



MEMORANDUM

January 25, 2026

VIA EMAIL

TO: Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Conference Commissioners, Head Coaches, and NCAA Registered Officials

FROM: Greg Lockard, Secretary Rules Editor,
NCAA Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Rules Committee

SUBJECT: NCAA Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Rules Review

NCAA Rules Process:

The NCAA Swimming and Diving Rules change process occurs every two years, and began in January 2025, with a call for suggested items for consideration. A non-binding survey was distributed to the entire NCAA membership, and the results were discussed at the College Swimming Coaches Convention, followed by consideration for adoption by the Swimming and Diving Rules Committee, in May. The newly adopted rules are included in the rules book that was published on August 15, 2025, and is effective for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 seasons.

The rules book may be downloaded or purchased from NCAA publications (www.ncaapublications.com).

NCAA Officials Program:

- All officials that wish to be NCAA registered officials are required to take the new test, which was updated and released on August 15, 2025.
- Most conferences mandate the use of NCAA registered officials, and only registered officials can be selected to officiate at the NCAA Championships, in the three divisions.
- Officials registration/test link: <https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/ncaa-officials>

NCAA Waiver Process:

- Waiver Requests – Institutions requesting a waiver of the NCAA Swimming and Diving playing rules must submit the request in writing to the NCAA Secretary-Rules Editor, Greg Lockard (greg@swimdiverules.com). Waiver requests must include the name(s) of the student-athlete, rationale for requesting a waiver of the specific playing rule and any other pertinent documentation (e.g. medical documentation), if necessary.

The current rules book is available to be downloaded or purchased from NCAA publications (www.ncaapublications.com).

Rule Reminders:

- **Suits and Logos (Rule 3-1)** Swimsuits may contain only one manufacturer's logo and a single post-construction institutional logo that does not exceed 9 square inches. The manufacturer's logo or trademark must be contained within a four-sided geometrical figure (i.e., rectangle, square, parallelogram) that does not exceed 2½ square inches.

If a student-athlete competes in an illegal swimsuit, that student-athlete shall be disqualified from that event. In the event of a relay, the rule shall apply to the disqualification of the relay.

- **Artificial Aids (Rule 3-1-4-a)** No swimmer is permitted to wear or use any device or foreign substances, including kinesiology tape, to help their speed, pace, buoyancy, or body compression in competition. The use of tape, kinesiology tape, and compression sleeves is permitted to treat a documented medical condition, but not to gain an advantage over the remainder of the field. The prescribed course of treatment must describe a minimally invasive plan identifying the necessary placement of tape, kinesiology tape or compression sleeves to support the athlete's medical condition. Documentation must be presented to the referee and must come from a physician or certified athletic trainer to be considered. Note: Requests for use of any form of tape must be presented to the referee and do not require approval from the Secretary Rules Editor in advance.
- **Failed Dives (Rule 4)** The diving referee shall disqualify a diver who fails two dives in any event in any competition.
- **Backup Timers (Rule 4-14-2)** “Regardless of the availability of automatic and/or semiautomatic timing equipment, a minimum of one human timer per lane and one manual watch per lane is required for all non-NCAA championships meets and is recommended for all non-championships meets. In addition, for an NCAA championship qualification standard, two human timers, each with a manual watch, are required if there is a malfunction with priority level one or two equipment.”
- **Required Levels of Timing (Rule 4-18-2-a, b, c, d)** Three levels of judging and timing equipment (primary, secondary, and tertiary) are required at championship meets, for NCAA time standards, consideration standards, and optional entry standards to be achieved. For clarification: primary = automatic equipment; secondary = semiautomatic equipment; tertiary = manual watches.

The following priority list shall be used to designate levels of judging and timing equipment:

1. Automatic equipment. When stationary overhead cameras recording 100 images per second and that are fully integrated into the primary electronic system are in place at a competition, it is permissible to use the system as the primary system, and no other back-up system is necessary.
2. Two-button semiautomatic equipment.
3. Two manual watches per lane.

For a time to be considered for entry into an NCAA championship it must have been achieved using priority level one equipment (automatic equipment). If a malfunction is confirmed by the head judge with priority level one equipment, then priority level two equipment (two-button semiautomatic equipment) is acceptable. If a malfunction is confirmed by the head judge with priority level two equipment, then priority level three equipment (two manual watches per lane) is acceptable.

- **Mixing Genders (Rule 5)** “Note: It is not permissible to mix genders in any heat or event, in non-championships or non-NCAA championships, including time trials and/or time standard trials.”
- **Failure to Compete (Rule 5-1-1a)** Failure to compete in a preliminary heat of a prelim/finals event is simply a disqualification and a charged event with no further penalty. Failure to compete in a timed final or in a final that had preliminary qualification remains a disqualification and prohibits further competition in the meet.
- **Medical Scratches (5-1-1d)** All requests for a medical scratch must include a written certification from a physician or a certified athletic trainer. A written certified request must be made, to enable a student athlete to be reinstated to compete in the same competition.
- **Declared False Start vs. Scratching (Rule 5-3-4)** Scratching is when a swimmer is eliminated by the coach following normal scratch protocol and is relieved of the requirement to swim and is not charged with an event swum. A declared false start is actually a disqualification and counts as an event contested for the student athlete. Since a declared false start doesn’t take place until the heat of the race occurs, a coach can rescind a declared false start without penalty. If a relay should take a declared false start, they **must** turn in an entry card listing four eligible athletes and they are all in turn charged with an event.
- **Seeding vs. Reseeding (Rule 5-7-3c&d)** A heat cannot be seeded with less than three competitors in it. However, once a heat is seeded, if a medical issue or declared false start

cause the heat to go below three, there is no reseeding during the preliminaries. The lane remains open.

- **Appeal Procedure (Rule 8-4-3)** Must be submitted in writing within 15 minutes after the finish of the final heat of the event in question. Appeals may only be lodged for errors in the recording of data, scoring and nonjudgmental errors in application of rules. The use of video is not permitted during the appeal process. If the referee uses video to review relay judging platforms, his/her decision is a judgement call and cannot be appealed. The decision of a meet committee is final.
- **Bona Fide Competition (Rule 9-1-1)** Non-collegiate athletes may not participate in collegiate meets in any form. Non-collegiate athletes may compete in exhibition events conducted outside of the meet program. Note: These exhibition events may occur in breaks, during the regularly contested collegiate competition. Non-collegiate athletes may not compete against collegiate athletes.
- **Initial Distance Time Standards (Rule 9-2-1-c)** A time standard, consideration standard or an optional-entry standard may be achieved over an initial distance within any individual or relay race that is conducted according to the criteria established for bona fide competition. This rule applies to competitors who are eligible to score in regularly scheduled and scored events, and to exhibition competitors in such events. This rule does not apply to competitors in time-standard trials.

2026 NCAA Championships:

- NCAA Division II Men and Women: March 11-15, 2026 (Evansville, IN)
- NCAA Division III Men and Women: March 18-21, 2026 (Indianapolis, IN)
- NCAA Division I Women: March 18-21, 2026 (Georgia Tech)
- NCAA Division I Men: March 25-28, 2026 (Georgia Tech)

If you have questions or need to request an interpretation, please contact me. via email at greg@swimdiverules.com or by phone at 973-486-5501.

Greg Lockard, Secretary-Rules Editor
NCAA Swimming & Diving Rules Committee

cc: NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Rules Subcommittee
NCAA Divisions II and III Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Rules Committee
Selected NCAA staff