



December 10, 2025

NFHS Swimming and Diving Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: Meet management does not permit use of backstroke starting ledges during warm-up even though they will be available for use during competition. **RULING:** Inappropriate practice.

COMMENT: For purposes of both athlete safety and competitive equality, it is essential that all equipment/facilities utilized during competition also be available for use during the warm-up period. (2-7-3)

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.

Coaches: When scheduling meets and preparing for competition, coaches should exercise due diligence in providing the opportunity for athletes to utilize backstroke ledges during warm-up. Similar to NFHS Suggested Meet Warm-up Procedures for forward starts, specify 2 lanes as one-way sprint lanes with racing starts permitted at the starting end of the pool. Place a cone marker or similar sign on the starting platforms in lanes not specified as one-way sprint lanes. Swimmers should not be allowed on a starting platform when a backstroke swimmer is executing a start in the same sprint lane.

SITUATION 2: The host school pool has water depth of at least 7 feet throughout the competition course. However, the host team chooses not to provide backstroke starting ledges for the competition. The visiting coach insists that the host team's medley relays and backstroke swimmers should be disqualified because of the absence of the ledges, claiming it's the host school's obligation to provide the equipment if their facility is of legal depth. **RULING:** The coach is incorrect. Just as individual swimmers may decide not to use the backstroke ledges, host schools may likewise choose not to provide ledges even though their facilities are legal. **COMMENT:** Backstroke starting ledges are optional, not required, equipment. (2-7-3d)

State Association: The state association should clearly communicate to member schools that the provision of backstroke starting ledges by the host is optional. However, if backstroke ledges are to be provided, they should be made available to all participating athletes.

Coaches: Coaches should articulate the availability of backstroke starting ledges to all participating schools and officials prior to their arrival to the event.

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 3: The State Association has not adopted any policy regarding the use of backstroke ledges in the medley relay and backstroke events. The host school, whose competition course is more than 6 feet deep throughout, provides ledges for swimmers' use. The referee instructs the host school to remove the ledges. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** By rule, the use of ledges may occur ONLY when a State Association has adopted a formal policy governing their use within the requirements specified in Rule 2-7-3. It is expected that the policy will provide necessary details about the equipment itself as well as its use, and where necessary specify sanctions for misuse. (2-7-3)

State Association: The state association should communicate to all its constituents the current status of the state's action regarding 2-7-3, and if/when adoption of this rule will occur. Officials must be instructed on such policies and trained in the appropriate procedure for making any required reports to the state office.

Coaches: Coaches must be informed of such policies and provided a timeline for backstroke ledge implementation as well as state policies regarding requirements for athlete education.

Officials: Officials must be instructed on such policies and trained in the appropriate procedure for making any required reports to the state office.

SITUATION 4: In the consolation finals of the 100 free, the backplate/starting wedge detached from the platform at the start, clearly affecting the start of the swimmer in that lane. The referee determines that sufficient unfairness occurred and orders all competitors in that heat to re-swim the race at a later point in the competition. **RULING:** Correct procedure. In the championship round, it would NOT be appropriate to have only the affected swimmer re-swim and then insert her/his time into the final array; at that point, head-to-head competition is essential. However, if this incident had occurred during qualifying rounds, some other type of re-swim could be appropriate. Of course, all swimmers must be given ample rest time (25 minutes minimum) on either side of a re-swim. (4-2-2p)

Officials: In any heats/finals format competition, officials MUST be familiar with the NFHS Swimming and Diving rules pertaining to 4-2-2p in order to provide a fair and equitable opportunity for high school student athletes.

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>