



Overview

The World Open Water Swimming Association or WOWSA (pronounced *wowza*) is an international organization dedicated to the support, organization, sanctioning, promotion, recognition and celebration of open water swimmers and open water swimming events.

Promotion

Through its Daily News of Open Water News and monthly Open Water Swimming Magazine, WOWSA documents and describes swimmers and events held throughout the world and goes into depth about former and recent heroes and heroines of the sport.

WOWSA publishes the world's most comprehensive global open water swimming calendar and manages Openwaterpedia, the world's greatest collection of open water swimming data with over 15,000 entries.

Administration

Through its administration of the International Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame, WOWSA honors swimmers, coaches, pilots, contributors and administrators through the International Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame induction ceremonies that have been held on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, California, in the United Nations in New York City, and in Cork, Ireland.

Since 2008 through its annual WOWSA Awards, WOWSA organizes public polls that recognized dozens of luminaries, events, products and services in the global open water swimming community through its World Open Water Swimming Man of the Year, World Open Water Swimming Woman of the Year, World Open Water Swimming Performance of the Year, and World Open Water Swimming Offering of the Year.

Education

WOWSA hosts a variety of open water swimming clinics, seminars, conferences and webinars, both online and in Japan, Fiji, Cayman Islands, Canada, Spain, Brazil, Greece, Mexico and throughout the United States. These include the Global Open Water Swimming Conference and Open Water Swimming Safety Conferences. It also developed a comprehensive online coaching education program with over 300 multiple-choice questions.

WOWSA wrote an open water swimming textbook, entitled Open Water Swimming, published by Human Kinetics and translated into Germany and Polish. It also created



the Open Water Swimming Almanac and the Pyramid of Open Water Swimming Success.

Brands

WOWSA created brands including the Half Century Club, 24-hour Club, Oceans Seven, Open Water Swimming Magazine, World Swimming Majors, World's Top 100 Open Water Swims, America's Top 100 Open Water Swims, Asia's Top 50 Open Water Swims, Africa's Top 100 Open Water Swims, and World's Hardest Swims (North Hemisphere + Southern Hemisphere) as well as maintains the Triple Crown of Open Water Swimming.

Information-sharing

WOWSA has assisted with information, articles, data and recommendations on open water swimming to FINA, Canada Swimming, USA Swimming, U.S. Masters Swimming, Mexican Swimming Federation, Cayman Islands Amateur Swimming Federation, Special Olympics International, Guinness Book of World Records, Swimming World Magazine, Competitor Magazine, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, USA Today, Associated Press, National Public Radio, National Geographic Magazine, Tsugaru Channel Swimming Association, Farallon Islands Swimming Association, Swimming Australia Magazine, and Triathlon Magazine.

Data-mining

WOWSA collects, datamines and analyzes open water swimming trends and data based on 3 decades of compiling data and demographic information on competitions, charity events, solo swims, relays, marathon swims and relays, eco-swims, stage swims, and professional races, including FINA 10km Marathon Swimming World Cup, the FINA Open Water Swimming Grand Prix, and the Olympic 10K Marathon Swim.

Sanctioning

WOWSA sanctions open water swimming events and serves as an independent observer for open water swims and relays. Under such sanctioning, WOWSA has developed a comprehensive list of rules that are made freely available to interested events and athletes. WOWSA events have been sanctioned in Hawaii, Cuba, Florida, Brazil, Fiji, Cayman Islands, United States of America, Africa, and Japan.



Environmental Friendliness

Through a partnership with the Plastic Disclosure Project, WOWSA offers guidelines to assist event organizers to reduce their environmental impact and minimize their plastic footprint.

Marathon Swimmers Federation

WOWSA supports and endorses the Marathon Swimmers Federation Rules for solo swims in ungoverned open bodies of water.



WOWSA Rules

World Open Water Swimming Association events, solo swims and relays operate under the following rules, regulations, protocols, procedures, policies, and definitions:

PRE-RACE

- WOWSA 1.0 – Definitions
- WOWSA 2.0 – Officials and Their Duties
- WOWSA 3.0 – Equipment
- WOWSA 4.0 – Open Water Safety

RACE

- WOWSA 5.0 – Start
- WOWSA 6.0 – Courses
- WOWSA 7.0 – Racing
- WOWSA 8.0 – Finish
- WOWSA 9.0 – Adjudication of Rules

DOCUMENTS

- WOWSA 10.0 – WOWSA Sanction Application
- WOWSA 11.0 – Observer Report
- WOWSA 12.0 – Records

EXCEPTIONAL SWIMS

- WOWSA 13.0 – Butterfly Swims
- WOWSA 14.0 – Backstroke Swims
- WOWSA 15.0 – Breaststroke Swims
- WOWSA 16.0 – Stage Swims
- WOWSA 17.0 – Marathon and Channel Swims
- WOWSA 18.0 – Team Pursuit
- WOWSA 19.0 – Blind Swimmers

OTHER

- WOWSA 20.0 – Environmental Friendliness
- WOWSA 21.0 – Miscellaneous
- WOWSA 22.0 – MSF Rules
- WOWSA 23.0 – Wetsuit Recommendations



WOWSA 1.0 – DEFINITIONS

WOWSA 1.1 – Open water swimming shall be defined as any swimming event that takes place in rivers, lakes, oceans, channels, canals, estuaries, bays, seas, dams, reservoirs, fjords, basins, lochs, coves, meres, firths, sounds, straits, bays and harbors.

WOWSA 1.2 – Marathon swimming shall be defined as any open water swimming event at least 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) in distance.

WOWSA 1.3 – Ultra-marathon swimming shall be defined as any open water swimming event at least 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) in distance.

WOWSA 1.4 – Scope

WOWSA sanctioned events include multi-race events, solo swims, stage swims, charity events and relays of any distance or duration with either onshore or in-the-water starts and finishes.

WOWSA 1.5 – Age Limits

The minimum age requirement for WOWSA-sanctioned marathon swims and relays and ultra-marathon swims and relays shall be 14 years of age. The Referee shall determine the minimum age for WOWSA-sanctioned events. However, as a general guideline, swimmers under the age of 8 are not encouraged to do open water swims over 1 mile. Swimmers under the age of 10 are strongly encouraged to swim with a responsible adult in races of at least 1 mile. Swims that have children under the age of 14 are strongly encouraged to have courses along the shoreline.

WOWSA 1.6 – Safety

WOWSA emphasizes and requires that athlete, volunteer and staff safety must be the highest priority at all times. Adherence to rules, protocols, procedures and policies must be put aside when there is an issue of personal safety during any sanctioned open water swimming event.

WOWSA 1.7 – Documentation

WOWSA provides Sanctioning Event Documentation and Observer Reports for solo swims and relays. These documents must be completed in full and returned to WOWSA to complete the sanctioning requirements.

WOWSA 1.8 – Course Layout

WOWSA-sanctioned courses may be point-to-point, loop, geometric of any shape (e.g., triangular, rectangular), out-and-back, two-way, three-way or divided in different stages.

WOWSA 1.9 – Timing



Events can be timed for competitive purposes or simply mass participation for fun or fitness, challenge or charity.



WOWSA 2.0 – OFFICIALS AND THEIR DUTIES

WOWSA 2.1 – The following officials can be utilized during a WOWSA-sanctioned event. Some individuals may fulfill dual roles during an event, and some official positions may not be necessary in some events:

- Referee
- Starter
- Timekeeper
- Safety Officer
- Medical Officer
- Course Officer
- Announcer
- Recorder
- Observer

WOWSA 2.1 – The Referee shall have full control and authority over all officials and shall approve their assignments and instruct them regarding all special features or regulations related to the competition. The Referee shall enforce all the rules and decisions of the event and WOWSA where applicable and shall decide all questions and issues relating to the actual conduct of the competition, the final settlement of which is not otherwise covered by this document or the established rules of the event. In the event, an unusual or unprecedented situation or happening occurs during an event, the Referee may refer the situation to the WOWSA Head Referee (Steven Munatones for the 2013 calendar year).

WOWSA 2.2 – The Referee shall have authority to intervene in the competition at any stage to ensure that rules, policies, procedures, and protocols are observed.

WOWSA 2.3 – In the case of hazardous or questionable conditions occur or appear to interrupt the event or jeopardize the safety of the swimmers, volunteers or officials, in conjunction with the Safety Officer, the Referee may stop, postpone or modify the event.

WOWSA 2.4 – The Referee shall adjudicate all protests related to the event, either in progress or after the event is completed. The Referee has the authority to intervene in the event at any stage to ensure that rules are observed.

WOWSA 2.5 – The Referee may disqualify any swimmer for any violation of the rules that he observes or which are reported to him by other authorized officials who observes the infraction. The infraction must be directly observed by the officials and must be immediately documented. Upon exit from the water, the athlete must be verbally informed of the reasons for the infraction, warning or disqualification.



WOWSA 2.6 – The Referee ensures that all necessary officials for the conduct of the event are at their respective posts. He may appoint substitutes for those who are absent, incapable of acting, or found to be inefficient or inexperienced. He may appoint additional officials if or when necessary.

WOWSA 2.7 – The Starter shall start each race at the specified time with an air horn, whistle, or other suitable device (including a loud voice) unless there is a delay as approved by the Referee. The Starter can fulfill other roles or responsibilities after the start of the race has safely been executed.

WOWSA 2.8 – The Timekeeper shall work with the timing company to assure official and accurate times are recorded for each athlete and relay. In the case of a solo swim, the Timekeeper shall keep at least 2 watches running from start to finish and should request an independent volunteer also confirm the official start and finish time.

WOWSA 2.9 – The Timekeeper shall conduct a time check to allow all related personnel to synchronize their timing systems and watches with the official running clocks before the start.

WOWSA 2.10 – The Timekeeper shall confirm the records and official times and placing after the race, relay or solo swim.

WOWSA 2.11 – The Safety Officer shall be responsible to the Referee and athletes for all aspects of safety related to the conduct of the competition.

WOWSA 2.12 – The Safety Officer shall check that the entire course, with special regard to the start, transition and finish areas, and any possible hazardous spots, are safe, suitable, and free of any obstruction.

WOWSA 2.13 – The Safety Officer shall be responsible for ensuring that a sufficient number of powered safety craft and a sufficient number of medical personnel are available on the water and on land during the event.

WOWSA 2.14 – The Safety Officer shall provide information on the water temperatures, water conditions, potential marine hazards and tidal flow / currents on the course to the swimmers. This information shall be recorded in the Sanctioning Event Documentation or Observer Report for solo swims and relays.

WOWSA 2.15 – The Safety Officer in conjunction with the Medical Officer and Referee advises if conditions are unsuitable for staging the event and make recommendations



for the modification of the course or the manner in which the event is conducted, if necessary.

WOWSA 2.16 – The Safety Officer shall prepare a comprehensive Safety Document that documents and educates all relevant staff and volunteers of myriad contingencies and emergency situations that may occur. This Safety Document shall serve as a guideline to ensure proper execution of safety procedures by staff and volunteers.

