

# 2026 TRACK & FIELD PRE MEET NOTES



PLAY.  
PERFORM  
COMPETE.  
TOGETHER.

## 2026 NFHS Track and Field Rule Changes



**K**ey updates enhance clarity, fairness, and safety across events.

The NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee approved the addition of javelin specifications as well as 11 rule changes for the 2026 high school season during its June 16-18 meeting in Indianapolis. These changes, later approved by the NFHS Board of Directors, reflect the committee's continued focus on athlete safety, competitive equity and consistent administration of events nationwide.

### **6-10-5: Javelin Specifications Added to Rules Book**

With 21 state associations now incorporating the javelin into outdoor competition, the NFHS has moved to implement construction specifications into the Track and Field Rules Book.

**In a crowded pack, athletes often run shoulder-to-shoulder. For 2026, updates to Rules 4-6-5 and 8-6-1 reinforce that designated medical personnel may assess a downed competitor without penalty, underscoring the priority of athlete safety.**



"Moving the implement construction specifications for the javelin into the rules book provides greater clarity, consistency and accessibility for high school coaches, athletes and meet officials," said Julie Cochran, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Track and Field Rules Committee. "By incorporating the construction requirements directly into the NFHS Track and Field Rules Book, we ensure that all necessary information is readily available, specific to the high school

level, and aligned with the intent of education-based athletics. This approach maintains appropriate equipment standards while promoting ease of understanding, consistent enforcement and fairness across all levels of high school competition."

The change ensures that all necessary details, previously only found in external resources, are now housed within the official rules book, promoting uniform inspection and enforcement across all high school levels.

### **4-6-5, 8-6-1: Assessment of Downed Competitor**

The committee clarified that the assessment of a downed competitor by a health-care professional to determine whether an athlete can continue is not considered aid.



Games committees may designate appropriate medical personnel to evaluate a competitor during a race, trial or cross-country event without penalty, provided no assistance is given to help the athlete progress along the course.

This change reinforces that athlete safety takes precedence while maintaining the integrity of the competition.

#### 6-8-6: Vertical Jump Warm-Up Window Changed

A new allowance in Rule 6-8-6 standardizes warm-up times for athletes entering the high jump and pole vault after 60 minutes have elapsed. The rules committee changed the rule to provide a standardized 1 1/2 minutes for high jump and two minutes for pole vault. The update addresses fairness and safety concerns for athletes who wait extended periods before their first attempt.

#### 6-9-21: Padding Clarification

Rules 6-9-21 now explicitly references padding “items above ground level.” This clarifies that hard or unyielding surfaces that are elevated relative to the ground must be padded.

The intent is to ensure consistent

application of safety padding around all elevated structures near landing areas.

#### 3-2-3k (NEW): Games Committee Authority Expanded in Horizontal Jumps

The games committee now has the authority to determine the placement of takeoff boards in horizontal jumps, aligning its role with existing authority in setting starting heights for vertical jumps.

This clarification streamlines event management and recognizes the committee's existing oversight in field-event configuration.

#### Indoor Track: New Event Option and Standardized Exchange Zones

Two key changes affect indoor competition:

9-1-1: The 200-meter dash is now an approved option in the official Order of Events, offering flexibility for facilities where a 300-meter dash is impractical.

9-6-1: A uniform 20-meter exchange zone is established for all indoor relays on indoor tracks 200 meters and below, creating a single standard and simplifying officiating.

#### 4-6-6c (NEW): Audio and Video Devices Prohibited

New Rule 4-6-6c prohibits athletes from wearing any audio (microphone) or video (camera) device during a race, trial or within restricted areas.

This aligns track and field with other NFHS sports and protects competitive integrity and privacy.

#### Field Event Administration Updates

Several minor but important clarifications improve consistency in field events:

Rule 6-3-2b4(a) updates standard metric progressions for breaking ties, simplifying implementation and aligning with current meet practices.

#### Participation and Impact

Track and field remains one of the most popular high school sports, with more than 625,000 boys and 506,000 girls participating nationwide.

As participation grows the NFHS continues to refine its rules to ensure fairness, clarity, and safety for all competitors. ■

# NFHS 2026 Points of Emphasis

The NFHS Track and Field Committee has issued four points of emphasis for the 2026 season. They are not listed in priority order and are considered of equal importance:

#### Throws Safety – Shot Put, Discus, and Javelin

Safety in the throwing events must be a top priority during both practices and competition. Coaches, meet officials, event managers, competitors and volunteers should review proper safety protocols during the preseason and before each meet to reduce the risk of potentially dangerous situations, during both warm-ups and competition periods. These safety measures must also be implemented consistently at practice.

Each throwing venue should be carefully regulated and set up with safety for athletes, officials, and spectators in mind. A clearly marked safety zone must be established for each event, using

flagging or rope placed outside the sector lines and the farthest potential landing area of the implement. It's important to recognize that the flagged safety sector indicates the primary danger zone, but not the only one. Implements such as the discus and javelin can deviate significantly from their expected flight paths, and even well-marked venues require constant vigilance.

Officials must inspect venues for hazards, including checking cages for holes, loose netting, or other deficiencies. Any damage must be repaired prior to the start of throwing activities. Event personnel and athletes must be reminded to never turn their back to the throwing area during warm-ups or competition and to always wait for an official's signal before retrieving implements or leaving the designated area. These precautions are essential to prevent accidents due to premature

entry or unexpected throws. Ongoing attention to safety by all involved is critical to protecting participants and ensuring the integrity of the competition.

