



October 22, 2025

SITUATION ONE: In the preliminaries of a championship meet the relay from Beach City High School finishes the 400-yard freestyle relay. After some time has elapsed the team jumps in the water to celebrate. The team from Sac City High School has not yet completed the race. The official disqualifies the Beach City High School relay team. The meet committee convenes; because the Beach City High School swimmers are seniors and really good kids, the committee decides to overturn the disqualification and allow the team from Beach City High School to swim in the finals. **RULING:** Rule 3-6-4 PEN 2b is the applicable rule here; rescission of the application of that rule would not be within the meet committee's jurisdiction/authority – see Rule 4-1-2. The re-entry during event prohibition is a critical part of protecting athlete safety as well as non-interference with the conduct of any particular race. In this instance, 3.6.4 SITUATION C would not apply even if all teams had completed the race, because there is a subsequent round of competition in this (championship) meet. Rule 4-1-2 "In championship meets, a meet committee and a meet director shall assume responsibility for all aspects of meet management. The meet committee shall make decisions on matters not specifically covered by the rules or on the misapplication of a rule during a meet. Judgment calls of officials are not subject to review by this committee. The decisions of the meet committee are final. **COMMENT:** Rule 4-1-2 allows for the creation of a meet committee. However, the meet committee does not have the authority to overturn the judgement call of the referee. The violation described in this Situation is specifically covered by the rules and the sanction is not a misapplication of a rule; there is no need for the meet committee to intervene.

Coaches: Training their relays to remain out of the water upon completion of the race is one item that should be placed high on a coach's curriculum, especially prior to major meets or situations where closely contested races are likely.

Officials: Officials should be especially observant at the completion of hotly contested relay events and make provision for swimmers to re-enter as quickly as possible after the last team finishes.

State Association: The state association should educate the hosts of championship meet and ensure that the meet committee understands the authority that can and cannot be used.

SITUATION TWO: 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 THREE: In a championship meet with multiple officials, the official opposite the starter notices a female swimmer with a bikini top worn above a folded-down competition tech suit. The official reminds the swimmer that all changing of suits must take place in the designated changing area. Several minutes later, the official sees this swimmer, who is standing behind the timers, pulling the bikini top out from under the competition suit. The official contacts the swimmer's coach, asks for the coach to identify the swimmer, and then disqualifies the swimmer for the remainder of the meet. The official also reports the incident to the state association. **RULING:** Correct procedure. Rule 3-6-1d defines deck changing as unsporting conduct.

State Association: State associations may wish to be made aware of any incidents of unsporting conduct that occur in swimming competition. Officials must be instructed on such policies and trained in the appropriate procedure for making any required reports to the state office.

Coaches: Prior to the start of the competition season, coaches MUST instruct their swimmers regarding proper meet conduct, including no deck changing. Regular reminders are helpful, and peer oversight can help prevent unnecessary incidents of this unsporting behavior.

Officials: Any incidents of deck changing resulting in an athlete being charged with unsporting conduct MUST be directly observed by a designated meet official. Consultation with the coach is a desirable factor to support the coach in monitoring the behavior of athletes. While it is not required by rule, it would be considered a "best practice" for officials to only address deck changing in the presence of the coach, in the same manner as is done for suit coverage issues (3-3).

SITUATION FOUR: The Sunkist League allows each school to enter two relays in the league championships, per Rule 3-1-1. Sunspot High School lists the same 8 swimmers on its entries for the 200-yard freestyle relay and those participants are clearly determined to have competed in the preliminary round, four on each relay. Prior to the finals, the Sunspot coach moves one of Team B's prelim competitors to Team A to improve his A team's chances of winning the finals. That swimmer is replaced on Team B by the previous Team A competitor. Now, one of the swimmers in prelims for the A team is swimming on the B team, and vice versa. **RULING:** While there is no specific NFHS rule prohibiting this, such a practice is undesirable, and should be treated as illegal. Under no circumstances can the same swimmer compete on two different relays in the same heat. Since heats and finals are the same meet, what is described here would be tantamount to that sort of arrangement.

State Association: When leagues exercise their discretion under 3-1-1, they are responsible for providing specific requirements to address these changes in the entry rules, which are not otherwise covered by NFHS procedures. In this specific circumstance, the league might choose to permit what Sunspot has done; the state association would oversee any such decisions as part of their general oversight of competition within the state.

Officials: When leagues permit variations from the entry rules as part of their league championships, it is essential that they provide to the meet referee WRITTEN documentation of those decisions and how they are to be implemented.

SITUATION FIVE: 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 SIX: 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 SEVEN: Attempting to reduce overhead costs (transportation, officials, etc.), Swampy Bottom League 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 league 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 league coordinators consider the types of meets they schedule between schools and the implications of such within the framework of the league constitutions, policies and philosophy.

Officials: Officials should confirm with the 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 the leagues or athletic directors and proactively consider the applicable rules that apply. The help of coaches in working with the athletic directors and league organizers is essential.

Resources

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

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