

VHSL High School Diving How-To Manual

Welcome to the high school diving season! Many elements of high school diving competition will be familiar, but the brief refresher course that follows may prove helpful.

High school diving differs from other competitive diving in that it comprises two events (women and men) within a swim meet, and is governed by rules adopted by a national association of high school swim coaches. High school rules are very specific as to which dives may be performed, the order in which they must be performed, and the manner of performance.

The primary emphasis of a high school meet will be on the swimming events, but it's important for coaches, parents, and athletes to remember the divers make a valuable contribution to the overall team effort.

The number of official divers permitted to compete for each team must be the same as the number of swimmers competing for each team in a swimming event. With mutual consent of coaches, the referee may permit unofficial divers, but only up to the total number of event entries as determined by the number of lanes in the pool. Thus, in a meet held in a six-lane pool no more than 12 divers would be competing. No team may enter more than three "official" divers in any event, and exhibition divers must be so designated prior to the start of the meet.

Divers need not wear team suits, or even competition-style suits, but must wear suits "of decent appearance." Jewelry, except religious or medical, must be removed. Religious or medical jewelry must be taped to the body. Hair restraints are fine, but they're supposed to be functional rather than decorative. Divers may only be disqualified for violating the appearance provisions only if they refuse to comply after being reminded by the referee.

Organizing the Event

Every team needs to provide officials -- typically five -- to work each meet.

The host team provides two judges (one of whom serves as a referee or, alternatively,

another individual to serve as non-scoring referee), an announcer, and two table workers (a scorekeeper and a tabulator).

Students or team members not competing in the diving events may work table but may not judge.

Meet equipment includes five diving scorecards, scrap paper, two calculators (make sure the batteries are working), and pencils. Usually the home team provides this equipment.

Chairs should be set up for the judges on either side of the diving well. The scoring table should be located so that the announcer has a clear view of all the judges and can hear easily the referee. Set up five chairs at the scoring table.

All meet sheets (the NFHS sheet is required) should be completed and signed by the divers and turned in to the table by the beginning of the event before the diving event (usually 50 free). This allows the table workers enough time to check the sheets and correct any problems before the event starts. There is no penalty if sheets are corrected prior to the event start. Any later, and the mandatory calls become rather Draconian. Frequently, disqualification is the prescribed penalty.

For 6-dive dual meets:

- The voluntary dive **MUST** be performed first (remember the voluntary dive group changes each week in some districts);
- The remaining dives **MUST** include dives from at least four groups (forward, back, inward, reverse, twisting);
- Every dive listed **MUST** be listed on the table of dives in the high school rule book; and
- The DD assigned to the voluntary dive must not exceed 1.8. (For instance, if 5122D, forward 1 somersault 1 twist free, is used as a voluntary, the sheet would show a DD of 1.8, rather than its actual DD of 1.9.)

Remember the degrees of difficulty assigned to dives under high school rules are not necessarily the same as those used in summer league or USA Diving meets.

After the sheets are checked, a decision should be made on whether to combine the boys' and girls' events. If either event has less than four competitors, it will be more efficient to combine the event. The referee should obtain the consent of both coaches.

Diving order should be assigned to correspond to the swimming lane assignment. For a team swimming in lanes 1, 3, and 5, its divers would compete 1st, 3rd, and 5th in the diving order. In a combined event, boys dive first, and sheets for all competitors should be numbered consecutively. For example, in a combined event with five boys and three girls, the sheets would be numbered 1 through 8, not 1 through 5 and 1 through three, to avoid confusion at the table.

Judging Pointers

The referee should briefly review the rules for the other judges, with emphasis on requirements that are unique to high school competition. These pre-meet instructions are the best way to ensure a fairly judged meet. The observation "Well, I think we all know what we're doing" is not adequate, regardless of how experienced the panel may be.

In high school diving, some flaws mandate a maximum award of two points per judge. This is a referee's call, but a judge should impose this ceiling on his or her own score if the referee does not make the call. These "max 2 point" errors include:

- A dive clearly performed in the wrong position;
- A twisting dive in which the diver tucks, but tuck position is prohibited (tuck is only allowed in 5152, 5221, 5231, 5321, and 5331);
- A dive that hits the board; and
- A dive in which no attempt is made to emerge from tuck (the "cannonball") or pike.

A referee may set a maximum score to be awarded, but may not set a minimum score.

High school rules also provide that a dive is failed if the diver falls into the water, performs a forward or reverse dive from a standing start, neglects to put the written description of the dive on the sheet, performs a dive not listed on the high school table or twists greater or less than 90 degrees from what is written on the scoresheet.

A diver may change the position of a dive from the board. Degrees of difficulty should be adjusted downward, but never upward. (For example, if the dive list is 201 back dive pike, 1.6, changing to tuck would require adjusting the DD to 1.5. Changing to straight would leave the DD at 1.6.) In championship meets, the true DD of the voluntary dives cannot exceed 9.0 so changes to a position with a higher DD need to be carefully monitored.

Explicit pre-meet instructions by the referee are particularly important in high school meets because many of the judges have limited judging experience. In addition to covering the special points listed above, the referee should review the generally accepted standards for judging diving competitions:

1. Draw the difference between the dives. To the extent the divers give you the ability to do so, use the entire range of scores. Judge all divers according to the same scale. Don't have one set of standards for experienced divers and a different set for those less skilled. They're all competing in the same event.

2. Disregard difficulty. Apply the same standards to a forward 2 1/2 somersault that you would to a front dive tuck.

3. Dives end when the body passes through the water. Stop judging the flight and position when the diver makes first contact with the water.

4. Judge the entire dive. Weight the approach, the takeoff, the flight, and the entry equally. It's easy, but wrong, to judge a dive based on the size of the splash it generates.

