NEWS RELEASE

Backstroke Start Altered in High School Swimming

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **Contact: Becky Oakes**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 21, 2009) — Participants in the backstroke event will be able to start the race with their feet placed on the end wall – without the requirement of the feet being under water – beginning with the 2009–10 school year.

The backstroke change was one of eight rules changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Swimming and Diving Rules Committee at its March 29–31 meeting in Indianapolis. The revisions were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Previously, backstroke swimmers were required to have their feet below the water at the start of the race. Beginning next year, the feet may be placed on the end wall as long as the feet, including the toes, are not above or curling over the lip of the gutter or pool edge.

"This change will provide more consistent execution of the backstroke start and reduce the risk of injury," said Becky Oakes, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Swimming and Diving Rules Committee. "In the past, swimmers had to change starting positions based on the water level from pool to pool. Now, they will be able to place

their feet at the same place on the end wall and not have the start affected by water depth."

Although the committee did not adopt a rule with regard to the highly publicized high-tech swimsuits, the subject generated a great deal of discussion. Currently, there is no language in the NFHS rules book regarding these suits that have become popular at all levels of swimming.

"While the committee discussed the popular high-tech suits, there was no official action taken at this time," Oakes said. "The committee will continue to monitor this issue nationwide."

In other rules changes, the committee established the requirements for the first leg of a relay to be recorded as an official time for an individual event when using fully automatic timing (FAT). As an example, the swimmer in the first leg of the 400-yard freestyle relay could record an official time for the 100-meter individual freestyle, providing all requirements for the start, stroke and finish were met.

If the relay team is disqualified on a technical violation, such as a stroke violation by the second, third or fourth swimmers, the first leg would still be considered an official time; however, if the team is disqualified on a conduct violation under Rule 3-5, the first leg of the race would not be considered an official time.

A change in Rule 8-1-7 clarifies how a swimmer legally finishes a race when a touch pad has been dislodged. Oakes said the new language addressed the contact required to finish the race when the touch pad is not in the proper position on the end wall.

A new note to Rule 8-3-5 defines a legal start for the second, third and fourth swimmers of a relay team when an in-water start is used. The rules book covered legal

starts for the last three legs of relays that start out of the water but did not define a legal start for those races that commenced in the water.

Following are other rules changes approved by the NFHS Swimming and Diving Rules Committee:

- Rule 2-7-9: It is no longer required, but rather recommended, that the meet score be posted and/or announced throughout the meet.

- Rule 3-3-1: Swimmers are now required to wear one-piece suits. The committee noted that a two-piece suit, as originally allowed in the rules, is outdated as all competition suits are manufactured in one piece.

- Rule 4-1-5: This rule revision allowed swimming and diving officials to dress uniformly, other than all white, as approved by the state association. State associations determine the color of officials' uniforms.

- Rule 4-3-1b, New NOTE: The use of a pistol capable of discharging live ammunition is prohibited for use as the sounding device.

The committee also adopted two points of emphasis for the upcoming season: posting and announcing of meet scores and compliance with entry rules when using electronic meet management.

According to the NFHS 2007-08 High School Athletics Participation Survey, swimming ranks eighth in popularity for girls with 147,197 participants in 6,766 schools. The sport ranks 10th among boys sports with 111,896 participants in 6,428 schools.

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<u>About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)</u>

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches nearly 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including almost 7½ million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

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