

Position Statement Regarding the Use of Tape in Swimming Competitions

SWIM ENGLAND /BRITISH SWIMMING MEDICAL COMMITTEE

The use of tape by medical and allied health professionals to support the injured joints and muscles of athletes has been in common practice for decades. Improvements to the athletes' support team means medical care is more readily available. A rising number of incidents where swimmers have requested to use tape during competition has prompted this position statement. The use of tape for medical reasons is accepted across other aquatics disciplines but not in swimming.

Swimming events under the jurisdiction Swim England or British Swimming take place in accordance with FINA law. FINA rule SW10.8 states *“Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by the FINA Sport Medicine Committee.”*

As SE/BS events will never have a member of the FINA Sports Medicine Committee (SMC) present and it is impractical for every member federation to refer each case to the FINA SMC, in applying the rules, the competition Referee currently has no choice but to prevent the use of tape or subsequently disqualify the athlete. This does not permit the inferred caveat in the rules that, in some clinical circumstances, the use of tape would be acceptable during swimming events.

The roles of the Referee include that 1) competition takes place in accordance with the rules, 2) no athlete has an unfair advantage, and 3) the health and well-being of the athlete is protected. The lack of a workable mechanism to approve appropriate tape usage could compromise the well-being of the athlete.

The SE/BS Medical Committee generally discourages the use of tape during competition. They are assured, however, that on both practical and scientific grounds **the use of tape for medical reasons does not confer any performance or unfair advantage.**

We, therefore, recommend that any swimmer wishing to use tape during competition

1. Presents themselves to the Referee before the start of their event.
2. Demonstrates the extent and location of the tape applied.
3. Provides written confirmation from a healthcare professional (eg. Doctor or Physiotherapist) or a Certificate of Exception
4. The Referee should then reassure his/herself that the taping is
 - a. appropriate (e.g. located to the joint / muscle / finger in question)
 - b. not excessive (e.g. does not cover the whole limb or hand, typically a maximum of two digits might be taped) and
 - c. discrete (e.g. ideally be flesh / neutral coloured)
5. The Referee may then allow the athlete to compete within these practical criteria.
6. The decision of the Referee remains final and binding.

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Chairman, ASA/ BS Medical committee March 2014