2023

TRACK AND FIELD PRE-MEET NOTES

01 HIGHLIGHTS OF RULES CHANGES

01

Rerun Guidelines: Moved and defined specific guidelines from the case book to offer consistency and guidance to a meet referee when ruling on reruns.

02

Hold Times for Starters: Standardize starter hold times for fair and consistent starts.

03

Relay Entry Increase: Gives opportunity for more athletes to be involved in regular and postseason track meets.

04

New Indoor Track and Field Rule: Creates an indoor specific rules section.

Photo provided by Paynter Pics, Arizona Interscholastic Association.

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02 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Photo provided by Northwest Sports Photography, Beaverton, Oregon.

Sportsmanship

Good sporting behavior is one of the fundamental ingredients to the continued success and enjoyment of education-based high school sports and activities. In fact, in the 103-year history of organized high school sports in the United States, good sportsmanship has been one of the most important outcomes of high school activity programs.

NFHS playing rules are written to encourage sportsmanship. Participation in these programs should promote respect, integrity and sportsmanship. However, for these ideals to occur, everyone involved in these programs must be doing their part.

The NFHS is concerned that unsporting behavior in education-based athletics has increased across all sports. As a result, the NFHS has made sportsmanship the No. 1 Point of Emphasis for the 2022-23 school year.

Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest and caring. When these types of appropriate behavior occur, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone.

Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display

of sportsmanship. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner, their behavior sets the tone for players, spectators and others. If coaches, however, are complaining constantly about the decision of contest officials, spectators are more likely to do the same.

There must be a collaborative, working relationship between contest officials and game administration to promote good sportsmanship and safely conduct the contest. Everyone has their roles to play in creating a positive, sportsmanlike atmosphere at contests.

Officials should focus on the actions of players, coaches and other bench/sideline personnel. A positive, open line of communication between officials and coaches ultimately results in a better contest for everyone involved.

Contest officials, however, should never engage with spectators who are exhibiting unsporting behavior. Once the contest begins, school administration is responsible for dealing with unruly spectators. A proactive approach by school administration includes monitoring the behavior of spectators and intervening as needed.

If spectators are using demeaning or profane language at officials – or at others in the stands – those individuals should be removed from the contest by school administration.

In recent years, a heightened level of unsportsmanlike behavior has been occurring by spectators at high school sporting events, and it must be stopped. The use of demeaning language, or hate speech, by students, parents and other fans must cease.

High school sports and other activities exist to lift people up, not demean or tear people down. The goal is to treat everyone fairly and treat each other with respect. Any speech or harassment that is insulting, demeaning or hurtful will not be tolerated.

High schools must establish a culture that values the worth of every single person – both players on the school's team and players on the opposing team. There must be a no-tolerance policy regarding behavior that shows disrespect for another individual.

Good sports win with humility, lose with grace and do both with dignity. It takes the efforts of everyone every day to ensure that sportsmanship remains one of the top priorities in education-based activity programs.

Protest/Appeal Process

During a track and field competition there are instances where there are disagreements with an official's call. In these cases, a protest may be made to the Meet Referee. The Meet Referee's decision in all matters is final. At meets where a Jury of Appeals is appointed by the games committee a coach may protest if they believe that the state's terms and conditions of competition or the application of the rule(s) have been misapplied or misinterpreted by the Referee, a written appeal may be made to the Jury of Appeals.

Video replay or television monitoring equipment, other than the official finish line equipment approved by the games committee prior to the start of competition, shall not be used to make decisions related to the meet.

Coaches may NOT protest

a. Any judgment decision pertaining to violations or alleged violations of the rules.
b. A decision made by the finish judges or timers that does not involve misapplication of a rule, or the terms and conditions of competition.
c. Whether a start is fair and legal.

Situations which are subject to protest/appeal include:

a. Misapplication of the rules which must be filed within 30 minutes after the announcement of event results.
b. Correction of clerical or team scoring errors which may be corrected up to 48 hours after the end of the meet, unless another time period is specified in advance by the games committee or meet director.
c. Correction of meet results involving an ineligible participant which may be made at any time when discovered.
d. Failure to follow a procedure contained in the terms and conditions of competition announced in advance by the meet director or games committee. This would include such items as the time schedule, the number of qualifiers to advance, number of trials, etc.

Cross Country Safety

Training for Cross Country is unique in that there are so many options afforded to the runner(s) to accomplish their workouts. Not being limited to the track allows the runners access to parks, city streets, highways and country roads.

However, each of these options creates safety concerns that all runners and coaches should keep in mind. Workouts and runs should be fun, relaxing, carefree experiences. Sadly, the need for runner safety tips is evidenced by a dramatic increase in pedestrian deaths in the United States, as well as eight reported running-related motor vehicle crashes resulting in nine deaths and two disabling injuries among middle school and high school cross country and track and field runners between 2011 and 2021.

It is critical that administrators, coaches and athletes promote and practice safety and risk minimization strategies as Cross Country runners share the road with vehicles and drivers that have become increasingly distracted on the roads. Some key safety measures that can be promoted by school coaches and others to their Cross Country runners include:

- Using sidewalks when available or run facing traffic.
- Stay alert and avoid wearing headphones and using electronic devices, including cell phones.
- Crossing roads at crosswalks and intersections, when available. If not, cross at a well-lit location.
- Avoid running when it is dark. If it is dark, wear bright, reflective materials and/or use a flashlight or head lamp.
- Follow the rules of the road.
- Avoid running along eastbound roads at sunrise or along westbound roads at sunset.
- Provide a safety orientation for first-year runners
- Run in pairs
- Never run against traffic lights
- Avoid running in higher traffic speed areas
- Run during lower traffic times if running along a road
- Avoid loitering along the road before and after runs

Coaches need to plan when developing a road route where stop lights, routes, and heavy traffic exist. Educating the athletes on where to go for safety in case of weather, emergency situations and hydration stops is crucial to athlete safety.

Photo provided by Northwest Sports Photography, Beaverton, Oregon.

03
JUDGING LANE VIOLATIONS ON THE CURVE

Meet officials or umpires observe each running event to ensure that no competitor gains an advantage and no competitor is placed at a disadvantage. This is most important during races that are run around one or more curves.

Situation 1

While running around the curve, a competitor steps on or over the lane line to the left with multiple steps. Rule 5-12-1a:

> *Without being fouled and while running around a curve, steps on or over the inside lane line or curb for three or more consecutive steps with either or both feet.*

As a meet official or umpire observing the race on a curve, place yourself in a position to have the greatest visual vantage point of all lanes. Observe the runners as they are approaching you or having passed you and scan back and forth at their feet. Pause at any runner whose feet are near the inside lane line and observe attentively.

Situation 2

A less common lane violation on the curve involves interfering with a runner assigned to the lane to the runner's right. This would occur most often in long hurdle races and relays. Rule 5-12-1c:

> *While running around a curve, runs over the outside lane line and interferes with another competitor.*

Situation 3

A competitor shortens the running distance by cutting early at the break line. Rule 5-12-1e:

> *The competitor takes one or more steps inside the assigned lane line at the break line.*

In these situations, as a meet official or umpire, it is important to note what happened:

1. prior to the violation
2. during the violation
3. after the violation
4. how many steps over the line
5. approximately where the violation occurred

These are all vital aspects for the referee to be aware of, to assist in making a final determination of the situation. In addition, it also provides the referee the necessary information to explain to coaches, if a violation and disqualification is warranted. Sample violation report forms and infraction reporting forms may be found in the NFHS Track and Field Officials Manual Additional Forms section.

Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.

04
RESOLVING TIES IN FIELD EVENTS

Document reprinted from USATF Best Practices

If two or more competitors have the same best mark, the procedure to decide places is as follows:

Vertical Jumps

First tie-breaker – among tied athletes, the one with the fewest number of trials at the tied height is awarded the higher place.

Second tie-breaker – if still tied, the athlete with the fewest total number of unsuccessful trials up to and including the tied height is awarded the higher place. Passes trials do not count as a miss.

Third tie-breaker – if still tied; then:

For other than 1st place: Athletes remain tied (there is no jump-off)

For 1st place: Conduct a jump-off per Rule 6-3-2b(4a)

Sample situation and event sheet

On the sample sheet below, only Crane has the best height of 3.80 meters, so she is awarded 1st place.

