2026-2028 Senior National Team Final Squad Selection Criteria

Olympic Squad Trials

May 1-3, 2026

Objective:

The Phase 8 - 2026-2028 Senior National Team Final Squad Selection Process aims to select as few as twelve (12) and no more than sixteen (16) athletes, from a squad of up to 30 athletes. Athletes selected to this squad will commence full-time training in preparation for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, CA immediately following the conclusion of the Selection event. The evaluations outlined in this document aim to score and rank all participants through a series of tests relevant to elite Artistic Swimming.

The objective is to identify athletes who possess the necessary skills to achieve a high level of success in all Olympic events (Team Technical, Team Free, Team Acrobatic, Duet Technical, Duet Free).

The ideal selected roster size will consist of 12 athletes, including at least two (2) athletes identified as flyers. Athletes will be ranked using tests 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 & 8. The Artistic Swimming Manual will serve as the scoring system to rank athletes within each test. Tests 2 & 4 will only be used for discretionary selection (see below).

The final number of athletes selected may or may not be expanded to include up to 16 athletes at the discretion of the Chief of Sport & SNT Head Coach.

Eligibility:

This selection process is open exclusively to members of the Senior National Training Squad who have progressed from Phases 1, 5, and/or 7.

Selection Panel:

During Phase 8 of the selection process, athletes will be evaluated on specific tryout content by the following panel of evaluators:

- Two Senior National Team coaches, including the Senior Head Coach and a Senior Assistant Coach, appointed by the Chief of Sport (COS)
- The Chief of Sport (or designee) – Lara Teixeira
- Two additional panelists, AQUA judges – Erin King & Kim Kohut

Scores from each evaluator will be tallied by the Chief of Sport, the Vice President of Olympic International (or designee), and a 10-year athlete representative appointed by the USAAS Athlete Executive Council. The Vice President of Olympic International (or designee) and the Athlete Representative will ensure compliance but will not serve as evaluators.

Athletes will be ranked based on their total scores, which will be used in conjunction with discretionary criteria (if applicable), to determine the athletes selected to the training squad.

Objective Criteria:

The selection process will evaluate athletes based on their artistic swimming performance and will utilize the AQUA AS Manual scoring system.

Athletes will perform Tests 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 and will be scored by the Selection Panel as described above. The combined scores from these tests will produce a ranking of the athletes. The final number of selected athletes may or may not be expanded from 12 to a maximum of 16 athletes under the circumstances explained in the discretionary criteria.

Discretionary Criteria:

Discretion may be used in the following scenarios:

1. **Squad Size:** Once the top 12 athletes have been identified based on total score, the SNT Head Coach and Chief of Sport may use the discretionary criteria outlined below to select up to four (4) additional athletes. This may include athlete(s) who successfully petitioned per the USAAS Petition Procedures (see Appendix B).

   Since the sport of artistic swimming is a subjectively judged event, it may not be possible to make selection decisions based solely on objective criteria. To be competitive in the team and duet events, certain skillsets must be exhibited by one or more team/duet members. In addition, it is crucial that the athletes demonstrate the ability to complement each other, to work cohesively, and to make and retain corrections consistently.

   In determining whether to select additional athletes, the SNT Head Coach & Chief of Sport will consider the needs of the program from a holistic standpoint. Specifically, the SNT Head Coach & Chief of Sport will consider the following factors:

   - The athlete's demonstrated pattern of growth and past international competition experience during the last two years.
   - The athlete's interview and observations (see Test 2).
   - The athlete's placement on individual evaluations (see Tests 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8).
   - The strengths and areas of opportunity within the top 12 ranked athletes who are selected via the Objective Criteria.

2. **Flyer Assessment:** Once the top 12 ranked athletes have been identified based on the tallied Objective Criteria from Days 1-3, up to two (2) flyers will be added to the squad if two (2) flyers are not selected via Objective Criteria. In this case, the highest-ranked flyer(s) based on the total score from Days 1-3, who passed all skills listed in Test 4, will be selected until two (2) flyers are on the roster.
   a. Once two (2) flyers are on the roster, additional flyers may be added through the Squad Size discretionary criteria described above.