WOWSA 2.17 – The Medical Officer shall be responsible to the Referee for all medical aspects related to the event and competitors.

WOWSA 2.18 – The Medical Officer in conjunction with the Safety Officer, shall advise the Referee if conditions are unsuitable for staging the event and make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted, if necessary.

WOWSA 2.19 – The Medical Officer shall inform the local medical facilities of the nature of the event and ensure that any injuries are attended to and all casualties can be evacuated to medical facilities at the earliest opportunity.

WOWSA 2.20 – The Course Officer shall be responsible to the Referee for the correct marking of the course, turn buoys and intermediate stages. The Course Officer shall use Global Positioning Satellite technology and record the information in the Sanctioning Event Documentation or Observer Reports for solo swims and relays.

WOWSA 2.21 – The Course Officer shall ensure the start and finish areas are correctly marked and all equipment has been correctly installed and, where applicable, is in working order.

WOWSA 2.22 – The Course Officer shall endeavor to use Turn Buoys and Guide Buoys of different colors, sizes and shapes on the course.

WOWSA 2.23 – The Course Officer shall ensure each competitor is identified correctly with their race number (on the shoulders, back of hands or back or swim cap, and/or by their kayaker or escort boat).

WOWSA 2.24 – The Course Officer shall be certain all swimmers are present, in the assembly area, at the required time prior to the start for the pre-race instructions.

WOWSA 2.25 – The Course Officer shall keep swimmers and officials informed of the time remaining before the start at suitable intervals until the last five minutes, during which one-minute warnings shall be given.



WOWSA 2.26 – The Recorder shall record withdrawals (due to injuries, fatigue or voluntarily stopping) from the event, inform the Referee and Safety Officer, and enter the results and reasons on official forms including scoring for team awards as appropriate.

WOWSA 2.27 – The Recorder shall report any violations by the athletes to the Referee on a signed document detailing the rule infringement. Either the Referee or the Recorder shall inform the athlete(s) of the rule infringement.

WOWSA 2.28 – The Observer shall be responsible for documenting the event, solo swim or relay and completing the Observer Report. The Observer shall witness the event, solo swimmer or relay members and document the activities as detailed as possible. The Observer shall also be responsible for the adjudication of the rules.



WOWSA 3.0 – EQUIPMENT

WOWSA 3.1 – All escort and safety craft shall refrain from navigating through a pack of athletes at all times unless the recognized safety personnel must respond to an emergency. If any escort or safety craft impedes another athlete, the escort boat's athlete will be immediately disqualified.

WOWSA 3.2 – Athletes may wear any number of swim caps, goggles, heart rate monitors, wristwatches, protective swimwear (including full-length swimsuits), and wetsuits of any thickness or composition as the event permits. However, awards must be separately offered for athletes who wear only FINA-legal swimsuits, one swim cap, goggles and/or ear and/or nose plugs.

WOWSA 3.3 – Athletes may use fins, snorkels, swim streamers, Shark Shields® or other shark repellent or protective equipment, hand paddles, safety rings, booties or any kind of Swimmer Safety Devices as they require or desire and which is allowed by the local governing body or race director. However, athletes using these types of equipment shall not be eligible for the same awards as athletes who wear only FINA-legal swimsuits, one swim cap, goggles and/or ear and/or nose plugs.

WOWSA 3.4 – Athletes may wear any type of sunscreen or skin lubrication including lanolin, Vaseline® or any other kind of commercial skin protection on any part of their body.

WOWSA 3.5 – Athletes are encouraged to remove jewelry, necklaces, rings, and wristwatches during the event. The Referee may require removal of all jewelry including wristwatches and rings during the race if he so wishes.

WOWSA 3.6 – The course is best marked with a combination of Turn Buoys and Guide Buoys of different colors, sizes and shapes on the course if possible. The Turn Buoys should be larger and more easily seen as these buoys indicate a turn or change of direction and can only be navigated on either the left side or right side of the athletes. The Guide Buoys should be smaller as these buoys are simply aids in helping swimmers understand the course layout. The Guide Buoys can be navigated on either side by the athletes. If possible, the Turn Buoys should be marked consecutively by numbers in the case of a point-to-point course.

WOWSA 3.7 – WOWSA encourages its sanctioned events to use timing systems with transponders or timing chips. If such a system is not used, stopwatches with memory and print out capability are strongly encouraged.



WOWSA 3.8 – WOWSA encourages its sanctioned events to use a video-recording device at the start of the event to record the athletes getting into the water. It also encourages use of a video-recording device at the finish of the event.

WOWSA 3.9 – WOWSA encourages the use of social media and pre- and post-race press releases to promote its sanctioned events. It encourages press releases that include photographs and the official results of at least the top 5 in each division.

WOWSA 3.10 – WOWSA encourages the use of aerial photography and videography of its sanctioned events to provide to the media.

WOWSA 3.11 – Athletes are permitted to carry their own fuel (e.g., gel packs) in their swimsuits or swim caps.



WOWSA 4.0 – OPEN WATER SAFETY

WOWSA 4.1 – Open Water Safety: Many Rules, Different Venues, One Goal. There are numerous rules, interpretations and traditions - local, regional, national and international - that dictate and influence the safety procedures, guidelines and rules used in open water swims, but there is only one goal: safety for all.

WOWSA 4.2 – Every open water swimming course is different and every open water swimming course can be different from day-to-day and from hour-to-hour. Safety plans, procedures and protocols may be difficult and challenging, but they should also be based on common sense and local knowledge of the waterways and the accumulated wisdom of local safety experts including lifeguards, fishermen, government authorities, boaters, and the Race Director and Safety Officer.

WOWSA 4.3 – Because the natural elements in the water and the weather are so dynamic and unpredictable, the ultimate safety of open water swimmers depends on rules and guidelines supported by common sense and a reasonable, flexible approach to safety that is properly planned, documented, approved and executed by the race director, the race organization staff and local authorities (in the case of a race) or by the coach and pilot (in the case of a solo marathon swim).

WOWSA 4.4 – Considerations may slightly differ between a limited field of professional swimmers and large fields for amateur races, between solo swims and competitions, and between events in the world's oceans, seas, lakes, fjords, bays, rivers, reservoirs, lagoons or canals, but (1) there should be a pair of eyes potentially on every swimmer at every point in the race, and (2) there should be no blind spots along the course.

WOWSA 4.5 – At any point in the race, someone (race officials, lifeguards, volunteers or spectators) should potentially be able to see every swimmer in the water at all times. This does not mean that every swimmer should always have a pair of eyes glued on them. It only means that IF a swimmer has to be located at any point in time, there is someone in position to see them along the course. In other words, if there are points along the course where athletes cannot be seen (blinds spots) by someone, then the WOWSA Open Water Safety rules are not followed.

WOWSA 4.6 – When an athlete cannot answer simple questions about himself (e.g., his telephone number, his pet's name, his street address), his mental state is adversely affected by the elements (e.g., heat or cold or exhaustion). Race officials should immediately pull the athlete out of the water. Even if athletes protest about being pulled from the water, the authority of the race officials is final.



WOWSA 4.7 – Lead boats either watch the lead pack of athletes with referees or race officials on board, or the lead boats actually lead the fastest swimmers along the course.

WOWSA 4.8 – Other official boats and safety marshals along the course, including safety kayakers, paddlers, surf skiers or stand-up paddlers, must keep an eye out for the middle-of-the-pack and trailing swimmers.

WOWSA 4.9 – Safety kayakers, paddlers, surf skiers and stand-up paddlers should always scan the field. These safety staff should possess a means of communication and understand the communication chain to alert the swimmers and officials if there are problems or emergencies.

WOWSA 4.10 – Numbering of athletes is essential to enable the race organization and timing company to keep track of the athletes in the water and at the end of the race. Numbers can be hand-written or stamped with ink pads on the athlete's hands, arms, backs or swim caps. Alternatively, the numbers can be placed on the vests or clothing used by the athlete's kayaker, paddler or stand-up paddler.

WOWSA 4.11 – Athletes and safety personnel shall use night sticks, glow sticks, disc lights, or some other form of adequate illumination in order to identify an athlete in low-light conditions or in the dark, especially during solo swims or relays. Similarly, escort kayakers, paddlers and/or boaters shall also have different types of illumination on their body or equipment in order for the athletes to see them.

WOWSA 4.12 – Positioning of safety personnel on the course shall be determined by the Race Director and Safety Officer based on their experience, dynamic conditions of the course, historical considerations, and the experience of the local government officials and safety personnel. Safety personnel should always be positioned along the course in a variety of pre-determined positions. They are assigned specific areas to patrol with adequate communication tools to alert others and the command control.

WOWSA 4.13 – Safety personnel and course marshals should be easily identified by each other, the athletes, and the spectators at the competition. The communication between the Race Director, Safety Officer, and all safety personnel on land and in the water should be convenient and easily performed through the use of radios or mobile phone.

WOWSA 4.14 - Open water swimming is a sport inherent with risks. There are risks from marine life, from currents and tidal flows, from exhaustion, from hypothermia and hyperthermia, and from collisions with piers, docks, pontoons, feeding stations, escort boats, kayakers and surf skis. The more eyes on the swimmers in the open water, the



safer the swimmers generally are. A Race Director actively engages the assistance of four different levels of safety:

- Race organization staff
- Race volunteers
- Spectators
- Swimmers

WOWSA 4.14.1 – The highest level of open water safety responsibility falls on the race organization staff that creates structures, provides equipment, sets the philosophy and plans, prepares and prioritizes safety well before race day. This includes contracted staff such as lifeguards, Safety Officers, volunteer medical personnel, local lifeguards, fishermen and boaters who know the body of water best. Consultation with all of these different groups falls upon the shoulders of the race director and staff.

WOWSA 4.14.2 – Race volunteers stationed along the course, both on the water and on shore, provide the second set of eyes on the swimmers. These volunteers are provided pre-race instructions on what to do when problems or emergencies occur and are provided with whistles, binoculars and mobile communication devices.

WOWSA 4.14.3 – Spectators on shore can also help. The race announcer keeps the spectators on shore engaged by calling attention to everyone on the course, from the fastest to slowest swimmers. Through the voice of the announcer, the eyes of the spectators can be directed to scan the course that serves to increase the safety net.

WOWSA 4.14.4 – The athletes themselves are often the first to respond to a fellow swimmer in need. During pre-race instructions, all athletes should be told how to call for help and where that help will be located (in boats, on kayaks, JetSkis, surf skis or paddle boards, on shore, with radios, dressed in red or other identifiable colors). While a Race Director cannot depend on the athletes in the water, these athletes are often an active and first line of defense.

WOWSA 4.15 – WOWSA recommends to Race Directors that they look at safety from four perspectives: Philosophy, Planning, Preparation, and Priority.

