



September 2, 2026

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: Several swimmers in both the 100-yard butterfly and 100-yard backstroke events, prior to their turns at 50 yards, were observed being completely submerged coming into the wall. The referee refuses to disqualify those swimmers because they were approaching the wall that also serves as the finish end of the competition. **RULING:** Incorrect. Swimmers in the butterfly and backstroke, as well as all freestyle events, may only be completely submerged prior to touching the finish wall (or segment of the Individual medley or medley relay). Some part of the swimmer's body must remain above the surface of the water prior to each turn or a violation will be imposed. The rule focuses on a specific portion of the event being contested NOT a location in the pool. The permissible portion of the race where the swimmer may re-submerge is the final 5 yard/meters of the 100-yard butterfly, 100-yard backstroke, and all freestyle events (or those strokes in the Individual medley or medley relay), the distance prior to the wall on which the completion of the event/segment is registered.

COACHES: Instruction to swimmers regarding re-submerging must clearly differentiate between turns and finish.

OFFICIALS: Clear understanding and implementation of which segments of the race permit re-submerging is essential.

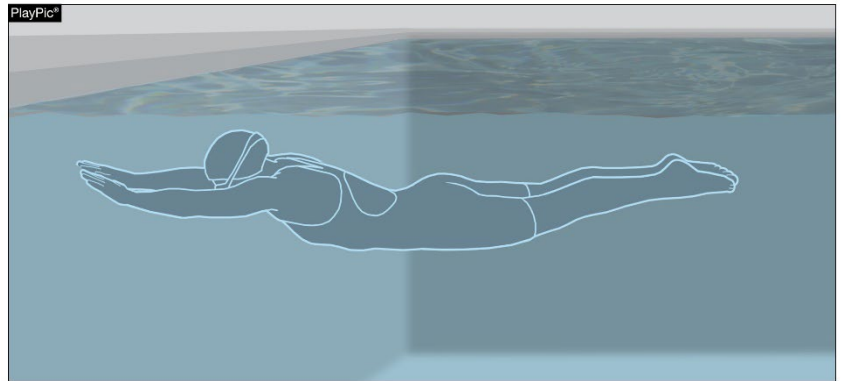
SITUATION 2: In the individual medley event, a swimmer is observed completely submerged prior to the completion of the backstroke leg and the butterfly leg of the event. The referee declines to disqualify the swimmer on the grounds that the completion of each section (stroke) of the individual medley is considered a finish because that completion is specifically governed by the finish rule for that stroke (Rule 8-2-5 and 8.2.3 SITUATION D). **RULING:** Legal.

STATE ASSOCIATION: Schools and especially officials need to be aware of this specific interpretation of the new rule pertaining to finishes in backstroke, butterfly and freestyle events or segments of events.

COACHES: Swimmers should be properly educated concerning when they may re-submerge in backstroke, butterfly and freestyle events/segments.

OFFICIALS: Training of officials in the specific context of the new resubmerging rules must carefully differentiate between situations where re-submerging is and is not permitted.

SITUATION 3: In the 200 I.M. at the finish of the butterfly leg after passing the flags the swimmer submerges, touches the wall with 2 hands, performs a flip turn and leaves the wall on the back. The official disqualifies the swimmer for performing a flip turn on the butterfly to backstroke turn. **RULING:** Incorrect. This is legal. The swimmer submerged after the flags, touched the wall with two hands, which legally finishes the butterfly leg of the I.M. The swimmer left the wall on the back to begin the backstroke leg of the I.M. The method of turning is up to the athlete.



STATE ASSOCIATIONS: The state association needs to make sure that all swimmers, coaches and officials are properly educated in the technical rules of each event.

COACHES: Coaches should educate the swimmers in the rules of the event and train them in the latest techniques of each event.

OFFICIALS: Officials must study the rulebook and make sure to properly apply the rules. A swimmer should only be disqualified for a violation of a rule rather than an unorthodox or new swimming technique.