- Now we have to break a tie among three athletes at the next best height of 3.70 meters. Adams and Graham have zero misses at the tied height and Edwards has one, so Adams and Graham go to the next tie-breaker to determine places. Since Graham has fewer total misses in the competition (0) than Adams (1), Graham is awarded 2nd place and Adams is awarded 3rd place; Edwards is awarded 4th place.
- Four athletes have a best height of 3.60 meters. Bradley, Howe, and Irons have one miss at the tied height, so we must go to the next tie-breaker to determine their places. Bradley has fewer total misses in the competition (2) so she is awarded 5th place; Howe and Irons have the same number of overall misses, so they remain tied for 6th place; and Jackson (with two misses at the tied height) is awarded 8th place.

In the sample event sheet below, the next-to-last column provides a way to record the number of misses at the tied height (first number) and the total number of misses throughout the competition (second number).

Sample Event Sheet

		Imper.																		BEST MARK	Jumps Tied Ht / Total Misses	PLACE
Bib #	Name	Metric 3.30			3.45			3.60			3.70			3.80			3.90					
1	Adams	–	–	–	X	O		–	–	–	O			X	X	X				3.70	1 /1	3
2	Bradley	O			X	O		X	O	–	X	X	X							3.60	2 / 2	5
3	Crane	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	X	O	X	O		X	X	X	3.80	2 / 3	1
4	Douglas	X	X	X																NM	–	–
5	Edwards	–	–	–	–	–	–	O			X	O		X	X	X				3.70	2 / 1	4
6	Graham	O			O			O			O			X	X	X				3.70	1 / 0	2
7	Howe	X	O		X	X	O	X	O		X	X	X							3.60	2 / 4	6 Tie
8	Irons	X	X	O	X	O		X	O		X	X	X							3.60	2 / 4	6 Tie
9	Jackson	O			X	O		X	X	O	X	X	X							3.60	3 / 3	8

Horizontal Jumps & Throws

First tie-breaker – among tied athletes, the one with the greater 2nd best distance is awarded the higher place.
Second tie-breaker – if still tied, the athlete with the greater 3rd best distance is awarded the higher place; if still tied, repeat this process, using the 4th best distances and if necessary, then the 5th and 6th best distances.

Sample situation and event sheet
On the sample sheet below, each athlete's best throw is circled. Davis clearly has the best throw in the competition and is awarded 1st place. The next best distance is 20.85 meters by both Frawley and Huff, so you then compare their second-best throws, and since Huff's 20.60 is better than Frawley's 20.32, Huff is awarded 2nd place and Frawley 3rd place.

Sample Situation and Event Sheet

# / Bib #	Name / Affiliation	1st Att.	2nd Att.	3rd Att.	4th Att.	5th Att.	6th Att.	BEST DIST.	PLACE
1	Jack Adams	18.19	X	19.05	19.17	X	18.91	**19.17**	**4**
2	James Burroughs	17.50	X	X	–	–	–	**17.50**	**6**
3	Bill Campbell	18.64	X	X	X	18.62	18.87	**18.87**	**5**
4	Rod Davis	19.98	X	20.93	21.13	20.97	X	**21.13**	**1**
5	Nick Edwards	16.46	16.66	17.17	–	–	–	**17.17**	**8**
6	Adam Frawley	20.32	19.95	X	X	20.85	X	**20.85**	**3**
7	Brent Grant	17.17	17.20	17.43	X	X	17.06	**17.43**	**7**
8	Charlie Huff	X	19.12	19.04	20.85	20.60	X	**20.85**	**2**

05
THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN RUNNING AND FIELD EVENTS

The role of electronic devices in the daily lives of most people is central and growing. In some places, large majorities of people no longer have a "land" telephone, and instant communication is an expectation. Many teachers incorporate a student's use of a cell phone into the daily lesson plan. *These developments make a Track & Field meet one of the few locations where technology used for communication between coaches and athletes remains prohibited in most situations.*

The NFHS rules specifically address electronic devices, empowering the Games Committee to establish the boundaries of restricted and unrestricted areas (Rule 3-2-4g). Electronic devices may be used in unrestricted areas, as long as that use does not interfere with the progress of the meet (Rule 3-2-8). However, the use of any device during competition is forbidden and results in the disqualification of the competitor (Rule 3-2-8a). To avoid confusion, the restricted and unrestricted areas must be defined by meet management prior to the start of every meet.

Today, an increasing number of competitors use "wearable technology" in the form of smartwatches. Some of the devices made by Fitbit, Apple, Samsung, and others

function as watches – which the rules allow (Rule 4-6-5 NOTE 2). However, these devices can also receive text messages or phone calls. If that occurs in a restricted area (or during actual competition), the receiving of electronic communications violates the rules. Preventative officiating is the key to managing wearable technology in the field of play.

Possible approaches include:

1. Reminding those at the pre-meet coaches' meeting where the boundaries of coaches' boxes and other unrestricted areas are located that allow electronic devices to be used;
2. Training officials to be aware of the newer technologies and be observant of possible violations of the rules;
3. A meet could exclude any "wearable technology" from restricted areas if announced in a meet's published information; and
4. A state association could take action by limiting the definition of a watch, excluding any devices that can receive information from an outside source.

Let's review some track & field situations involving technology:

A. At the pole vault, a coach observes the athletes from the designated coaching box near the pit on the infield. The coach may show a video of the attempt to the athlete after the attempt is complete at the coaching box; a permitted action because both the coach and the athlete are in an unrestricted area.

B. At an invitational meet, the high jump is held on the infield, but no coaches' box is available inside the track. However, the Games Committee sets aside an area outside the track, but inside the fence, designating it an unrestricted area. Athletes can enter this area and view videos over the fence without worry. [In the case of consecutive jumps, the time to view video may be limited since video review may not occur once the athlete's trial begins and the athlete goes, "on the clock."]

C. While waiting for an implement to be returned during the warm-up period, an official at the discus cage hears a buzz and looks around. The next time the official hears it, the official observes a student-athlete staring at their watch and tapping the screen. Before the competition begins, the official reminds all competitors about the rules governing electronics, and that a smartwatch's communications ability violates the rules. After the brief meeting, three competitors remove their devices.

D. During a height change at the pole vault, an official notices a vaulter sitting adjacent to the runway, wearing what appear to be wireless earbuds. As the official gets nearer, the official gestures to their ears and the student-athlete removes them. The official can hear music playing from the device and summons the referee. After confirming the situation, the referee disqualifies the competitor from the event for using an electronic device in a restricted area.

Technology is constantly changing and evolving and the need for officials to be aware of innovations is critical to maintaining fair and equitable competition within the rules. Disqualification from an event is a steep price for a competitor to pay for using technology without thinking of the consequences first.

Remember:

1. Athletes may view video of field event attempts while in unrestricted areas and not "on the clock." The athlete and the coach must both be in an unrestricted area.
2. Competitors may not use an electronic device in a restricted area at any time.
3. Coaches may not use any electronic device to communicate with an athlete during a track event. Disqualification from an event is a steep price for a student-athlete to pay for using technology without thinking first.

Note: *Be sure to check with your state high school association for adaptions that your state may have in place regarding electronics and wearable technology.*

06
ADMINISTERING RELAY EXCHANGES FOR RACES NOT RUN IN LANES

Relays are an exciting part of track & field meets. Some relays (4x100m & 4x200m) are run entirely in each team's assigned lanes. Other races (4x400m & 4x800m) are not run completely in lanes and may require pre-race and during-the-race administration. Good communication helps facilitate the smooth, efficient, fair and consistent competition, while minimizing the potential for problematic situations.