WOWSA 4.15.1 – The WOWSA philosophy that safety for the athletes is the top priority must be genuine because there are inherent risks in the sport. If budgets cannot allow for proper safety measures to be taken, then the event shall not be held. If human resources are inadequate to provide proper safety measures to be taken, then the event shall not be held. If equipment (watercraft, radios, and emergency medical facilities) is inefficient, then the event shall not be held.



From a positive perspective, a philosophy of safety must be pervasive from the very moment a race is conceived. The focus on safety is set by the Race Director and Safety Officer and needs to be on the mind of every race volunteer and organization personnel. Budgets, watercraft (boats, kayaks, Inflatable Rescue Boats (IRBs), surf skis, personal watercraft (PWC), paddle boards), volunteers, professionals (lifeguards, physicians, paramedics) and equipment must be part of the planning process from Day One.

WOWSA 4.15.2 – When a race is in the planning stages, safety aspects and considerations are paramount. A general idea of the number of safety personnel will be derived from the estimated number of athletes. A general idea of the optimal type and number of watercraft (diesel boats, kayaks, IRBs, PWCs, paddle boards, stand-up paddlers, JetSkis) to use will also be derived by the configuration and location of the race. The assumed water and weather conditions will determine the type and number of onshore personnel and equipment (mylar blankets, whistles, radios).

A communication plan shall be prepared so every individual involved in the race organization knows what their roles are and where and what they should be doing during contingencies or in emergencies. Emergency plans shall be prepared that documents assigned responsibilities, actions and procedures required in the event of an emergency. Additionally, a written Athlete's Guide shall be a useful tool to educate and inform the athletes of what is expected and all the different situations that can occur.

WOWSA 4.15.3 – The Athlete's Guide shall be posted on the event website and emailed to the athletes well in advance of race day. The Athlete's Guide should provide helpful tips and reminders for the athlete regarding water temperature, water conditions and course layout and how they can prepare for these expectations.

WOWSA 4.15.4 – After all the plans have been discussed and documented, the written plans must be prepared to be executed. Emailing safety plans to key staff and volunteers is important, but even more important are face-to-face meetings where everyone is informed on what can happen on race day, review contingency plans, discuss emergency situations, test everyone's knowledge of how to communicate, where to go and what to do when the unexpected occurs.

WOWSA 4.15.5 – Race Directors should prepare notes to keep on a clipboard with information for easy and quick reference. Similar to the land-based safety personnel, volunteers and staff on the water should be given the same information prepared in waterproof bags.

WOWSA 4.16 – On race day, the Race Director should be prepared to change things on the fly without hesitation if problems occur. The Race Directors should anticipate and



identify potential problems before they occur and make adjustments so they can quickly react. For example, if the waves are large, position lifeguards within the surf zone. If the weather is too warm, change the start to the cooler morning hours or the late afternoon. If jellyfish swarm, make sure to have plenty of household vinegar in spray bottles. In all cases, keep the athletes and spectators informed of potential hazards. Even if some athletes complain, the Race Director and staff must be prepared to take some verbal criticism in order to protect the safety of all.

WOWSA 4.17 – After the event is over, document the following in order to improve the race in the future: what went right and why, what went wrong and why, what went unexpected and how to prevent from reoccurring.

WOWSA 4.18 – The lead pack of athlete are usually well-attended to by the officials and volunteers. The attention of the race announcer and race officials are usually fixed on the leaders. However, the entire field demands the attention of the race director, on-the-water safety marshals and volunteers.

WOWSA 4.19 – Experienced water safety staff and Race Directors often divide the entire course into manageable segments. Each segment has a designated number of water safety personnel - both onshore and on the water - in order to take care of the entire field of swimmers. As the athletes pass from one segment to the other, the water safety staff should stay diligently focused on the athletes in their area - and are in close communication with others on the course.

WOWSA 4.20 – WOWSA highly recommends that all open water events should be captured on video. Not only is the effective cost of filming the race by hand-held video recorders relatively inexpensive, filming the race can serve the following functions:

- Documentation of the race for educational purposes of the race staff.
- Documentation of the race for educational purposes of the volunteers.
- Documentation of the race for educational purposes of the race officials.
- Documentation of the race course, safety equipment, personnel and swimmers on the course.
- Documentation of possible rule infractions, cheating, course mishaps or other unforeseen situation or unanticipated accidents.
- Marketing of future races.
- Educational or motivational purposes for swimmers and coaches interested in future races.
- Posting on YouTube, Vimeo and other online file-sharing services.
- Sharing of the race with future sponsors, vendors, city officials, safety personnel and governing bodies.



WOWSA 5.0 – THE START

WOWSA 5.1 – The start shall be pre-determined and noted in the event information. The start can be on land, on a fixed or floating platform, or partly or entirely in the water as long as all athletes have a fair opportunity to be in the position they wish. If there are crowded conditions at the start, the general principle of first come first serve applies. The Referee can give warnings and disqualifications before the start for cheating, non-adherence to the rules or pre-race instructions, or for unsportsmanlike conduct.

WOWSA 5.2 – When starting from a fixed platform athletes shall be assigned a position on the platform, as determined by random draw.

WOWSA 5.3 – Athletes may start anywhere within the starting area at their choice.

WOWSA 5.4 – Participants should be informed of the time before the start at suitable intervals. WOWSA recommends 10-minute, 5-minute, 3-minute and 1-minute intervals with a 10-second countdown unless the Referee and the Starter have determined a different system.

WOWSA 5.5 – The Referee and Starter shall attempt to execute a fair start, but safety shall be the overriding concern in crowded conditions.

WOWSA 5.6 – In the case that U.S. Masters Swimming or USA Swimming members are included in a WOWSA event, accommodations should be made as required under U.S. Masters Swimming rules. For example, U.S. Masters Swimming or USA Swimming members should start either 5 minutes before or after the non-U.S. Masters Swimming members or non-USA Swimming members as required by the rules of these respective governing bodies.

WOWSA 5.7 – A WOWSA-sanctioned event may start men and women, boys and girls, disabled and able-bodied athletes separately or together as it wishes. However, awards shall be given separately to each gender.

WOWSA 5.8 – The Starter shall be positioned so as to be clearly visible to all athletes.

WOWSA 5.9 – If, in the opinion of the Referee, an unfair advantage has been gained at the start, the offending athlete may be given a yellow or red flag .

WOWSA 5.10 – All escort and safety craft (e.g., kayaks, paddle boards, canoes, electric boats, motorized vessels) shall be stationed at a safe distance from the swimmers as determined by the local jurisdictions (e.g., Fire Department, Lifeguards, Coast Guard) at all times.



WOWSA 5.11 – The escort and safety craft shall not interfere with or impede any athlete. If an escort craft, intentionally or unintentionally, interfere with another athlete, the athlete who is guided by that escort craft shall be immediately disqualified.

WOWSA 5.12 – All escort safety craft shall navigate in such a way as not to manoeuvre through the field of athletes. Any violation shall lead to any immediate disqualification of their athlete and their immediate removal from the course.

WOWSA 5.13 – Although they may start together, in all other respects the men's and women's competitions shall be treated as separate events.



WOWSA 6.0 – THE COURSE

WOWSA 6.1 – The course shall be accurately measured by GPS or other appropriate means. The distance shall be measured using the shortest straight-line tangents between start, turn buoys and finish.

WOWSA 6.2 – Expected conditions and water temperatures shall be informed to the athletes in advance via the website and pre-race information.

WOWSA 6.3 – A certificate of suitability for use of the venue shall be issued by the appropriate local health and safety authorities. In general terms the certification must relate to water purity and to physical safety from other considerations.

WOWSA 6.4 – On the day of the event, the water temperature should be checked at least one hour before the start in the middle of the course at a depth of 40 cm.

WOWSA 6.5 – All turns, obstacles and landmarks of the course shall be clearly indicated to the athletes before the start.

WOWSA 6.6 – All starting platforms, feeding pontoons, turn buoys and guide buoys shall be securely fixed in position and not be subject to tidal, wind or other natural or unexpected movements.

WOWSA 6.7 – If possible, the final approach to the finish shall be clearly defined with markers or buoys of a distinctive color.

WOWSA 6.8 – The finish shall be clearly defined and marked.

WOWSA 6.9 – Athletes cannot be supported, touched or pushed during the swim at any point along the course as long as there is not a rescue or emergency. However, if the local rules allow, athletes may rest or place their hands and arms on their escort boat, stand-up paddleboard, kayak, paddle board, pier or other supportive structure during the event if they get sick, injured or are afraid of or get approached by marine life. Athletes who are touched, supported, pushed, dragged along, or carried by their escort kayak or paddle board at any point in the race shall not be eligible for awards.

WOWSA 6.10 – Athletes may be handed fuel (food) and hydration (drink) by their crew or coach from an escort boat, stand-up paddle board, kayak, or paddle board. The fuel and hydration may be provided hand-to-hand or via a feeding stick, water bottle on a rope or simply thrown to the athlete.



WOWSA 6.11 – Escort crew, coaches and the race organization shall endeavor to pick up all cups, gel packs and other discard items from the body of water. It is the goal of WOWSA-sanctioned events to leave the open water at least as pristine as it was before the event.

WOWSA 6.12 – The escort boat captains and crew, kayakers, stand-up paddle boarders or paddle boarders shall follow all instructions of the Referee and Safety Officer at all times. These individuals must have the safety of the all the athletes in mind at all times.

WOWSA 6.13 – The water temperature and conditions shall be documented by the Referee or Safety Officer.

WOWSA 6.14 – The race director must inform athletes of the expected conditions prior to the race day via the website and other race information. This will enable the athletes to prepare themselves to handle the expected water temperatures and conditions. If the water temperature and conditions fall outside this expected range on race day, the Referee and Safety Officer shall make this announcement and any modifications to the course as necessary.

WOWSA 6.15 – Properly rounding all Turn Buoys is the sole responsibility of the athlete. Athletes shall be asked to properly round the turns if they inadvertently miss a turn. If an athlete chooses to cut short the turn buoys even with a warning, he shall be immediately disqualified unless there are safety issues. If an athlete cuts short turn buoys due to safety issues, the Referee shall make a determination of a possible disqualification.

WOWSA 6.16 – In the case of an onshore finish, athletes are encouraged to clear the water and crawl, walk or run across the finish line under their own power. However, if an athlete is tired, weak, injured or is in obvious need of assistance, they should be immediately helped by volunteers. The top priority of all WOWSA-sanctioned races is safety and rules play a secondary role where there is risk of danger to an athlete.



WOWSA 7.0 – RACING

WOWSA 7.1 – Athletes may swim any stroke style: any form of freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, or butterfly or any combination thereof. Rules on butterfly, backstroke and breaststroke are noted in Sections 10.0, 11.0 and 12.0.

WOWSA 7.2 – Drafting behind and pacing along other swimmers is permitted (see exception in WOWSA 7.3). However, drafting behind escort boats, safety craft, kayaks and paddle boards is not allowed. Navigating parallel to watercraft is permitted.

WOWSA 7.3 – Drafting behind an escort boat on a solo marathon swim or relay, or on a solo channel swim or relay is not permitted. Swimming closely alongside an escort boat is permitted as long as safety of the athlete is maintained.

