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To: Athletic Directors and Swim Coaches

From: Katie Hartman, Assistant Executive Director
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Subject: Swim Reminders for the 2026-27 Season

Please review this information with your swim staff and best of luck as you start your season! Each school offering swimming will receive a copy of the NFHS Swimming Rules Book from the OSAA. Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Season Dates:

First Practice Date ..... November 16
First Contest Date ..... December 2
Cutoff Date ..... February 13
All State Championships ..... February 19-20

While Oregon has **NOT** adopted the backstroke ledge device for this upcoming season (and will NOT be used in any OSAA sanctioned events this season), the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association is in the process of gathering input from the membership in support of potentially adding this piece of equipment for the 2026-27 swim season. In preparation for that, education is very important and the NFHS emphasizes that this year.

NFHS Points of Emphasis for 2026-27:

Relay Judging Platforms (RJP's)

Backstroke Ledge Education

As of the 2025-26 school year, NFHS state associations may adopt rules permitting the use of backstroke ledges during high school swimming competitions, provided the facility meets specific requirements, including a minimum water depth of 6 feet (1.84 meters) at the starting end to at least 16 feet, 5 inches (5 meters) from the wall. This decision is grounded in extensive research conducted by Indiana University, DePauw University, and input from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, with the goal of reducing risks while aligning with national and international standards for competitive swimming.

State associations that choose to permit use of backstroke starting ledges in their high school competitions must clearly articulate the importance of a teaching protocol implementation for their high school competitors and for risk minimization. The implementation of backstroke ledges requires clear, structured education protocols. Swimmers must demonstrate proficiency in executing a backstroke start without the ledge before progressing to its use. Coaches should ensure athletes are familiar with the full backstroke start progression, which begins with mastering the shallow backstroke racing start. Swimmers must first practice getting into position with hands grasping either the gutter or the lowest bar on the starting block and placing both feet on the wall. Once this base skill is achieved, the coach may introduce the backstroke ledge, but only when the swimmer demonstrates sufficient strength and height to handle the additional skill safely. Progression to the ledge should be gradual, and the swimmer must exhibit a firm understanding of proper technique and safety procedures. The use of backstroke ledges should only occur during controlled swim practices, instructional sessions, supervised warm-ups, or competitions, ensuring the environment is safe and appropriate.

Coaches should closely monitor swimmers' proficiency at each stage of the progression, ensuring that each athlete is physically and mentally prepared for the next step. The coach should assess whether the swimmer is sufficiently tall and strong to handle the backstroke bar or ledge before introducing them to these components. By following these guidelines and maintaining a clear focus on skill progression, safety and controlled environment practices, the use of backstroke ledges can be safely

integrated into high school swimming competitions and training sessions. Additional educational resources may be accessed via the swimming and diving page of NFHS.org, the 2025 NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Interpretation PowerPoint, and the new NFHS Swimming and Diving Pre-Season Guide, will help ensure that swimmers gain confidence and skill in a safe manner.

GENERAL INFORMATION

OSAA SWIM PLAN BOOK:

This plan contains information regarding important season dates, NFHS rule changes/points of emphasis, OSAA swim specific policies and OSAA general policies.

UNIFORM REMINDERS:

Common questions and clarifications regarding the NFHS Swimming Rule 3.3.2.

PARTICIPATION LIMITATIONS *(OSAA Handbook, Participation Limitations, Swimming)* *(Revised Fall, 2007)*

A. **Team**. A school team shall not compete in more than 12 meets at each level of competition – if more than 10, two shall be invitational (more than two schools) – exclusive of the varsity district meet and state championships. There is no limitation on the number of schools that may participate in a swimming meet. Relay meets count toward the limitation. Any time a student participates representing his/her school, it shall count toward the school's team limitation.

B. **Individual**. A student shall not compete in more than 12 meets – if more than 10, two shall be invitational (more than two schools) – exclusive of the varsity district meet and state championships.

INTERRUPTED CONTESTS *(OSAA Handbook, Executive Board Policies)* *(Revised Fall 2013)*

Following is the policy concerning interrupted athletic contests. NOTE: For state championship final games, the OSAA staff shall take jurisdiction and make any decisions rather than the schools involved.

H. **Swimming**. Contest shall be continued from point of interruption unless teams mutually agree otherwise or there are athletic district rules that apply.

HEALTH & SAFETY

The OSAA website contains a variety of information regarding air quality, hydration and concussion management. The page contains links to informational items that all coaches should familiarize themselves with as practices begin.

PRACTICE MODEL

The OSAA handbooks contains questions and answers regarding practice limitation rules.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROTATION 2026-27

Classification	Friday, February 19	Saturday, February 20
6A – Session 1	9:00am – 11:30am	8:00am – 11:30am
4A/3A/2A/1A – Session 2	1:30pm – 4:30pm	1:00pm – 4:45pm
5A– Session 3	6:30pm – 9:00pm	6:30pm – 10:00pm

**These competition times are approximate