



November 26, 2025

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

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)

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.

Coaches: When scheduling meets and preparing for competition, coaches should exercise due diligence in providing the opportunity for athletes to utilize backstroke ledges during warm-up. Similar to NFHS Suggested Meet Warm-up Procedures for forward starts, specify 2 lanes as one-way sprint lanes with racing starts permitted at the starting end of the pool. Place a cone marker or similar sign on the starting platforms in lanes not specified as one-way sprint lanes. Swimmers should not be allowed on a starting platform when a backstroke swimmer is executing a start in the same sprint lane.

SUGGESTED MEET WARM-UP PROCEDURES

It is recommended that state associations adopt warm-up procedures similar to the example provided below:

Prior to any contestants entering the water to begin warm-ups, there shall be a meeting that includes head coaches and captains from each team and officials (if available). The criteria to be reviewed should include, but is not limited to: warm-up procedure, pool environment, water depth at both ends, uniform rules, starting platforms, lane selection, emergency procedures, conference rule differences, lifeguard responsibilities and other pertinent issues. In addition, the following guidelines are recommended for warm-up procedures at all meets:

1. A designated supervisor whose sole responsibility is to observe the warm-up procedures shall be on duty prior to any contestants entering the pool/diving well and throughout the entire warm-up period.
2. Swimmers shall enter the water feet first except for starts which are limited to specified lanes.
3. Specify Lanes 2 and 5 (six-lane pool) or Lanes 2 and 7 (eight-lane pool) as one-way sprint lanes with racing starts permitted at the starting end of the pool. If applicable, backstroke ledges should be made available.
4. Place a cone marker or similar sign on the starting platforms in lanes not specified as one-way sprint lanes.
5. Specify center lanes for circle swimming (two lengths of the pool beginning at the starting end of the pool).
6. Specify the outside lanes as pace lanes (swimmers swim one or two lengths from an in-water push-off position from the starting end of the pool).
7. May specify lanes for relay practice during the last 15 minutes of the warm-up.
8. Coaches should stand at the starting end of the pool and verbally start swimmers for sprint or pace work.
9. Swimmers should not be allowed on a starting platform when a backstroke swimmer is executing a start in the same sprint lane.
10. Swimmers shall not swim in the area where the diving warm-up is occurring.
11. Pool shall be closed during the coaches' meeting.
12. Athletes should be reasonable in attire worn during warm-ups.

SITUATION 2: 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)

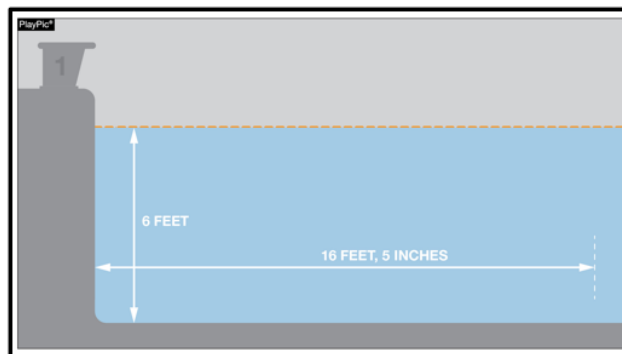
State Association: The state association should communicate to all its constituents the current status of the state's action regarding 2-7-3, and if/when adoption of this rule will occur. Officials must be instructed on such policies and trained in the appropriate procedure for making any required reports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



SITUATION 3: In the 100-yard backstroke, the feet of all swimmers are in proper position prior to the starting signal. Just after the starting signal, the swimmer in Lane 3 curls her toes over the top of the gutter and pushes off from that position. The starter/referee observe this action and, without recalling the heat, disqualify the swimmer in Lane 3 at the completion of the race. **RULING:** Correct procedure. Any foot position violations observed after the starting signal should result in disqualification; violations noted prior to the signal must be corrected by the starter/referee before activating the starting signal.

Coaches: Coaches should instruct swimmers in proper foot position for backstroke starts for all starting methods. The only time a swimmer's toes should be above the water surface is if a flat wall pad is in use that extends above the water surface.

Officials: Starter/referee must continuously observe the foot position of all swimmers using backstroke starts and delay the starting signal until all have complied with the foot position rule. The only time a swimmer would be disqualified for foot position in a backstroke start is if the swimmer moves his/her feet into an incorrect position after the starting signal is given. See 8.1.2 Situation A.

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:

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>