WOWSA 7.4 – Escort boat shall attempt to maintain a constant position so as to station the swimmer at, or forward of, the midpoint of the escort boat.

WOWSA 7.5 – Standing on the bottom during an event shall not disqualify an athlete but they may not walk or jump forward.

WOWSA 7.6 – Rendering assistance by an official or Referee to an athlete in apparent distress shall always supersede official rules of disqualification.

WOWSA 7.7 – Athletes shall be allowed to use skin lubrication or other such substances on the skin providing the substances are not serving to retain body heat. Lanolin, Vaseline®, grease, and other such substances are permitted.

WOWSA 7.8 – A pace swimmer is allowed but the athlete cannot draft off of a pace swimmer. Pace swimmers for disabled and blind swimmers can be in any position relative to the athlete.

WOWSA 7.9 – Coaching and the giving of instructions by the athlete's representative on the feeding platform or in the escort boat is permitted.

WOWSA 7.10 – Feeding poles are not to exceed 5 meters in length when extended. No objects, rope or wire may hang off the end of feeding poles except flags. Athletes are permitted to retrieve water bottles attached to rope.

WOWSA 7.11 – Each escort boat or kayak shall display the athlete's competition number so as to be easily seen from either side of the escort boat.



WOWSA 7.12 – Athletes may be disqualified by the Referee at any time. The Referee may give a warning, a Yellow Card (or Flag), or a Red Card (or Flag). Any number of warnings may be received by an athlete without consequence. Two Yellow Cards (or Flags) lead to an immediate disqualification. A Red Card (or Flag) leads to an immediate disqualification.

WOWSA 7.13 – If in the opinion of a Referee, an action of an athlete or an escort safety craft is an unsportsmanlike conduct, the Referee shall have the option to immediately disqualify the athlete. Unsportsmanlike conduct including pulling back an athlete by any body part, or sinking, dunking, punching, scratching, kicking, or swimming over another competitor.

WOWSA 7.14 – Escort and safety craft shall maneuver so as not to obstruct the direction or progress of any athlete.

WOWSA 7.15 – Escort craft shall attempt to maintain a constant position vis-à-vis their athlete, specifically the athlete is positioned near the mid-point of the escort craft on their primary breathing side.

WOWSA 7.16 – Standing on the bottom of a sandbar or ocean floor, and dolphining in and out of the water just after the start or near the finish, are permissible. Dolphining in the middle of the race is not allowed unless if this action is specifically exempted from this rule by the Referee.

WOWSA 7.17 – Athletes, if they encounter a shallow area along the course (e.g., within a coral reef, on a sandbar, along a jetty, or near a pier), may stand up if allowed by the Referee or Safety Officer for safety reasons. However, they may not walk along the course, dolphin or jump in the forward motion to gain an advantage.

WOWSA 7.18 – Rendering assistance to any athlete in apparent distress shall always supersede the rules of conduct and disqualification. If an athlete assists another athlete on a kayak, paddle board or on a boat while touching the boat, an official, a volunteer or another swimmer, this Good Samaritan athlete shall not be disqualified. When rendering assistance to another athlete during the race, the rules governing touching another individual, a fixed pontoon or water craft shall be waived.

WOWSA 7.19 – Rendering assistance to physically and intellectually disabled athletes is permitted. Specifically, physically and intellectually disabled athletes may receive assistance getting in and out of the water at the start and finish or at the feeding stations. The determination of specific exceptions shall be made by the Referee.



WOWSA 7.20 – Athletes may take any form of fuel, hydration, medication or sustenance during the event as long as this does not include alcohol or drugs on the United States Anti-Drug Testing Agency (USADA) banned list or the World Anti-Drug Testing Agency (WADA) banned list.

WOWSA 7.21 – WOWSA-sanctioned events respect the guidelines, recommendations and rules outlined by USADA and WADA unless there is an athlete with a previously documented medical exception.

WOWSA 7.22 – All athletes shall have their event number clearly displayed at least on one part of their body (upper back, arms or back of hands) or on their swim cap at the start of the event.

WOWSA 7.23 – A suitable timing system shall be decided by the Referee. WOWSA-sanctioned events are strongly encouraged to use transponders or timing chips that are attached to an athlete's ankles or wrists.

WOWSA 7.24 – The Referee shall determine all time limits for each race. If athletes do not complete the event in the pre-determined amount of time, the Referee has the choice to either pull the athlete from the water or allow the athlete to continue to the finish.

WOWSA 7.25 – If the athlete is pulled from the water, either voluntarily or involuntarily, he shall receive the DNF (Did Not Finish) designation.

WOWSA 7.26 – If the athlete does not complete the event within the time limit, but is allowed to finish by the Referee, he shall receive an OTL (Over Time Limit) designation.

WOWSA 7.27 – In cases of emergency, abandonment of the event or portions of the race), the race results will be calculated from the final position in the water. That is, the athlete who has swum the longest distance shall be deemed the winner. The athlete who has swum the second longest distance shall be deemed to finish in second place, and so on.

WOWSA 7.28 – Athletes must answer all questions from the Referee, Safety Officer or other officials on the course during the race. If questions cannot be answered or are answered in a slurred manner that may indicate hypothermia, hyperthermia or other physical problem, the athlete may be pulled from the event due to safety issues.

WOWSA 7.29 – If transponders or timing chips are used, it is mandatory for all athletes to wear the transponder or timing chip on the wrist or ankle throughout the race. If an



athlete loses a transponder, the Referee will pre-determine a means to either provide a replacement chip or capture the athlete's time and placing without the transponder.

WOWSA 7.30 – WOWSA-sanctioned events must have an adequate amount of liability insurance. WOWSA recommends using HMBD to obtain event insurance. WOWSA does not earn any commission from HMBD or any insurance underwriter from this recommendation.



WOWSA 9.0 – THE FINISH

WOWSA 8.1 – The escort boats, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards and paddle boards shall follow all instructions by the Referee upon encroaching upon the finish area.

WOWSA 8.2 – Finishes shall be clearly explained to athletes and can be located on the water between two points, at a finish pontoon, on the shoreline, or up on land.

WOWSA 8.3 – Upon clearing the water, some athletes may require assistance. Athletes may receive assistance as necessary if they display a need, are disabled, or ask for assistance.

WOWSA 8.4 – Individual and relay results shall be tabulated electronically by gender and age group in order of finish.

WOWSA 8.5 – In addition to the final time for each athlete or relay, WOWSA encourages the Race Director to take split times when possible.



WOWSA 9.0 – ADJUDICATION OF RULES

WOWSA 9.1 – The Referee shall optimally position himself in a water craft as close to the lead pack as safely possible. The Referee shall endeavor to be in a position visible to the athletes in the lead pack at all times. The Referee shall assign an Assistant Referee or other designee to oversee the following packs if the lead males and lead females have separated during the race.

WOWSA 9.2 – The Referee and his designees shall endeavor to ensure at all times that the rules of the event are complied with at all times and violations being recorded in writing at the earliest opportunity.

WOWSA 9.3 – The Referee and his designees shall have the power to order an athlete from the water upon disqualification, imminent safety concerns (including darkness, lightning and marine life), or expiration of any time limit.

WOWSA 9.4 – The Referee and his designees shall ensure that athletes do not take unfair advantage or commit unsportsmanlike conduct on other athletes.

WOWSA 9.5 – The Referee and his designees shall be positioned so as to visually confirm the position and conduct of all athletes.

WOWSA 9.6 – The Referee and his designees shall record any infringement of the rules on the record sheets.

WOWSA 9.7 – The disqualification procedure shall be as follows:

WOWSA 9.7.1 – If in the Opinion of the Referee, any athlete, or athlete's approved representative, or escort boat, takes advantage by committing any violation of the rules or by making intentional contact with any athlete, the following procedures shall apply:

WOWSA 9.7.2 – First Infringement: A yellow flag and a card bearing the athlete's number shall be raised to indicate and to inform the athlete that he is in violation of the rules. It shall be the responsibility of the athlete to be aware of this action. The Referee shall hold up the card bearing the athlete's number for at least 30 seconds near the proximity of the athlete.

WOWSA 9.7.3 – Second Infringement: A red flag and a card bearing the athlete's number shall be raised by the Referee to indicate and to inform the athlete that he is for the second time in violation of the rules. The swimmer shall be immediately disqualified upon a second infringement. He must immediately leave the water and be placed in an escort boat, and take no further part in the race.



WOWSA 9.7.4 – If in the opinion of a Referee, an action of an athlete or an escort boat crew, or an athlete’s approved representative (e.g., coach or trainer or crew) is deemed to be unsporting, the Referee shall disqualify the athlete concerned. Unsporting can include punching, elbowing, pulling back another athlete, scratching, veering another athlete off-course or ignoring the Referee’s warnings.



WOWSA 10.0 – WOWSA Sanction Application

WOWSA 10.1 – The attached WOWSA Sanction Application must be completed for each event.

WOWSA 10.2 – There are several benefits to receive a WOWSA sanction:

WOWSA 10.2.1 – WOWSA offers event insurance to protect the sponsors and race organization staff in the event of accident, injury of death to athletes, volunteers and staff.

WOWSA 10.2.2 – WOWSA has an online open water swimming safety program, offered for each athlete prior to the event that includes a waiver of liability from each participant.

WOWSA 10.2.3 – WOWSA will create press releases in advance of the event to garner a greater participation and media exposure, and/or write articles for Swimming World Magazine and Daily News of Open Water Swimming.

WOWSA 10.2.4 – WOWSA will create press releases after the event, and write articles for Swimming World Magazine and Daily News of Open Water Swimming.

WOWSA 10.2.5 – WOWSA will offer exclusive product discounts from SPEEDO and/or FINIS to the participants in which the race director/organization can share in the profits.

WOWSA 10.2.6 – WOWSA will input the results of all participants in a global data base of open water swimmers that the race director/organization will have full access. The data base will enable the race director/organization to better understand the demographics and trends of the sport.

WOWSA 10.2.7 – A certificate that acknowledges the event is a member in good standing with WOWSA.

WOWSA 10.2.8 – One-page PDF of similar races around the world for educational, promotional and comparative purposes.

WOWSA 10.3 – A WOWSA sanction for a world championship event is US\$350. The cost does not include liability insurance, but it does include a standard WOWSA individual membership for the race directors, his volunteers, and staff. A WOWSA sanction for a non-world championship event is US\$250. The cost does not include liability insurance, but it does include a standard WOWSA individual membership for the race directors, his volunteers, and staff.



WOWSA 10.4 – The costs of additional services available to a WOWSA-sanctioned event include the following (volume discounts available):

- Event insurance (based on location and # participants) TBD
- Online Safety training video and liability waiver (per entrant) \$10.00
- Profit-sharing of merchandise sold 20%



WOWSA 11.0 – Observer Report

WOWSA 11.1 – The attached Observer Report must be completed and submitted for each solo swim and relay.



