YMCA of the USA
Competitive Swimming and Diving Advisory Committee

Adoption of USA Swimming Technical Rules

September 7, 2006

YMCA of the USA, on recommendation from the YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Advisory Committee ("the Committee"), has adopted USA Swimming ("USA-S") Technical Rules for the conduct of its meets, effective September 1, 2006. This will affect virtually all YMCA swim meets conducted throughout the country, as the requirements for closed competitions will now be based on USA-S Technical Rules.

This change is the result of considerable discussion within the YMCA swimming community, and the positive responses to a 2005 survey conducted by the Committee regarding the USA-S Rules. In anticipation of reasonable questions and concerns regarding the adoption of USA-S Rules, the Committee has instructed the YMCA National Officials' Committee to develop an extensive list of responses to frequently asked questions (FAQ's). It is highly recommended that all interested parties within the YMCA swimming community read the FAQ's completely in order to better understand these changes.

YMCA Swimming will adopt USA Swimming Rules 101-105, the so-called "blue pages". As such, most officials need merely to obtain a USA-S Mini Rule Book, although each YMCA should have at least one copy of the full USA-S Rule Book. (It is no longer necessary to provide NCAA Rule Books to all coaches and officials.) In addition, USA-S publishes rules interpretations from time to time, which are posted on their web site (www.usaswimming.org), and YMCA officials will want to be aware of those interpretations as well. It should also be noted that USA-S rules normally only change every four years, in conjunction with FINA rule changes, so there will likely be fewer changes to deal with than in the past few years.

To assist YMCA officials with incorporating these rule changes, the Committee has instructed the YMCA National Officials' Committee to develop answers to the following frequently asked questions. Local officials may also contact the Committee by going to the YMCA Swimming and Diving WEB Forum on the YMCA of the USA Swimming and Diving web page (www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org).

A topical index to the FAQs is included at the end of this document.

What Doesn't Change:

1. **Q:** Does this change mean that we will no longer hold YMCA dual meets and championship meets, as we have done in the past, but rather only attend invitational meets as many USA-S teams do?

A: No, the YMCA program of dual meets, invitational meets and championship meets (e.g., league, state, area and field championships) will continue as it has in the past. Only the technical rules under which we conduct these meets will change. Moreover, our emphasis on the YMCA core values and our team orientation will not change; they are integral parts of our program and will be maintained.

2. **Q:** Have the requirements for entry into the National Championship Meets changed?

A: No, the requirements to compete at the YMCA National Short and Long Course Championships (the required number of closed competition meets and the required participation in state/area/field meets) remain unchanged.

3. **Q:** Will we still require closed meets for only YMCA swimmers? Will we still need to have those meets sanctioned?

A: Yes, as noted above, the requirements for entry into the National Championships have not changed, and the requirements to have a meet sanctioned also have not changed.

4. **Q:** Does adoption of USA Technical Rules change the YMCA requirement of a minimum 5 feet of water depth for racing starts from a starting platform or deck starts?

A: Absolutely not! The YMCA requirement of a minimum depth of 5 feet at the starting end remains in effect. In addition, if local statutes or regulations require more stringent depth requirements, the local statutes or regulations must be followed. In fact, the USA-S Technical Rules (USA-S Rule 103.2) recognize that more stringent requirements may exist and must be followed.

5. **Q:** Since USA-S Technical Rules do not specifically mention swimmers younger than 10 & Under, does this mean we can no longer have 8 & Under age groups in YMCA meets?

A: No, The USA-S Technical Rules (USA-S Rule 102.1.2) are meant to provide guidance in scheduling events for a meet, but they specifically allow for other combinations, including other age groups. In fact, USA-S LSCs run many "Mini-Meets" for swimmers 8 & Under. We will continue to provide opportunities for 8 & Under swimmers as we have done in the past, including scoring and non-scoring events, as appropriate.

6. **Q:** Under YMCA rules, age of a swimmer is determined as of December 1 of the current swim season for that entire swim season. USA-S Technical Rules state that a

swimmer's age is determined on the first day of any meet. Which rule will apply to YMCA dual, invitational and/or championship meets?

