apparatus should be clearly marked by rows of

FINA OWS7.1 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 safety craft authorised to do so enter or cross this entrance.

- OWS7.2 The finish apparatus should, where possible, be a vertical wall at least 5 metres wide fixed if necessary to floatation devices, securely fastened in place so as not to be moved by wind, tide or force of a swimmer striking the wall. The finish should be filmed and recorded by video system with slow motion and recall facilities including timing equipment.
- OWS7.2.1 When automatic Officiating Equipment is used for timing of competitions in accordance with Rule SW11, microchip transponder technology capable of providing split times is mandatory and should be added to the Equipment. Use of microchip transponder technology is mandatory for competitions at the World Championships and Olympic Games. Microchip transponder timing technology will be recorded officially in tenths of seconds. The final places will be determined by the referee based upon the finish judges' report and the finish video tape.
- AOWS7.2.2 Where microchip transponder technology is used, it is mandatory for all swimmers to wear a microchip transponder on each wrist throughout the race. If a swimmer loses a transponder the Race Judge or other authorised Official, will immediately inform the Referee who will instruct the responsible official on the water to issue a replacement transponder. Any swimmer who finishes the race without a transponder will be disqualified.
- OWS7.3 The Finish Judges and Timekeepers shall be placed so as to be able to
- FINA OWS7.3 observe the finish at all times. The area in which they are stationed should be for their exclusive use.
- OWS7.4 Every effort should be made to ensure that the swimmers' representative can
- FINA OWS7.4 get from the escort safety craft to meet the swimmer as they leave the water.
- OWS7.5 Upon leaving the water some swimmers may require assistance. Swimmers
- FINA OWS7.5 should only be touched or handled if they clearly display a need, or ask for assistance.
- OWS7.6 A member of the Medical Team should inspect the swimmers as they leave
- FINA OWS7.6 the water. A chair, in which the swimmer can sit while an assessment is made, should be provided.
- OWS7.7 Once cleared by the Medical Member, swimmers should be given access to
- FINA OWS7.7 refreshment.