WOWSA 12.0 – RECORDS

WOWSA 12.1 – Records will be maintained for every venue and every competition by gender and by each age (in single year increments).

WOWSA 12.2 – Each record holder shall be eligible to receive a WOWSA World Record Certificate.



WOWSA 13.0 – BUTTERFLY SWIMS

WOWSA 13.1 – While open water swims are overwhelmingly completed doing freestyle, a small number of athletes attempt and complete open water swims, including marathon swims and channel swims, using the butterfly stroke. In order for a swim to be considered a Butterfly Swim, the entire distance must be swum butterfly as defined by the following rules:

WOWSA 13.2 – From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start (either from shore or in the water) to the finish of the swim (either onshore or in the water), the body must be kept on the stomach. While the athlete is swimming, he is not permitted to roll onto his back at any time or take any freestyle arm strokes or leg kicks, or breaststroke arm strokes or leg kicks, or do sidestroke of any type. A swimmer is allowed to stop swimming in shallow water as he approaches the shoreline and walk up on shore to clear the water as an athlete swimming freestyle would do.

WOWSA 13.3 – The athlete can stop swimming butterfly only during voluntary stops or feeding stops. During stops of any kind, the athlete must stay in the same spot and can tread water to rest or take fuel (food) or hydration (drink). They can stretch their arms, body, neck, back or legs, but they must stay in the same location.

WOWSA 13.4 – To qualify as a Butterfly Swim, both arms must be brought forward together over the water and brought backward simultaneously throughout the swim. The only acceptable exception to this rule is when a large wave, whitecaps or a boat wake prevents one or both arms from being brought forward simultaneously. In this case, the next arm stroke must continue brought forward together simultaneously.

WOWSA 13.5 – Breathing in a Butterfly Swim can be done forward or to either side of the body.

WOWSA 13.6 – All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to one another. The breaststroke or whip kick may not be used exclusively or interchangeably with the dolphin kick while doing the butterfly kick while doing the butterfly stroke at any time during the race.

WOWSA 13.7 – If the above rules are not adhered to, the swim will be defined as a standard (i.e., freestyle) swim.



WOWSA 14.0 – BACKSTROKE SWIMS

WOWSA 14.1 – While open water swims are overwhelmingly completed doing freestyle, a small number of athletes attempt and complete open water swims, including marathon swims and channel swims, using backstroke. In order for a swim to be considered a Backstroke Swim, the entire distance must be swum backstroke as defined by the following rules:

WOWSA 14.2 – From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start (either from shore or in the water) to the finish of the swim (either onshore or in the water), the body must be kept on the back to qualify as a Backstroke Swim. While the athlete is swimming, he is not permitted to roll onto the stomach at any time or take any freestyle arm strokes or leg kicks, or breaststroke arm strokes, or do sidestroke of any type. A swimmer is allowed to stop swimming in shallow water as he approaches the shoreline and walk up on shore to clear the water as an athlete swimming freestyle would do. However, if the finish is in the water, a swimmer must touch the finish pontoon or pad with their hand while they remain on their back.

WOWSA 14.3 – The normal position on the back can include a roll movement of the body up to, but not including 90° from horizontal. The position of the head is not relevant.

WOWSA 14.4 – Kicking may be done in any fashion as long as the athlete remains on his back during the swim.

WOWSA 14.5 – The athlete can stop swimming backstroke only during voluntary stops or feeding stops. During stops of any kind, the athlete must stay in the same spot and can tread water to rest or take fuel (food) or hydration (drink). They can stretch their arms, body, back, neck or legs, but they must stay in the same location.

WOWSA 14.6 – The exception of WOWSA 11.5 rule above is when a wave or wake crashes unexpectedly over the athlete causing the athlete to choke and/or swallow water. They can stop in this case and fix their goggles or catch their breath as long as they do not swim forward on their stomach or using any stroke other than backstroke.

WOWSA 14.7 – If the above rules are not adhered to, the swim will be defined as a standard (i.e., freestyle) swim.



WOWSA 15.0 – BREASTSTROKE SWIMS

WOWSA 15.1 – While open water swims are overwhelmingly completed doing freestyle, a small number of athletes attempt and complete open water swims, including marathon swims and channel swims, using breaststroke. In order for a swim to be considered a Breaststroke Swim, the entire distance must be swum breaststroke as defined by the following rules:

WOWSA 15.2 – From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start (either from shore or in the water) to the finish of the swim (either onshore or in the water), the body must be kept on the stomach to qualify as a Breaststroke Swim. While the athlete is swimming, he is not permitted to roll onto his back at any time or take any freestyle arm strokes or leg kicks, or do sidestroke of any type. A swimmer is allowed to stop swimming in shallow water as he approaches the shoreline and walk up on shore to clear the water as an athlete swimming freestyle would do. However, if the finish is in the water, a swimmer must simultaneously touch the finish pontoon or pad with two hands although they can be in a different plane.

WOWSA 15.3 – From the start to the finish, the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms must be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

WOWSA 15.4 – The hands must be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water. The elbows must be under water and the hands must be brought back on or under the surface of the water. The hands must not be brought back beyond the hip line.

WOWSA 15.5 – During each complete stroke cycle, some part of the athlete's head must break the surface of the water unless a wave or wake prevents this action.

WOWSA 15.6 – All movements of the legs must be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement. The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. A scissors, flutter or downward butterfly kick is not permitted.

WOWSA 15.7 – The athlete can stop swimming breaststroke only during voluntary stops or feeding stops. During stops of any kind, the athlete must stay in the same spot and can tread water to rest or take fuel (food) or hydration (drink). They can stretch their arms, body, back, neck or legs, but they must stay in the same location.

WOWSA 15.8 – If the above rules are not adhered to, the swim will be defined as a standard (i.e., freestyle) swim.



WOWSA 16.0 – STAGE SWIMS

WOWSA 16.1 – Stage swims may be conducted in a pool, lake, river, sea, and ocean, point to point, circumnavigation of an island or any other body of water. It may be swum as a solo, relay or a race. There is no minimum distance of each stage. The total cumulative distance may be no less than 25 kilometers. The overall final distance is measured from the starting point to the finish in miles, nautical miles or kilometers. This is measured as the shortest straight line or shortest sum total of a series of lines and not the swimmers course.

WOWSA 16.2 – A stage swim, stage relay or stage race may also be a timed event. They may be more than one day and more than one stage may be swum per day. Each individual stage can vary with location or distance as well as non-continuous and in different bodies of waters. A single stage of a multi-stage swim may qualify for a record. The time between the end of one stage and the start of the next shall be no more than 48 hours. For stage swims greater than one week, the time between the end of one stage and the start of the next shall be 72 hours.

WOWSA 16.3 – If any stage is skipped, substituted, or swam in the reverse direction then the swim would be categorized as a “non-continuous” stage swim.

WOWSA 16.4 – An assisted stage swim uses any device to aid the swimmer whereby the natural dynamics or conditions of the water are lessened or removed. During an assisted swim the following items may be used: neoprene suit or cap, fins, snorkels, scuba gear, shark cage, submersible drafting boom, jellyfish net, surfboard, hand paddles, neoprene cap, hand paddles, or anything else that may aid the swimmer with better floatation, propulsion, insulation, and lessen frontal resistance or drag. Swimming on the side of a boat to lessen wind, waves, or the current is also considered an assisted swim.

WOWSA 16.5 – Assisted swims do not qualify for any records for any body of water; however they will be given credit for the distance and a time. They are referred to as Assisted Swims. The item(s) used to assist the athlete must be identified and noted in the swimming log by the observer.

WOWSA 16.6 – If an obstacle, man-made or not, such as a dam, waterfall, locks or other is blocking the natural course of the direction of the swim or the athlete, it may be avoided. The athlete may exit safely before and re-enter after the obstacle. The distances avoided will be measured and subtracted from the total distance of the swim. The time will stop when the athlete exits and resume when the athlete starts. This obstacle safety exit will be noted in the Observer’s Report.



WOWSA 16.7 – During a stage relay, if an athlete drops out he may return at a later time. The team may continue without the Retired Swimmer.

WOWSA 16.8 – During any type of stage swim, if an athlete needs to exit due to a dangerous situation, then no penalty shall be levied upon the athlete.

WOWSA 16.9 – If an injury occurs, first aid may be administered in or out of the water by another person without penalty. Time continues during the administering of first aid.

WOWSA 16.10 – Land mass to land mass swims are measured by the shortest distance between these two points. The distance is measured by a straight line or the shortest sum total of a series of lines connecting these two points. A land mass to land mass swim may take place in a lake, stream, island to island, continent and point to point.

WOWSA 16.11 – The circumnavigation of an island is measured by adding the shortest tangents around the island.

WOWSA 16.12 – Timing begins from the moment the athlete enters the water or swims across the designated start point. For subsequent starts after the first stage, the athlete will start at the exact GPS point previously recorded from the end of the previous stage finish. The athlete starts behind the actual finish point of the previous stage finish. Time starts when the athlete passes over the exact ending point. The latitude and longitude will denote the ending point of each specific stage.

WOWSA 16.13 – The conclusion of any stage swim may be at the same location or a different location than the start. The finish may be in the water or on land.

WOWSA 16.14 – The total cumulative time is the actual time that the athlete or team members spend in the water. This is measured in hours, minutes and seconds. Total time for all stage or relay stage swims is the cumulative total of all stages.



WOWSA 17.0 – MARATHON AND CHANNEL SWIMS

WOWSA 17.1 – Marathon and channel swims shall follow the rules as indicated in the this document.

WOWSA 17.2 – Channel swims shall be from shore to shore. Athletes start and finish on land with no body of water behind. The land must be part of a naturally occurring contiguous part of the shore. Stopping at a pier or man-made jetty is not permitted.

WOWSA 17.3 – Athletes shall use no swim aids other than goggles, ear plugs, one non-neoprene, non-bubble swim cap, one porous, non-neoprene swimsuit and illumination for night swims. No flotation devices, propulsive aids, protective swimwear, or full-length swimwear is permitted.

WOWSA 17.4 – Swimsuits shall not go beyond the end of the groin or shoulders.

WOWSA 17.5 – Shark Shields® or other shark repellent devices or gels may be used by the escort crew, kayaker or paddler who is alongside the athlete. Swim streamers may be used if the local governing body permits them.

WOWSA 17.6 – The WOWSA Observer Report for either solo swimmers or relays must be completely filled in for verification.

WOWSA 17.7 – On a two-way or three-way or multiple-island crossing, the athlete must completely clear the water line at all stops. The athlete can rest, sit or stand on land for up to 10 minutes while accepting fuel, hydration or skin lubrication from another individual.

WOWSA 17.8 – The timing of the swim shall be from the moment a start is indicated (by voice, whistle or air horn) until the time the athlete clears the water on the opposite natural connecting shore.

WOWSA 17.9 – The Observer is responsible for the timing of the swim and for the interpretation of the rules including the right to cancel the swim in adverse conditions or in cases where there is physical danger to the health and well-being of the athlete or crew.

