



April 1, 2026

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: Nearing completion of the 100-yard butterfly, the referee notices that the swimmer in Lane 3 is dragging one arm across the surface of the water while the other arm is completely above the surface during the recovery. The arms are moving simultaneously but the referee disqualifies the swimmer because the two arms are in different positions in relationship to the water surface. **Ruling:** Incorrect. The requirements of the rule are met if both arms are above the surface of the water and are moving simultaneously. There is no requirement that the arms move in the same horizontal plane.

Coaches: Careful instruction of swimmers in butterfly includes emphasis upon the arm recovery being above the surface of the water, with arms moving simultaneously. Underwater recovery, especially at turns and the finish, should not occur.

Officials: Officials must carefully enforce the two elements of the arm recovery: simultaneous movement and recovery over the water. All references to arms being in the same horizontal plane were previously removed. Underwater recovery, which can assume several forms, may occur both during the race and at the turns/finish. Officials should pay special attention to such recovery especially at the finish.

SITUATION 2: 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.

SITUATION 3: The Crown Point High School coach wants his athletes to swim the medley relay in the 400-yard freestyle relay event and asks the referee to permit his leadoff swimmer to utilize a backstroke start. The referee refuses. **RULING:** Correct procedure. Rule 8-2-4a stipulates that the forward start is to be utilized in all freestyle events. The leadoff swimmer is permitted to start in the water, but a backstroke start is not permitted. (Rule 8-1 NOTE)

Coaches: While coaches may utilize freestyle events to observe performance of other strokes, they may not use times achieved in a freestyle event for any purpose other than a freestyle time.

Officials: Thorough familiarity with all the details of the starting rules is essential – see Rule 8-1 and accompanying Situations and Rulings. In a freestyle event, any stroke or combination of strokes/styles may be used and no disqualification for body position or arm/leg movement should be imposed.

SITUATION 4: The State Association has not adopted any policy regarding the use of backstroke ledges in the medley relay and backstroke events. The host school, whose competition course is more than 6 feet deep throughout, provides ledges for swimmers' use. The referee instructs the host school to remove the ledges. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** By rule, the use of ledges may occur ONLY when a State Association has adopted a formal policy governing their use within the requirements specified in Rule 2-7-3. It is expected that the policy will provide necessary details about the equipment itself as well as its use, and where necessary, specify sanctions for misuse. (2-7-3)

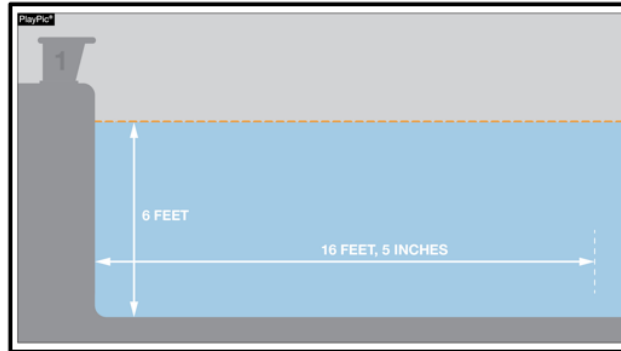
State Association: The state association should communicate to all its constituents the current status of the state's action regarding 2-7-3, and if/when adoption of this rule will occur. Officials must be instructed on such policies and trained in the appropriate procedure for making any required reports to the state office.

Coaches: Coaches must be informed of such policies and provided a timeline for backstroke ledge implementation as well as state policies regarding requirements for athlete education.

Officials: Officials must be instructed on such policies and trained in the appropriate procedure for making any required reports to the state office.

- Backstroke ledges may be used in competition by state association adoption:

- The starting end depth of the pool shall be no less than 6 feet (1.84 meters) deep, measured from the starting end wall to a minimum of 16 feet, 5 inches (5 meters) from the end wall.



NFHS Swimming and Diving Resource of the Week:

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

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

Swimming and Diving Points of Emphasis: <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>