Pre-Race Communications

1. Assemble all the competitors who are not running in lanes to the outside of the track.
   a. A good location is before the start/finish line so athletes don't get too involved and possibly interfere with earlier legs. Make sure your location works for the flow of your meet.
2. Maintain them in groups by leg and brief each group.
3. Remind competitors of the following:
   a. The lines or triangles and colors marking the start and end of the zone.
   b. There is no acceleration zone for legs where the incoming runner is running more than 200m.
   c. They must commence their run from a stationary position within the exchange zone.
   d. Check marks are not permitted.
   e. Should they wander outside the zone, they must return and be stationary, albeit briefly, before the exchange takes place.
   f. The exchange must take place entirely within the zone.
4. The outgoing competitor may not touch the baton before the baton is inside the zone and must be in sole possession of it before exiting the zone.
5. The athlete may retrieve a baton dropped inside the zone but must not impede other competitors.
6. If the baton has rolled off the track, return to the track at the point you left to avoid the possibility of shortening the course.
7. After passing the baton, the relieved competitor should stand still or jog straight ahead and step off the track when clear. If in Lane 1, they can exit the track onto the infield immediately.
8. After all incoming runners have passed the baton and the track is cleared, the runner/runners must exit the track and proceed onto the infield or other designated area that the facility dictates.

If possible, this designated post exchange area should be set up 10-15 meters away from the track area. This will keep the incoming relay runner/runners from moving around the infield area and cut down on any potential safety hazards in the infield.

During The Race Communications

1. The assigned official should provisionally line competitors up in starting lane order according to the order of the incoming runner/runners.
2. Escort competitors to the front of the exchange zone once the previous leg has been completed.
3. Remind the outgoing runner again where the front of the zone is and ask any athlete not in the zone to move forward.
4. Patrol the area before the zone, then get out of the way and watch the exchange. Issue general reminders if need be – be proactive, not reactive!

A limited timeframe does not always permit the communication of necessary information at the event. It is therefore incumbent upon coaches to educate their team on the principles and policies of relays.

Photo provided by Pam Wagner, Colorado High School Activities Association.

Pre-Meet Coaches Communications To Their Teams

1. Competitors need to position themselves so that their incoming runner can run in a straight line.
2. Competitors may move to a position better suited to meet the incoming runner.
3. There is no point at which the order of athletes lining up for the exchange is fixed.
4. The outgoing runner is responsible for taking a position that corresponds with where the passer is entitled inside the zone.
5. The baton must be handed, not thrown from the incoming runner to the outgoing runner.
6. If the baton is dropped within the exchange zone in a legitimate attempt to pass the baton, either runner may retrieve it, provided they do not interfere with an opponent, and it is retrieved within the limits of the exchange zone, extended across the track.
7. If the baton is dropped outside of the exchange zone or rolls outside of the exchange zone, the baton must be retrieved by the runner who dropped it.

Relays are an exciting part of track & field meets. Proper communication by the officials on the event protocols and expectations will give competitors a safe and fair competition, allowing them to compete to their fullest potential.

07
HOW TO UTILIZE A WIND GAUGE IN RUNNING AND FIELD EVENTS

During the outdoor track and field season, the weather can play a part in assisting an athlete or act as a hindrance in their athletic efforts. All sorts of variations come into play at track meets that can create a variety of outcomes, one being the wind. Winds do not always blow at a steady rate. Winds surge, subside and shift in direction with no prior knowledge. As a result, wind can have a distinct impact on the competition.

One area of common omission at the high school level is the delinquency in the use of an anemometer (wind gauge) for some running and field events. Results should not only have the times and distances noted but should also indicate the one variable that can have an impact on the outcome of the athlete's endeavors.

Anemometers or wind gauges are used to measure the average velocity of the wind over a pre-determined period during a race or during horizontal jumps. An assisting wind (as described in Rule 10-2-1) is one that blows at the runner's back, either directly or in a slanting direction. The events in need of a wind reading include the 100m, 200m, 100m/110m hurdles, triple jump and long jump. The sole purpose of a wind gauge reading is to ratify that the result of the field event attempt or race did not have any assisting wind over the prescribed 2 meters per second (4.474 mph). No matter how fast you run or how far you jump, your results must be under the legal limits outlined in the NFHS Track and Field Rules Book to be considered for a record. The wind readings may also be used for qualifying marks and seeding purposes for future meets.

The wind gauge is a calibrated wind instrument that uses a directional tube, which measures a wind reading expressed in meters per second (m/s) (Rule 10-2-2). Resultant times are rounded and recorded to the next higher tenth of a m/s in the positive direction (a reading of 3.03 m/s shall be recorded as 3.1 m/s). A positive reading means the wind direction is from behind, while a negative reading references the wind that blows against an athlete.

SPRINTS – Wind Gauge Setup and Positioning

1. Placed on inside of track 164 feet (50m) from the finish line;
2. Positioned within 2 meters of the track; and
3. 4 feet (1.22 meters) above the competition surface.

The length of time for the anemometer to measure each race is determined by the NFHS Track and Field Rules Book and is an average of wind velocity for the duration of the prescribed length of time.

SPRINTS – Measurement Times

1. 100m – 10 seconds (time commences at the discharge of the starting device)

2. 200m – 10 seconds (time commences when the lead runner enters the straightaway)
3. 100m/110m hurdles – 13 seconds (time commences at the discharge of the starting device)

You do not have to worry about when to start or stop the anemometer because with today's technology the gauge is pre-set to automatically function at the correct time, selected for the event.

HORIZONTAL JUMPS – Wind Gauge Setup and Positioning

1. Placed 66 feet (20m) from the foul line;
2. Positioned within 2 meters of the runway; and
3. 4 feet (1.22 meters) above the competition surface

HORIZONTAL JUMPS – Measurement Times

1. Long Jump – 5 seconds
2. Triple Jump – 5 seconds

When multiple takeoff boards are used, the 20-meter mark will be set from the foul line furthest from the pit. The measurement time commences when the competitor initiates their trial.

All NFHS national record applications for 100m, 200m, 100m/110m hurdles, triple jump, and long jump require anemometer readings. In addition, elite high school competitors applying for national championships and competitions should check to determine if the intended competition requires the anemometer readings. For a record to receive NFHS consideration, the performance shall also be made at a sanctioned event involving five or more schools and limited to high school contestants who are representing their high school.

Photo provided by Mississippi High School Activities Association.

08
EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENT INSPECTION – SHOT PUT & DISCUS

Throws competition can be one of the more dangerous events in track and field if not properly officiated. The purpose of inspecting implements is to be sure the use of the implement does not cause an unfair advantage and is safe for the athlete, competitors, officials and spectators. A damaged implement can result in injury to competitors, officials or spectators. In addition, an old, damaged or otherwise altered implement can create an unfair advantage to an athlete by allowing a better grip or flight of the implement.

To properly inspect throws implements, two issues must be addressed; weighing/measuring and inspection.

WEIGHING/MEASURING

To ensure the proper weight/measurement per NFHS Rules, a calibrated scale and measuring device must be available. Implements must be free of all tape, mud, or any other objects attached.

Shot Put

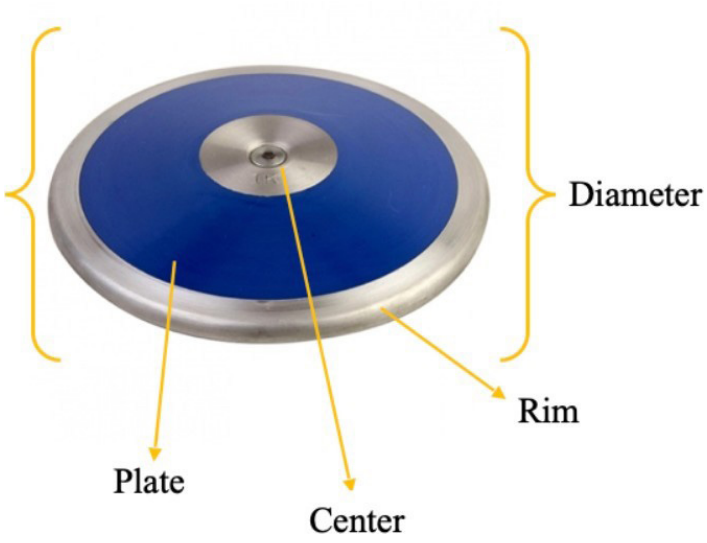
1. The minimum weight of the shot is 12 lbs (5.443kg) for Boys and 8.818 lbs (4.0kg) for Girls.
2. For Boys, the minimum diameter shall be no less than 3.873 inches (98.4mm), while maximum diameter shall not exceed 4.625 inches (117.5mm).
3. For Girls, the minimum diameter shall be no less than 3.740 inches (95mm), while maximum diameter shall be no more than 4.331 inches (110mm).