WOWSA 17.10 – Pilots, navigators and crew must receive the permission from the local governing authority to cross a channel (e.g., Coast Guard).

WOWSA 17.11 – WOWSA shall not observe or recognize marathon swims or channel swims by athletes under the age of 14.



WOWSA 17.12 – Paddlers, kayakers and/or pace swimmers are permitted as long as they are not used as physical support by the athlete.

WOWSA 17.13 - No alcoholic beverages, stimulants or drugs that are on the United States Anti-Drug Agency or World Anti-Drug Agency shall be consumed by the athlete during the swim or 12 hours before the swim start. No alcoholic beverages or narcotic drugs shall be consumed by the Observer, boat crew member, or anyone associated with the swim from dock to dock.

WOWSA 17.14 – WOWSA will not ratify a swim if any rules are not followed.

WOWSA 17.15 – If any situation arises which is not covered by the current WOWSA rules, the Channel Swimming Association rules shall be referenced and followed. In all cases, WOWSA shall remain the right to interpret its rules relative to the athlete's actions.

WOWSA 17.16 – Relays shall consist of 2 or more swimmers.

WOWSA 17.17 – Each athlete shall swim for one hour each time he enters the water. This duration is called a leg.

WOWSA 17.18 – On receipt of a time signal, the changeover to the new athlete shall be made as soon as is practically possible (within one minute) after the previous athlete has completed his leg. In the exchange, the new athlete can either touch the preceding swimmer or enter the water behind the swimmer and swim past him.

WOWSA 17.19 - Team members must rotate in the same order throughout the swim. Substitution of a relay athlete can only occur before the first team member enters the water for his first leg of the swim. The substitute must have been approved prior to the relay start as an alternate.

WOWSA 17.20 – Marathon swims and channel swims can be attempted with wetsuits, fins, buoyancy devices and other equipment such as protective swimwear, shark cages, jellyfish nets or waterproof audio devices. Swims with such equipment shall be defined as Assisted Swims according to the method and/or aids used.

WOWSA 17.21 – If a local governing body or swim director wishes to deviate from the WOWSA rules, prior written permission must be obtained, and exceptions will be noted.



WOWSA 18.0 – TEAM PURSUIT

WOWSA 18.1 – Team Pursuit are races generally can be loop, out-and-back or point-to-point courses open to swimmers of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

WOWSA 18.2 – In Team Pursuit, athletes swim closely together with teammates of both genders. The number of members can vary from race to race, but 3 – 4 is generally the most common format.

WOWSA 18.3 – Teammates must start and finish together with each team set off in separate staggered starts. The time between the staggered starts can vary depending on the race.

WOWSA 18.4 – As in cycling, Team Pursuit encourages athletes to form an aquatic peloton and utilize all the requisite drafting, positioning, navigating and pacing skills of open water swimming. Team Pursuit places a premium on drafting, positioning, navigating and pacing. The closer and straighter the athletes swim together, the faster their time will generally be. The athletes can swim as close to one another or as far apart from one another as they wish.

WOWSA 18.5 – Team Pursuit start can on shore at the water's edge, from a fixed or floating pontoon, or in the water.

WOWSA 18.6 – Team Pursuit can be done in either the clockwise or counterclockwise direction depending on the course layout.

WOWSA 18.7 – Team Pursuit finish can on shore at the water's edge, through a finish chute, at a fixed or floating pontoon structure, or indicated by a rope in the water on the water's surface.

WOWSA 18.8 – The finish time in a Team Pursuit race is the time that the last swimmer of the team crosses or touches the finish line.

WOWSA 18.9 – Each athlete shall have the same team number.

WOWSA 18.10 – If one team catches up to another team, it is their responsible to swim around the slower team. The standard WOWSA rules of open water swimming shall apply at all times. That is, impeding or unsportsmanlike conduct by one swimmer will result in a yellow card or disqualification of the entire team.



WOWSA 18.11 – At any time during the race, impeding other athletes or teams or committing unsportsmanlike behavior is not tolerated and will result in a warning, yellow card or disqualification.

WOWSA 18.12 – Drafting off of other athletes or teams is acceptable and part of the Team Pursuit concept.

WOWSA 18.13 – Age classifications are determined by the Referee or Race Director. Athletes from different registered teams may swim together unless mixed teams are not allowed by the Race Director. Athletes of different genders may swim together unless not allowed by the Race Director.

WOWSA 18.14 – If the race has gender-separate divisions and a team has one male athlete, then the team will be designated as a male team. Only if a team consists of all females is the team designated as a female team.

WOWSA 18.15 – Local or national regulations on swimsuits shall apply depending on the decision of the Race Director. If there are wetsuit and non-wetsuit divisions and one member wears a wetsuit, then the team will be designated as a wetsuit team. Only if a team has all non-wetsuit swimmers is the team designated as a non-wetsuit team.



WOWSA 19.0 – Blind Swimmers

WOWSA 19.1 – WOWSA open water swimming events encourage and support blind swimmers to participate. Blind swimmers are allowed 3 general exceptions to the solo swims performed by open water swimmers with sight:

- (a) they can be tethered together in some fashion to another swimmer throughout their swim for guidance,
- (b) they can be led by swimmers who allow them to tap on their feet or other parts of their body for guidance,
- (c) they can be escorted by kayakers or paddlers or crew on an escort boat who blow whistles for guidance (e.g., once for “go left” and twice for “go right”).



WOWSA 20.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLINESS

WOWSA 20.1 – Open water swimming events, their sponsors, participants, venues, suppliers and spectators increasingly wish to improve their sustainability and reduce their environmental impact. WOWSA events can take steps to minimize their plastic footprint.

WOWSA 20.2 – Swimmers, coaches, volunteers, officials, and support crew may not intentionally pollute any open body of water or its environs with trash or debris, including feed cups and gel packs, at any point before, during, or after the swim, from start to finish. Swimmers shall be disqualified if the swimmer or his crew members pollute the open water with cups, gel packs, bottles, trash, or other debris before, during, or after the competition or swim (solo or relay). It is the responsibility of the race director, staff, officials, and observers to monitor the behavior of the swimmers and their crew.

WOWSA 20.3 – WOWSA offers guidelines (see below), created by the Plastic Disclosure Project, to assist event organizers.

WOWSA 20.3.1 – Open water swimming events, their sponsors, participants, venues, suppliers and spectators increasingly wish to reduce their environmental impact. WOWSA events can take steps to minimize their plastic footprint. Plastic takes decades to fully degrade, can cause ecosystem and health impacts, and is often the cause of much of the waste that is found in racing environments.

WOWSA 20.3.2 – WOWSA offers guidelines [see below], created by the Plastic Disclosure Project, to assist event organizers. This lays out guidelines to assist event organizers, including a checklist to assist with planning and a scorecard to help evaluate progress towards certification as a PDP Sport event. These guidelines should be very achievable for most events from solo marathon swims to mass participation events. For events that already pride themselves on their sustainability, they should stretch further and seek ISO 20121 certification.

Overall sustainability of events is important, but these guidelines focus on minimizing an event's 'plastic footprint'. Plastic is a useful and valuable resource, especially to sports event organizers. However, plastic needs to be managed properly, and doing so can be an easy, but significant, step towards a more sustainable event. Plastic is often highly visible to event participants and those that use the location afterwards, so brands and events want to be careful about the image they leave behind, and also demonstrate that they are responsible and effective event organizers and supporters. In addition, plastic is a valuable commodity, and there are often strong economic reasons for ensuring it is not wasted. Furthermore, plastic takes decades to fully degrade, can cause ecosystem and health impacts, and is often the cause of much of the waste that is found in our



racing and training environments, both on land, and in the water. This is completely avoidable, and athletes are a perfect segment of society that can be ambassadors in driving a large-scale reduction in plastic waste.

Checklist and Tips

To help move towards zero and minimize an event's 'plastic footprint', event organizers should consider the following as develop and review their plans:

Have you made a commitment to reduce, reuse, and recycle all plastics?

- Who is going to assist in your efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle?
- Consider a waste management/recycling committee to create partnerships and environmentally friendly initiatives between all stakeholders – facilities management, event organizers, vendors, waste services contractors, and recycling processors.
- How will you educate your volunteers about your efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle?
- Have you publicized your commitment to participants and encouraged their help?

Have you considered all the situations where plastic is provided?

- Consider items provided to athletes, officials, organizers or spectators
- Remember both free and sold items
- Remember drinks, food, prizes and event equipment/gear
- Consider items made of, served in, or wrapped with, plastic

Can plastic items be replaced or substituted with something more sustainable?

- Can athletes bring their own reusable bottles?
- Can you use powdered form for flavored drinks and/or provide water via dispensers?
- Can you use sustainable wooden chopsticks instead of plastic cutlery?
- Can you use washable cutlery and plates?
- Can you supply utensils and equipment without individual plastic wrapping?

Where plastic is provided, can favorable plastics be chosen?

- Look for high % of post-consumer recycled content of the plastic
- Use biodegradable plastic where possible (ideally with feedstock that does not come from food related crops), and even better if there is proper composting infrastructure for this material after the event



- Prefer types of plastic that are readily recyclable in your area

Where plastic waste is generated, is it collected in an organized way?

- Clearly designate where people should put their plastic waste
- Remember to ensure collection is where the waste is generated (e.g., bottle caps near the start, bottles on the course)
- Some events receive great PR if they, or the sponsor, have teams of people in branded uniforms collecting waste

What assistance can you anticipate from local waste management and recycling services?

- How does your plan fit within your local waste management and recycling program?
- How much waste do you anticipate? How much of this waste will include plastic?
- Are waste management and recycling services already collecting at your location?

Who is it?

- Will they pick up materials or require delivery?
- Will they provide adequate collection and recycling receptacles based on anticipated waste?
- What sorting of materials do they require in order to recycle plastics (i.e., Bottles separate from cups? Bottle caps? Plastic bags? Plastic containers?)
- Will they pay for materials based on quantity and quality?

Where recycling is conducted, are you confident in the recycling process?

- Do you know where your recycled material goes after pick up?
- Make sure that there is a systematic process of collection, sorting and removal, and that you don't simply rely on existing municipal waste management operations to do your job
- Can they provide data about how much PET or other materials they recycle?

WOWSA/PDP Sport Scorecard – Moving Towards Zero Plastic Footprint

To help gauge your progress towards a minimal plastic footprint being left behind after your event, measure your event against this scorecard. For each question, score your event appropriately, and total your response. In general, if you either have no plastic, or manage plastic very carefully to minimize both reputational and environmental impacts, your event will score sufficient points to become a certified PDP Sport event.



