



March 11, 2026

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION ONE: The Washington High School coach notifies the teams in her league that backstroke ledges will be used in all meets hosted at Washington 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 Washington 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.

SITUATION TWO: In a relay event using starts from the deck, the following three situations are observed:

1. The third swimmer in Lane 2 stands two feet back from pool edge. As the second swimmer finishes, the third swimmer steps forward, left leg first and then right, and executes a two-footed takeoff.

RULING: Violation. At least one foot must be stationary at the edge of the deck when the preceding swimmer finishes.

2. The second swimmer in Lane 6 is standing with her left foot stationary at the edge of the deck. As the first swimmer touches the end wall, she moves her right leg forward and executes a two-footed takeoff. **RULING:** Legal.

3. The fourth swimmer in Lane 5 is standing with her left foot at the edge of the deck and her right leg extended behind her. As the incoming swimmer approaches, she moves her right leg several times to

achieve a comfortable position and finally takes off from her left foot only as the third swimmer finishes. **RULING:** Legal. **COMMENT:** The new rule requires only one foot be in a stationary position at the edge of the deck while the incoming swimmer is approaching her/his finish. Movement of the other leg is permissible prior to and after the finish of the incoming swimmer.

Coaches: Coaches must remind their swimmers that the relay takeoff rule is different for a deck start. Movement that is permitted when using starting platforms is NOT permitted for a deck start.

Officials: Officials must be carefully attentive to what subsequent swimmers are doing as they prepare for each exchange. The new rule greatly simplifies this process in that now the only requirement is to have one foot stationary at the edge of the deck when the preceding swimmer finishes. Other body movements are now irrelevant.

SITUATION THREE: Franklin 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) Franklin provides no notification or other information to visiting schools that ledges will be used.
- (b) Franklin has no provision for ascertaining that all visiting swimmers have been properly trained in use of ledges prior to their participation in competition.
- (c) Franklin does not permit the use of the ledges during the pre-meet warm-up period.
- (d) Franklin 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.

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>

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