

**Backstroke Finish Interpretation**  
**March 19, 2025**

**67. Approaching the finish of the backstroke, a swimmer likes to submerge themselves completely underwater when coming into the finish past the flags, as they know that it will allow him to achieve a faster finish. Is this legal?**

Recommended Resolution: Yes, if the swimmer is determined to be reaching for the finish. The rule states: "Once some part of the swimmer's head has passed the 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards) immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch." Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

**68. While approaching the finish of the 100 long course meter backstroke, a swimmer submerges once their head has passed the 5 meter mark. Then, they run out of air, and resurface, and kick into the wall without taking an additional stroke. Is this legal?**

Recommended resolution: Yes, this is legal. The rule states, "Immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch." Because the athlete reached for the wall, then kicked into the wall **without taking an additional stroke**, they have resubmerged after their head crossed the 5 meter mark, and immediately prior to reaching for the finish. Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

Reference: Stroke and Turn Situations and Resolutions

<https://websitedevsa.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/officialdocuments/officials-training-resources/situations-and-resolutions/situations-and-resolutions-stroke-and-turn.pdf>

# Backstroke Finishes

*From Derek Paul*

We've also heard from a number of officials about what they're seeing on deck regarding the new backstroke finish language of Rule 101.4.2 (page 24 USA Swimming 2024 Rulebook). Thanks for letting us know what you are seeing. If you have any questions or concerns about this change, please do not hesitate to reach out to your LSC Officials' Chair, who will coordinate education efforts through the NOC and R&R Committees.

A few things to remember about the new language of 101.4.2:

1. USA Swimming made changes to its rule 101.4.2 in response to AQUA changing its Swimming Rule 6.3.
2. All changes to 101.4.2 are contained within its final sentence. "Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch."
3. In order to be completely submerged at the end of the race, a swimmer must be at or past the point in the race in which 1) "some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards)" AND 2) the swimmer is "immediately prior to [the act of] reaching for the finish".
  - The language requires both parts 1) and 2) to be satisfied.
  - The language is permissive ("the swimmer may be completely submerged"), not mandatory.
  - The timing component ("immediately prior to") in part 2) is determined in relation to when the swimmer starts "reaching for the finish", not when the athlete touches the finishing wall.
  - A swimmer may kick while completely submerged.

Reference: Newsletter from Dec 2023