#### Restricted Areas –

An often underestimated responsibility of the games committee is the designation of restricted and unrestricted areas within the meet facility. This delineation is key to all meets, not just the state meet series. Clearly defining

Copyright © 2026 jointly by the National Federation of State High School Associations and Referee Enterprises, Inc. PlayPic® and MechanGram® are registered trademarks of Referee Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in any medium without written permission of Referee Enterprises, Inc., 2017 Lathrop Ave, Racine, Wis. 53405. Telephone: 262-632-8855. Fax: 262-632-5460. E-mail: referee@referee.com. Produced by Addie Martin, Referee Assistant Editor. Graphics by Matt Bowen, Referee Publication Design Manager. Edited by Julie Cochran, NFHS Director of Sports. Contact the NFHS at P.O. Box 690, Indianapolis, Ind. 46206, 317-972-6900 or nfhs.org

these areas supports risk minimization, maintains the integrity of competition and ensures efficient meet operations.

Restricted areas are those where only competitors currently involved in an event, meet officials, and designated personnel are permitted. All others, including non-competing athletes and coaches, must remain in unrestricted areas, such as coaching boxes or designated viewing zones.

Per Rule 4-6-6, electronic devices can only be used in unrestricted areas. This rule applies to coaches and managers recording performances for review and instructional purposes, but also to athletes. Use of headphones, cell phones and other devices are prohibited by competitors in restricted areas. Athletes using an electronic device while crossing the track or approaching a field event venue may be distracted and unaware of their surroundings which increases the risk not only to themselves and others.

Coaching from a restricted area is considered assistance under Rule 4-6-5, which results in the coach's athlete being disqualified from the event. Coaches wandering from a designated coaching box into a restricted area of the facility can interfere with the competition and expose themselves to risk.

The games committee must make clear designations of restricted and unrestricted

areas, communicate them effectively to all and enforce them consistently throughout the meet. This proactive approach promotes safety and fairness.

#### 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 referee shall review each written protest. The referee shall review all allowable evidence, such as an umpire's written report, and circumstances regarding the protest. 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. Video or photos from the bleachers, streaming footage or any electronic means cannot be used as part of the appeal process. After the referee renders any decision, the referee shall notify the coach of the competitors affected by the decision and if necessary, results revised, posted and announced.

At meets where a Jury of Appeals is appointed by the games committee a coach may protest if they believe that the stated 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.

The following situations are subject to protest and appeal:

- 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 - corrected up to 48 hours after the end of the meet;
1. Another time period may be specified in advance by the games committee or meet director.
- c. Correction of meet results involving an ineligible participant
  1. May be made at any time when discovered.
- d. Failure to follow a procedure contained in the terms and conditions of competition
  1. This would include such items as the time schedule, the number of qualifiers to advance, number of trials, etc.

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. ■

# Coaches' Boxes & Competition Areas

Coaches' boxes and competition areas are essential aspects of meet management and should be established by the Games Committee at a track & field meet. Each contributes to the proper conduct of a track & field meet and defines:

1. Who can be in the coaching box;
2. What coaching can be done there; and
3. What restrictions are applied to competitors and coaches in these areas.

#### Definitions (Rule 3-2-4g & I)

1. COACHES' BOX - a designated specific area for coaches to observe and confer with their athlete during competition.

2. RESTRICTED AREA - Meet area where only competitors and meet officials are allowed.

3. UNRESTRICTED AREA - Meet area where anyone attending the meet is allowed.

#### Who Determines The Location

It is the responsibility of the Games Committee to determine the locations and notify all participating teams prior to arrival at the meet. These areas are then reviewed at the pre-meet coaches' meeting. Meet management is responsible for clearly marking these areas to facilitate their use and to alleviate any confusion.

#### Competition Areas

The competition area is often referred to as the "Restricted Area". The much more general purpose of restricted areas is to provide event safety for both running and field events, for competitors and spectators. Determining how large a restricted area should be, depends upon of the layout of the track and field venue and the number of participating teams.

In general, areas that should be restricted, where no one except appropriate competing athletes/meet personnel are allowed, include:

1. Flagged/roped-off field event competition areas;
2. The clerk of course check-in location;
3. The start, and the finish areas;

4. Any other designated area(s) deemed appropriate/necessary by the Games Committee.

Restrictions in Competition Areas include:

1. Removing any part of the team uniform, excluding shoes, while in the competition area, as defined by the Games Committee, is illegal, Rule 4-3-3.

2. Usage of electronic devices.

In areas not defined as Competition Areas or "Unrestricted Areas":

1. Coaches, managers, etc., shall be allowed to encourage, call out times, and give verbal instructions;

2. Review videos (provided the location does not interfere with the progress of the meet);

3. Spectators may observe the competition.

NOTE: In field events, competitors must

go to the unrestricted area or coach's box (if provided) to confer and review video.

#### Coaches' Box

A Coach's box (if provided), is a designated area, for viewing the competing athlete, free of obstruction. They are most often used in field events.

Defined as an "Unrestricted Area", Coaches' Boxes provide ONLY coaches an area to:

1. Review videos.
2. Confer with their competitor.

#### Implementation of Coaches Boxes

It is the responsibility of the meet management to set up and communicate the location of coaches' boxes and who is allowed to utilize them. Suitable options to identify coaches' boxes include, but are not limited to:

1. Fencing, either portable or fixed,
2. Stanchions or cones,
3. Rolled up pennant or caution tape, and

4. Posted signage.

NOTE: A lanyard or wristband that identifies and permits a coach in the area is also an appropriate and easy way to grant access and monitor who is allowed there.

