

WHAT IS A FALSE START?



NFHS Rule 8-1-1

...When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall activate a starting device.

NFHS Rule 8-1-3

Subject to the discretion of the referee/starter, (referee and starter in championship meets), an infraction/false start occurs when a swimmer:

- a. unnecessarily delays in reporting for the start, or in assuming a starting position;
- b. does not step into water feet-first for an "in-water" start;
- c. does not remain stationary immediately prior to the start. Other swimmers are to be released by the starter's command, "Stand up;" or
- d. leaves the mark before the starting signal.

NFHS Rule 8-1-4

When one or more swimmers have obtained an unfair advantage at the start, the race shall continue without recall.

The following scenarios should help you paint the picture.

Situation: Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given.

Ruling: False start. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Assistant Starter independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 8-1-3d applies.

Situation: Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. The Starter says absolutely nothing and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool.

Ruling: False start. Rule 8-1-3c applies.

Situation: Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. The Starter says "stand up" after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand up. The offending swimmer struggles, but is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool.

Ruling: False start. Here the starter said "stand up", but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the "stand" command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes should stand up. The offending swimmer did not stand up. Rule 8-1-3c applies.

Situation: Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. When the command "stand up" is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand up.

Ruling: This is **NOT** a false start. Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and no starting signal ever sounded.

Situation: Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. When the Starter gives the "stand up" command a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the "stand" command.

Ruling: This is **NOT** a false start.

Situation: The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action.

Ruling: This is **NOT** a false start.