KEEP IT SIMPLE!

3 Steps for Judging the Backstroke to Breaststroke Turn

By Gary Matyko

Many officials, both new and experienced, express some level of frustration with judging the Individual Medley, specifically the Backstroke to Breaststroke exchange. Concerns include not knowing in advance which hand will touch the wall or how the swimmer will execute the turn.

Individual Medley turns are best judged from the end wall, not from the side of the pool. In dual meets or invitational meets with limited numbers of officials, after the start, the Referee and Starter should move to the starting end wall, in a position to observe an equal number of lanes if possible.

Rule 2-2-6-d-2 states "The turns when changing from one stroke to another shall conform to the finish rules for the stroke just completed, and shall be as follows:"

For the Backstroke to Breaststroke exchange, the requirements are:

1. The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back (same as a Backstroke finish)
2. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner
3. The shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall
4. The prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke

(Note that requirements 3 and 4 are the same as those for a Breaststroke turn)

Therefore, when observing the transition from Backstroke to Breaststroke:

1. **Be in the proper position, observe from the end wall**
2. **Observe a Backstroke finish, ending when the swimmer touches the wall**
3. **Observe a Breaststroke turn, starting when the feet leave the wall**

After the Backstroker's hand touches the wall your responsibilities end until the swimmer's feet leave the wall to start the Breaststroke, as the swimmer may turn in any manner. How the swimmer executes the Backstroke to Breaststroke turn (i.e., the technique used after the touch and before the feet leave the wall) is the responsibility of the swimmer and the coach and not relevant to your responsibilities as an official.

Hopefully this approach helps those officials that may be intimidated by the Back to Breast transition turn. **Just Keep it Simple!**

About The Author: Gary Matyko is currently Director of Operations and a charter member of CSOA. Gary has been officiating high school swimming and diving in Pennsylvania since 1983 and college swimming since 1987. Gary has served as Meet Referee for the following championship meets: Big East Conference, American Athletic Conference, East Coast Athletic Conference, and University Athletic Association.

A 1974 Engineering graduate of Virginia Tech, Gary was Team Captain and school record holder in the 200 and 500 Free and 400 Medley, 400 Free, and 800 Free Relays. Before retiring in 2015, Gary spent 41 years in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program in Engineering and Management with Westinghouse and Bechtel.