



2025-26 NFHS SWIMMING AND DIVING RULES INTERPRETATIONS

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SITUATION 1: Meet management does not permit use of backstroke starting ledges during warm-up even though they will be available for use during competition. **RULING:** Inappropriate practice. **COMMENT:** For purposes of both athlete safety and competitive equality, it is essential that all equipment/facilities utilized during competition also be available for use during the warm-up period. (2-7-3)

SITUATION 2: The host school pool has water depth of at least 7 feet throughout the competition course. However, the host team chooses not to provide backstroke starting ledges for the competition. The visiting coach insists that the host team's medley relays and backstroke swimmers should be disqualified because of the absence of the ledges, claiming it's the host school's obligation to provide the equipment if their facility is of legal depth. **RULING:** The coach is incorrect. Just as individual swimmers may decide not to use the backstroke ledges, host schools may likewise choose not to provide ledges even though their facilities are legal. **COMMENT:** Backstroke starting ledges are optional, not required, equipment. (2-7-3d)

SITUATION 3: 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)

SITUATION 4: The day following competition, the meet referee is contacted by one of the schools to advise that a competitor participated in too many events the preceding day. The meet referee refuses to take action to change the meet results, indicating that since this is not a clerical error, the referee has no authority to alter the outcome. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. Any confusion related to the nature of errors made during or following the competition has been eliminated by removal of the term "clerical"; thus, any errors, regardless of their nature, arising from matters over which the referee has jurisdiction before/during/after the meet are correctable, subject to state association policy. (4-1-4)

SITUATION 5: In the consolation finals of the 100 freestyle, the backplate/starting wedge detached from the platform at the start, clearly affecting the start of the swimmer in that lane. The referee determines that sufficient unfairness occurred and orders all competitors in that heat to re-swim the race at a later point in the competition. **RULING:** Correct procedure. In the championship round, it would NOT be appropriate to have only the affected swimmer re-swim and then insert her/his time into the final array; at that point, head-to-head competition is essential. However, if this incident had occurred during qualifying rounds, some other type of re-swim could be appropriate. Of course, all swimmers must be given

ample rest time (25 minutes minimum) on either side of a re-swim. (4-2-2p)

SITUATION 6: The third swimmer on the 200 freestyle relay stands on the step at the back of the starting platform and develops momentum for the exchange by moving forward from that position. One foot contacts the flat surface of the top of the platform and the exchange is performed with final contact on the front edge of the platform. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** As a matter of athlete safety, all momentum on a relay exchange MUST take place on the top surface of the block. Movement is permitted from back to front of the platform; movement from the pool deck is prohibited. This prohibition should be understood to include any other location except the top surface of the platform. If a wedge is used, the requirements of Rule 8-3-4c must be followed as well. (8-3-4)

SITUATION 7: In the 200-yard medley relay event, the meet referee requires one of the team members to remove the backstroke ledge after the race is started. The team in Lane 5 fails to remove the ledge and the referee disqualifies the relay. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. **COMMENT:** The referee's instruction is appropriate and within his/her responsibilities to assure an obstacle free competition course. Ledges should be removed immediately upon completion of the start, but there is no penalty for not removing the ledge (2-7-3). Any adjustments in competition results or sanctions for not removing the ledges will need to be established by state association policy. Swimmers may designate a team member, a timer or a coach to remove the ledge in that event.

