



September 3, 2025

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION ONE: The Bayview High School coach notifies the teams in her league that backstroke ledges will be used in all meets hosted at Bayview during the coming season. However, the state association has not formally adopted the implementation of Rule 2-7-3 and has not created a state policy for use of this equipment. **RULING:** Coach's notification is invalid, and Bayview High School and other schools in the state MAY NOT use ledges until the state association has met its obligations under 2-7-3. The use of ledges should not be permitted until the state association has adopted Rule 2-7-3 and created a policy.

State Association: Well in advance of the 2025-26 swim season, the state association should communicate to all its constituents the current status of the state's action regarding 2-7-3: immediate adoption of the rule for this season along with the content of state policy with respect to use of the backstroke ledges, delay in adoption, or non-adoption of the rule.

Coaches: Before any communication to other schools is generated, coaches must ascertain from their state office that they in fact have adopted the new equipment and have provided a policy for its use.

Officials: As part of preparation for training officials, officials' organizations throughout the state must confer with the state association to determine the status of Rule 2-7-3. If the state association has adopted the rule, the state's policy should be obtained, carefully reviewed and then implemented by all officials.

<https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources:>

Backstroke Ledge FAQ

Teaching Starts Using the Backstroke Ledge

SITUATION TWO: The meet referee REQUIRES the starter, all coaches, and captains from each team to participate in a pre-meet conference prior to the start of competition. **RULING:** Correct procedure following Rule 4-2-1d. This conference is especially significant for athlete safety in meets where Rule 2-7-3 is being implemented and backstroke starting ledges are being used.

State Association: This is one of the referee's duties prior to the meet. The state association should promote the pre-meet conference as a vital way of setting the tone for the meet and making sure both/all teams are prepared to compete safely, and a fair competition setting is established.

Coaches: Coaches should be prepared to attend the pre-meet conference and address any concerns with the referee ahead of time. Make sure any concerns are addressed and clarified at the pre-meet conference.

Officials: With the implementation of backstroke ledges, the pre-meet conference is imperative. Holding the pre-meet conference early or prior to warmups will give the visiting team(s) the opportunity to practice with the ledges if they are available. All aspects of the competition facility, the events to be contested and any unique situations for the meet should be discussed. Clarify as many specifics as possible prior to the competition will help it run smoother and avoid any potential issues.

<https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>:

Sample Pre-Meet Conference Topics

SITUATION THREE: Freeport High School has a deep competition course (all lanes are a minimum of 6 feet deep) and decides to use ledges for all competitions hosted at their facility for the coming season. Their state association has determined that the use of backstroke ledges are permitted.

- (a) FHS provides no notification or other information to visiting schools that ledges will be used.
- (b) FHS has no provision for ascertaining that all visiting swimmers have been properly trained in use of ledges prior to their participation in competition.
- (c) FHS does not permit the use of the ledges during the pre-meet warm-up period.
- (d) FHS provides a brief training video regarding the proper installation and use of the ledges for all visiting swimmers at the time of the competition.

RULINGS: (a) Incorrect – depending upon state association policy, it is important that visiting schools be properly advised about the intended use of this equipment.

- (b) The matter of who is responsible to ascertain that swimmers have been properly prepared for use of this equipment should be addressed by state association policy; placement of that responsibility should occur based upon what the state office deems appropriate and most likely to accomplish athlete safety.
- (c) Incorrect. All equipment to be used during competition must also be available to all athletes during the pre-meet warmup period.
- (d) This approach could be stipulated in the state association policy; even if not, it is a wise and useful practice to provide the visiting coach(es) with a brief training video.

State Association: All of the elements addressed above should be included in the policy created by the state office when it approves the use of ledges under Rule 2-7-3.

Coaches: When scheduling meets and preparing for competition, coaches should exercise due diligence in determining whether backstroke ledges may be used at various competition sites AND should train their swimmers in the proper use of the ledges.

Officials: The role of officials in these areas of concern would appear to be minimal. Officials may become involved in any or all of these depending on how state policy is constructed.