

2015-16 Swimming Rules Changes Include Lifting of Jewelry Restrictions for High Schools

By Ben Sieck on April 15, 2015



NFHS News

High school swimmers and divers will now be permitted to wear jewelry during competition. This change was approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Swimming and Diving Rules Committee at its March 22-24 meeting in Indianapolis.

This significant rules change was among four revisions recommended by the committee for the 2015-16 season and subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

With a focus on addressing pertinent rules regarding competition, the committee determined that the wearing of jewelry presents little risk of injury to the competitor or opponents. Therefore, prohibiting jewelry is an unnecessary restriction, and officials can now better focus on meet administration directly related to competition. Rule 3-3-5 now reflects the change with the removal of any language barring or penalizing the wearing of jewelry.

“We’ve been working for the past 10 years on the role of prohibiting jewelry, and we finally came to the conclusion that prohibition presented little concern for injury,” said Becky Oakes, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Swimming and Diving Rules Committee. “We determined the penalty’s severity

was no longer based in sound rationale.”

The committee also addressed the requirements of officials’ uniforms. Rule 4-1-7 was amended to only require that swimming and diving officials dress in a uniform approved by the state association. Previously, officials were required to dress in white attire or other attire approved by the state association. This change clarifies the rule and allows for more practicality when determining the appropriate uniform for officials, as white is no longer the current standard.

“We felt that it was more appropriate for state associations to handle officials’ uniforms, so long as, in each state, every official wears the same uniform,” Oakes said.

The committee also amended Rule 4-3-1 a, b to allow the starter to designate another individual to sound a device for the lead swimmer during the 500-yard/400-meter freestyle when the swimmer has two lengths plus 5 yards remaining in the race. The starter may have multiple tasks occurring simultaneously, and having a designee would allow for the starter to maintain better accuracy and concentration during events.

The final change was to Rule 9-6-1, which now includes a clarification indicating that the diving referee may be one of the judges on the panel, or a separate official.

A complete listing of all rules changes is available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page, and select “Swimming & Diving.”

According to the 2013-14 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, swimming and diving has 304,152 participants in 14,530 programs nationwide.

