

Diving:

High School Judging Update

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The change in the High School judging scale last year wreaked havoc with the scoring of High School diving meets across the country. While it was necessary to update the HS scale to be consistent throughout all levels of diving, it created a period that lacked direction. Because new rules do not come with instruction on how to implement them judges were left to interpret the changes themselves.

More specifically, when the categories changed judges did not know how to adjust their scores within the categories. Instead of translating the change to understand that the score remained the same (a 6 remained a 6) many judges around the country interpreted the change to mean that the score increased one point higher (the increase/change in the "good" category). In essence only the name of the category in which the score is placed changed.

For those of you that raised your scores I need to beg your forgiveness as I play devil's advocate. Did the divers magically get 20 - 30 points better by changing the scale? Did the score increasing 20 - 30 points actually make the divers better? And, is it good for HS diving when all the top divers are receiving 10's?

Because the judging scale change confused a lot of high school judges, the scoring around the country became temporarily more inconsistent. Scores in New York did not correlate consistently with those in Florida. A diver scoring 450 points in Ohio did not translate to the same score in Texas, and a score in Washington did not mean the same as it did in California or Colorado. This left a lot of parents (and coaches) wondering what was going on.

Thankfully, championships in the sport of diving are contested with all the divers in the same pool with the same judges. Therefore, the final meets were scored the same for everyone. Divers' scores may have been higher or lower in comparison with another state but judges were able to put the divers in the right places and that is what counts the most in diving.



Statistics show that scores of good divers in most states increased last year. The increases fell into three categories 5 - 15 points, 20 - 40 points and more than 40 points. There really is no rhyme or reason to which states did what. For example, in Connecticut, Maryland and Washington, states that normally judge harder, scoring became dramatically easier. When comparing All America applications, these states scored on average 42, 48 and 55 points higher than the previous year. States which score consistently higher like California and Florida increased just slightly by 11 and 15 points respectively. However, other states which normally judge high like NC, Iowa, and Massachusetts got dramatically higher (42, 46, and 48 points respectively).

The actual increase in scores are as follows: TN (6), CA (11), TX (11), VA (11), MI (13), FL (15), NE (23), NY (23), OH (36), IL (38), CO (40), NC (41), CT (42), IA (46), MA (47), MD (48), WA (55), NJ (56), MN (60), WI (78) and KS (85). And yes there were the statistical anomalies, these states scores actually went down compared to previous years: GA (-15), IN (-15), and ND (-24).

While the scoring of above average dives should have increased slightly with the new scale, the amount of change seemed a bit exaggerated. Judges need to remember that the Failed and Unsatisfactory categories remained unchanged and the Deficient category expanded by only a half a point while the Satisfactory category shifted up a half point and expanded by half a point. The intent of the new scale is to reward a better than average dive (not the diver) which creates better separation throughout the competitive field and allows the divers to spread themselves out by hitting or not hitting their dives. The scale was never intended to have every above average diver receive 9's and 10's.

Towards this point, I would argue that if High School divers are consistently receiving extremely high scores (9, 9 1/2 and 10's) we are doing them a disservice. These scores should be reserved for the dives that are highly refined, done with exceptional diving skills, above average height and not only straight entries, but ripped or splashless entries. The judging scale is not meant to reward every diver with high scores but to let divers know where their dives are at any given time.

Reasonably the new scale should have shown an increase in the top divers' scores by 10 -20 points, however more than half the states comparative scores went up by more than that and some states scores tripled it. Until judges understand that the categories changed and not their scores we will be stuck in this state of exaggerated scoring with coaches complaining of unwarranted pool and varsity records and parents wondering what is going on.