COMMITMENT

- 0 - Your event has made a commitment to reduce, reuse, and recycle all plastic waste and publicized it to all staff, volunteers and participants
- 3 - Your event has made a commitment to reduce, reuse, and recycle all plastic waste, with no publication to staff, volunteers and participants
- 5 - Your event has not made a commitment to reduce, reuse, and recycle all plastic waste

____ EVENT SCORE

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE-SERVE PET BOTTLES

- 0 - No single-serve PET bottles are distributed (i.e., you provide water or other beverages through water bottle filling stations)
- 1 - Single-serve PET bottles distributed, with organized and assisted collection and recycling by brand company volunteers
- 2 - Single-serve PET bottles distributed, with organized and assisted collection and recycling by event volunteers
- 3 - Single-serve PET bottles distributed, with unorganized collection and recycling
- 5 - Single-serve PET bottles distributed, with no collection or recycling

____ EVENT SCORE

DISTRIBUTION OF PLASTIC OR PLASTIC-COATED CUPS

- 0 - No plastic cups distributed
- 3 - Plastic or plastic-coated cups distributed and actively collected by volunteers (i.e., staffed feeding stations)
- 5 - Plastic or plastic-coated cups distributed, with no active collection

____ EVENT SCORE

DISTRIBUTION OF STYROFOAM (CUPS OR ANY OTHER CONTAINER)

- 0 - No Styrofoam distributed
- 3 - Styrofoam distributed and actively collected by volunteers
- 5 - Styrofoam distributed, with no active collection

____ EVENT SCORE

FOOD OR FEEDING STATIONS (ANY CONTAINERS OR UTENSILS)

- 0 - No plastic distributed
- 1 - Plastic distributed, actively collected, washed and reused by volunteers
- 2 - Plastic distributed and actively collected and recycled by volunteers
- 3 - Plastic distributed and actively collected by volunteers
- 5 - Plastic distributed, with no active collection

____ EVENT SCORE



EQUIPMENT OR GEAR (BIBS, CAPS, BADGES, ETC.)

0 - No plastic equipment or gear issued

1 - Plastic equipment gear issued, but collected and either recycled or reused (over 100 participants)

2 - Plastic equipment gear issued, but collected and either recycled or reused (25-100 participants)

3 - Plastic equipment gear issued, but collected and either recycled or reused (1-24 participants)

5 - Plastic equipment gear issued, with no collection

____ EVENT SCORE

PRIZES, AWARDS, OR GIVEAWAYS (INCLUDING RACE PARTICIPATION BAGS)

0 - No plastic prizes awards, or giveaways distributed, OR those distributed made from 100% recycled material, and not wrapped in plastic by manufacturer

2 - No plastic prizes awards, or giveaways distributed, OR those distributed made from 100% recycled material, and although wrapped in plastic by manufacturer, 100% of wrapping removed and recycled by event staff/volunteers

3 - No plastic prizes awards, or giveaways distributed, OR those distributed made from 100% recycled material, but distributed with individual plastic wrapping

4 - Plastic prizes, awards, giveaways distributed that come wrapped in plastic, with 100% wrapping removed and recycled by event staff/volunteers

5 - Plastic prizes, awards, giveaways distributed with individual plastic wrapping

____ EVENT SCORE

APPAREL

0 - Made from 100% recycled material (Clothing made from PET bottles help create demand for recycling plastic waste)

2 - Made from 75-99% recycled material

3 - Made from 50-74% recycled material

4 - Made from 25-49% recycled material

5 - Made from <25% recycled material

____ EVENT SCORE

WASTE COLLECTION

0 - Recycling bins/containers, appropriately sized and visually distinctive, are available and well-marked at all possible plastic bottle production points, with volunteers to help with collection (*PET bottles and plastic cups are separated)

3 - Recycling bins/containers, appropriately sized and visually distinctive, are available and well-marked at all possible plastic bottle production points, with NO volunteers to help with collection

5 - No recycling bins/containers available



____ EVENT SCORE

POST-RACE WASTE COLLECTION

0 - Volunteers retrace entire race course/event location and collect and recycle all waste

1 - Volunteers revisit all likely waste production sites (i.e., feeding stations and spectator areas) and collect and recycle all waste

3 - Volunteers revisit all likely waste production sites (i.e., feeding stations and spectator areas) and collect all waste

5 - No post-race waste collection

____ EVENT SCORE

RECYCLING

0 - All plastic waste is collected, sorted and recycled (you have verified and coordinated the processing of all recyclable materials with waste management and recycling services)

3 - All plastic waste is collected, sorted and recycled, but not 100% aware or confident in the end-result of your recycling efforts

5 - No recycling

____ EVENT SCORE

QUALIFICATION SCORING – 9 Points or Lower (with a goal of zero)

In order to qualify for the use of a PDP Sport logo on your event, and approval of meeting PDP Sport guidelines, with certification, your total score must be lower than 9 points. If you would like to be certified, and use the PDP Sport logo in your event material, website, etc., please contact the Plastic Disclosure Project and the World Open Water Swimming Association to self-register, along with your scorecard as per the items above.

If you have any questions about these guideline or the Ocean Recovery Alliance's Plastic Disclosure Project, contact Doug Woodring (doug@oceanrecov.org), Andrew Russell (Andrew@plasticdisclosure.org), or Richard Herstone (Richard@openwaterswimming.com).

Plastic Disclosure Project

The focus of Ocean Recovery Alliance, in partnership with WOWSA, is to bring together new ways of thinking, technologies, creativity and collaborations in order to introduce innovative projects and initiatives that will help improve the ocean and open water environment. Plastic Disclosure Project is part of the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Partnership on Marine Litter.



Plastic Disclosure Project is similar to that of carbon disclosure, whereby companies, organizations and events annually report their plastic use or waste accumulation. By having metrics for measurement, it is easier to then manage the use of plastic in a more efficient manner, with our communities, and the environment, as the benefactors. Five main ways of improving plastic's use include less waste in the supply chain, more recycling within the business operations, more recycled content in the material, new design, and the use of new materials.

ISO 20121:2012 specifies requirements for an event sustainability management system for any type of event or event-related activity, and provides guidance on conforming to those requirements. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was the catalyst behind the development of ISO 20121, which provides the framework for identifying the potentially negative social, economic and environmental impacts of events by removing or reducing them, and capitalizing on more positive impacts through improved planning and processes.



WOWSA 21.0 – MISCELLANEOUS

WOWSA 21.1 – Contiguous Solo Crossing Relays are swimming events where a number of athletes completes consecutive point-to-point solo swims or circumnavigations of any duration, length or type in an open body of water and where each swimmer starts after being touched by the previous swimmer who has cleared the water. Each swim by the individual swimmers is called a Leg of the Contiguous Solo Crossing Relay. Each swimmer must start and finish on land. Each swimmer is referred to in numerical order. That is, Swimmer #1 is the first swimmer to begin the Contiguous Solo Crossing Relay, Swimmer #2 is the next swimmer to swim after the first Leg is completed, Swimmer #3 follows until the last swimmer completes the final Leg.

WOWSA 21.2 – The number of athletes in a Contiguous Solo Crossing Relay must be at least two, but can number as many as desired. The venue can be an ocean, sea, lake, river, channel, canal, fjord, lagoon, estuary, bay, reservoir, dam, lido, rowing basin or any man-made or natural body of water. The athletes must follow the traditional rules that govern their chosen body of water or competition if there is a recognized body that oversees swims in the area (e.g., Channel Swimming Federation or Catalina Channel & Swimming Federation).

WOWSA 21.3 – For a point-to-point Contiguous Solo Crossing Relay to be recognized, each athlete must cross body of water, touch the intended terrestrial finish point, clear the water under their own power and then immediately touch the next swimmer to begin the next Leg. For a circumnavigation of an island or Contiguous Solo Perimeter Swim around the perimeter of a lake, each athlete must completely swim around the course, touch the intended terrestrial finish point, clear the water under his/her own power and then immediately touch the next swimmer to begin the next Leg.

WOWSA 21.4 – For Ice Swims, WOWSA follows the rules and procedures of the International Ice Swimming Association.

WOWSA 21.5 – In Elimination Sprints, the top 50% of the finishers of each heat will advance to the second round. The second round will begin five minutes following the initial swim and the top 50% of those swimmers will advance to round three. This process will continue until there are less than twenty swimmers in the final round. In this round, swimmers will be allowed to start by diving from the starting boat to allow maximal speed.

WOWSA 21.6 – In an open water medley swim, the athlete shall cover the four standard swimming strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one quarter of the total distance.



WOWSA 22.0 – MSF RULES

WOWSA supports and accepts the Rules of Marathon Swimming as defined on January 6, 2014 by the Marathon Swimmers Federation for those swimmers who wish to follow its guidelines in ungoverned swims.

However, the rules, guidelines and traditions of existing and future governing bodies are respected by WOWSA. That is, the MSF Rules do not supersede or replace the rules of the Channel Swimming Association, Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation, Catalina Channel Swimming Federation, Farallon Islands Swimming Association, British Long Distance Swimming Association, Irish Long Distance Swimming Association, Lake Tahoe Swimming Society, International Ice Swimming Association, International Winter Swimming Association, Lake Erie Open Water Swimming Association, Santa Barbara Channel Swimming Association, Vancouver Open Water Swimming Association, Northeast Kingdom Open Water Swimming Association, Japan International Open Water Swimming Association, Tsugaru Channel Swimming Association, Menorca Channel Swimming Association, Association of Korea Open Water Swimming, Universal Marathon Cold Swimming Association, Lake Ontario Swim Team, Solo Swims of Ontario, Dubai Open Water Swimming Association, Great Lakes Open Water Swimming Association, Massachusetts Open Water Swimming Association, Asociacion de cruce a nado del Estrecho de Gibraltar, FINA (Fédération Internationale du Natation Amateur), Tsugaru Strait Swimming Association, Hawaiian Channel Swim Association, Kawaii Channel Association, and other local governing bodies.

Purpose

The Marathon Swimmers Federation (MSF) Rules of Marathon Swimming are a set of standards and guidelines for undertaking a solo, unassisted open-water marathon swim in any body of water.

MSF Rules may be used by any swimmer who wishes to attempt a swim for which there is no local governing body. They also may be used by local governing bodies wishing to adopt a global standard — or as a foundation upon which to establish local exceptions. MSF Rules do not override local rules — they aim to codify their shared spirit.

The Spirit of Marathon Swimming

MSF Rules are guided by the traditions and spirit of unassisted marathon swimming. Marathon swimmers embrace the challenge of crossing wild, open bodies of water with minimal assistance beyond their own innate physical strength and mental fortitude. There are ways to make the sport easier, but marathon swimmers consciously eschew



them.

Marathon swimmers take pride that their achievements can be meaningfully compared to the achievements of previous generations, because the standard equipment of the sport has not changed significantly since 1875.

Definitions

Marathon Swim: A nonstop open-water swim, undertaken according to standardized rules, and requiring at least several hours of sustained effort to complete. Ten kilometers without significant assistance from currents is the minimum distance considered to be a marathon swim.

Nonstop: Remaining in the water for the entire duration of the swim from start to finish without intentional physical contact with escort vessels, support personnel, or other objects (fixed or floating).

