

NCAA Confirms Dramatic Changes to D1 Swimming & Diving Championships for 2021



The NCAA has released its COVID-19 Meet Operations Guidelines for the 2020-2021 Division I Swimming & Diving Championships.

The biggest news is that the relay events will be swum as timed finals with one empty lane between each relay in an attempt to mitigate the number of swimmers crowded behind the blocks for each race.

- [Read the full meet operations updates here.](#)

While it's possible that the challenges prevented by COVID-19 will reduce the number of relays at the NCAA Championships, there are typically between 20 and 24 qualified relays per event at the NCAA Championships, which means 5 or 6 heats of competition.

Since the proposal was [initially reported by SwimSwam here](#), many

college coaches have spoken up in favor of the plan as it reduces the load on top swimmers, who historically have had as many as 14 swims over 7 sessions of competition.

The change will also even the field against the top teams that have enough depth to put relays into the A final without using all of their best swimmers.

The 800 free relay is traditionally raced as a timed final on the meet's first day, with other races being swum as prelims-finals events.

The NCAA in making the announcement of changes also confirmed that all sessions, including prelims, will be streamed on ESPN3.

Other big changes due to COVID:

- There will be no spectator seating due to the mass gathering restrictions in place in North Carolina. That includes parents and family members.
- All participants will be seated in the large 2,000-seat grandstand at the Greensboro Aquatic Center, with no participant seating on deck. The top 15 teams from the 2019 NCAA Championship meet will get the first crack at seating selection for the 2021 championship meet.
- Alternates will only be accepted into the meet if they're to replace a withdrawal within the first 24 hours after the public selection announcement. Historically, we've seen alternates called up as much as a week or two after announcements when late issues with injury or motivation arise. This is significant as there's an expectation that COVID exposures will lead to a higher-than-normal number of absences from the meet.

- Uninvited relay participants must swim in at least one relay during the meet, and they may not fill an alternate slot if a scratch occurs. Alternates may not travel to the meet in hopes of a late scratch either. If an uninvited relay participant does not participate, the team's last relay will be disqualified.
- There will be no relay exchange judges on the pool deck to limit the number of individuals in close contact with the student-athletes. Instead, there will be a **High-Speed Video System** used to review all potential **relay exchange infractions**.
- Teams will receive designated practice times for participants in the current session, and a designated 1:45-3:45 practice time for individuals not participating in the session. No other practice times will be available in the GAC.
- Athletes will be expected to exit the building when that individual finishes competing and cooling down. When all individuals from a team are finished competing and cooling down, the full travel party should leave the building.
- Each team will be given 2 deck passes for its swimming coaches and 1 deck pass for its diving coach (if they have divers participating). Coaches will only be allowed on deck when they have swimmers competing in the competition pool, and must **leave deck** as soon as their swimmers are done competing.
- No showering, shaving, or lingering is allowed in locker rooms. There will be no hot or cold tubs provided and no stretching mats will be provided. Individuals may bring their own yoga mats.
- There is a 10PM curfew currently in effect for Greensboro and Guilford County. This means all individuals must be in their hotels by 10PM. Restaurants close by 10PM as well, meaning teams will have to plan ahead.

The 2021 NCAA Division I Swimming & Diving Championships at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, North Carolina. The women's meet is scheduled from March 17-20, while the men's meet is scheduled a week later from March 24-27.

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