Fairness considerations must include checking minimum weight, and minimum and maximum circumference. There are several easy to use gauges on the market that allow quick and easy measurement.

Figure 1 : Shot Put Gauge

Figure 2 : Discus Gauge

Figure 3:



Discus

1. The minimum weight of the discus is 3.527 lbs (1.6kg) for Boys and 2.205 lbs (1.0kg) for Girls.
2. The diameter of the Boys discus must be at least 8.228 inches (209mm), but not more than 8.307 inches (211mm).
3. The center core must be between 1.968 inches (50mm) to 2.244 inches (57mm) in diameter and 1.575 inches (40mm) to 1.654 inches (42mm) in thickness.
4. Finally, rim thickness (1/4 inch from edge) must be a minimum of 0.472 inches (12mm) and a maximum of 0.512 inches (13mm).
5. The diameter of the Girls discus must be at least 7.087 inches (180mm), but not more than 7.165 inches (182mm).
6. The center core must be between 1.968 inches (50mm) to 2.244 inches (57mm) in diameter and 1.457 inches (37mm) to 1.535 inches (39mm) in thickness.
7. Finally, rim thickness (1/4 inch from edge) must be a minimum of 0.472 inches (12mm) and a maximum of 0.512 inches (13mm).

Some competitors like to bring a heavier weighted implement for warmups. Considering weight only, this would be legal. However, the implement has to meet the other specifications such as the diameter and circumference (Shot Put), and diameter, diameter core, thickness, rim thickness and radius of edge (Discus).

INSPECTION

A towel should be available to hand to the competitor if the implement is muddy or dirty. The athlete should have a clean implement to hand to the inspector.

Minor blemishes are passable, however, anything that might improve a grip would be considered unfair.

Shot Put

NFHS Rule 6.10.1 states that

1. The shot shall be constructed so its body is a solid sphere made of any metal or suitable material not softer than brass, or a shell of such metal filled with lead or other material.
2. The shot shall not have indentations other than a weight marking which must be manufactured in such a manner that no advantage is gained by the grip.
3. For indoor meets only, a shot consisting of a shell of rubber or plastic with a center filled with lead pellets may be used.

Most shots today have their weight etched on the shot. This would be considered acceptable as shown in Figures 4 and 5. However, there are some shots that have the manufacturer name and weight as part of the mold. Some of these are questionable such as Figures 6 and 7. These could be disqualified based on the possibility of improving the grip.

Figure 4 **Figure 5** **Figure 6** **Figure 7**

Photos from USATF Best Practices Implement Inspectors Handbook

Indoor Shot:

The NFHS Rule 9.6.1 states - "For indoor meets only a shot consisting of a shell of rubber or plastic with a center filled with lead pellets may be used." The maximum diameter for the Boy's Indoor Shot is 132.5 mm and the Girls Indoor Shot is 130 mm to account for the synthetic cover.

Figures 8 and 9 show indoor shots that should be impounded. The plug has caused cracking allowing the beads to escape, resulting in the implement losing weight. Also, when the plug is coming out as in Figure 9 it can be a danger as well as allow for a possible change in grip.

Figure 8 and 9

Discus:

The NFHS Track and Field Rules Book allows the use of a discus constructed entirely of rubber, plastic or metal, if it conforms with the specifications of weight, size and shape. This is also the type of discus that may pick up illegal blemishes the easiest.

Rule 6-10-3 gives these specifications and states that the rim shall not be sandblasted. It needs to be a smooth surface devoid of marks that may give the athlete an advantage. Prior to weighing the discus, the official should run their hand around the rim. Figures 10 and 11 are candidates for impounding the discus.

Figure 10 and 11

Photos from USATF Best Practices Implement Inspectors Handbook

The rim, body and center plates should be flush and fit as they were originally designed. These can be observed by sight as well as feel. Figure 12 shows the center plate not flush and Figure 13 shows the rim not fitting. These would be candidates for impounding.

Figure 12 and 13

Photos from USATF Best Practices Implement Inspectors Handbook

Small dents are acceptable if they allow for all parts to fit properly and do not create an advantage for the athlete, such as being able to increase the ability to grip the discus. Plates and rims that are cracked should not be allowed as these may turn into a safety concern. Figures 14-17 show some discus that should not be allowed.

Figure 14-17

Photos from USATF Best Practices Implement Inspectors Handbook

What about a rattle in the discus? If in your opinion that is due to a structural defect it is wise to look into it. A structural problem is a safety issue. This type of discus should be impounded.

Marking the Implements

The person inspecting implements must mark each implement which has passed inspection and is legal with a defined mark of the day. A paint pen is the best option for creating such mark, though sharpies, nail polish, etc. may also work. The most important factor is that the mark will stay on the implement throughout the meet. All legal implements should be clearly marked with the mark of the day. The exact style of the mark is inconsequential, as long as it remains consistent throughout the day and is placed in the same general position on all implements.

The official/volunteer at the venue should be informed of the color and the location of the mark of the day on the implement and, as part of their instructions, ask the athlete to show the mark prior to entering the ring or runway.

Impounding of Illegal Implements

NFHS Rule 3-2-4t grants the Games Committee the authority to set up a procedure for impounding and releasing illegal implements. This ensures that only legal implements are utilized in warm-ups and competition. The impounded implements should be marked with a different color and list the school name so it may be returned to the correct school at the conclusion of the event.

When inspecting implements, always err on the side of caution. Be sure to think safety first. If in doubt, impound.

09
BENEFITS OF WEIGHING POLE VAULTERS ON SITE PRIOR TO COMPETITION

Vaulting poles, like the athletes who carry them, come in many different lengths and weights. Matching the weight, strength, and speed of the athlete to the weight rating of the pole allows the athlete to be both successful and safe. An athlete who is too heavy, or too fast or too strong, is more likely to over bend and break the pole resulting in injury to the athlete, a coach, official or other competitor from the flying debris.

The NFHS rules state that no athlete may use a pole rated for less than the weight of the athlete (Rule 6-8-15). Simple, direct, and concise. Each state high school association has a process in place to ensure that the properly weighed pole is utilized by each and every competitor.

Benefits to weighing in pole vaulters on site the day of competition.

1. Ensures that the competitor is properly utilizing the correct weighted pole.
2. Provides safety to the competitor and the competition area.
3. Assists in facilitating a fair and consistent competition for all competitors.

Process

1. A certified scale must be on site for each competition.
2. Meet management must establish a weigh-in time on meet information.
3. Each school must provide a designated official, coach, AD, or administrator to supervise the weigh in.

What constitutes a certified scale? A portable bathroom scale can do the job if you contact your local "Weights and Measures" officer at your city hall and ask them to test and place a sticker (like the ones on a gas pump) on the scale. Most won't charge anything when you tell them it is for the local high school.

At present, the NFHS Rules Book dose not permit the use of variable weight poles, poles improperly marked, or a pole rated below the competitor's weight. Additionally, altering the pole in any fashion renders it illegal. Penalty for these infractions is disqualification from the event. Rule 6.8.15 states that "Prior to competition, the ***coach*** must verify that all of the school's pole vaulters and poles" meet the stated weight ratings.

Benefits do exist to weighing pole vaulters on site the day of a competition. However, your state high school association must provide guidance to make the process a reality and have it fall within rule guidelines.

10 TRACK AND FIELD INJURY SURVEILLANCE STUDY

As participation in high school track and field continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries may also increase. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sports Rules Committees use data from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO™) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO is currently collecting the 17th year of sports exposure and injury data.

Among the 20 sports currently under surveillance in High School RIO, the overall injury rate in boys' track and field ranked 15th during the 2020/21 academic year, and the overall girls' track and field injury rate ranked 12th (note, these results may have been affected by COVID-19). The most commonly injured body part in both boys' and girls' track and field was the hip/thigh/upper leg (boys: 55%, girls: 37%). The most common injury diagnosis sustained during competition for both boys' and girls' track and field was strain (boys': 73%, girls': 46%). Strains were also the most common injury diagnosis sustained during practice (boys: 43%, girls: 33%). Injury mechanisms were similar between boys' and girls' track and field with acute no contact as the most common competition-related injury mechanism (boys': 50%, girls': 57%) and overuse/chronic as the most common practice-related injury mechanism (boys': 50%, girls': 52%). In boys' track and field, 67% of subluxations/dislocations were recurrent while 50% of subluxations/dislocations were recurrent in girls' track and field.

