

Subject: NFHS Swimming Rule Change for Immediate Implementation

National Federation of State High School Associations

Memorandum

To: State Association Executive Officers and Swimming & Diving Administrators

From: Robert F. Kanaby/Becky Oakes

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Date: August 11, 2009

The NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Committee recommended and the NFHS Board of Directors approved the following changes to Rule 3-3-2 with an immediate implementation date for the 2009-10 school year.

Rule Change and Rationale

Rule 3-3-2, page 20 in 2009-10 Swimming & Diving Rules Book

New ART. 2...Suits worn by swimmers shall be limited to the following requirements:

- a. only one swimsuit shall be permitted in competition. (A swimmer with special needs may request customization through his/her school to the state association.)
- b. the swimsuit shall be:
 1. constructed of a woven/knit textile material;
 2. permeable (100 percent to air and water);
 3. made so as not to aid in buoyancy and shall not be altered to aid in buoyancy;
4. made with no zippers or other fastening system other than a waist tie for a brief or jammer and elastic material within the casing/ribbing in the terminal ends (straps, leg openings, and waist openings); and
5. constructed so that the style/shape of the suit for males shall not extend above the waist nor below the top of the kneecap and for females shall not extend beyond the shoulders nor below the top of the kneecap, nor cover the neck.

Penalty (For ART. 2): When an official discovers a competitor wearing an illegal swimsuit by the wearing of two suits or a suit which is of an illegal construction, the official shall:

1. when reporting prior to the start of the heat, notify the competitor to make legal the swimsuit before becoming eligible to compete. If the competitor cannot comply without delaying the start of the heat, the competitor is disqualified from that event and shall not be eligible for further competition until in a legal swimsuit.
2. when the competitor has stepped up on the starting platform but prior to the starting device being activated, direct the competitor to "Step down," disqualify the competitor from that event and he/she shall not be eligible for further competition until in a legal swimsuit;

3. when the starting device has been activated, disqualify the competitor at the completion of the heat; nullify the competitor's performance time and he/she shall not be eligible for further competition until in a legal swimsuit.

Rationale: Technical swimsuits were introduced to the world of swimming approximately two years ago. The advanced technology fundamentally altered the sport, and swimwear became more of a piece of equipment as opposed to a uniform. The rules of swimming have always prohibited the wearing or use of an item that would aid in the swimmer's speed or buoyancy. The technical suits have evolved with little or no regard for these basic rules. In order to preserve the integrity, tradition and heritage of the sport, as well as protect and enhance the interscholastic swimming program, the new requirements and restrictions on swimwear are necessary to promote the educational values of high school athletics by promoting fair play. The immediate implementation date will guarantee fairness in competition throughout the high school swimming seasons and allow the meet officials to fairly and consistently enforce the rule.

The issue of the introduction and use of the technical swimsuit has been perhaps one of the most controversial in the sport of swimming at all levels. The NFHS Swimming & Diving Rules Committee has diligently monitored the developments surrounding the impact of the suits and evolving rules. The committee and the Board of Directors, once sound information was available, took immediate action in order to preserve the integrity of our high school swimming programs and bring back the fairness in competition that is expected to be present in our education-based athletic competitions.

We thank you for your prompt attention and cooperation to disseminate this information as is appropriate in your state to schools and officials. The schedule of immediate implementation is intended to include the necessary time for each state association to properly address this rule change with their member schools.

Should you have any questions, please contact Becky Oakes, boakes@nfhs.org or 317-972-6900.

RFK/BO/af

Cc: Bob Gardner, NFHS
NFHS Swimming & Diving Rules Committee

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