Plenty of stories exist of individuals putting themselves at risk because they were distracted, talking, or unaware of where they were walking or sitting. Defining coaches' boxes, restricted areas, and unrestricted areas at a track & field meet provides a safe, competitive environment and minimizes risk for competitors, coaches, officials, and spectators. ■

## Throws Safety

**S**afety is the most important element at a track and field event. It is a constant consideration and should never be taken lightly. Safety is everyone's responsibility. Maintaining a safe environment for the competitors, coaches, officials, and spectators is the top priority.

Definition: DANGER ZONE - A roped-off area around a throws venue created to minimize the potential for injury for competitors, officials, and spectators. Usually marked with flags, fencing or pennants, this area identifies the area of greatest landing potential for a thrown implement. The area should be at least 10 + meters from the sector lines. No one except officials and volunteers are allowed inside this area.

In the throwing events, there are plenty of opportunities for an injury to occur. Listed below is a breakdown of the necessary areas that need attention at every track & field meet.

**A discus thrower completes her release inside a properly inspected and maintained cage. With netting, danger zones and spectator placement all playing critical roles, officials must ensure the throwing venue meets safety standards.**



### General Guidelines for Throws Safety

1. SAFETY is everyone's concern.
2. ONLY competitors, officials, and volunteers are allowed inside the competition area.
3. NEVER turn your back to the circle or runway when in the competition area.
4. NEVER allow anyone else to turn their back to the circle or runway when in the competition area.
5. WALK implements back, NEVER throw them back.

### Throws Setup Checklist

Prior to the meet and before the arrival of the competitors and coaches, the event judge should:

1. Inspect the venue layout for:
  - Safety hazards
  - Competition flow
  - Competitor and spectator seating
2. Ensure flagging and cones clearly identify the competition area and the danger zone.
3. Inspect the ring/runway surface for protrusions or indentations to prevent slips and falls.
4. Clear the ring/runway surface of dirt, grass, or debris to ensure proper shoe traction.
5. Check sector lines and ensure proper marking of danger zones, painted lines, and flagging.
6. Inspect the cage and netting for damage or holes and repair as needed.
7. Remove foreign objects and large stones from the sector that may cause bounces or ricochets of implements.
8. Identify safety concerns that need to be corrected prior to competition and communicate with meet management to have them corrected before the start of competition.
9. Determine whether any adjacent competition areas overlap, and where a thrown implement has the potential to reach another competition area.

Corrective options are to adjust:

- the competition schedule
- the competition areas

### Pre-Event Preventive Guidelines

Pre-meet duties for the Head Event Judge include, but are not limited to:

1. Review warm-up and competition safety protocols with the officials and volunteers.
2. Address any observed safety concerns.
3. Review traffic flow in and around the throwing area.

4. Review spectator/competitor seating and adjust their locations to ensure safety.

5. Address safety protocols with the spectators:

- Watch each and every throw during competition.
- Minimize verbal and visual distractions during competition.

6. Position the spectator viewing areas, keeping safety in mind.

Once the competitors and coaches arrive, the Head Event Judge should meet to:

1. Clarify and outline safety protocols.
2. Outline acceptable warm-up procedures.
3. Advise that throwing outside the designated sector within the competition area is prohibited.

### Practice and Competition Guidelines

An overlooked aspect of competition is the monitoring of the warm-up period. It is essential that all warm-up and practice throws are supervised, take place ONLY in the circle, and that there are NO UNSUPERVISED THROWS. Ensure that no bystanders, spectators, non-competitors, or competitors are inside or near the cage during warm-ups. To maintain a safe environment:

1. Position officials and retrievers to the sides, not behind, at least 20 feet from the expected impact point and away from the rotational direction of the throw.
2. No one enters the danger zone until the implement(s) land and the area is declared safe.
3. Implement retrieval procedure options:
  - The competitor throws, and then the retrievers return the implement to the competitor's area.
  - A designated number of implements are thrown, and then the entire group that just threw retrieves their implements together (warm-up).

4. Only retrievers and officials enter the landing area after all implements have been thrown. No one enters the sector or danger zone until all implements are thrown and the area is declared safe.

5. Always face the circle/cage/runway when in the field; never turn your back to the throwing area.
6. Monitor wind direction, as discuss/

javelin flight can be affected and may deviate from the sector. Consider wind conditions for all throws and adjust positions accordingly.

7. Mark and fill divots or depressions after each round.

**NOTE:** A standard safety practice is that when the circle is closed, place a cone in the center to indicate that the circle is not available for throwing. In the javelin, indicate the runway is closed by placing the cone on the runway near the foul line arc.

### Discus - Shot Put - Javelin Venue Safety

Each of these three competition venues presents different safety concerns to be mindful of. To minimize the potential for injury, ONLY three competitors are allowed to have an implement in their possession - the competitors who have been called "Up, On Deck, and On Hold."

**DISCUS** - The fencing or netting provides a protective barrier. However, netting gives and expands outward. Competitors and spectators should remain six feet beyond the netting.

## Remember, throws safety is an all-the-time thing.

Fencing, on the other hand, can give a ricochet effect to an implement striking it. Competitors should be advised of that effect.

**NOTE:** All competitors must remain outside the cage until called into the circle to throw.

**SHOT PUT** - The lack of fencing or protective barrier increases the potential for injury. Competitors and spectators alike must focus on each thrower's attempt. Competitors awaiting their attempt to throw should be positioned a minimum of 20 feet behind the back half of the circle and off to the side.