3. **<u>Tiebreaker:</u>** If two (2) or more athletes have a total score from Days 1-3 that are within 0.1 of each other, they will be considered tied. In this case, the Squad Size discretionary criteria outlined above will be used to determine which of the tied athletes will be ranked in the top 12.

    a. For example, if athletes ranked 11, 12 and 13 are all within 0.1 of each other, Squad Size discretionary criteria will be used to determine which of these athletes are selected to the squad in spots 11 and 12.

The Vice President of Olympic International, along with the Athlete Representative, will be present to observe the discussions concerning the Discretionary Criteria.

Selection Process Criteria: The Selection Process Criteria will consist of three days of evaluations as follows.

Day 1: Friday, May 1

Artistic Swimming Routine & Soft Skills Assessments

Test 1 - Artistic Swimming Basics Skills Assessment

Objective: To evaluate athletes based on fundamental technical artistic swimming skills.

Criteria: Execution based on the AQUA AS Manual scoring system

Assessment:

- Athletes will perform a combination of basic skills. Test Instructions:

Lap 1: 25 meters underwater swim.

Lap 2 (synchro lap): Athletes must complete the following skills, evenly spaced throughout the lap:

- Two (2) Body Boosts (first double arm body boost, second no arms body boost)
- T9b (Double Leg Thrust), followed by an S1 (360° Spin Down)
- Two (2) Body Boosts (first double arm body boost, second no arms body boost)
- Women Duet technical element TRE 2A - Rocket Split Alternating Legs and 180° Spin Down
- Two (2) Body Boosts (first double arm body boost, second no arms body boost)
- Skills sequence code: F10 A8 RU2 F6c RU1 A4b (starting from a tabletop position)
- Two (2) Body Boosts (first double arm body boost, second no arms body boost)
- Skills sequence code: SC2 S2 (starting from a tabletop position)

All moves must be performed in the same manner as shown on the video (Video HERE)

- Skills will be performed individually, one time each, in front of the Selection Panel. The order of draw will be determined randomly.
- Athletes may perform these skills tests with goggles.
- Scoring:
    - Evaluators will score the execution of the following:
        - T9b followed by 360° spin down (S1)
        - Technical Duet TRE 2A- Rocket split alternating legs and 180° spin down
        - Skills sequence: F10 A8 RU2 F6c RU1 A4b
        - Skills sequence: SC2 S2
    - The degree of difficulty for each element (TRE & hybrid skills) will be used to calculate each athlete's final score.
    - Base Marks for each element will be recorded, and a penalty of 0.5 points will be deducted for each skill recorded as a Base Mark.
    - A 0.5 point deduction will also be applied for:
        - Each body boost below 5.0 height on the AQUA height chart
        - Each body boost that deviates from the instructions (with or without arms).
        - Each body boost and/or TRE that is omitted from the sequence

- The AQUA Routine Factoring Chart (Women Duet Tech and Senior Team Tech) will be applied to this test.

Test 2 - Interview & Observation

Objective: To identify athletes who best align with the pillars of the USAAS Senior National Team culture (see Appendix A). Athletes who demonstrate emotional maturity and alignment with the team's culture will be able to contribute to the program's success in preparation for and at the 2028 Olympic Games.

Criteria: The interview and observation aim to serve as an opportunity for athletes who embody team core values such as excellence, drive, grit, positivity, honesty, and adaptability to demonstrate how they might contribute to the team culture in the lead up to the 2028 Olympic Games. The focus is on finding authentic individuals with a growth mindset to thrive in and contribute to a high-performance environment.

Additionally, observations during the three-day Selection Process, including interaction with staff members, body language, attitude, and a proactive approach will be factors in the discretionary selection process.

