



March 25, 2026

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: Ledges are installed such that the device can be placed more than 4 cm below the water surface.

Ruling: Incorrect; Rule 2-7-3b(1) requires that the ledge be installed within the range of 4 cm above to 4 cm below the water surface.

State Association: Instructions regarding proper installation of backstroke starting ledges should be included in the state association policy governing use of the ledges.

Coaches: Instruct swimmers as to the correct installation of ledges according to Rule 2-7-3 and/or state association policy.

Officials: Officials are not expected to carry measuring devices and perform inspection, provided devices appear to be within the range required by the rule. The metric dimension is approximately the equivalent of 1 ½ inches; officials should utilize an estimate to ascertain whether the ledges are properly installed and should not delay the start of the event unless the ledge is noticeably outside the stipulated range.

SITUATION 2: The state association announces the state championships will be held at the facility of the state university located in the same city as the state association office, and that facility utilizes electronic relay takeoff judging pads. The state swimming administrator advises the meet referee and designated timing system operator for the meet that they will be responsible for ascertaining the technical information necessary to use the RJPs appropriately in the upcoming state championships.

Ruling: Appropriate action. There are various RJP systems available, and operational aspects vary from one system to another. Meet officials must be thoroughly familiar with those aspects in order to utilize the information derived from the RJPs in a fair and appropriate and accurate manner.

State Association: State associations must be confident that equipment used in the state championships is utilized correctly and appropriately, by whatever means that can be accomplished. Likewise, meet hosts using RJPs should provide information to teams/coaches in advance of the meet to assure such equipment is used effectively.

Coaches: Coaches should be aware of the pending use of RJPs and instruct their swimmers in proper relay starts.

Officials: It is important to be aware that some RJPs register vertical pressure on the top surface of the starting platform, while others measure horizontal pressure at the front edge of the platform. In either instance, it is possible that data can be affected by other sources of contact with the platform/RJP, such as might occur from other relay team members surrounding the platform. Therefore, it is essential that officials (starter/referee, lane timers/judges) monitor the presence of other relay team members and remind them to refrain from coming in contact with the platform during the race but prior to their start. The meet referee, in consultation with the state association, prior to the meet will establish what protocols will be used to disqualify a team for an exchange violation, including a timely and time-sensitive procedure for acquiring and utilizing RJP data.

SITUATION 3: At a conference championship meet where relay takeoff judging pads (RJPs) are being used, meet management has indicated that the RJP data will only be used to confirm or overturn human-judge-initiated/dual confirmed exchange violation calls; no violation will be initiated solely by use of the RJPs. **RULING:** Acceptable procedure. The procedures described in NFHS Rules Book, Appendix D, are not REQUIRED; state associations are free to use this technology in other ways.

State Association: In order to have statewide uniformity for all competitions, the association may wish to determine a protocol that will apply to all high school competition in the state. Associations may want to utilize the Appendix D protocol or some other method, such as that described in this rule interpretation.

Officials: Irrespective of the RJP technology, officials designated to observe relay exchanges and possible violations MUST maintain a written record of their observations. Dual human confirmation is always preferred (Rule 4-6-2). Meet officials will follow the protocol designated by the state association or meet management. The meet referee should establish an efficient procedure for utilizing the RJP data and for confirming or overturning early takeoffs.

NFHS Swimming and Diving Resource of the Week:

Swimming and Diving Comments on the Rules: <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>

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

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