Awards from 4 1/2 to 5 1/2 indicate a satisfactory

dive. It's balanced and controlled on the board, has a vertical takeoff, a flight that includes all the elements (right number of spins and twists), and lands more or less vertically, approximately three feet from the board.

If a dive, or pieces of the dive, exceed "satisfactory" your score should be 6 or above.

If one of more of the flaws listed below is present, your score will likely be a 4 or below:

- Distance is too close or too far from board (deduct on a sliding scale);
- Break in position (deduct on a sliding scale depending on the severity and duration of the break);
- Split tuck (deduct 1/2 to 2 points);
- Crow hop (deduct 1/2 to 2 points);
- Over-twisting, under-twisting, or twisting at all in dives that shouldn't include twist (deduct on a sliding scale, depending on degree of twist—over or under by 90 degrees or more is a failed dive); or
- A dive in which the hands are below the shoulders on a head-first entry or above the shoulders on a feet-first entry—hands must enter the water before the shoulders (deduct 1-2 points).

With twisting dives, remember that the legality of the dive is determined by the degree of twist at first contact with the water. A legal dive is not necessarily a good, or even satisfactory, dive.

Running the Event

Generally, a *brief* warm-up is allowed immediately before the event starts. In a combined event, all divers warm up; otherwise only boys warm up before their event and girls are provided a separate warm-up. Divers are entitled under the rules to only one practice bounce or one entry, but, from a practical standpoint, let the divers remain on the boards until the judges and the table are ready to start. On the other hand, do not allow coaches to insist on warm-ups beyond the "one entry" if the officials are ready to start.

The announcer should call for the judges to assemble no later than the time the swimmers from the preceding event clear the water. Ideally, this announcement is made prior to 50 free, to allow the referee adequate time to instruct the judges.

The announcer should then review the sheets to be sure they are legible and the names pronounceable. Any questions or concerns about the sheets should be directed to the referee.

At the scoring table:

- The **announcer** reads the name of the diver, the dive, the DD, and the next diver. He or she announces the judges' scores and relays any instructions from the referee. When an electronic scoreboard is used, the announcer need not announce the individual awards. After Round 1, the announcement of each dive should be abridged. For instance, in Round 1, the announcer would say, "Joe Croft of Langley will perform 101, forward dive, pike, degree of difficulty 1.5. Matt Bower on deck." By the second round, the announcement format should be shortened to "Joe, 201, back dive straight, 1.7; Matt". This may seem a minor point, but it will make the event run more quickly. Remember that only the referee, not the announcer, can declare a balk or failed dive.
- The **scorekeepers** write down the scores as they are announced, cross off the high and low if five judges are being used, and add the remaining three scores. One scorekeeper writes on the dive sheet, the other on scrap paper, so arithmetic can be done simultaneously and compared.
- The **tabulators** multiply the total score by the degree of difficulty and keep a running total of those results. One does the initial calculation, the second checks the work, and has the added responsibility of ensuring the sheets remain in order and are passed back to the announcer in a timely fashion.

Concluding the event

As the last round is completed, the second tabulator places the sheets in order of finish rather than returning them to the announcer, and writes the finish place in the appropriate section of the dive sheet. Unofficial divers are not included in the final order regardless of how well they did. The sheets are placed in reverse order of finish (1st place face-up on the bottom) and returned to the diving announcer so they can be read to the competitors and spectators.

At the conclusion of the event, the sheets are returned to the swim scoring table so that scores can be recorded and team points allocated. Don't return any sheets to divers or coaches.

Championship Meets

The championship meets that typically are held at the end of the season are the most angst-laden elements of the high school season.

These meets require performance of an 11-dive list. During these meets, the judging standards should remain the same as those for dual meets, but the conduct of the meet is complicated by other factors, especially the dive sheet requirements.

The order in which dives must be performed is very specific. The requirements are intended to ensure divers have demonstrated comparable skills at each point in the competition at which cuts are made. An unfortunate side effect is that clerical skills may influence some outcomes more than athletic skills.

A legal list consists of five preliminary dives, three semifinal dives, and three final dives:

- Prelims — Two voluntaries, three optionals
- Semis — Two voluntaries, one optional
- Finals — One voluntary, two optionals.

Additionally, voluntaries must be clearly designated on the sheet by circling both the number and the DD of the dive, the combined

DD of the voluntaries may not exceed 9.0, all five diving groups must be touched in the first eight dives, and no optional group may be touched twice until finals.

Exceeding the DD limit on voluntaries results in the last voluntary dive performed (the one that causes the limit to be exceeded) being declared a failed dive. Touching an optional group twice in the first eight dives causes the second optional to be declared a failed dive. Failure to complete the official dive description results in a failed dive.

Most other illegalities result in the diver being disqualified from competition. These include: four or less dives designated "voluntary"; four or less groups listed in first eight dives; five or less dives designated as "optional." Any diver who fails two dives is disqualified. High school rules provide no latitude on this point.

Sheets may not be changed after the meet starts, even if an error is discovered prior to performance of the dive that would render the list illegal.

Correct sheets are the responsibility of the divers and coaches. Any sheet checking done at the table is a courtesy.

In championship meets, the number of places being scored in the overall swim meet determines how many divers compete in the diving finals.

If 16 places are scored, cuts would be made after five dives to 20 divers, and after eight dives to 16 divers. The meet host may (but is not required to) make cuts after three dives to reduce the number of competitors to 32. If there is a tie for the last qualifying place, both divers advance to the next round.

If a diver (or divers) withdraws from the contest at the conclusion of prelims or semi-finals, other competitors shall be added, in the order determined by their point standings, to make up a full complement of competitors.