Assessment:

- Includes a one-on-one interview with the SNT Head Coach, Megan Abarca.
  - As part of the interview process, athletes will be required to prepare and submit two (2) copies of their athletic resume and highlights of career achievements to the Chief of Sport (lara@usaartisticswim.org) and SNT Head Coach (megan@usaartisticswim.org) via email by April 30th.
  - Athletes will be asked a series of five (5) questions focused on assessing the alignment of the athlete's mentality with the USAAS Senior National Team culture and principles (see Appendix A).
  - Particular attention will be paid to the athlete's past experiences, mentality, and communication skills. Athletes should be prepared to demonstrate how their skills and experiences will contribute to the competitive success of the program.
- The coaching staff and judges will also observe athletes' behavior, approach and attitude throughout the three-day Selection Process. Observations will include the athlete's ability to communicate and collaborate with other athletes, ability to work cohesively, and ability to consistently make and retain corrections. Factors such as interaction with coaching staff, body language, and attitude towards fellow athletes will also be taken into consideration.

The interview and observation will not be scored but will serve as an opportunity to assess the athlete's mindset while allowing athletes to engage directly with the staff.

Test 3 - Artistic Swimming Routine - Individual Technical Team Routine Assessment

Objective: To evaluate athletes based on individual Technical Team routine performance.

Criteria: Execution (TRE and Free Hybrids), Artistic Impression (Performance and Transitions). Evaluation based on standards outlined in the AQUA AS Manual, including factoring (Senior Team Technical). Accuracy of positions & counts will be assessed based on the STC (Synchronization Technical Controller) scoring system. Deductions for Synchronization errors will be the following: Small errors (-0.1) / Obvious errors (-0.5) / Major errors (-1.0).

Assessment:

- Athletes will compete in a Technical Team routine segment competition. Athletes will learn the routine prior to the Trials event (Video HERE).
- Athletes should learn the whole Technical Team program for use in Tests 3 & 6. The segment that will be used for this test will be announced on the day of the assessment. Different segments may be used for Test 3 and for Test 6.
- The Technical Team routine segment will assess athletes' execution (TRE and hybrids) as well as Artistic Impression (Performance and Transitions), in front of the panel of evaluators.
- The routine segment will be performed individually, and each athlete will swim the segment twice. Execution will be assessed during one swim, and Artistic Impression will be assessed during the other, with the athlete unaware of which is being evaluated first.
- Base Marks for the Free Hybrid will be noted for feedback purposes but will not be a part of the scoring for this test.

Test 4 - Acrobatics Assessment (Flyers only):

Objective: To identify at least two (2) well-rounded flyers who can perform a wide range of acrobatic skills.

Flyer Identification: Athletes must inform the Chief of Sport (COS) and SNT Head Coach in writing by April 30, 2026 if they wish to be evaluated as a flyer.

Prerequisites: Athletes who self-identify as flyers must demonstrate their eligibility for this assessment by providing evidence of performing in the flyer position within the past two (2) years. Submitted videos should be clearly labeled with the athlete's name, date reference, and the event/competition title in the file name (e.g. "Mariya Koroleva_3_16_2024_U.S. Senior National Championship." Videos must be submitted via email to the Chief of Sport (lara@usaartisticswim.org) and the SNT Head Coach (megan@usaartisticswim.org) by April 30, 2026.

Criteria: The assessment will follow a pass/fail system, with each flyer given two consecutive attempts to earn a pass on the required skills. A pass will be judged based on adherence to position and/or rotation guidelines as presented in the AQUA Acrobatics Catalogue.

For each of the six (6) Flyer Assessments listed below, the athlete only needs to pass one of the two attempts. If an athlete successfully passes the first attempt, they will not perform the skill a second time in order to minimize undue strain for the pusher athletes.

Pusher athletes will not be evaluated in this assessment; however, a minimum quality of construction, as determined by national team coaches, will be required for the flyer's performance to be eligible for assessment

This assessment is scored on a Pass/Fail basis. Only athletes who successfully pass all six (6) skills listed in the assessment below will be named to the flyer shortlist. Failure to pass any of the skills means that an athlete will not be named to the flyer shortlist.