Unassisted: Without artificial assistance to performance, other than the standard equipment of the sport. Any swim using nonstandard performance-enhancing equipment, or otherwise violating the rules of unassisted marathon swimming, is considered an Assisted Swim.

Standard Equipment of Marathon Swimming

- One swimsuit made of porous, textile material. For males, the suit must not extend below the thigh or above the waist. For females it must not extend below the thigh, onto the neck, or beyond the shoulder.
- One bathing cap made of latex or silicone.
- Goggles, earplugs, and noseclips.
- Sunscreen and grease.
- Safety lights for night visibility.
- Simple timekeeping device (chronometer).
- Escort boat, pilot, and crew.
- Nutrition, and equipment to transport it between the boat and swimmer. The swimmer may not be supported or towed by the feed equipment.
- Paddlers and support swimmers.
- Observer(s)

The swimmer does not need to declare the use of standard equipment (i.e., it is assumed).

Any equipment not specifically listed here is considered nonstandard equipment. Use of



nonstandard equipment must always be declared, even if the equipment's benefit to performance is ambiguous.

Examples of nonstandard performance-enhancing equipment

Swims using nonstandard, performance-enhancing equipment cannot be considered unassisted. Examples include:

- Equipment that may retain or increase warmth – e.g., wetsuits, neoprene caps, booties, gloves.
- Equipment that may increase speed – e.g., flippers, paddles, shark cages.
- Equipment that may increase buoyancy – e.g., pull buoys, wetsuits.
- Auditory pacing aids – e.g., music players, metronomes.
- Electronic devices attached to the swimmer, which transmit information to the swimmer – e.g., wristwatches, navigation aids, biofeedback monitors.
- Underwater streamers.
- Performance-enhancing drugs on the World Anti-Doping Agency List of Prohibited Substances.

Observers

The swim observer documents the facts of a swim and verifies the swim's adherence to the declared rules. Documentation produced by a qualified observer is the single most important source material for authenticating a swim claim.

Qualifications

The primary qualifications of an observer are:

Independence

The observer must be capable of dispassionately evaluating the swim and its adherence to the declared rules. If the observer is acquainted with the swimmer, (s)he must be able to separate the personal relationship from his/her duties to observe, document, and verify.

Expertise

The observer must be knowledgeable about the rules, traditions, and spirit of marathon swimming, and with the responsibilities of observing a marathon swim.

The MSF maintains a global network of qualified, willing observers. Local observer networks and official trainings are offered by following organizations:



- Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation
- Channel Swimming Association
- Catalina Channel Swimming Federation
- Santa Barbara Channel Swimming Association
- NYC Swim

Observers who have not attended an official training may also demonstrate expertise through their personal history in the sport – as a swimmer, crew-member, or administrator.

Special Considerations

Very Long Swims

If a single observer is not able to maintain alertness for the entire duration of the swim, an additional observer is necessary. The MSF recommends two observers for swims anticipated to last longer than 18 hours, and three observers for swims anticipated to last longer than 30 hours. Overnight swims in the 10-18 hour range may also require a second observer.

On swims with multiple observers, a lead observer should be designated to coordinate the observer team and documentation procedures.

High-Profile or Unprecedented Swims

Swims of unusual magnitude or notoriety – especially unprecedented swims – demand a stricter standard for observer qualifications and reputation. In such cases, it is essential that the observers are trusted by the broader community of marathon swimmers.

The MSF recommends a minimum of two highly qualified, reputable observers for high-profile swims, to reinforce their credibility.

“Golden Rules” of Marathon Swimming

Transparency of Swim Conduct

The intended conduct of the swim – including Swim Rules and any nonstandard equipment to be used – must be communicated fully and clearly before the swim begins, to everyone involved in the swim attempt, and in all public promotion. The declared rules and equipment may not be changed once the swim has begun.



Independent Observation

Independent and knowledgeable observers must document the facts of the swim and verify the swimmer's adherence to the Swim Rules.

Swim Rules

This section defines standard MSF Swim Rules for a one-way solo swim (Point A to Point B). Standard rules for multi-leg swims, circumnavigation swims, relay swims, and stage swims are defined in the MSF Rules Supplement.

Individual swimmers or local governing bodies may adopt MSF Swim Rules in full, as shorthand for "standard conduct." Or, they may adapt the rules to local circumstances, as long as two conditions are met:

1. Any modifications of standard swim conduct are declared.
2. The modifications do not violate the spirit of unassisted marathon swimming.

The declared Swim Rules must be read aloud by the observer in the presence of the swimmer and all support personnel before the swim begins.

Start & Finish

The swim begins when the swimmer enters the water from a natural shore. If geographic obstacles (e.g., cliffs) prevent the swimmer from clearing the water at the start, the swimmer may begin the swim by touching and releasing from part of the natural shore (e.g., cliff face).

The swim finishes when the swimmer clears the water on a natural shore, beyond which there is no navigable water. If geographic obstacles prevent the swimmer from clearing the water at the finish, the swimmer may finish by touching part of the natural shore.

Physical Contact

The swimmer may not make intentional supportive contact with any vessel, object, or support personnel at any time during the swim.

Standard Equipment

The swimmer may wear a single textile swimsuit with standard coverage, one latex or silicone cap, goggles, ear plugs, nose clips, and may grease the body. The swimmer may not use any additional equipment that benefits speed, buoyancy, endurance, or heat retention.

Drafting



The swimmer may not intentionally draft behind any escort vessel or support swimmer. The swimmer may swim alongside an escort vessel, but may not intentionally position him or herself inside the vessel's bow and displacement waves, except while feeding.

Support Swimmers

A support swimmer (or swimmers) may accompany the solo swimmer for a limited duration. Multiple support swims are allowed, but should not occur consecutively. The MSF recommends a maximum of one hour per support swim and a minimum of one hour between support swims.

The support swimmer may not intentionally touch the solo swimmer and must position him or herself at least slightly behind the solo swimmer.

Authority on the Escort Vessel

The observer is responsible for documenting the facts of the swim, interpreting the swim rules, and keeping the official time.

The pilot of the escort vessel (or lead pilot, if there are multiple vessels) is the ultimate authority in all other matters. (S)he may cancel the swim at any time, for any reason. The pilot is responsible for following all relevant local maritime regulations.

Responsible Environmental Stewardship

Everyone involved in the swim attempt – swimmer, observer, support personnel, and escort boat personnel – must treat the environment respectfully and prevent avoidable harm to marine wildlife and ecosystems.

Continuance of the Spirit of Marathon Swimming

If any issue regarding swim conduct arises that the Swim Rules do not clearly address, the swimmer should act – and the observer should judge – in accordance with the spirit of unassisted marathon swimming.

Using MSF Rules For Your Swim

The MSF Rules of Marathon Swimming are licensed through Creative Commons, and may be used or adapted by individual swimmers or local sanctioning bodies according to the following guidelines:

- The Swim Rules section (and only that section) is subject to an [Attribution 4.0 International license](#). You may create adaptations of the MSF Swim Rules,



provided you attribute the [Marathon Swimmers Federation](#) as the source.

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End Notes

Linked Documents

- [Rules Supplement](#) (including Special Swim Types)
- [Endorsements](#): Marathon swimmers and organizations who endorse MSF Rules
- [Press Release](#) for launch of MSF Rules

Rules of Marathon Swimming – Supplement

Special Swim Types

Certain types of swims require additions or modifications to the standard rules for a one-way swim (Point A to Point B). Swimmers and observers should incorporate the indented portions below into their declared Swim Rules, as appropriate.

Multi-Leg Swims

A multi-leg swim is a swim that reaches one or more intermediate destinations (shores) before the final destination.

The simplest form of a multi-leg swim is a two-way (“double”) channel crossing – a swim from one shore to a different, non-contiguous shore, and then returning to the first shore.

However, a multi-leg swim need not return to the original shore. For example, a swim from Island A to Island B to Island C is also a multi-leg swim, with Island A to Island B as “Leg 1” and Island B to Island C as “Leg 2.”

For a multi-leg swim, add the following two rules:

1. After finishing one leg of the swim, the swimmer may rest for up to 10 minutes before beginning the next leg. While resting, the swimmer may be supported by a natural land mass but not by people or artificial objects.
2. Timing of the first leg begins when the swimmer enters the water and ends when the swimmer finishes the leg. Timing of subsequent legs begins at the end of the previous leg and includes any break on shore.



Circumnavigation Swims

A circumnavigation swim is a swim around an island (or islands). For a circumnavigation swim, replace the standard Rule #1 (Start & Finish) with the following:

The swim begins when the swimmer enters the water from the island's shore. If no beach is available on the island, the swimmer may begin the swim by touching and releasing from part of the island's shore (e.g., cliff face).

The swim finishes when the swimmer swims around the island and then clears the water beyond the starting point (or touches the island's shore beyond the starting point, if no beach is available).

If access to the island is restricted, the swimmer may start and finish offshore, as long as (s)he "closes the loop" by swimming beyond the starting point, as measured by GPS.

Relay Swims

A swim undertaken by a team of two or more swimmers, swimming in successive turns of a fixed time interval, in a fixed order.

For a relay swim, add the following two rules:

1. Relay teams may choose the number of swimmers (six is standard) and the turn interval (one hour is standard), but the team roster, order, and interval must remain fixed for the duration of the swim.
2. The swimmer exchange takes place in the water, with the new swimmer approaching the previous swimmer from behind. The swimmers are allowed five minutes to complete the exchange, starting from the scheduled exchange time.

Stage Swims

A stage swim consists of two or more "stages," between which the swimmer rests on shore or on an escort vessel.

For a stage swim, add the following two rules:

Each stage after the first should begin at or behind the finish location of the previous stage.



If the resting location is in open water, the observer must record the GPS coordinates of the stage start and finish locations.

Local Rule Variations in Marathon Swimming

Rules in marathon swimming date to 1927, when the newly-formed Channel Swimming Association wrote its first regulations for English Channel swims. CSA rules (often known as “Channel Rules”) are the basis for most contemporary marathon swimming rules and standards.

Local adaptations of Channel Rules have produced many slight variations on the original. In the absence of a global governing body with global rules, this has sometimes produced confusion about which rules are truly fundamental, and which are open to local modification.

Interestingly, even the “original” Channel Rules are written as local guidelines, not global guidelines. For example, CSA Rules state that after finishing the first leg of a two-way crossing, “Walking 200m along the shoreline to Cap Gris Nez is not permissible.”

The MSF believes there is a fundamental “spirit” shared by the many variations on Channel Rules, and it aims to codify this global spirit while remaining flexible to local adaptations. The MSF also recognizes existing well-established local marathon swimming rules as legitimate adaptations of the global spirit of the sport.

MSF Rules do not invalidate existing local adaptations. Nor should existing local variations necessarily be applied globally.



WOWSA 23.0 – Wetsuit Recommendations

WOWSA incorporates the USA Triathlon recommendations on use of wetsuits in open water swims.

The matrix below includes the range of water temperatures and conditions recommended to race directors.