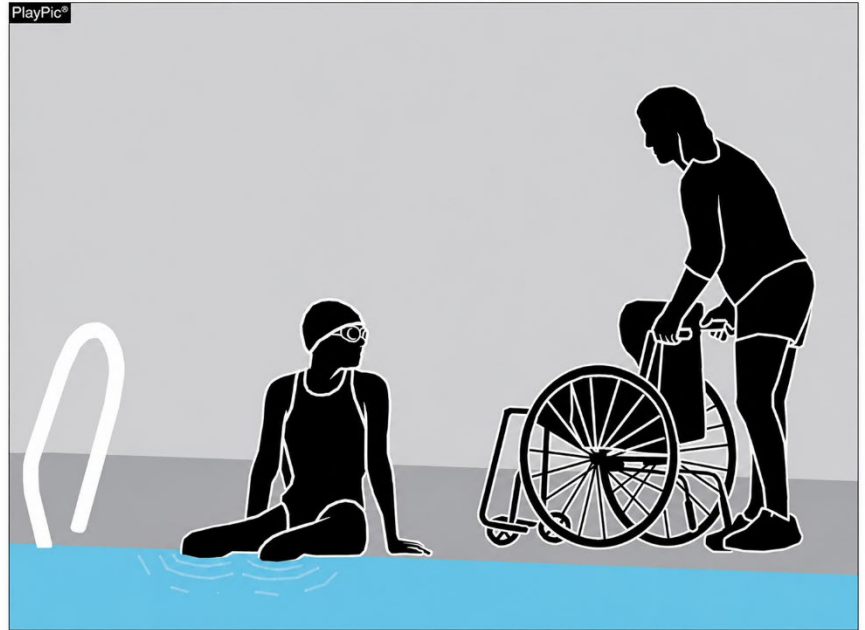
SITUATION 4: In the 200-yard freestyle, after passing the flags at the finish of the race a swimmer dives to the bottom of the pool, to pick up the goggles that fell off during the race and then continues to the wall. The official disqualifies the swimmer for re-submerging. **RULING:** Incorrect. At the finish once the swimmer has passed the flags, the swimmer may be completely submerged.

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COACHES: Coaches should educate the swimmers in the rules of the event and train them in the latest techniques of each event.

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SITUATION 5: The second swimmer in Lane 5's relay team is unable to climb out of the pool and must swim across Lane 6 to reach the ladder to leave the pool at the completion of the swimmer's leg of the event. The referee carefully monitors this movement to avoid interference with the team in Lane 6. **RULING:** While not ideal, there is no rule prohibiting officials from using a wide range of solutions to address special needs/limitations of swimmers. In the situation described, the official might also organize the assistance of several of the swimmer's teammates, or others available, to help pull the swimmer out at the end of the lane rather than crossing an occupied lane.



STATE ASSOCIATION: The state office should encourage practical, situation-based training of its swimming officials to prepare them for necessities as described here.

COACHES: When athletes are competing who have limitations such as described here, coaches should be taking preparatory steps to assure that swimmers are able to get out of the water quickly during a relay event. These steps should be coordinated with meet officials to avoid interfering with other athletes and avoiding unnecessary confusion on the pool deck.

OFFICIALS: Discussion of athletes' needs/limitations should initially occur at the pre-meet coaches'/captains' meeting. Officials should be made aware of what will occur and coordinate with coaches and team personnel in arranging an appropriate accommodation.

SITUATION 6: The referee requires all swimmers, at the conclusion of each race, to climb out of the pool at the end of their assigned lanes. **RULING:** Incorrect. Once a race is concluded (all swimmers have completed the race) swimmers may leave the pool from any location. Crossing several lanes in order to use the ladder to climb out is an acceptable practice that should be permitted at the discretion of each athlete.

STATE ASSOCIATION: State associations should remind schools and officials that meeting athletes' physical needs is essential in swimming. Accommodation letters provided by the state association can help officials identify and provide appropriate support.

COACHES: Communication with officials is essential, and awareness of the needs/limitations of individual athletes is a critical part of team leadership.

OFFICIALS: Officials should not impose arbitrary requirements unsupported by rule and should take reasonable steps to accommodate athletes' needs. During the pre-meet coaches'/captains' meeting, officials should discuss whether any swimmers need assistance or special consideration when exiting the pool.

SITUATION 7: The swimmer in lane 3 cannot exit the pool from the end of the lane. The swimmer a) once all swimmers have completed the race, slides under lanes 4, 5 and 6 into the warmup area, b) asks the official for permission to cross lanes 1 and 2 and to use the ladder c) crosses lane 2 and 1 to use the ladder before the swimmer in lane 6 has completed the race. **RULING** a) and b) are acceptable. c) is illegal and the swimmer should be disqualified because the swimmer did not stay in the assigned lane throughout the race. Rule 3-6-2c states the penalty for failing to swim in an assigned lane throughout the race. The race officially ends when the last swimmer finishes the race. (1-4-3b)

COACHES: Must be aware of the rules regarding entering and exiting the pool. Clear communications with any issues should be addressed with the official at the pre-meet conference so that swimmers do not commit violations.

OFFICIALS: Officials must ensure all swimmers have completed the race before any swimmer leaves the assigned lane. When extenuating circumstances arise, swimmers may exit by using a ladder or swimming into the warmup area, provided they do so promptly so the meet can continue without unnecessary delay. Alternative exit methods should be reserved for athletes with special circumstances, not used simply for convenience. Swimmers do not need an official's approval to use an alternative exit method, but any need to use a ladder or slide under a lane line should be addressed during the pre-meet conference.