

MHSAA OFFICIALS BULLETIN



Since Sunday 9/9/19 there have been a series of media articles on television, internet and in print regarding a call made by a swimming official in Alaska. The official's call had to do with the legality of a swimming suit being worn by a competitor. The official's pool side call was later reversed by the AHSAA, the state level association certifying officials for the state of Alaska.

The MHSAA believes, that consistent with the AHSAA and the NFHS rulings, the spirit of the rule involved was designed to affect suits that have been intentionally altered beyond the manufacture's design. If a suit is provided by the swimmer's school, is consistent with suits worn by all other team members and has not been modified, the suit should be considered a legal suit unless it has other issues.

Rule 3-3-2 and 3-3-2 Situation B address illegal suits and how the official should proceed.

It is unclear at this point at what time the official in Alaska observed the violation and what if any opportunities or directions were given to the competitor prior to the disqualification. Remember 3-3-2 Penalties attempt to get the swimmer in compliance, if at all practical, before resorting to sanctions. If the competitor has been called to the starting block with a long whistle the event has begun. This is the break point between prior to the start and the start of the race. It is the point where the official's options are changed. Note the Comment on 3.3.3 Situation G. This comment applies to all races.

One question you might ask yourself as an official "Do I always give a whistle signal before I begin the start process?" In the Alaska situation the information is unknown at present. One thing however

is abundantly clear, as with many other NFHS rules the whistle is a required action by the official and is a defining point.

Finally, a caution for all officials inclusive of those who would officiate Swimming and Diving. In today's world of a 24-hour news cycle, the accuracy and completeness of news reports often leaves something to be desired. While a specific terminology to us as an official may mean one thing, the media, in an effort to explain information to the public may use that term in quite a different way.

Imagine if we were watching a professional baseball game and the first base umpire calls a player out. The video appeal by a team manager results in a call by the umpire crew to New York for a decision. A short time later the umpire's call is "overturned" by the off-site video umpires. Happens almost every summer day. Now let's change the word---his call was "decertified" How would we react---uncommon word sure, but to an uneducated reporter maybe the same meaning.

Just as we have learned from watching flash media reports with a "grain of salt" perhaps when we hear reports that touch a responsive cord we need to listen and evaluate them with the same level of objectivity that makes us a good official on the pool deck.

Rules Review: During the 200 freestyle relay, the second swimmer leaves the starting block before the first swimmer's relay leg has been completed. While the team is disqualified, is the first swimmer able to receive an official time for his/her leg?

Ruling: Yes, any swimmer not in violation and which swims prior to the action that causes the disqualification is eligible to a recorded official time for his/her leg.