



## **2018-19 Synchro Swim Ontario Rule Changes – August Update**

**SENT TO:** All Club Presidents, Head Coaches, and Registrars (with CC to OOC & SSO Board)

**DATE:** August 21, 2018

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### **Introduction**

Dear Synchro Swim Ontario members,

As you are all aware, Synchro Swim Ontario has a number of initiatives underway for the 2018-19 season, including aligning our programs with Synchro Canada's decision to move to a single competitive stream, and as a result of our own provincial initiative to better map out the competition calendar to support athlete development.

SSO has been hard at work to identify provincial rule changes that will be required to support the new structure and to review Synchro Canada rule changes that impact our athletes. SSO rule change submissions were due at the end of July and a review of these submissions is currently underway by the Rules Committee. The committee chose to begin with a review of those rules that mark a significant change for the coming season and will continue to look at less-impactful rules in the coming days and weeks.

To give the clubs as much lead time as possible to plan programming, SSO has outlined the significant changes below (with final wording to be released with the new rulebooks).

### **Planned Ontario Addendum to CASSA Rulebook**

The new 2018-19 provincial rulebook will be adapted to more closely align with the Canadian Artistic Swimming/CASSA rules. Rather than a separate stand-alone rulebook, SSO will be adopting the CASSA rulebook as the primary rules governing competitions, and will then create an Ontario 'addendum' that will outline:

- a) Rules specific to Ontario competitions, which CASSA does not address; and
- b) Rules that CASSA addresses, but which Ontario will deviate from at provincially-held meets.

This means that all duplication between rulebooks will be eliminated, and it is hoped that this new system will make it easier for all members to find/reference rules. *Please note that this process cannot be fully completed until the release of the final CASSA rulebook, anticipated in September 2018.*

## MAJOR 2018-19 ONTARIO RULE CHANGES:

### #1. Team Make-up (Blended Teams)

- Ontario will continue to allow blended teams and duets/trios as per current SSO rules (i.e. an athlete may swim up OR down an age group)
- The age of the team will continue to be determined by average age as per current SSO rules
- **HOWEVER, all athletes on a team or duet/trio will compete in the SAME FIGURE EVENT** (e.g. if the average age of the team is 13-15, ALL team members must compete in 13-15 figures)
- If an athlete swims routines in multiple age groups (e.g. is on an 11-12 duet and a 13-15 team) the athlete must attend the appropriate competitions for the age group of the routine and must compete in all figure events required for those routines, to a maximum of 2 figure events at a given competition.
- **National stream rules:** If a team or duet/trio wishes to be eligible to continue on to National events, the routine MUST follow CASSA rules (i.e. an athlete may swim up an age group but may NOT swim down an age group)
- **Changes to team make-up during the season:** Note that the age group the routine competes in for the season will be finalized as of the **first routine meet entered** (either January routine meet, Leslie Taylor Ontario Cup, or Trilliums Regionals). After the first routine meet is entered, the routine's age stream does not change for the remainder of the season (even if team make-up is modified). Exceptions to this will be as per Jury of Appeal approval only.
- **Stand-alone figures:** At provincially-held competitions, an athlete who swims up or down in the team routine may still opt to enter their own age-eligible figure event if they choose (i.e. there will be no restrictions on 'stand-alone' figures).
- **Swimming down/exhibition:** Any athlete who swims down an age group for team or duet/trio will need to enter the relevant figure event for the routine; these swimmers will be marked as 'exhibition' and will be eligible for duplicate awards.
- **Competitive pathway:** Athletes must follow the competitive pathway of the routines they compete on (example: an athlete who is synchro age 12, but who swims on a 13-15 team, would follow the competitive pathway and attend the meets for 13-15 team; if the athlete also wishes to swim an 11-12 duet/trio they would also need to attend the required meets for the 11-12 age group).

### Rationale

- SSO has undertaken the above change to team make-up to allow for the transition to the new competitive structure, wherein different age groups will attend different competitions; this rule change eliminates the need for additional figure events at competitions which would not normally require them, while maintaining the needed flexibility for clubs to create blended-age teams
- This rule change aligns more closely to CASSA rules wherein athletes compete the same figures as their team age
- The change will eliminate the need for a routine coach to train multiple figure groups within a single team environment
- SSO feels strongly this solution is in the best interest of athlete development, as those athletes who are strong enough to swim up an age group in routine will be exposed to higher-level figures, and only those athletes strong enough to compete in extra routines will be

required to compete multiple sets of figures (the above rule also ensures that athletes may still compete and be successful in their own age-eligible figures event if they choose)

## **#2. 16-20 Rules / Technical Routine Requirement**

- In order to better align with CASSA, SSO will be removing the 16-20 age category. Athletes will now fall under the CASSA definitions of Junior (synchro age 15-18) or Senior (synchro age 15+)
- In order to qualify for entry into the Free Routine event (team/duet/solo), athletes must follow CASSA rules **requiring entry into each appropriate Technical Routine event**
- As with CASSA, athletes may choose to enter only the Technical Routine event (but may NOT choose to enter only the Free Routine event)

### **Rationale**

- Following the FINA and Synchro Canada change from Junior figures to Junior Technical events, SSO conducted a pilot in 2017-18 requiring a minimum of one Technical event entry. With the move towards a single competitive pathway, SSO has chosen to align more closely with CASSA for the 2018-19 season and require entry into the respective Technical Routine event for each Free Routine event.
- Mandatory Technical Routine entry more closely mirrors the requirement for figures in other age groups, and emphasizes the importance of skill development across the competitive pathway.
- The closer mirroring of Nationally-held events also gives more Ontario athletes the opportunity to move on to National events (pending qualification), while retaining the flexibility to compete in only the Technical Routine if the club/athlete chooses.