A: The current YMCA Rules That Govern Competitive Sports regulate the ages of all YMCA athletes for all sports. There would have to be a change, as applied to all sports, in these National YMCA Rules for competitive swimming to have a different eligibility date. No change is presently foreseen, although the Competitive Swimming and Diving Committee does review this matter regularly and could propose a change if it were deemed warranted. However, for the present time, the December 1 eligibility date will remain in effect for dual, invitational and/or championship meets in the local leagues. The eligibility date for swimming in the National Championship meets (age on the first day of the meet) will also remain in effect.

7. **Q:** Does this change mean that all YMCA certified officials would automatically become USA-S certified officials?

A: No. YMCA certified officials desiring to also become certified as a USA-S official will have to go through the normal USA-S certification process.

8. **Q:** Does this change mean that all USA-S certified officials would automatically become YMCA certified officials able to officiate at YMCA meets?

A: No. The YMCA officials' certification program is unchanged; anyone, including USA-S certified officials, must still attend a YMCA Officials' Clinic and pass the required test.

9. **Q:** If my YMCA official's certification does not expire this year, will I nonetheless have to take a clinic and pass the test to continue to be certified as a YMCA official?

A: No. The rule changes are relatively straightforward and no different than any changes we encountered in NCAA rules in the past. However, you should obtain a USA Swimming Mini Rule Book and study the USA-S Technical Rules (USA-S Rules 101-105).

10. **Q:** Will the Officials' Training Program change to conform to the USA-S Training Program?

A: No, not for the current (2006-2007) season. For this year the training program will continue in its present form. Some changes are being considered for future years, but we will not be adopting the current USA-S model, with its various levels and required tests.

11. **Q:** Will we still use Place Judges and the Modified Ballot System in cases where automatic judging and timing equipment is not available or rendered inoperable?

A: Yes. The USA-S Technical Rules (USA-S Rules 102.15.2 and 102.16.6) include very specific guidance when manual timing is used, although they do not specifically refer to the modified ballot system, as do the NCAA Rules (NCAA Rules 4-16-2&3). The USA-S rules clearly state that place judges should be provided (they can be the Referee and Starter), and place judging shall only be used to change the order of

finish if the swimmers competed in the same heat, automatic judging and timing was not available, or not operative, and the place judges observed a different order of finish than the semi-automatic or manual times would indicate.

12. **Q:** Will our officials' uniform change to blue or khaki pants or shorts?

A: No, not at this time. For the present, we will continue to wear white shirts or blouses, with our patches affixed on the left sleeve, and white pants, shorts or skirts.

What Does Change:

13. **Q:** What are the current significant changes affecting the actual strokes that we will encounter with the adoption of the USA-S Technical Rules?

A: There are only three notable changes affecting the actual strokes, as summarized below:

Backstroke Turn – USA-S Technical Rules are more restrictive in prohibiting gliding after the crossover or flip turn is initiated. Once the swimmer leaves his/her back, any arm pull or kick must be part of a continuous turning action. In addition, the USA-S rule does not require that the any part of the head be past the backstroke flags before the initiation of the turn (Compare USA-S Rule 101.3.3 with NCAA Rule 2-2-1-c). The USA-S videocassette, "Officiating Swimming" has an excellent section on the backstroke turn and all officials are encouraged to watch it

Breaststroke – There is no prohibition on sculling with the hands during the first stroke in the USA-S Technical Rules (NCAA Rule 2-2-2-b; USA-S Rule 101.1.2).

Under NCAA rules, the elbows shall be under the calm level of the water except for the last stroke at the turn or finish and during the turn (NCAA Rule 2-2-2-b). Under USA-S rules, the same wording is used. However, an Interpretation clarifies that the elbows have to remain under the surface of the water only during the recovery portion of the stroke (USA-S Rule 101.1.2 and Interpretation dated June 3, 1995).

14. **Q:** In adopting USA-S Technical Rules, are we also following published USA-S Interpretations of those rules?

A: Yes. In fact, NCAA also unofficially followed most USA-S Interpretations. The Officials' Committee will try to get any Interpretations out to all officials as soon as possible, but officials are also going to have to be aware that Interpretations are published at various times and take steps to obtain them from the USA-S web site. Interpretations are normally effective when issued, they are widely distributed and the YMCA Officials' Committee is and always will be included in the primary distribution list.

15. **Q:** How is the USA-S starting protocol different than what we do now?

A: There are two significant differences:

Whistle Starts – The USA-S starting protocol provides for the Referee to sound a series of short whistle chirps (four to seven or eight chirps) to alert the swimmers to get ready before he/she sounds a long whistle that instructs the swimmers to step on the blocks or step into the water. (Current NCAA starting protocol requires only the long whistle.) Both protocols require a second whistle for backstroke starts to bring the swimmers to the wall. Then, upon a hand signal from the Referee, the Starter instructs the swimmers to take their mark, and when they are all stationary, he/she activates the starting signal.

False Starts – The USA-S starting protocol does not recall false starts. If the Starter and Referee agree that a swimmer false started, the swimmer is disqualified and notified at the end of the race, as with any other disqualification.

16. **Q:** Can the Referee or Starter give additional instructions, for example announcing the event or the distance?

A: Yes, USA-S Technical Rules provide for the Starter to give additional oral commands when necessary (USA-S Rule 102.14.3). However, such additional oral commands should only be given where the circumstances clearly warrant them (e.g., for an 8& Under meet where the swimmers are all new and jumpy), and they should be kept to the bare minimum so as not to distract the swimmers. Even the youngest swimmers will quickly come to respond to the whistle starts with no additional instructions from the Referee or Starter. Also, the Starter can announce that an event is a bell or gun lap event.

17. **Q:** Are there any circumstances under which the start of a race may be recalled under USA-S rules?

A: Yes. As with the NCAA rules, if in the judgment of the Referee and Starter there was an unfair start they can call the race back. For example, if a flash from a camera was detected, or a loud noise heard, right before the start, and some swimmers reacted to it, the Starter might recall the race if he/she had already activated the starting signal. However, such instances are expected to be rare and a race should not be called back just because one or more swimmers were not paying attention.

18. **Q:** Where do the Referee and Starter stand under the USA-S starting protocol?

A: The normal convention in USA-S meets is for the Referee and Starter to stand side by side on one side of the pool. However, for our meets, their positioning will be guided by the nature of the meet. For example, in a dual meet where the Referee and Starter are also serving as finish judges or relay take-off judges, they will have to be on either side of the pool, as many of us have also been in this situation in some USA Swimming meets where we were short of officials. Let the circumstances of the meet guide you, as you have done in the past.

19. **Q:** If there is a confirmed false start, does the Referee raise his/her hand to signal an infraction?

A: No, if the Starter observes a false start, he/she marks their heat sheet and shows it to the Referee. If the Referee confirms the false start, the swimmer is notified at the end of the race, but no signal is given (USA-S Rule 102.13.2).

20. **Q:** When judging relay take-offs with dual confirmation, does the side judge raise his/her hand to signal a potential infraction when the last swimmer is in the last lap of the race?

A: No, when dual confirmation is used, no signal is given. The side judge walks over to confer with the lane judge and if there is dual confirmation, the relay team is notified at the end of the race (USA-S Rule 102.15.6).

21. **Q:** Will the rules with respect to resting (standing on the bottom of the pool) be changed?

A: Yes, but only slightly. The NCAA rules allows for a swimmer to stand on the bottom of the pool during the competition, but only for the purpose of resting (NCAA Rule 2-5-4). Under USA-S rules, standing on the bottom of the pool during a race in any stroke other than freestyle will result in a disqualification, as the swimmer has now left the required body position on the breast or back (USA-S Rule 102.10.5). However, a USA-S Interpretation allows for standing on the bottom of the pool during a turn after a legal touch has been made and prior to pushing off the wall (Interpretation dated June 5, 1999). Under both sets of rules, walking on the bottom or pushing off the bottom will result in a disqualification.

22. **Q:** NCAA rules changes normally took place on September 1st of each year, whereas USA-S rules changes normally are effective on May 15th of each year. Will the YMCA Swimming Program adopt USA-S rule changes on September 1st of each year?

A: No. As we are now following USA-S Technical Rules, the effective dates set by USA-S will also govern when we adopt the rule changes. To do otherwise would be very confusing for swimmers, coaches and officials.

23. **Q:** Are the rules for entry into invitational and championship meets different from those we now follow?