**NOTE:** After securing their implements, the three competitors "Up, On Deck, and On Hold" should be positioned off to the side of the circle.

**JAVELIN** - Competitors awaiting their attempt to throw should be positioned a minimum of 20 feet to either side of the runway and towards the back half of the runway.

**NOTE:** After securing their implements, the three competitors, "Up, On Deck, and On Hold," should be positioned near the back of the runway.

Competitors, coaches, officials, and spectators must be mindful of and practice the 3 P's for SAFETY - Preparation, Patience and Professionalism:

1. Be prepared for any potential safety problems.

2. Be patient with competitors who are there to compete and may lose sight of safety issues.

3. Be professional, not personal, when dealing with individuals and throws safety.

Following all of these guidelines can improve the safety of any throwing event. While it is impossible to foresee and prevent all accidents, common sense and safety-first diligence can decrease

the potential and possibility of injuries. **REMEMBER:** It is permissible to halt the event in the name of safety.

Throws safety is an all-the-time thing. All meet personnel and competitors are responsible for the safety of the event and the competition. If something doesn't seem right, say something to the appropriate official or meet management. ■

## Games Committee – Role and Responsibility

Track and field meets do not all look alike, and because of this fact, there is a meet management role known as The Games Committee. The games committee determines administrative procedures and terms and conditions that will govern the competition. The games committee acts as general supervision of the meet conditions and procedures in a wide variety of situations, the vast majority of which are determined prior to the meet and communicated to the coaches. In fact, a review of Rule 3-2-3 & 4, shows nearly 40 items the games committee has the responsibility to determine, prior to a meet. New this year the games committee is responsible for appointing appropriate health care providers and take off board distances in horizontal jumps. When communication is provided ahead of time, schools are able to prepare their athletes for the meet procedures, and coaches come to the meet knowing what to expect.

### Who is the Games Committee?

It may consist of:

1. An individual (meet director or referee) in dual meets.
2. State association appointed individuals for qualifying and state meet finals.
3. Selected individuals for large invitational meets.

### What does the Games Committee do?

It is responsible for the proper conduct of the meet. In addition, it may also serve as the Jury of Appeals.

Here are some examples of the Games Committee's jurisdiction.



A fatigued runner receives help just beyond the finish line as officials look on. Situations like this highlight why the Games Committee must clearly define and enforce the competition area, ensuring only authorized personnel enter restricted zones and that medical assistance is available without disrupting meet operations.

### Decision 1

A games committee decision determines the competition area (i.e. that area at the meet site that is reserved for competitors, officials, and medical staff only). Each meet may be different based on the Games Committee and the committee should always make, announce, and enforce the decision. This ensures non-competitors are not in

areas they aren't supposed to be and all understand the location of the allowed areas.

### Decision 2

The direction of jumping events may be a factor in the competition when the wind is strong. By rule, the choice of direction is a primary responsibility of the Games Committee.

As the meet proceeds, the Referee(s) addresses issues as they arise. They are charged with enforcement of the rules, and the Games Committee's decisions become part of the Referees' enforcement as well. Items that arise that are Games Committee decisions that have not been made or announced previously need the meet officials to call the committee together for a decision, that can then be implemented and used by all.

### Decision 3

Imagine a conference championship meet that is held yearly and rotates from school to school for host responsibility. Coaches will typically have a developed manual of procedures for entry numbers, qualification to finals, places, scoring, and

more. In fact, the bulk of the items are the Games Committee decisions. The manual will have the items pre-determined that can stay consistent at each site, year after year. In almost all cases, the procedures will name a subset of the coaches to be that year's Games Committee. Now, their responsibility is determining items not in the meet procedures for the specific venue. A few examples include:

1. Determining the competition area,
2. The location of coaches' boxes at field events,
3. The procedure to use if the automatic timing system fails, and more.

Doing this work as a group early in the season allows the conference coaches to know all the policies and procedures prior to arriving at the meet. If coaches bring

issues forward, the Games Committee listens to concerns, then adjourns to an area away from the coaches to make its decision. Any changes are immediately communicated to the coaches and the officials, so the meet is run according to the committee's decisions.

The Games Committee's work sets the tone for the meet. Its work:

1. Gives the officials the framework they need to answer questions from competitors and coaches.
2. Ensures that events are managed the way the committee intends.

A well-structured meet will run itself as competitors, coaches, and officials all utilize the procedures and follow them as determined by the Games Committee. ■

# Check-Out Guidelines for Field Event Competitors

There are many opportunities for contestants to compete in track and field events. When the contestant desires to compete in multiple events, or the coach has assigned them conflicts can arise when they compete in some events simultaneously. The NFHS Rules allow the competitor to compete in these simultaneously scheduled events, but the competitor's coaches and officials need to have a clear understanding of the rules and procedures set forth by the Games Committee as they administer these excused absences from competition.

NFHS Rule 3-2-3(p) states that the Games Committee has the authority to determine the "time limit and procedure to follow when competitors are excused to compete in another event". For example, in the vertical jumps, the games committee decides when the bar will be raised for excused competitors: after all present active jumpers have cleared the bar, or only after the time limit for excused competitor(s) has expired.

In the 2025 NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Case Book, 6-2-3 Situation D, Comment 2 clearly explains the steps to follow when an athlete checks out of a field event to participate in another event.

