

SITUATION ONE: Due to a very unfortunate childhood accident, one of the Southport HS swimmers is missing one hand to a point just above the wrist. Competing in the 100 breaststroke, he is disqualified by the referee for failing to comply with the required touch/finish requirements for breaststroke, as described in Rule 8-2-2f & g. **RULING:** Incorrect. When a swimmer has physical disability that prevents rule compliance, that athlete's endeavor must be judged on the basis of what s/he is actually capable of accomplishing. In this instance, the swimmer would be expected to move both arms simultaneously. The state association must provide written directive to meet officials as to the nature of the accommodation to be provided.

State Association: State offices are authorized, under NFHS rules, to grant appropriate rule exemptions (See Rule 3-3 NOTE and Appendix B) in such situations. Consultation with the local representatives of paralympic or disability organizations is encouraged in order to assure that accommodation appropriately fits within the framework of swimming competition. Written directives to meet officials should always accompany any decision to accommodate a special need.

Coaches: When coaching athletes with special needs, coaches must keep in mind the necessity of engaging with their state associations to assure that those needs are properly addressed. Initiation of communication with the state office should take place well before the season begins. Written

documentation from the state association should be specific as to the individual for whom the accommodation is granted and the precise nature of the accommodation to be made. The coach should present this to the meet official at the pre-meet coaches'/captains' conference and then retained by the coach for further use throughout the season of competition.

Officials: Accommodation of special needs should take place within the framework of written directives from the state association; officials should not be placed in a position of having to unilaterally determine what will be accommodated.

State Association: Some states prohibit phones at or behind the starting platforms due to concerns about intrusions into swimmer privacy. In such cases, phones would not be permitted as timing devices.

Officials: Officials must ensure that the rule requirement for a manual timing device in each lane (see Rule 6-3-4) is met for all meets.

SITUATION TWO: The backstroke flags at West Creek HS are comprised of pennants that are 5" wide and 8" long. In order to meet the requirements of Rule 2-7-5, West Creek staff has stapled paper 8" x 16" pennants over the existing pennants in the visiting team's lanes. The referee permits competition in all events involving backstroke. **RULING:** Incorrect. Unlike lap counting devices where competition is conducted when only visiting team athletes are provided the device, backstroke flags are required equipment for safety reasons. The protection of all swimmers is essential; therefore, all lanes must be equipped with flags meeting rule specifications. For not providing backstroke flags which meet rule specifications, the host team shall be disqualified from the events which required backstroke flags (200 medley relay, 200 IM, 100 back); those events are not contested.

State Association: Schools should be provided detailed safety-compliance information for all sports contested under the association's jurisdiction. NFHS Rules 2 and 9 provide such information for swimming and diving.

Officials: The absence of equipment that does not comply with rule requirements places limitations on conducting of certain events in high school swimming. While some such situations may be waived by prior mutual consent, the absence of legal backstroke flags CANNOT be waived – see rule 2-1.