Final number of athlete selection: If 2 flyers are not in the top 12 ranked athletes, the next highest-ranked flyer(s) will be added to ensure there are 2 flyers in the squad as outlined in the Flyer Assessment Discretionary Criteria above.

Assessment:

This test will be evaluated by the Chief of Sport and Senior National Team coaches designated by the Chief of Sport.

Acro Group A - Basket setup:

- **Assessment 1:** Perform a 360° backwards somersault rotation in a pike position variation
- **Assessment 2:** Perform a 360° backwards somersault rotation in a tuck position
- **Assessment 3:** Perform a 720° backward somersault rotation in a tuck position
- **Assessment 4:** Perform a straight body 360° somersault with 720° twist

Acro Group B – Stack setup:

- **Assessment 5:** Perform a Glass position in a stack construction with feet on the shoulder area of the support.

Acro Group P – Platform setup:

- **Assessment 6:** Perform a Pin position on a double ballet leg platform construction. Athletes who fail to demonstrate the correct flexibility position will receive a fail for this assessment.

At the conclusion of Day 1, athletes will be ranked based on the combined scores from Test 1 (Basic Skills Assessment) and Test 3 (Individual Technical Team Routine Assessment). The combined score and the athlete's ranking will be shared with each athlete in advance of Day 2.

Day 2: Saturday, May 2

Performance Evaluation and Team Dynamics Testing Day

Test 5 - "Show Us What You Got" Assessment

Objective: To evaluate athletes based on their performance, demonstrating artistry/artistic impression, mastery of the AQUA hybrid chart and scoring system, excellence in execution and comfortability with self-reliance when performing independently.

Criteria: Execution and Artistic Impression. Evaluation based on standards outlined in the AQUA AS Manual scoring to system and factoring as per description below.

Assessment:

- Athletes will participate in an individual assessment to showcase their strengths.
- Athletes must choreograph a routine section to perform in front of the Selection Panel. The routine section will be performed to music of the athlete's choice and should be one minute long (+/- :05). The routine section must include the following:
    - One hybrid with a degree of difficulty (DD) between 8-10 points
        - Athletes must submit a coach card for this hybrid
    - One section of transitions
    - One choreography hybrid of the athlete's choice (no DD required)
        - Submission Deadline: Athletes must submit their music and hybrid coach card via email to the Chief of Sport prior to the start of Day 2 of Trials.
- Athletes should perform in the style they feel most comfortable.
- This test will be performed individually, one time by each athlete, in front of the Selection Panel.
- Scoring:
    - Evaluators will score Elements execution, Choreography & Musicality, Performance & Transitions.
    - The declared degree of difficulty (DD) hybrid will be used to calculate the score for the hybrid.
    - The choreography hybrid will be scored as an element and subsequently calculated using the Base Mark (0.5) as the declared difficulty. The AQUA Routine Factoring Chart (Senior Team Free) will be applied to this test.
    - A 0.5 point deduction will also be applied for:
        - Every required element or part of an element that is omitted from the performance (DD hybrid, transition and choreography hybrid)
- Base Marks for the DD hybrid will be recorded for feedback purposes but will not be included in the scoring for this test.

Important Information:

At the conclusion of Test 5, the top four ranked athletes, based on the combined scores from Tests 1, 3, and 5, will form a core control group for Tests 6, 7 and 8. These four athletes will be included in all group assessments on Day 2 and Day 3 as part of the pattern formation.

- Please note that athletes in the control group have not been automatically selected to the roster. All athletes, including the four control group athletes, will participate in the tests on Day 2 and Day 3 to showcase their abilities.

Test 6 - Technical Team Group Swim

Objective: To evaluate athletes' artistic swimming skills in a team context, focusing on their ability to contribute effectively to team performance. This includes assessing execution, performance quality, spatial awareness, and synchronization deductions outlined in the AQUA AS Manual within team patterns.