### In general:

1. The competitor must receive permission from the Head Event Judge. Failure to do so results in a foul or a miss for the athlete when called for their trial once the allowable time for the attempt has elapsed.

2. The Head Event Judge must record the time excused. This marks the allowed check out time determined by the Games Committee.

3. The Head Event Judge may allow the competitor to take a trials/attempt out of turn before being excused (Rule 6-2-3).

It is helpful, but not required, to ask the competitor what event they are checking out for, in order to prevent them from checking out too early.

Additionally, Head Event Judges should use some judgment in extending the time excused under special or unusual circumstances, such as a 3200-meter run, an injury, reruns, etc., which will prolong the absence of an excused competitor. It shall be the competitor's responsibility to communicate the unusual circumstance to the Head Event Judge.

### Rule 6-2-3

- Competitors excused to participate

in another event shall not be called for a trial during their excused time.

b. In the vertical jumps, before the cross bar is raised, the judge will pass an excused competitor who has not returned within the designated time limit.

Make sure you know games committee rules for invitacionals and regular season meets and your state association rules for handling excused competitors at state championship meets.

Remember, if an athlete has NOT been excused from competition, the head event official will call the athlete up in the competition order, let the time expire, and record a "MISS or FOUL".

Coaches must consider the meet schedule, and the limited time allowed to compete in other events prior to submitting entries. They are doing a competitor no favors by making it difficult for the competitor to compete in all their events. Competitors are responsible for communicating the need to "Check Out" with the head event judge and communicating any delays upon their return. Understanding the check-out procedures for excused competitors in field events will assist in the efficient, fair, and equitable administration of the field event for all competitors. ■

# Starters – Standard Practices

The goal of any Starter must be to ensure all runners receive a fair and equal start for each race. The officiating Golden Rule for all Track & Field officials is:

"No athlete is allowed to gain an unfair advantage, and no athlete should have to suffer an unfair disadvantage."

The aura at the start of a race can be one of calmness and organization, or one of confusion and chaos, based on the approach and the actions of the Starter at the starting line. A good, standard practice of a competent Starter is to take command, lead and remain steadfast throughout the starting process. This begins with the ability to give clear, precise instructions and the ability to give the starting commands in a calm, yet firm voice. This, in turn, will help relax the competitors and make them feel confident in the Starter. If the athlete feels confident that the Starter will provide a clean, fair start for everyone without any variance or distraction, it is one less thing the athletes must worry about, which allows them to focus more attention on their race.

Because the Starter is in complete control of the start of the race and the Starter's decisions cannot be appealed (Rule 3-6-1), the Starter must have a complete and thorough knowledge of the rules regarding the starting of races and an understanding of competition requirements and needs of the athlete. Since circumstances can occur so quickly at the starting line, the Starter must:

1. Be decisive but not overbearing,
2. Have a great deal of patience,
3. Project an air of calmness at the starting line, and
4. Be relaxed and never try to overwhelm the athletes with his/her presence.

No matter what the level of competition, whether a junior high meet or the high school state meet, the Starter should be able to project the feeling that these athletes are important and that this is the most important race ever started. This would also include the aspect of the up and growing number of Unified athletes that are competing at the high school level.



A Starter fires the starting device after confirming all athletes are set and motionless. Clear commands, consistent hold times and controlled surroundings are essential to providing every runner a fair and equal start.

**Starter's Uniform:** As the point person of a track & field meet, the Starter must dress professionally, in accordance with your state association governing body. If there is a specific meet directed uniform, follow that recommendation.

## Pre-Meet Practices/Duties

### 1. Starters Meeting:

- Review positions on the track.
- Discuss hand/arm signals (in accordance with your state association governing body).
- Review starting violations (addressed later in this document).
- Review duties of the Assistant Starter, including when to halt the starting process.
- 2. Check the starting and finishing lines, relay staggers, exchange zones, cut line and cut line flags/cones.
- 3. Walk the track to familiarize yourself with any unique track markings for the facility.
- 4. Confer with the announcer to familiarize them with the time schedule, the plan for preliminary calls, and introductions.
- 5. Confer with Head Finish Judge to ensure agreement and understanding of meet procedures:

- Red and white flags
- Lap counter
- Bell lap
- FAT procedures

6. Confer with the Clerk of Course regarding pre-race instructions to the contestants to avoid duplication of this information at the starting line.

- Have athletes remove outer garments before moving to the starting line when weather permits.
- Have the next heat ready to move up.
- If the meet is on time or behind schedule, start them forward as soon as the track is clear on the final lap of the previous race.

If the meet is ahead of schedule, hold them until shortly before race time.

NOTE: Prepare for other assignments as the Start Team may have to perform the duties of a clerk to assure athletes are in the proper heat and lane in some regular season meets.

7. Confer with the Meet Director. Do we stay on time, or is this a "rolling" schedule?

8. If FAT is in use:
  - Conduct a starting device test to ensure functionality

- Determine recall procedures if FAT fails.

9. If a speaker system is available, check out its functionality and how it may dictate your starting positions.

#### Pre-Race Practices/Duties

1. Inspect the starting device to be sure it is ready and working and direct all attendants and non-competitors to move away from the starting line.

2. Control environment around the starting line area so competitors can direct their total concentration to the start of the race.

3. Give final instructions (especially in sprints and hurdles). Appropriate information might include the following:

- Runners, do not delay responding to commands.
- At the command "ON YOUR MARKS", you will be provided reasonable time to assume your position.
- When the command "SET" is given, promptly come to your final position and remain motionless until the starting device is fired.