The coronavirus pandemic remains a challenge for high school sports due to extended absences and altered training schedules. Understanding patterns of injury in track and field, both in general and related to the ongoing pandemic, is one important tool when considering injury prevention efforts to keep track and field athletes as safe as possible.

If you are interested in more information about the High School RIO Study or you are a certified athletic trainer who is interested in becoming a reporter for track and field, please email the High School RIO team at highschoolrio@datalyscenter.org. Please visit *https://www.datalyscenter.org/rio-annual-reports/* to access the annual summary report referenced above.

11
GUIDANCE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF RERUNNING RACES

NEW to the 2023 NFHS Track and Field Rules Book is a rule providing direct guidance in the administration of rerunning races. The meet referee has the sole authority to determine if a race shall be rerun, who is eligible to participate in a rerun, and when it should be scheduled (Rule 3-4-3).

While the need to rerun a race is rare, it does happen. As it will rarely, if ever, be fair to everyone, it should be avoided if at all possible. To consider a rerun, one of the following must apply:

1. Interference by another competitor; or
2. Interference caused by a non-participant; or
3. A meet administration error such as using the wrong stagger(s), hurdle heights or spacing, official's instructions, etc.

Reruns should be considered only in races or relays in which the distance run is 400 meters or less.

To determine who is eligible to participate in a rerun, the hardship placed on the competitors running an extra race and the fact that those who participate will have their places and times from the original race replaced, must be weighed against establishing an opportunity for a fair outcome.

Example #1
All runners in an intermediate hurdle race ran with the hurdles improperly spaced.

The race should be reran after an appropriate rest period for ALL participating runners.

Example #2
During an intermediate hurdle race, Runner A falls and knocks a hurdle into Runner B's lane causing interference.

Runner A shall be disqualified, and Runner B is eligible for a rerun. While other runners were not interfered with, they also may be eligible for the rerun.

1. If some competitors were closely competing with Runner B at the time of the infraction, and it is determined that those finishing places were uncertain, then those runners should be included in the rerun.
2. Runners whose places were clearly NOT affected by the interference, because they finished well ahead or well behind Runner B, should NOT be included in the rerun.

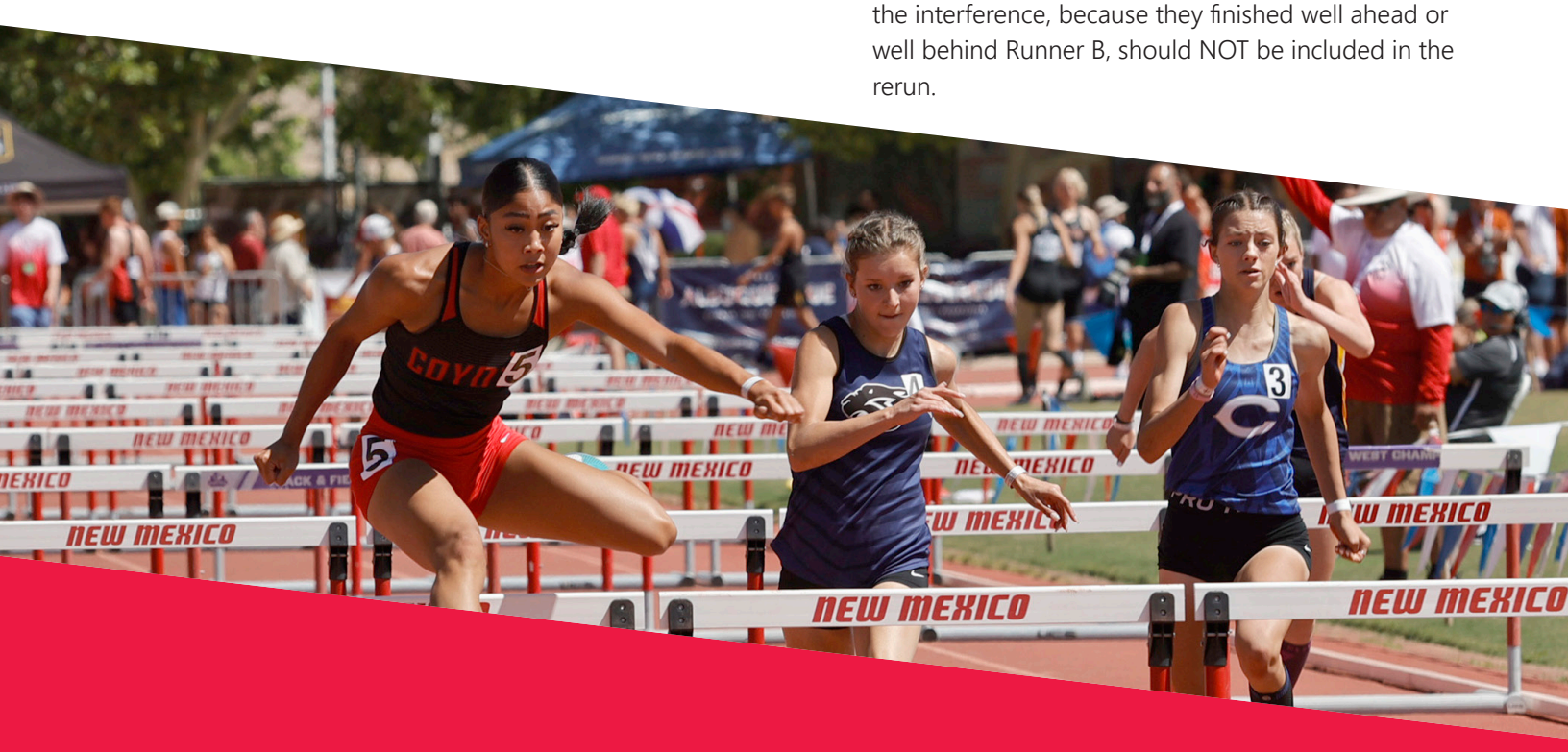


Photo provided by XL Sports Photography, New Mexico.

3. A competitor who is eligible and elects to participate in the rerun wipes out any performance, including place, time or record, from the original race.
4. Any disqualification from the original race would stand.

Example #3
In the 4x200m relay, Team A was placed at the wrong exchange zone during one of the handoffs. This is determined after the race.

Team A must rerun the race and may compete with anyone listed on the relay entry card.

Any disqualifications from the original race would remain in effect and make those competitors ineligible for the rerun, unless it is determined that a meet administrative error contributed to the disqualification. Such errors might include:

1. Starting at the incorrect line
2. Being given the wrong exchange zone
3. Other official instructions

The final consideration in determining when a race is to be rerun is to provide a sufficient recovery period for the competitors. This rest period must be provided to ensure the safety of the competitors. Races should be rerun as soon as a rest period can be provided, to maintain the flow of the meet and in consideration of athletes who are still scheduled to participate in other events. The referee should work closely with meet management and the clerk of the course to decide the time for the rerun. The referee may consult with coaches of affected athletes to determine a time that allows their athletes to recover but limits the impact on the rest of the meet.

Note: *Although coaches may be consulted, it is the referee who has the final authority to determine the time and participating competitors of any rerun.*

12 MIXED RELAYS AT TRACK & FIELD MEETS

Mixed relays are becoming increasingly popular at high school meets. A mixed relay typically consists of relay teams comprised of two male and two female athletes.

The 2023 NFHS Track and Field Rules Book has added them to special events (Rule 7-2-1f). Additionally, the rule provides guidance indicating that mixed relays shall be conducted under USATF event rules, unless state association policy determines otherwise .

The mixed relay was introduced at the 2017 IAAF World Relays and were then held at the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Qatar. They have now become a fixture at World Athletics Championships and in 2023 are now also allowed at high school meets.

The most popular mixed relay is the 4x400m where each member of the team will run a lap around the track, passing a baton to their teammate at the end of their lap. The race provides diversity and a new level of strategy as it is down to the individual team to decide which order they choose to run in. The teams could choose both male athletes first and then the two females, or vice versa, or decide to alternate between male and female runners.