Criteria: Execution (TRE and Hybrids) and Artistic Impression (Performance and Transitions) will be scored based on standards outlined in the AQUA AS Manual. Pattern accuracy (spatial awareness and positioning within team patterns) and Synchronization (ability to stay in sync with the team, matching timing and movements (deductions applied for lack of synchronization), Accuracy of positions & counts will be assessed based on the STC (Synchronization Technical Controller) scoring system. Deductions for Synchronization errors will be the following: Small errors (-0.1) / Obvious errors (-0.5) / Major errors (-1.0).

Assessment:

- Athletes will compete in a Technical Team routine segment competition. Athletes will learn the routine prior to the Trials event (Video HERE).
- Athletes should learn the whole Technical Team program for use in Tests 3 & 6, including patterns. The segment that will be used for this test will be announced on the day of the assessment. Different segments may be used for Test 3 and for Test 6. Each athlete will be individually assessed.
- The routine will be performed with eight athletes swimming in a set pattern at a time. The core control group will remain constant, while the remaining athletes will rotate in groups of four, with each group performing the routine segment once.
    - Athletes will be randomly assigned a spot in pattern and will be expected to perform the pattern changes as shown in the videos linked below. Control group athletes will remain in their assigned spots for every swim. Video HERE
- All group swims will be recorded and judging will be conducted using video footage only, so athletes will not need to swim multiple times during the evaluation. Evaluators will score each athlete by rewatching video footage and scoring one athlete at a time. Athletes in the control group will only be evaluated during the first group swim.
- Base Marks for the hybrid will be recorded for feedback purposes but will not be included in the scoring for this test.

Test 7 – Free Routine Choreography Execution I

Objective: To assess the athlete's ability to retain new information and perform when they are in an uncomfortable/high-pressure situation.

Criteria: Execution (Hybrids) and Artistic Impression. Positions and counts will be specified in the instructions from Coach Klamburg. Accuracy of positions, patterns and counts will be assessed based on the STC (Synchronization Technical Controller) scoring system. Deductions for Synchronization errors will be the following: Small errors (-0.1) / Obvious errors (-0.5) / Major errors (-1.0).

Assessment:

- Athletes will learn a new free routine segment, including pattern changes, taught by Coach Paula Klamburg onsite.
- Following a training session for preparation, athletes will perform the routine segment in front of the Selection Panel.
    - The routine will be performed with eight athletes swimming in a set pattern. Athletes will be randomly assigned a spot in pattern and will be expected to perform the pattern changes as taught by Coach Klamburg during the session. Control group athletes will remain in their assigned spots for every swim.
- The core control group will remain constant, while the remaining athletes will rotate in groups of four, with each group performing the routine segment once.
- All group swims will be recorded and judging will be conducted using video footage only, so athletes will not need to swim multiple times during the evaluation. Evaluators will score each athlete by rewatching video footage and scoring one athlete at a time. Athletes in the control group will only be evaluated during the first group swim.
- Base Marks for the hybrid will be recorded for feedback purposes but will not be included in the scoring for this test.

  At the conclusion of Day 2, athletes will be ranked based on the combined scores from Test 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7. The combined score and the athlete's ranking will be shared with each athlete in advance of Day 3.

Day 3: Sunday, May 3 - Final Component

Test 8 – Free Routine Choreography Execution II

Objective: To assess the athlete's ability to retain new information and perform when they are in an uncomfortable/high-pressure situation. This test will build on the material learned in Test 7.

Criteria: Execution (Hybrids) and Artistic Impression (Performance and Transitions) will be scored based on standards outlined in the AQUA AS Manual. Positions and counts will be specified in the instructions from Coach Klamburg. Accuracy of positions, patterns and counts will be assessed based on the STC (Synchronization Technical Controller) scoring system. Deductions for Synchronization errors will be the following: Small errors (-0.1) / Obvious errors (-0.5) / Major errors (-1.0).