4. In races where a waterfall start is used or with more than one runner assigned to a lane, alert runners of possible recall during the first 50 meters

5. Following the predetermined instructions, signal Head Finish Judge with a whistle, or wave a hand or a white flag that the race is about to begin.

6. When the Head Finish Judge confirms the signal with a white flag, ask competitors to remove their warm-up clothes if they have not already done so.

7. Take a starting position appropriate to the type of race.

#### Starting Voice Commands

The importance of the Starter's voice control cannot be overemphasized.

1. A calm voice is one of the most important characteristics of a successful Starter.

2. The Starter's voice commands should be practiced regularly so the volume or tone is consistent from the beginning to the final command.

3. Speak in a crisp, normal, spoken command just loud enough to be easily heard by the runner furthest from the Starter.

4. Maintain a calm, consistent intonation throughout the command cycle for all the competitors to hear and comfortably react.

5. If utilizing a speaker system, normal voice tones must be used, as microphone impedance may cause alterations in voice projection that could be a hindrance to the start procedure for the athletes.

6. The "ON YOUR MARKS" and "SET" commands should never be forcefully spoken, yelled, or drawn out.

NOTE: It can be quite disconcerting to the runners in the blocks to have a Starter give the "SET" command starting with a low 's' and finishing with a high 't' or the opposite. Yelling the "SET" command also will disrupt the atmosphere at the starting line.

#### Starting the Race

1. For races or opening relay legs of less than 800 meters, when all the competitors are in position, give the "ON YOUR MARKS" command.

2. After a reasonable length of time (sufficient to allow all competitors to become motionless), give the "SET" command. If you believe the time taken

to prepare for the "SET" command is unfair, direct the competitors to stand up and warn the offender(s) to arrive at the final set position immediately.

3. After the "SET" command, be certain that all competitors assume their final position at once and without delay.

4. When all competitors are "set and motionless", fire the starting device.

5. For any reason, either before or after the "SET" command, the Starter may cancel a start by directing all competitors to "STAND UP". After making the appropriate adjustments, a new start is initiated.

#### Starting "Hold Times"

The "hold time" is the length of time between the "SET" command and the firing of the starting device. Rule 5-7-2 states, "the interval between the set command and the firing of the starting device is approximately two (2) seconds.

1. Any hold of less than 1.5 seconds does not allow the athletes sufficient time to get into the "set" position.



2. If the starting device is fired with less than 1.5 seconds of hold time; there is an extremely high probability that at least one runner has not had sufficient time to complete this process, and the Starter has created a disadvantage for someone by starting too quickly.

3. There are two activities that require sufficient time to occur between the "SET" command and the firing of the starting device.

- First, the Starter needs to recognize and ensure that all the competitors have come to full and complete set position, have stabilized and are motionless. This typically requires an amount of time, usually a minimum of 1.5 seconds, to do properly.

- Second, consider what the athlete must do in sequence. They must hear the "SET" command, respond to it by directing the body to begin rising to the "set" position, sense when the body has reached the correct position, ceased body movement, and then refocus on listening for the starting device and concentrating on the explosive reaction of the sound.

NOTE: While this becomes an almost automatic sequence with experience, it still takes an amount of time to complete for both the novice and the experienced competitor.

4. A good hold time will range from 1.8-2.3 seconds.

- It is adequate to give the Starter the time to view the field.
- Provides the competitors the time to get settled in the "set" position and refocus on reacting to the starting device.

NOTE: If a Starter must wait for an athlete who is slow in coming up or reaching a stable position at about 2.5-2.6 seconds, the Starter should be ready to call the runners up, as this may have created a disadvantaged situation for some competitors.

### Starting Hand Signals

The use of arm signals with vocal commands assists both the competitors and timers. (Follow State Association Recommendations)

1. When competitors are starting from a crouched position:

- The Starter should raise the starting device to the proper overhead position and give the "ON YOUR MARKS" command.

- At the same time, swing the other arm (starting with the elbow straight

and hand at side) backward and upward over the head and then down in front, ending with the hand pointing to the ground in front.

- After a reasonable length of time, sufficient to allow all competitors to become motionless, give the "SET" command, and at the same time, quickly raise the free hand above the head.

- Fire the starting device only after you are certain all competitors are set and motionless. If this interval is too long, call up the competitors and restart the race.

2. In individual races or relay legs of 800 meters or longer:

To alleviate the problem of leaning or movement at the starting line on this preliminary command, ask all competitors to take a position three meters behind the starting line.

Before the Starter gives the "ON YOUR MARKS" command, they will raise the starting device over their head and the other hand pointing to the ground in front.

When the "ON YOUR MARKS" command is given, the Starter will raise the non-device arm over the head at the same time.

On the "ON YOUR MARKS" command, all competitors will step up to the starting line without delay.

The starting device will be fired once all are "set and motionless".

### Assistant Starter

1. The Assistant Starter shall assist the Starter in each race. The Assistant Starter has the same authority as the Starter to ensure a fair start in each race and may recall the competitors if there is an unfair start.

2. A race, including relays, shall be recalled in the first 50 meters when a competitor falls due to contact with another competitor in the following situations:

- When the race is not started in lanes (waterfall start); or
- When two or more competitors are assigned to a single lane (or alley).

Unless a bell is used, the Assistant Starter is assigned the duty of firing a pistol to begin the last lap of individual races of at least two laps or more.

