



NFHS VIRTUAL SWIMMING AND DIVING COMPETITION

Considerations for High School Competition

The NFHS rules which govern high school swimming and diving competition assume that such competition will be “head-to-head” with ALL participants engaging in an environment that is identical for all and thus equitable to all. “Virtual” competition cannot provide such identical conditions, however. With that understanding in mind, there are no NFHS rules provisions that would prohibit “virtual” competition when unique conditions, such as a pandemic, necessitate its use.

The following are some best practices and suggestions to guide state associations in overseeing “virtual” swimming and diving competition, if a state wishes to offer such an option to its member schools.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Competition for each team/school involved should take place in a venue that meets all requirements of Rule 2 (Pool, Lanes, and Equipment Specifications) and Rule 9 (Diving Competition), with special emphasis on risk minimization.
- Competition should be officiated by qualified personnel of sufficient number (see Rule 4-1-3) to assure fair results at each location. The meet must be conducted under the supervision of a meet referee who is a duly certified NFHS or state association registered official. The official(s) may not be coaches of the team(s) involved in the meet.
- All rules regarding athlete entry, participation and conduct should apply; technical rules for competition (Rules 8 and 9) should be enforced.
- The course must be the same at each site. All teams must compete in short course yards or short course meters.

SWIMMING

- State associations must determine whether a swimmer can achieve a qualifying time during a “virtual” meet that is used for future purposes such as the state championships. Fully automatic timing should be mandated in the case of qualifying times.

- Configuration of swimmers in a race should be considered. State associations should determine whether they wish to prohibit configurations that might provide advantages, such as allowing empty lane between competitors.
- Participants in each race must be limited only to those eligible to score points. For example, non-scoring swimmers, specifically to establish pace, should not be permitted.
- State associations should consider whether “breaks” in the competitive program will be permitted in addition to the required break following the 50-yard freestyle. State association may need to stipulate the pace of the meet and determine if extended pauses between events will be permitted.
- State associations may permit competition to be conducted using manual watches or semi-automatic timed results. Fully automatic timing is the most equitable in a “virtual” situation, but some facilities may not be able to offer that environment. Be aware that it will not be possible for the meet referee or other official to perform an across-the-board place pick to serve as a “check” on the times from stop watches/buttons. Regardless, the same timing protocol should be used at all venues involved in the “virtual” competition. There should be no mixing of fully automatic timing, semi-automatic timing, or manual watches.

DIVING

- State associations should consider whether scores from the “virtual” competition be permitted for any purposes other than deciding the outcome of the immediate “virtual” competition.
- Determine whether a diver can achieve a qualifying score for subsequent competition via a “virtual” meet.
- Divers will be judged by different sets of officials. State associations should consider what adjustments might be made to eliminate possible scoring inequities.