

Changes to the rules regarding body position in the Freestyle leg of the Individual Medley and Medley Relay

By: Jay Thomas – Chairman, USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee.

At the General Congress in Budapest, Hungary – FINA changed its rules regarding Medley swimming. At the 2017 USA Swimming House of Delegates meeting, we adopted language to conform with the new FINA rule. Please see the link below for the new rule language.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/governance/lsc-managementdocuments/interpretations-legislation-bylaws/medley-rules-change-eff092117.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

Questions have arisen regarding “what is the definition of to the breast”. Very simply, a position to the breast means that the shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast. In the context of this rule – a swimmer must return to the breast before any stroke or kick.

1. Question: What if the legs are in a position toward the back?

Answer: Body position is measured relating to the shoulder position. Provided that the shoulders were at or past vertical toward the breast - the swimmer would be legal.

2. Question: Does a swimmer’s shoulders have to be level with the surface of the water before any stroke or kick?

Answer: NO – the shoulders simply must be at or past vertical toward the breast prior to any stroke or kick. There is no concept of “horizontal plane” in this rule.

3. Question: What if the swimmer’s shoulders are in a position toward the back and the body is undulating prior to returning toward the breast – is that legal?

Answer: This is a judgement decision by the official. The difference between a legal undulation and an illegal kick (while in a position toward the back) is very difficult to judge. When in doubt, the benefit of the doubt should go to the swimmer.

4. Question: Does this rule apply to the Individual Medley **AND** the Medley Relay?

Answer: This rule applies to the Freestyle leg of the Individual Medley **AND** the Medley Relay.

5. Question: Does this rule apply to the Breaststroke to Freestyle transition or just the intermediate turns in the Individual Medley and Medley Relay.

Answer: This rule applies to the transitional turn from Breaststroke to Freestyle as well as the intermediate turns during the Freestyle leg of the Individual Medley or Medley Relay.

As always, any questions that arise should first be directed to your LSC Official’s Committee.