### Reasons to Halt the Starting Process

While not all-inclusive, the following is a list of some examples of when to halt

the starting process:

1. Crowd control, causing a distraction
2. Starting block problems
3. Obstructions on the track
4. Slow competitor response to Starters' commands

5. Announcer interrupting
6. Wrong starting line
7. Inclement weather, outside noises
8. Slow roll-up
9. Bad shell/misfire

10. Flinch or jerk or runners having difficulty holding the "set" position

11. Runner's request – At any time from the "ON YOUR MARKS" command until the starting device goes off, a runner may halt the start of a race by raising a hand and requesting a delay. This can be for any of several reasons, e.g. blocks not being properly adjusted, dirt or dust blown in an eye, crowd noise, etc. Be sure to determine if there was a valid reason the competitor raised their hand.

12. Unsportsmanlike conduct or gestures from an athlete

### False Starts

Proactive preventive officiating can alleviate many false start issues. Per Rule 5-7-4, starting violations that constitute a false start include:

1. Failure to comply with the Starter's commands.
2. Having any part of the body in contact with the starting line or running surface beyond the line, when the starting device is fired.
3. If a runner leaves their mark with a hand or foot after the "set" command but before the starting device is fired.
4. If a runner leaves their mark with a forward motion without the starting device being fired.
5. Failure to place starting blocks within the respective competitor's lane.

6. Repeated use of disconcerting acts. Any competitor who commits a false start shall be disqualified. If violations occur, all start team members should quickly meet and discuss the incident prior to ruling. The Head Starter will make the final decision on whether a violation occurred based on all input from other members of the start team.

### Three-Point Start (if utilized)

1. On the "ON YOUR MARKS" command, the athletes' hands must be on or below the knee of the forward leg.

2. On the "SET" command, the hand opposite the forward foot gently touches the track next to the line. Simultaneously, the opposite arm should be cocked, with the hand positioned next to the forward hip or raised behind the body.

3. If any athlete is slow in taking either position, runners are called up, and the athlete is given a warning.

A false start in this starting position usually occurs when the athlete starts leaning or falling forward or when the upper arm starts down. The forward arm will start back when the upper arm starts down.

### During Races

1. Once a race begins, observe and assist in ruling on running infractions, hurdle infractions, relay exchanges and finishes. Remember, all starters need to be neutral observers.

2. During relay races, assist with the instruction, preparation, and placement of the runners.

3. Observe and supervise the conclusion of races.

The Start Team is responsible for avoiding unnecessary delays in the continuance of events. Your primary responsibility is to create fair starts and keep the meet moving. Do not

make the position more glorified than it is or call undue attention to the position or yourself. Be mindful that track layouts and field event venues may dictate different starting positioning, so be flexible enough to allow various necessary adjustments. In all cases, fairness to all runners should be the primary consideration. Utilization of Starter Standard Practices, professionalism and good common sense should, in accordance with your state association governing body regulations, provide a fair and equitable competitive environment for all competitors. ■

## Time Limits in Field Events

Proper and consistent application of time limits for field events (NFHS Rule 6-2-2) helps to ensure a fair and efficient competition. Here are a few tips on applying these limits.

Competitors should be informed as to exactly when the clock will start, for them to initiate their trial. One of the following signals can be used:

1. A second "Up" call;
2. Removal of a cone;
3. An official stepping off the runway;
4. An athlete stepping into the circle.

The clock should not be stopped or reset until the attempt has been ruled "Fair" or "Foul".

If an athlete has initiated the purposeful action of completing the requirements of the athletic challenge (jump or throw) before expiration of the time limit, with continuous forward motion, they have complied with the rule. Competitors are charged with a foul if they do not initiate a trial within the prescribed time limit.

Competitors may pass an attempt before, but not after the start of their time, to initiate their trial. If the clock has started, they may abandon their trial. The trial shall be recorded as a foul.

The time limit for all competitors remains the same within a round or bar height, with the following exceptions:

1. The time limit for a competitor's first attempt in the competition is one minute in all cases.



A high jumper clears the bar as officials monitor the attempt. Consistent enforcement of Rule 6-2-2 time limits helps ensure every athlete receives the same opportunity to prepare, initiate and complete a trial, keeping the vertical events fair and efficiently managed.



2. A "consecutive" attempt earns the additional time indicated in the rule; for verticals, this applies both within a height or after a height change.

3. The time limit for one remaining competitor applies when a competitor has won the competition; for verticals, this applies both within a height or after a height change.

Competitors should be warned verbally or by signal that 15 seconds remain in the time for their trial. This should be done in a manner that does not distract the competitor.

The time limit for competitors excused to compete in another event is set by the Games Committee (Rule 3-2-3o).

1. Excused competitors are not called up for an attempt during their excused time.

2. They may take attempts out of order before or after their return.

Athletes remaining in the competition at the start of a round or bar height	Individual Events			Combined Events		
	HJ	PV	Other FE	HJ	PV	Other PE
First attempt of a competitor in the competition	1	1	1	1	1	1
More than 3	1	1	1	1	1	1
2 or 3 remaining	3	3	1	3	3	1
1 remaining (winner)	5	5	1	5	5	1
Consecutive Trials	2	3	2	2	3	2

3. In vertical events, if all other competitors have completed attempts at a height, the official will pause the event until the excused time has expired; if they don't return within the allotted time, they are passed and the bar is raised to the next height.

In all events, if the excused

competitor has not returned within the allotted time and all other competitors have completed all attempts, that preliminary or final competition is concluded.

