



2026-27 NFHS SWIMMING AND DIVING RULES INTERPRETATIONS

Publisher's Note: The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.

Davis Whitfield, Publisher, NFHS Publications © 2026

2026-27 NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Book Correction: (Underlining shows additions; ~~strikethrough~~ shows deletions.)

4.3.1 SITUATION C: During the 500-yard freestyle event, the lap counter errs, causing the lead swimmer to stop before the prescribed distance. ~~The starter disqualifies the swimmer for failing to complete the prescribed distance. The swimmer is disqualified for failing to complete the prescribed distance unless an official notices the error and encourages the swimmer to swim additional lengths for legal completion of the race.~~ **RULING:** Correct procedure. The swimmer shall be disqualified for not completing the prescribed distance. Absent an official's error (~~discharging the sounding device at the wrong lap~~) each swimmer is responsible for completing the correct distance, regardless of an error made by the lap counter. ~~The Referee is Officials and team personnel may permitted and encouraged to~~ instruct the swimmers to swim such additional lengths as are necessary for legal completion of the race provided the swimmer has not exited the pool.

2026-27 SITUATIONS:

SITUATION 1: A swimmer in the 100-yard butterfly submerges just after the flags and kicks into the finish. The official disqualifies the swimmer for not remaining at the surface after the 15-meter mark. **RULING:** Incorrect. Swimmers may resubmerge at the finish of the race.

SITUATION 2: A swimmer in the 200-yard freestyle submerges just after the flags and kicks into the turn. The official disqualifies the swimmer for not remaining at the surface after

the 15-meter mark. **RULING:** Correct. Swimmers may not resubmerge at the turn. Rule 8-2-4e does not apply to the turn, only the finish of the race.

SITUATION 3: The referee has indicated that Declared False Start may be utilized up to the start of the race (i.e., long whistle) for the event in which the swimmer is entered. In a championship meet, the consolation finalists have been introduced but the event has not started (no long whistle). The swimmer for Lane 5 is not present. That coach quickly advises the referee that Lane 5 will be a Declared False Start. **RULING:** Permissible. **COMMENT:** Setting the time for a Declared False Start (see Rule 3-2-3, second paragraph) as close as possible to the start of the affected heat is appropriate and supports the intent of this provision to provide maximum flexibility to coaches and athletes. Officials should also make every attempt to fill Lane 5 with the first alternate. Excessive delay in starting the heat should be avoided, but the priority should be placed upon participation, which would encompass avoidance of empty lanes.

SITUATION 4: The Smithville High School coach notifies the teams in her league that backstroke ledges will be used in all meets hosted at Smithville High School 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 Smithville High School and other schools in the state MAY NOT use backstroke ledges until the state association has met its obligations under Rule 2-7-3. The use of ledges shall not be permitted until the state association

has adopted Rule 2-7-3 and created a policy. **COMMENT:** Well in advance of the swim season, the state association should communicate to all its constituents the current status of the state's action regarding Rule 2-7-3.

SITUATION 5: In a preliminary heat of the 100-yard backstroke at a championship meet, the backstroke flag line nearest the starting end breaks and falls into the water as the swimmers are completing the final length of the race. Swimmers in Lanes 2 and 6 become entangled in the line and are unable to finish the race properly. The other swimmers had already passed the breakage point and were able to finish the race unobstructed. The referee determines that affected swimmers will re-swim the event at a subsequent time AND instructs management personnel that any prelim results from this event will not be official until that re-swim has been accomplished. **RULING:** Correct procedure (4-1-5). **COMMENT:** At least 25 minutes of rest must be included in the arrangement. NFHS policy expressed in Rule 5-4-4 should be applied to this situation as it is applied for swim-offs. It should be noted that the re-swim is to repair "obvious unfairness" (Rule 4-1-5) and only Lanes 2 and 6 were unfairly affected. The re-swim should be extended to any swimmer who was affected by the breaking of the flags, not just the swimmers who became entangled in the flags. For example, if a swimmer had already passed under the flags but stopped to look around due to the event. This should be primarily the judgement call of the referee.