If meet administration is going to include a mixed relay event in their upcoming meet, communication is the key part in making the mixed relay event a success. The following information needs to be communicated to all invited schools well in advance of the meet:

1. Mixed relays being contested (4x100m, 4x200m, 4x400m, 4x800m). On some school teams the female and male teams have different coaches, so advanced planning, discussion and cooperation are necessary.
2. Order of events where the mixed relays will be contested in the order of events. A suggestion would be to contest the relay after the completion of the gender specific event of the same distance. For example, a mixed 4x100m relay would occur after the Female and Male 4X100m relays.
3. Will the mixed relays be included in the team scores? This may affect placement of athletes in events throughout the entire meet. If the event counts toward team scores there are several possible scoring options:
   - each place could be split and half given to each gender's team; or
   - each gender's team could receive total points for each place.
4. Participation in a mixed relay would count as one of the allowable 4 events no matter if the event counts towards the team score or not.

Administration of the actual mixed relay race is the same as normal single gender relay races of the same length, except the mixed relay races are run by two female and two male competitors.

13
CORRECTLY MEASURING JAVELIN THROWS

At a track & field meet, no throwing event measurement presents as much of a challenge as the javelin. The challenge centers around the varied landing options of the implement. Per NFHS Rule 6-6-7:

> *"The measurements shall be from the nearest edge of the first point of contact made by the javelin".*

Identifying The First Point of Contact

There are five potential options for the landing:

1. Tip first – impact causes tip to stick in the ground
2. Tip first – does not stick in ground- javelin slides
3. Tail first – javelin bounces
4. Flat throw – neither tip or tail lands first
5. Lands outside the sector

Point of measurement for each landing listed above:

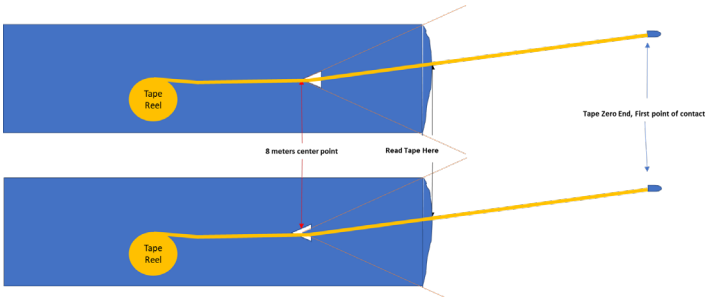
1. The first point of contact will be the back end of the sticking tip where the javelin made the first contact with the ground before it pierced further into the ground.
2. Observe carefully where any part of the tip first landed. Do not get distracted by the slide of the javelin.
3. Observe where the tail first landed. Do not get distracted by the bounce of the javelin.
4. Assume the first point of contact was the cord grip. Observe carefully where the grip landed first. The first point of contact would be from the back of the cord grip (end nearest to the foul line).
5. It is a foul. The throw is not measured but counts as a trial.

If the javelin lands with the first point of contact but slides out of the sector or sticks in the ground within the sector with part of the body outside the sector, it is not a foul. First point of contact is what matters.

Identifying the Center Point

The center point is located in the center of the runway, 26 feet, 3 inches (8 meters) behind the arc. All throws should be measured along the line from this center point to the landing point of the javelin. Javelin runways have a center point marked in various ways. All are equally effective.

1. A dot or circle.
2. A triangle *(top figure)*. The Red Dot indicates the center point.
3. A "V" *(bottom figure)*. The Red Dot *(inside the "V")* indicates the center point.



Measuring The Throw

All measurements should be made with non-stretchable tape such as fiberglass, nylon, steel, or a certified scientific measurement device (laser), NFHS Rule 6-6-8.

1. Zero end of the tape should be held at the first point of contact made by the javelin.
2. The tape should be pulled to the point on the inside edge of the circumference of the arc nearest such contact and in line with the center of the circle (illustrated in the figures above)
3. The measurements shall be from the inside edge of the foul line arc.
4. Measurement is recorded to the inch or centimeter.

The measurement of the javelin relies on observing each throw carefully to determine the first point of contact and measuring correctly to ensure a fair, consistent, and equitable competition.

14
FAIR & CONSISTENT STARTS

The tone of a high school track & field meet is determined by the fair and consistent starts administered by the starters. Throughout the varied race distances, the presentation of the starting commands must remain consistent to facilitate fair and equitable competition. This tone is set in pre-meet discussions with start area personnel and at the start of each race.

Photo provided by Minnesota State High School League.

Starting Commands outlined in NFHS Rule 5-7-2:

1. The starting commands for races or opening relay legs of less than 800 meters outdoors and 600 meters indoors shall be: "On your marks."
2. At this signal, the competitors will immediately take their proper positions behind their starting lines.
3. After they have taken their positions and are steady on their marks, the starter shall instruct them, "Set."
4. At this command, all competitors shall at once, and without delay, assume their full and final set position in such a manner that no part of their person touches on or over the starting line.
5. When all competitors are set and motionless, the starter shall fire the starting device.

New in 2023:

6. *The interval between the set command and the firing of the starting device is approximately two seconds.*
7. *After a starter gives the order "Set", if any competitor is in motion, the starter shall not fire the starting device.*

Note: *The inclusion of the NEW #6 above, provides each competitor the opportunity to settle into their final set position and become motionless prior to the firing of the starting device.*

Pre-Meet

Starters should meet with meet personnel assigned to the start line area to define their role in the starting procedures.

1. Having clerks give prior-race instructions to the competitors before they approach the start line should be considered. Instructions will be given by the starters if there are no clerk(s) available.
2. Clerks shall inform the competitors that once placed at their designated start line(s), they will give their attention to, and react promptly to the commands of the starters, and shall remain motionless until the firing of the starting device.

Race Time

1. The starter and assistant starter(s) shall be in a position so that all competitors hear the commands. Best Practice positions are available in the 2023-2024 NFHS Officials Manual under Additional Forms.
2. Proper start commands shall be verbalized in a firm, calm, and projected voice. Volume and tone shall be consistent from the beginning to the final set command.
3. The "Set" command should be a normal spoken command.
4. If there is any unsteadiness or unreadiness of any competitor, prior to the firing device, the starter or assistant starter(s) shall instruct the competitors to "Stand Up". This ensures fairness to all competitors.
5. The starter and assistant starter(s) shall discuss any issues and inform the competitors of the appropriate decision, before restarting the race.
6. The starter and assistant starter(s) shall implement these same principles for each race. This ensures consistency for all competitors.

When working as a Start Team with one or more assistant starters, communication between all is of utmost importance. All members of the Start Team must provide identical consistency and fairness to the start of each race.

There are many factors which attempt to create variance in the starting commands and procedures. The starter and assistant starter(s) must adapt and react to the moment, but yet remain true to the established start policies, procedures, and delivery.

Creating and maintaining fair and constant starts will ensure that each competitor is afforded the opportunity to compete to their fullest potential and provides a framework for equitable competition.

15
MENTORSHIP AS AN OFFICIATING RETENTION STRATEGY – DANA M. PAPPAS, NFHS DIRECTOR OF OFFICIATING SERVICES

The issue with the dwindling number of officials can be broken into two areas – recruitment and retention. While the issue of recruitment is an absolute necessity, we cannot forget the importance of keeping officials in once we have them in our ranks. Retention is one of the most difficult aspects of maintaining the officials' pipeline, as it is so multifaceted, including training, evaluation, relationship building, treatment of officials, recognition of officials and so much more.

One of the largest components of retaining our officials, however, is that of mentorship. While that is a great word and is something that we talk about all the time, we must truly understand what mentorship is, what a mentor is and how we can facilitate and foster productive, meaningful relationships between new officials and veteran officials in order to have a plan that works for us.

So, let's break it down. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a mentor is defined as: a) a trusted counselor or guide or; b) tutor or coach. Mentorship is then defined as the influence, guidance or direction given by a mentor. Sounds easy enough, right? Well, in the words of Lee Corso, "Not so fast…"

The problem with finding mentors within any population is the basic fact that not everyone is cut out to be an effective mentor. Just because someone has 30 years of experience doing something does not mean that he or she has the ability to mentor. A mentor needs to possess more than just experience or knowledge. A mentor must be selfless and willing to put him or herself out there to make someone else better than he or she is. This takes a great degree of confidence and a servant's heart. This means that the mentor has to believe in the greater good and has to have the desire to leave their profession, avocation, organization or company better than he/she found it.

