



1 Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909-5770

o 719.866.4578
f 719.866.4669

Jay Thomas
301 SW 63rd Terrace
Plantation, FL 33317

c 954-873-3370
c 888-782-4091
jaythomas@gmail.com

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To: Board of Directors, USA Swimming
General Chairs USA Swimming National Team Staff
Officials Chairs USA Swimming Officials
Rules & Regulations Committee USA Swimming Coach Members

From: Jay Thomas, Chair, Rules & Regulations Committee

Re: Open Water – Wetsuit Legality - Questions and Answers

1. On January 11, 2017, FINA Office a Memorandum changing the FINA Bylaws which govern swimwear in Open Water competitions. This change permits the use of wetsuits when water temperature is between 20°C and 18°C, and requires the use of wetsuits when the water temperature is below 18°C.
2. After consultation with FINA Approval Commission President - Jan-Anders Manson, the following guidance is provided regarding wetsuits for Open Water competition.

Coverage - The FINA Memorandum of 11 January 2017 includes this statement:

“The wetsuits should meet minimum requirements for coverage - wetsuit must completely cover torso, back, shoulders and knees, and shall not extend beyond the neck, wrists and ankles. In addition, the outer surface of the used wetsuits shall not include outstanding shapes, such as ridges, fins etc.”

General Notes: There may be no external applications in the design of the suit such as ridges, fins, channels or external shapes. This applies to all areas of the suit – torso, arms or legs.

- A. Question: What is the definition of covering the shoulder?** The wetsuit material must extend over the top of the shoulder joint and extend down the arm. A “Farmer John” or sleeveless cut suit would not be compliant with the rules.
- B. Question: Is a suit legal where the forearm area has a material with ridges, ribs, bumps, fins or other external raised application which is designed to catch the water?** No there may be no such external applications to the suit. Additionally, there may be so such shapes or features incorporated in the manufacturing of the suit.
- C. Question: Is a suit legal where the forearm area has a different wetsuit material or water permeable area that has no external raised application which is designed to provide better “feel for the water”?** Yes

D. Question: May a suit with an illegal design in the forearm or lower leg area be made legal by removing the offending part of the wet suit – may the suit be modified? Arms -Yes – provided enough material is left to cover each shoulder. **Legs** – Yes – provided enough material is left to cover the knee.

E. Question: May a suit with a legal design regarding coverage of the arms and legs, be modified by shortening the suit coverage in those areas? Arms -Yes – provided enough material is left to cover each shoulder. **Legs** – Yes – provided enough material is left to cover the knee.

Thickness - The thickness of wetsuit material shall be a minimum of 3mm and maximum of 5mm. The minimum material thickness value may be reduced in limited specific areas, if such is functionally justified to allow free swimmer's movements. Provided that the torso and back area are a minimum of 3mm thick, the following areas may be thinner material – no minimum value is specified:

- a. Neck
- b. Shoulders
- c. Arms
- d. Upper leg
- e. Lower leg

Advertising – USA Swimming will not enforce the provisions of rule 102.8.3.A(1) regarding limitations on manufacturers logos on wetsuits for 2017.



Jay Thomas

Chair, USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee