



January 28, 2026

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: Meet management requires submission of a relay declaration document at a specified time prior to each relay event. Teams are required to provide a relay declaration of the four swimmers who will compete in each event, including designation of the leadoff swimmer. **RULING:** Correct procedure. See Rule 3-2-3, third paragraph. **COMMENT:** The designation of the four competitors is NOT the same as the entry for the event, although it is possible and acceptable to have the relay entry document also serve as the declaration document on which the four competitors are indicated.

Officials: It is preferable to have the submission deadline for the declaration as close as possible to the conduct of the actual event. Having the declaration brought to the blocks just prior to the heat is acceptable procedure. Timers/takeoff judges can quickly ascertain that each team has provided its declaration at that point, without any delay to the start of the race.

SITUATION 2: The referee disqualifies a relay team because the four swimmers did not swim in the order in which they were listed on the relay declaration. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. There is no rules requirement that swimmers must compete in a particular order, except (a) correct stroke order in medley relay and (b) leadoff swimmer must be indicated at some point by the coach – See Rule 3-2-5.

COMMENT: Listing four swimmers on a declaration or entry card does not impose a requirement that they compete in that order.

Coaches: Coaches are to be given maximum flexibility in use of their declared swimmers in a relay event, including adjusting the order during actual competition.

Officials: Once the race is started (long whistle), the official has in essence designated the leadoff swimmer by having that individual step into the water or onto the blocks. At that point, no other swimmer may trade places with the leadoff individual. See Rule 8-3-3. Otherwise, there is no requirement imposed for swimmers competing in a specific order.

SITUATION 3: In a meet in which relay entries are accomplished by submission of up to 8 names of swimmers who are eligible to compete, the Bay Hill coach submits a relay declaration card bearing the name of a swimmer not included in the original list of 8. The referee disqualifies the Bay Hill relay team in that event for using an ineligible swimmer. **RULING:** Correct procedure. Once relay entries are final, the school is limited to the 8 individuals submitted on the entry.

SITUATION 4: Two of the three judges on the panel are scoring all dives in the 4 ½ to 5 ½ range, regardless of the skill of the individual diver being scored. The diving referee temporarily suspends the competition and instructs the judges regarding the scale of points (see 9-7-2) and how it is to be applied to the dives performed. **RULING:** Appropriate action. Rule 9-6-2b requires the diving referee to review the basis and scale for awarding points. This should be done prior to the start of the diving competition but can certainly be repeated as necessary during the competition.

State Association: State associations should provide information to their schools about resources available to train diving judges. This information should also be made available to officials' organizations for their use in training the officials who will oversee diving competition.

Coaches: Coaches should recognize that successful diving programs require not only skilled athletes and capable coaches but also a cadre of trained judges who will participate in the adjudication of their competition. Coaches should recruit parents and/or school staff and direct them to their state association who can provide information and opportunity to learn and improve their judging skills.

Officials: Officials' organizations must offer adequate training to their members, who will most likely function as diving referees during competition. Utilization of NFHS education resources can provide initial information, and officials' groups must tap into actual diving competition to create on-the-job training opportunities.

NFHS Swimming and Diving Resource of the Week:

NFHS Swimming & Diving Officials Forms and Documents: <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>

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

Teaching Starts Using the Backstroke Ledge: <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>