I once heard the best perspective about mentoring from NFL Referee Scott Novak. He defined the core principle of a mentor in one brief sentence, *"A mentor has to be willing to train an official or a group of officials to one day take his job."* As a mentor in officiating, you have to get over the fear that someone is going to take your games. You have to realize there are plenty of games to be had and you have to approach mentorship as an honor. Good mentors want their mentees to succeed at a level higher than they did. It is kind of like parenting. Parents want to see their kids to be more than they were. Truly effective mentors operate in the same way. When the mentee succeeds, they mentor has a sense of pride instead of one of jealousy or envy or the thought of, "Why not me?"

I read an article some time ago about the three C's of mentorship in terms of the roles that a mentor should play. These roles are:

- **Role #1 – Consultant** – Mentors should be individuals who inform their mentees about the policies and practices of their state and local associations. They should help mentees through the process of registration, purchasing uniforms, navigating governing documents and online platforms and advising as to camps and clinics their mentees should attend. A mentor should provide the what, why and how of their thinking and should go beyond just simple advice.
- **Role #2 – Counselor** – Mentors should be there to listen and understand the concerns and frustrations of their mentees. Sometimes, a mentee is seeking advice and other times, they just need a willing ear. Mentors should be prepared for both circumstances.
- **Role #3 – Cheerleader** – While a mentor should provide a fair amount of advice and constructive criticism, one of the most important roles a mentor serves is that of an enthusiastic supporter, one who is the first to congratulate a mentee on a job well done and who celebrates successes and lifts the mentee up during the hard times.

If you are a new official and you do not yet have a mentor, we encourage you to seek one out, if your local association does not have a formalized mentorship program. Find someone you connect with, someone who has a similar background or interests as you and, most importantly, someone you can trust. If you start a mentor/mentee relationship with someone

and you find that person is not helping you but is almost detrimental to the trajectory of your career, it is okay to terminate that relationship. Ask your local level leadership or our state office to help you find a mentor if you are struggling to find one. Keep in mind that the official with the most experience may not be the best mentor. Keep in mind that your mentor may actually be someone who is younger than you in age but has experience and wisdom to share with you. Find someone with whom you can truly have a meaningful connection and who will help guide you rather than attempt to derail you.

American entrepreneur, Jim Rohn, once said, *"My mentor said, 'Let's go do it,' not "You go do it.' How powerful when someone says, 'Let's!'"* To the mentors within officiating associations throughout the country – be there with and for your mentor and help them succeed WITH you. To those being mentored – make sure your mentor is someone who wants to be your partner in this journey of officiating and who has your success at the center of what he/she is telling you. These basic principles will let you know if you are being an effective mentor OR if you are being effectively mentored.

Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.

Photo provided by Paynter Pics, Arizona Interscholastic Association.

16
THE MEET DIRECTOR/FAT PROVIDER RELATIONSHIP

FAT (Fully Automatic Timing) has become a common finish line system at many high school track & field meets. From Championships to invitationals and even interleague competition, FAT is the preferred and most accurate provider of track results.

At one time, FAT systems were hard wired and each element was set and adjusted manually. The process was very technical, as well as very expensive. FAT providers were an elite group that reserved their services for national championships, prestigious invitationals, and collegiate competitions.

New technology has simplified a FAT systems. Laptops have become common place and the development of wireless systems simplified the quantity of equipment needed. More FAT companies have been established allowing greater availability and more competitive pricing. Some school systems have even made the investment to purchase their own FAT system for their track & field and swimming programs. Coaches are certainly appreciative when attending a meet where their services at the finish line are not required for timing.

When hosting a meet where FAT system is to be hired, the meet director becomes the primary communique with the FAT provider. The success of the meet depends on a cohesive relationship between the two. Meet directors should keep in mind that the FAT provider is hired by the host and is working for the meet director. Before contacting a FAT provider, the meet director should make a list of the services desired from the provider. What is included in the pricing?

- Hip numbers
- Bib Numbers
- Live Results/Printed results for posting
- Entries
- Scratch Sheets
- Clerking/Field Sheets
- Scoring

It is wise to shop around, not only to find the best price for the services provided, but also for a provider that works well with the meet director. Questions to ask potential FAT timing provider:

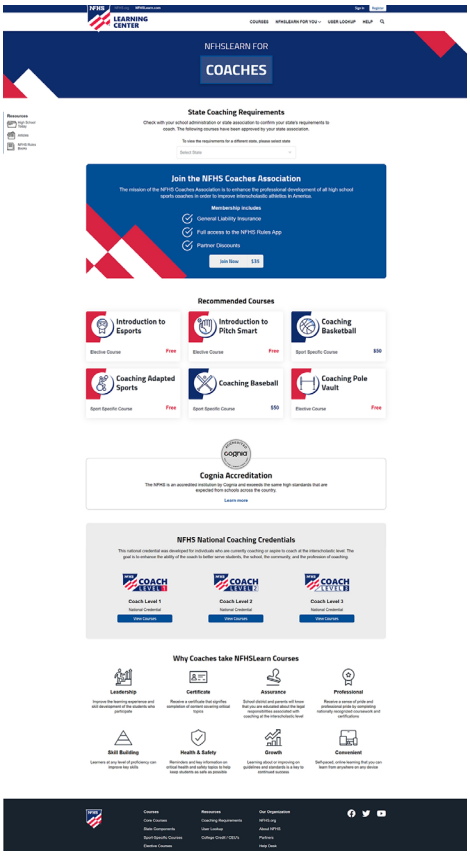
- Are they available on the date needed?
- Are they accepting of adjustments in heats and entries the day of the meet?
- Are they providing an electronic starting device or will the starter be using a .32/.22 caliber pistol? (Which is preferred by the meet director?)
- Do they have one or two certified officials reading the pictured results? (Rule 3 Section 8 Article 1)
- Are they accepting of reviewing the pictured results by the referee or jury of appeals?
- What are their electricity needs?
- Will they be positioned on the inside or the outside of the track?
- What are their venue requirements? (Is a tent needed and who supplies it?)

When setting the structure for the meet, information must be given to the FAT provider so the meet format will be to the host's desire. The meet director or the games committee sets the number of athletes allowable in non-laned races and the number of events in which an athlete may participate. Rule 4-2 sets participation limits for athletes. If the entry limitations are more restrictive, the FAT provider will need to be informed (Rule 3-3-3). The FAT provider will also need to know the number of athletes that advance to finals, as well as how an athlete progresses through the rounds. It cannot be assumed that the FAT provider will setup the meet in the way that is acceptable to the host. The more information that can be given on the particulars of the meet, the better off the host will be with the format utilized by the FAT provider. The FAT provider may also have suggestions based on their experience that could help with the flow of the meet. **Pre-meet discussions are essential**.

Upon entering a meet, the meet director should feel confident that the FAT provider will run the meet the way the host intends. As mentioned previously, the FAT provider is employed by the meet director/host school and should be flexible and accepting to the meet's needs. When the meet director and the FAT Provider are on the same page, major details concerning the meet will not be a frustration to either party.

17
AN HONEST PERSPECTIVE: THROUGH THE LENS OF AN EDUCATOR AND COACH

The NFHS Coaches Association's mission is to enhance the professional development of all high school coaches to improve interscholastic athletics. NFHSLearn provides opportunities for coaches to learn and gain knowledge on NCAA eligibility, proper nutrition for athletes to perform at their best, and provides coaches with information on how to hone their skills to teach their respective sports/activities. A coach can consistently use the platform to maintain credentials to coach the sports they are most passionate about. The courses offer valuable insight on how to assist athletes to build character through competing, and the resources are easy to navigate and beneficial in maintaining a successful program.



Assistant coaches are also encouraged to navigate NFHSLearn to identify the courses they need, not only for eligibility to coach, but to identify resources that can be utilized to add to their knowledge and skills. Heat acclimatization, concussion protocols, First Aid and how to administer CPR provided by NFHSLearn helps to keep athletes safe from potentially hazardous environmental factors that place them at risk for serious health issues. Valuing these protocols allows a coach to focus on placing the athletes' health above competition.

