

2008-09 NFHS Swimming and Diving Points of Emphasis

Starting regulations for backstroke - The backstroke start requires the swimmers to step into the water feet first. The swimmers shall then line up facing the starting end with both hands in contact with the end of the pool or the starting platform. The swimmer's feet, including the toes, shall be completely under the surface of the water beginning prior to the command "Take your mark" and until the feet leave the wall at the starting signal. Upon the command "Take your mark" the swimmers shall promptly assume a stationary position. It is not permitted for a swimmer to stand on or in the gutter or curl the toes over the lip of the gutter immediately after the start.

Stationary position after command "Take your mark" - In both the forward and backstroke starts, the starter will issue the command "Take your mark." At this time all swimmers shall assume the start position and become **stationary**. The inclusion of the term "stationary" more clearly describes what the swimmers are to do and what the officials should observe. A swimmer with a twitch of a hamstring, a slightly quivering heel, the blinking of the eyes are all legal and do not constitute a false start. The officials should not observe any motion that is initiating the start for the swimmer. Such motion observed would result in a false start as defined in Rule 8-1-3.

Verbal and whistle starting command protocols - The starting protocols for these two types of commands are described in Appendix A. Both verbal and whistle starting commands are acceptable within NFHS rules. Each state association shall determine if one or the other protocol is required throughout the season, only during the state series or at the discretion of the individual official. Using verbal commands all directions to the swimmers are provided verbally. However, the referee/starter shall blow one long whistle once the swimmers are in the starting area to get the attention of the swimmers for the next command to "step up." For the backstroke the swimmers will have entered the water and upon the first long whistle the swimmers will then receive the command to "place your feet."

When using the whistle commands the referee no longer provides the verbal commands. The short whistle brings the swimmers to the blocks, the long whistle is used to command the swimmers to "step up" or "step in" and take their preparatory position. In the backstroke a second long whistle is used once all swimmers have surfaced after stepping in to bring the swimmers to the wall and assume their starting positions.

Referee/starter position - There will be times when one official is assuming the responsibilities of both the referee and the starter. When this is the case, the rule book will reference as "referee/starter." There are distinct responsibilities for the referee and for the starter. These responsibilities, unless stated otherwise, are not optional for one or the other of these two officials to assume. However, when a single official must assume both positions he/she shall assume all responsibilities of both positions. The use of the term "referee/starter" is addressing one official contracted for both roles.

Exhibition swims - Rule 3-2-1 provides that exhibition swim and dive events are permissible unless state association policy determines otherwise. The rules do not specify the location of these events within the order of events and/or prior to or following finals in a swimming event or diving. An exhibition swim/dive shall count as one of the four allowed entries, does not score points, may count as a qualifying time and is subject to disqualification. Host management should communicate in advance of the meet to all visiting schools if there will be exhibition swim/dive, any limitations and the placement of the exhibition event(s).

Accommodations for competitor(s) with a disability - NFHS Swimming and Diving rules include a procedure to follow when a student with a disability requiring some type of accommodation desires to participate. The individual school should work with the state association in advance of the competition to address all accommodations. If special equipment is to be required the home school of the athlete should work with visiting and/or other hosting schools to be certain to coordinate for the special equipment.

There are several resources for how to accommodate students with various disabilities such as hearing impaired, visually impaired, etc. The following are the most useful resources:

USA Swimming

1 Olympic Plaza

Colorado Springs, CO 80909

www.usaswimming.org

U.S. Paralympics

25 North Tejon

Lower Level 110

Colorado Springs, CO 80903

www.usparalympics.org

Disabled Sports USA

451 Hungerford Drive

Suite 100

Rockville, MD 20850

www.dsusa.org

Special Olympics

1325 G Street NW

Washington, DC 20005

www.specialolympics.org

The individual referee is not responsible for determining what is a disability or the accommodation. The individual school and the state association shall communicate as to how best to handle any special requests. It is very important to use the resources available to assist in the individual case by case review of the request. The organizations listed above will be very helpful in many situations.