A: There are some differences as to numbers of events a swimmer may enter, entry times, etc., but they are not significant (USA-S Rules 102.2 and 102.4.7). As in the past, the Meet Invitation is the relevant document and must describe the entry procedures and prerequisites, scratch procedures and penalties, scoring, etc. More time is going to have to be spent by host YMCAs in making sure that the Meet Invitation (Announcement) covers the relevant information. (Host YMCAs might also want to include a statement in the Meet Invitation to the effect that current YMCA procedures for conducting meets take precedence over inadvertent errors or omissions in the Meet Invitation.)

24. **Q:** Will relay teams be able to change the order of the swimmers after the race has begun?

A: No. Under NCAA rules, once the relay team was called to the blocks, the designated first swimmer could not change places with any other swimmer. However, the other swimmers on the relay team could change the order in which they swam (as long as they swam the strokes in the correct order in the Medley Relay) (NCAA Rule 2-

2-7-d). Under USA-S rules, any changes in the names of the competing swimmers or their order of swimming must be reported to the Head Lane Timer prior to the start of the heat (when the Referee whistles the swimmers to step up or step in). After that, no changes are permitted (USA-S Rule 102.4.7).

25. **Q:** Will swimmers be able to scratch from Finals under the USA-S Technical Rules?

A: USA-S Administrative Rules (USA-S Rule 207.12.10) allow for swimmers qualifying in Preliminaries to swim in Finals to scratch from the Finals under certain defined conditions. Under the NCAA Rules, a swimmer who qualified for Finals was not allowed to scratch, other than for medical reasons (NCAA Rule 3-3-4). The Officials' Committee has not yet decided whether to allow scratching from Finals, and this will probably be left up to the individual leagues to decide for their Championship Meets.

26. **Q:** Is a swimmer who swims in or into the wrong lane disqualified?

A: No, except as noted below. USA Swimming Technical Rules are somewhat different than NCAA Rules on this point. The USA Swimming rule states that the swimmer must start and finish the race in the same lane (USA-S Rule 102.10.4). Assuring that the swimmer swims in the correct heat and lane is the responsibility of the Head Lane Timer (USA-S Rule 102.16.3.B(1)). The NCAA rules say that a swimmer must swim in the lane and/or heat assigned, and failure to do so shall result is a disqualification from that event (NCAA Rule 3-1-4-b). The NCAA rules further state that a swimmer who deliberately changes lanes during a race shall be disqualified (NCAA Rule 2-5-1-b). In any case, under both sets of rules, if the swimmer interferes with another swimmer, he/she is subject to disqualification and the affected swimmer may have to be given the chance to re-swim the event (USA-S Rule 102.10.6 and NCAA Rule 2-5-1-a).

27. **Q:** Are the lap counting rules the same in USA-S?

A: No. The USA-S rules for lap counting (USA-S Rule 102.5.6) are less restrictive than the NCAA rules (NCAA Rule 2-3). In either case, the swimmer is still responsible for swimming the correct number of laps, regardless if the lap counter or official makes a mistake in the count.

28. **Q:** Will closed YMCA meets still have to be observed by USA-S officials for NTV purposes?

A: No. As we are now following the USA-S Technical Rules, our meets will fall into the status of Approved Meets (USA-S Rule 202.4). The actual procedures to be followed for Approved Meets will be worked out by our Advisory Committee representatives and the USA-S Rules Committee representatives at the upcoming USA-S Convention and guidance will be issued to local YMCA swim leagues and USA-S LSCs at that time. It is expected that our various state and regional championship meets and possibly our invitational meets will be Approved Meets, but it is unlikely that we will try to have all of our dual meets approved, as the record keeping would overwhelm the USA-S SWIMS database.

29. **Q:** Where can I find out more about the USA-S Technical Rules?

A: You can go to the USA-S web site and purchase a Mini Rule Book, which contains all of the technical rules. USA-S also has two excellent videos on Officiating Swimming and the Starting Protocol. Visit www.usaswimming.org, or to view the rulebook, visit www.usaswimming.org/USASWeb/_Rainbow/Documents/9050d5c9-5cd3-45868732-f2432351cd21/2006%20Rules%20and%20Regulations%20W-O%20color%20cover.pdf

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For the National Officials' Committee
Ed Miller, Chairman

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