It is important for a coach to provide an experience where the players can flourish and develop as student athletes, while feeling safe and supported. NFHSLearn offers courses and information for all stakeholders to ensure young people are protected and can focus on excelling through sports. There are resources for officials to learn and understand the rules for fair and equitable play. Officials can also learn to identify how to protect athletes from bullying, hazing, and inappropriate behavior while competing. There are courses for parents to help support their children with the many stressors that can come with sports/activities and help maintain a strong academic standing. Most importantly, students can interact with NFHSLearn to gain the skills needed to navigate through high school competition, prepare for the next level of competition, and gain an understanding of what the body needs to perform at a high level through nutrition courses.

NFHSLearn is the ultimate guide for high school coaching as it allows coaches and other stakeholders to become familiar with what is needed to build strong, supportive, and safe programs. NFHSLearn ensures that coaches are well prepared with the skills to coach and protect their players, while offering an opportunity to learn about rules, policies, safety, character building, and positive team outcomes. The NFHSLearn site consistently updates content as the world of high school sports evolves and focuses on preparing individuals who impact the lives of young athletes to provide an environment that supports health and success. Those who seek to build winning programs, develop athletes, or simply want to nurture and support children can pull from this platform to be effective leaders within their team and community. As an educator and coach of high school-aged students, incorporating NFHSLearn into the curriculum can prepare scholars for internships and careers such as sports medicine and athletic training.The certifications available to students not only enhance their knowledge putting them a notch ahead of their peers, but build confidence and empower scholars to be the standard of our future leaders.

Tia Clemmons, MSA Jackson-Reed High School, Washington, DC.

18
TIPS FOR SAFER RUNNING ALONG THE ROADSIDE

It is not uncommon to see people of all ages along the side of the road out for a run. There are almost 500,000 cross country athletes and more than one million track and field athletes at the high school level. These numbers do not include the thousands of athletes who run during training for other sports and Special Olympics track and field athletes.

Surveillance by the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR) reported seven running-related motor vehicle crashes between 2011 and 2020, resulting in eight deaths, two disabling injuries among middle school and high school cross country and track and field athletes.

In addition, a 45 percent increase in pedestrian deaths was observed between 2009 and 2017 in the United States. In an effort to promote roadside safety for high school runners, the NCCSIR compiled the following pedestrian and runner safety recommendations from national agencies and organizations that are supported by previous research.

Runner Roadside Safety Recommendations:

- Use sidewalks when available or run facing traffic.
- Stay alert and avoid wearing headphones and using electronic devices, including cell phones.
- Cross roads at crosswalks and intersections, when available. If not, cross at a well-lit location.
- Avoid running when it is dark. If it is dark, wear bright, reflective materials and/or use a flashlight or head lamp.
- Follow the rules of the road.
- Avoid running along eastbound roads at sunrise or along westbound roads at sunset.

Additional Recommendations based on seven running-related motor vehicle crash incidents reported by NCCSIR:

- Provide a safety orientation for first-year runners
- Run in pairs
- Never run against traffic lights
- Avoid running in higher traffic speed areas
- Run during lower traffic times if running along a road
- Avoid loitering along the road before and after runs

Use sidewalks when available or run facing traffic. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), at least 91 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 2017 occurred in areas other than sidewalks. Additionally, a study comparing the walking patterns of fatally injured and non-fatally injured pedestrians struck by motor vehicles found a 77 percent lower risk of motor vehicle collision among pedestrians who walked facing traffic.

Stay alert and avoid wearing headphones and using electronic devices, including cell phones. A virtual pedestrian environment study found that participants distracted by texting on cell phones and participants distracted by listening to music through headphones were more likely to be hit by vehicles while attempting to cross streets in the virtual environment than participants that crossed undistracted. Additionally, participants distracted by electronic devices and music were more likely to look away from the street than undistracted participants. This study suggests that the cognitive demands of texting and reduced ability to pick up auditory cues from vehicles while wearing headphones may contribute to these results.

Another study, comparing auditory perception in cyclists with two earbuds, one earbud and no headphones, found that an auditory stop signal that was heard in subjects with no headphones and one earbud, was not heard by many of the cyclists with two earbuds. Despite a small sample size of cyclists with one earbud, this may suggest an alternative solution to listen to music while running without risking safety.

Cross roads at crosswalks and intersections, when available. If not, cross at a well-lit location. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's FARS, at least 73 percent of all pedestrian fatalities in 2017 occurred in locations other than intersections. One study, assessing pedestrian-injury severity in motor vehicle crashes, found a decreased risk of fatal injury at traffic signals. This, they suggest, may be due to vehicles moving at slower speeds at intersections when compared to speeds at midblock roads and better "right of way" knowledge between motorists and pedestrians at traffic signals.

Avoid running when it is dark. If it is dark, wear bright, reflective materials and/or use a flashlight or head lamp. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration identified 75 percent of 2017 pedestrian fatalities occurred in dark lighting conditions. Studies have found that, in comparison to daylight, dark lighting conditions increased the risk of motor vehicle crashes involving pedestrians. This risk is heightened during inclement weather. While any bright, reflective clothing may increase pedestrian visibility at night, one study identified that reflective material attached to the limbs of pedestrians, including wrists, ankles, and major joints, increased driver's recognition distances of the pedestrians by 60-80 percent compared to reflective material surrounding the torso. Although the definition of darkness differs between studies, these studies tend to identify darkness as non-daylight hours, including dusk and dawn.

Follow the rules of the road. A study of illegal pedestrian road crossings set in Australia observed walking patterns against signalized intersections. Illegal pedestrian road crossings were defined as entering the intersection against the pedestrian traffic signal (both blinking and steady) and crossing the road away from, but within 20 meters of, the intersection. It was determined that pedestrians who crossed illegally at or near an intersection were at a risk of motor vehicle collision around eight times greater than pedestrians who crossed legally.

Avoid running along eastbound roads at sunrise or along westbound roads at sunset. An investigation of crashes in relationship to high sun glare times found that, when compared to expected crash values, crashes were more prevalent during sunrise on eastbound roads and during sunset on westbound roads with sun glare. Additionally, higher traffic volumes during these times increased the crash risk further. These findings were more substantial in the early spring, fall, and winter seasons.

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Contributors:
Boyd, Richard (Auburn, IN)
Brand, Connie (Shawnee, KS)
Bruening, Lisa (Waukesha, WI)
Clemmons, Tia (Upper Marlboro, MD)
Collier, Kyle (Pottsboro, TX)
DeYoung, Mary (De Pere, WI)
Egan, Dan (Madison, WI)
Fergus, David (Elk River, MN)
Freeman, Yolanda (Columbus, OH)
Gidari, Robert (Goffstown, NH)
Griggs, Carolyn (Philadelphia, PA)
Grimes, Yvonne (Sandy Hook, CT)
Heckel, Mark (Hughesville, PA)
Hegge, Jon (Evansville, WI)
Kessler, Steven (Vernon Hills, IL)
Lohr, Carter (Winchester, KY)
Louis, Gloria (Lafayette, LA)
Merrill, Matt (Hilton, NY)
Meyer, Dennis (Waukesha, WI)
Nickels, Dave (Manitowoc, WI)
Padgaonkar, Ajay (San Jose, CA)
Pretty, Patrick (Cedarburg, WI)
Reed, Betsy (Henderson, NV)
Ronan, Patrick (West Newberry, MA)
Rouse, Patty (Elizabethtown, KY)
Sales, John (Altamonte Springs, FL)
Springer, Bob (Seattle, WA)
Sudrla, Terry (Sioux, IA)
Weir, Douglas (Paw Paw, MI)
White, Annette (Philadelphia, PA)
Williams, Rhiny (Artesia, NM)
Woolley, Dan (Hendon, VA)

Graphic Designers:
Kim Vogel, NFHS

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National Federation of State High School Associations

PO Box 690, Indianapolis, IN 46206
Phone: 317-972-6900 | www.nfhs.org

USA Track and Field

132 E. Washington St., Suite 800, Indianapolis, IN 46204
Phone: 317-261-0500