

Swimming & Diving Points of Emphasis - 2020-21

By NFHS on August 21, 2020swimming & diving

Communication between the Referee and Table

Rules 4-1 and 4-2 establish the meet referee as the head official for all competition with responsibilities and duties that include assignment, instruction and oversight of all other meet officials listed in Rule 4. This role is especially critical in the areas of timing/judging, scoring and determination of results; it requires constant communication between the referee and the individuals responsible for those functions, especially the timing system operator (4-8) and the meet management software operator (4-10). To ensure the meet progresses without unnecessary delays, the referee should be in constant communication with the table throughout the meet. The NFHS Swimming Officials Guidelines Manual lists several items to consider: Prior to the start of the meet the referee should confer with the meet management software operator and timing system operator to be sure they understand their responsibilities related to starts, finishes, registration of the proper number of laps completed and reporting any discrepancies between the pad times and backup times to the referee. Meet management software operators should never adjust any times without being directed to do so by the referee. It is recommended the referee discuss with the meet management software operator his/her role in helping the referee verify that no swimmer has exceeded the individual entry rule. In championship format meets, suggested times to verify entry limitations are: a) prior to the start of preliminaries; (b) after each relay event in both preliminaries and finals; (c) upon completion of the preliminaries, prior to printing results of that session; and (d) upon completion of the finals, prior to printing final meet results.

Establishing the Official Time

A legal finish requires the competitor to contact either the touchpad or the finish end wall (defined in Rule 1-1-1) according to the finish rules pertaining to the stroke being swum. This means that the initial point of contact with the end wall determines the final time for that lane as well as the final results for that heat. The referee must understand the tools that are available to determine that final time: order of finish determined by human finish judges/referee, touchpad, button, watch. When the referee determines that the swimmer's first point of contact at the finish of the race is:

- a. the touchpad, that time shall be the official time;
- b. the touchpad, but a difference of more than 0.3 seconds between the automatic time and backup time exists (indicates a potential malfunction). The referee determines that such malfunction has occurred, and the backup time for that lane shall be integrated into the results from the other lanes to determine the official order of finish;
- c. not the touchpad, the official time shall be the time registered by the backup system for that lane (semi-automatic button or manual watch). If other information supports the legitimacy of the human generated time (order of finish, times in other lanes, etc.), that is the official time.

The referee is the head official and is responsible for making decisions on matters not specifically covered by the rules and can order that a race be re-swum when there is obvious unfairness, such as a lane line malfunction or a power outage. In the case of a timing malfunction, the referee is expected to utilize other

information or data such as his/her order of finish, times on other lanes, etc., to verify the single data point (watch/button) is accurate. Referees have the authority to reject times that are clearly inaccurate and to determine placing without assigning a specific time to a swimmer.

Diving Entries

The diver entry process for championship meets continues to be a point of concern. Changes to Rules 9-3-3 and 9-3-5 clearly define what constitutes the official entry of a diver. The two-step process for championship meets consists of (1) entering the divers and swimmers into a culminating meet at a time specified by the meet manager (the team entry) and (2) submitting the dive list or scoresheet at a specified time and place. The referee will permit changes in the dive list until 60 minutes prior to the start of the diving competition. The penalty for not submitting a complete diving scoresheet at the specified time and place is disqualification. Divers must be included as part of the team entry to assure compliance with entry limitations (3-2-1); diving is one of the individual events of competition. The state association (or meet host) must publish the required procedure for diving entries for each championship-level meet.

Signals for Officiating Swimmers with Disabilities

Language and officials signals regarding the inclusion of students with a disability now appear as an appendix in the 2020-21 NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Book. Included are updated images of officials signals for the forward and backstroke start as well as images for modified starting positions. Specific accommodations for visually impaired and hearing-impaired competitors are also provided. These guidelines are provided to assist state associations in working with schools for the inclusion of students with disabilities. Officials' training prior to the start of the season should include review of these signals and procedures, and state associations may approve their use upon request without further authorization. Accommodations for students with special needs may be addressed through the rules and policies set forth by a variety of organizations, including Special Olympics, Disabled Sports USA, US Paralympics and USA Swimming. Contact information is provided in the beginning of the NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Book. An accommodation may be permitted provided it does not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk or place opponents at a disadvantage.