Assessment:

- Test 8 will utilize the routine segment from Test 7 for evaluation, with several modifications that will be taught by Coach Paula on Day 3.
- Following a training session for preparation, athletes will perform the routine segment.
    - The routine will be performed with eight athletes swimming in a set pattern. Athletes will be randomly assigned a spot in pattern and will be expected to perform the pattern changes as taught by Coach Klamburg during the session. Control group athletes will remain in their assigned spots for every swim.
- The core control group will remain constant, while the remaining athletes will rotate in groups of four, with each group performing the routine segment once.
- All group swims will be recorded, and judging will be conducted using video footage only, so athletes will not need to swim multiple times during the evaluation. Evaluators will score each athlete by rewatching video footage and scoring one athlete at a time. Athletes in the control group will only be evaluated during the first group swim.
- Base Marks for the hybrid will be recorded for feedback purposes but will not be included in the scoring for this test.

Event Conclusion

At the conclusion of Day 3, the scores from Tests 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 will be tallied to establish a final ranking and selection order for the training squad. The top 12 ranked athletes will be selected to the squad. Up to four (4) additional athletes may be selected by the Head Coach and Chief of Sport based on the discretionary criteria outlined above.

Scores will be calculated by the Chief of Sport, the VP Olympic International, and the Athlete Representative to ensure a transparent and fair selection process. The official announcement of the athletes selected will be made on May 3, 2026. However, please note that if an athlete submits a petition per the USAAS Petition Procedures, the announcement of any additional athletes may be made at a later date.

Appendix A

USA Artistic Swimming – Senior National Team Culture

Integrity

We strive to set the standard for good sportsmanship, honorable choices, and a strong sense of our values. We strive to be champions in life, and we believe success in the pool will follow.

Drive

Our relentless commitment to maximum effort drives us toward success. We encourage each other to take risks, push comfort zones, and give our best every day.

Joy

The journey is the reward, and we aim to enjoy the process each day. We choose to approach all situations with a positive, can-do attitude, and we opt to see the opportunities rather than the downsides.

Unity

We celebrate each other's successes, support one another through highs and lows, and maintain an inclusive, empathetic environment.

Game Changers

As ambassadors of our sport, we aim to push the boundaries of the sport as we know it in order to enhance the growth of artistic swimming.

Excellence

We reject complacency and strive for excellence through hard work, intentionality, and clear goals. We aim to win each day, and we recognize the value of consistency in pursuit of mastery.

Grit

We are resilient, self-disciplined, adaptable, and persistent, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and learning.

Trust

We create an atmosphere of physical, psychological, and emotional safety, supporting one another like a family.

Appendix B

USA Artistic Swimming - Petition Procedures

- Petitions must be submitted by May 3rd at 1pm Pacific Time to be eligible for a review.

Appendix C
USA Artistic Swimming - Replacement of Athletes for the Squad

1. 2026-2028 Senior National Training Squad - If at any time, there are fewer than twelve (12) total athletes or fewer than two (2) flyer athletes in full-time training due to long-term injury, sickness, or any other unforeseen circumstance, the Chief of Sport (or designee) will have the ability to invite an athlete who participated in the Phase 8 Trials (or who successfully petitioned per the USAAS Petition Procedures) to join the Squad using the Squad Size Discretionary Criteria outlined in these procedures. Athletes may be invited until a squad of twelve (12) athletes is present for full-time training or until two (2) flyer athletes are present for full-time training.

2. 2026, 2027 and 2028 Duet Training Squad (Phases 6, 9 and 14) – If at any time a duet training squad is fewer than three (3) athletes in full-time training for any reason, the next highest ranked athlete who was not selected from the most recent Duet Selection Phase may be invited to join the duet squad. The Chief of Sport (or designee) will make the final decision regarding whether to fill the position.

3. Athlete replacement procedures for the 2027 World Championships, 2027 Pan American Games, and 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games will be included in the selection procedures for each specific competition, which will be posted on the USAAS website at least 45 days prior to the selection event.