



April 8, 2026

## NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

**SITUATION 1:** Attempting to defend its previous two state championships, Whisperwood High School is going for a resounding “three-peat.” During the course of the competition, Whisperwood High School swimmers are observed doing the following at the conclusion of several individual or relay events: (a) taunting swimmers on other teams; (b) throwing caps/goggles; (c) sitting/standing on lane lines; (d) splashing water at teammates in adjoining lanes. How should meet officials respond? **RULING:** Enthusiastic celebration of athletic success is definitely a part of education-based high school athletics, and it should be permitted to the greatest extent possible without running afoul of important rules limitations.

- (a) Taunting in any form is a clear violation of NFHS Rule 3-6-1a. It should not be tolerated and is to be penalized by removal of the offender from the remainder of the meet (3-6-1 PENALTY).
- (b) Some instances of throwing caps/goggles do not warrant sanction, but if the items, for example, strike another swimmer who is finishing his/her race, this would constitute interference; the offender should be disqualified from the event (See Rule 3-6-2c). If the throwing of caps/goggles were accompanied by verbal outburst a disqualification could be warranted.
- (c) Sitting/standing on lane lines could range from almost inconsequential to severe interference or disruption of competition. Athletes who do this should immediately be instructed to cease and get off the line; response to such instructions, damage to equipment that disrupts the meet, or interference with another competitor could all warrant sanctions under Rules 3-6-1 and 2.
- (d) While offenders who splash water at teammates should immediately be instructed to cease, such behavior may be neither offensive nor cause interference.

**State Association:** This is a subject the discussion of which should proceed from the state association to assure conformity to policies already in place for other sports and for generic purposes.

**Coaches:** Coaches are expected to behave appropriately and to control the conduct of their team members to avoid any violations of conduct requirements. Coaches should proactively discuss sportsmanship with their athletes and discuss appropriate methods of celebration.

**Officials:** Officials should proceed with care in attempting to regulate behavior such as noted here. Athletes should be given the greatest possible latitude to celebrate their success. However, when such celebrations negatively affect other athletes or cause disruption to competition, they should be penalized via applicable NFHS conduct rules and designated as clearly not tolerable.

**SITUATION 2:** In a championship meet the diving is held the day before the swimming portion of the meet. Athlete A from East Grove High School competes in the diving competition. In the swimming portion of the meet, Athlete A competes in the 200-yard freestyle and the 50-yard freestyle. The competitor is also listed on the entry for the 200-yard freestyle relay (six swimmers are listed) and the 400-yard freestyle relay (four swimmers are listed). **RULING:** Athlete A becomes an illegal participant as of Event #5, diving, (see Rule 5-1-1) which is an individual event and is this athlete's third individual event of this competition (3-2-1). Even though the competition in diving was held on an earlier day, the determination of where the athlete became illegal is governed by the order of events in Rule 5-1-1. Athlete A is thus disqualified from the diving event but may participate legally in the 200-yard freestyle and 50-yard freestyle in subsequent rounds. This athlete will not be permitted to compete in either relay, having become an illegal participant prior to either relay in the meet order. In the 200-yard freestyle relay, the East Grove High School team may compete, provided that four of the remaining five swimmers listed on their entry card are eligible. In the case of the 400-yard freestyle relay, the East Grove High School team may not participate since they do not have an adequate number of eligible swimmers listed on their entry.

**State Association:** When reviewing entries for championship meets, great care must be given to ensure that athletes do not exceed their allowable number of events, as championship meets (typically conducted on multiple days) are considered to be a single meet (1-4-11 NOTE). Diving entries must be consolidated with swimming entries to verify the entry limit for each participating athlete.

**Coaches:** Coaches must remember that diving is an individual event in a swimming competition. The championship meet, even if it is held over multiple days, is one meet and the entry limits apply.

**Officials:** When reviewing entries, be sure to regard the diving event as one of the individual events for an athlete.

**SITUATION 3:** Swimmer A is the sprint star for Belmont High School. She competes in the prelims of the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle events in a championship meet and qualifies for the finals in both events. She also swims prelims in the 200-yard and 400-yard freestyle relay events, both of which qualify for finals. In the finals, hoping to shore up the team score, the Belmont High School coach takes her out of the 200-yard freestyle relay and has her swim the anchor leg of the 200-yard medley relay. **RULING:** Illegal. In the same meet (see Rule 1-4-11b(2) NOTE), a swimmer may compete in a maximum of four events, only two of which may be individual events. Here the swimmer has participated in five events (two individual plus all 3 relays). The medley relay is disqualified for having an illegal swimmer; Swimmer A becomes illegal upon participation in her fifth event, that is, the medley relay, which takes place in the final round of competition for this meet; she is ineligible for further competition in this round. The exception stated in Rule 3-2-1 PENALTY (second sentence) would not apply here because there is no subsequent round of competition. Swimmer A is also disqualified from the finals of the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle individual events; the empty lane may be filled by an alternate. Swimmer A may not

participate in the 200-yard or 400-yard freestyle relays; the coach may replace her if legal swimmers are available.

**Coaches:** Every coach must be familiar with the individual entry limitations rule (see Rule 3-2) as it applies to each type of meet. It is especially significant to recognize that meets conducted on different days may still be considered the same meet (see Rule 1-14-10 and 11).

**Officials:** In any heats/finals format competition, officials MUST provide a reliable entry verification check at the conclusion of each relay in the finals round, to assure that all competitors remain within compliance of the entry rule.

**SITUATION 4:** Attempting to reduce overhead costs (transportation, officials, etc.), the South Central Conference groups its schools into four-team clusters that swim together. This provides the equivalent of six league dual meets via a single competition event. Dual meet scoring is applied to each pairing, and the conference championship is awarded to the school which wins the greatest number of these “dual meets.” **RULING:** Not appropriate. Under Rule 1-4-10d, this clustering should be considered a multi-team meet wherein the teams are all competing for the same point under the scoring system established by Rule 7-1-3. The presumption for the various types of meets described in 1-4-10a, b, c is that they involve a single heat in each event, providing head-to-head competition for the athletes. A four-team configuration most likely requires multiple heats in each event and would thus significantly alter the nature of the competitive environment.

**State Associations:** States must make sure that the athletic directors and conference coordinators consider the types of meets they schedule between schools and the implications of such within the framework of the conference constitutions, policies and philosophy.

**Officials:** Officials should confirm with participating coaches the type of meet being contested and then inform them of the applicable rules for entries and scoring.

**Coaches:** Coaches must consider the types of meets that are scheduled by conferences or athletic directors and proactively consider the applicable rules that apply. The help of coaches in working with the athletic directors and conference organizers is essential.

#### **NFHS Swimming and Diving Resources of the Week:**

**Swimming and Diving Championships & Large Meet Administration:** <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>

**One Meter Diving Table with Video Clips:** <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>

**Swimming and Diving Finish Rules Best Practices:** <https://nfhs.org/sports/swimming-diving/resources>