When these rules are consistently applied, they create a level field and a fair experience for all. ■

## Scoring in Field Events

High school track and field meets most frequently include seven field events: three throws (shot put, discuss and javelin), two horizontal jumps (long and triple jump) and two vertical jumps (high jump and pole vault). Not all state association governing bodies sponsor competition in all events. However, the rules and scoring are generally consistent from one jurisdiction to the next.

### Horizontals and Throws

The horizontal jumps and throws are scored differently than the vertical jumps. In all events, the number of places to be scored is determined by the number of teams in the event. In a dual meet, the top three places are scored, earning 5-3-1 points (Rule 2-1-2). Scoring for competitions with more teams is also outlined in the rules.

In the competition:

1. All competitors are given three attempts in a preliminary round.
2. The top athletes, as determined by the Games Committee, are given another three attempts in a final round.
3. A fair or valid mark is measured either in feet and inches or in meters.

4. In shot put and horizontal jumps, round the measurement down to the nearest quarter inch or centimeter.

5. In the discus and javelin, round down to the nearest inch or centimeter.

6. The distance achieved on each fair jump or throw in the preliminary round is recorded.

At the end of the preliminary round, the best recorded attempt for each athlete

is compared. The top competitors, as determined by the Games Committee, will advance to the final, where they will compete in reverse order, shortest to longest.

1. One more competitor than there are scoring places advances to the final.

2. A competitor must have at least one fair mark to advance to finals.

3. All competitors tying for the last

Chart 1

Javelin Scoresheet Sample

Prelim Attempt 1	Prelim Attempt 2	Prelim Attempt 3	Prelim Attempt 4	Prelim Attempt 5	Prelim Attempt 6	BEST	PLACE
63-10	77-06	94-00	90-01	X	88-06	94-00	8
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
86-09	X	87-11	70-08	96-06	82-10	96-06	7
93-00	96-07	100-10	85-01	-	-	100-10	6
X	118-01	125-00	125-07	130-00	X	130-00	3
114-10	116-03	117-02	106-08	125-07	122-03	125-07	5
126-03	118-00	127-09	96-07	84-00	127-01	127-09	4
X	152-09	140-11	X	X	X	152-09	2
148-10	157-10	X	X	X	X	157-10	1

qualifying position for the finals shall advance.

NOTE: If a competitor has earned the right to advance to finals but then withdraws from the finals, no substitute is advanced in that person's place (6-2-19). However, that individual's best mark from prelims counts for determining placements and scoring (6-2-17).

Correct procedure of advancement from prelims to finals is crucial because if that does not happen, there is a chance someone who otherwise would score at a meet will not have that opportunity.

Once the final round is completed, all recorded attempts, both preliminary and final, are considered, and the best attempt for each athlete is scored.

1. The winner is the one with the longest distance.

2. In the event of a tie for any place, the second-longest distance for the tied competitors is compared, then the third-longest distance, etc., until the ties are broken.

3. If the tie cannot be broken, the points for the tied places are added together, divided by the number of tied athletes, with that amount awarded to each of them.

Example: If the meet is scored for places 1-8 (10, 8, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1), and two competitors tied for sixth, each shall be recorded as being 6th, shown as 6T. Sixth and seventh place points (3 and 2) total 5. Half of 5 is 2.5 points per tied competitor.

### Verticals

In the vertical jumps, each athlete may attempt or pass up to three times at each height until the athlete has three consecutive misses.

1. If the competitor legally clears the bar, the attempt is recorded using a small circle "O" in the blank for that attempt.

2. Competitors who do not legally clear the bar have a small "X" in the blank for that attempt, but may take a second and third attempt to legally clear the bar.

3. A competitor may pass any of the three attempts, recorded with a dash symbol "—", and move to the next height.

Once an athlete has three consecutive misses, that person is out of the competition, with the highest made height recorded as their best mark. The bar is then raised, and the athletes remaining in the competition are given

the opportunity to attempt or pass the next height. The competition continues until only one athlete is left. That person may elect either to continue jumping or to end attempts, concluding the competition.

Scoring in the vertical jumps is based on the best height for each athlete and the fewest attempts at that height. Passed heights or attempts are not considered. First place goes to the competitor who has cleared the highest height. If after the end of competition, two or more competitors have the same best height, the following tie-breaking procedures apply (Rule 6-3-2b.4).

1. The competitor with the fewest number of trials (i.e. fewest misses) at the height at which the tie occurs shall be awarded the higher place.

2. If the competitors are still tied, the one with the fewest number of unsuccessful trials throughout the competition up to and including the last cleared height shall be awarded the higher place. Sometimes this condition is referred to as "total misses".

3. If, after applying these tie breakers, the competitors are still tied and it is not for first place, the competitors will share the points for the places they are tied.

Example: If 8 places are being scored and two competitors are tied for 3rd place (shown as 3T on the Event Sheet), the points for 3rd place (6) and 4th place (5) will be combined and divided equally between the competitors ( $6+5=11$ ). Eleven divided by 2 = 5.5 points per competitor.

If the tie is for first place, additional steps shall be taken to determine the winner, including a jump-off. A competitor who elects not to participate in a jump-off automatically forfeits any claim to the higher place. If only one other competitor remains, that competitor is declared the winner regardless of whether that height is attempted. Both

may elect to forgo a jump-off, and in that case, the points are divided equally between the competitors.

### Jump-Off

In a jump-off, each competitor tied for first place has one trial at each height. The jump-off shall start at the next height after the height last cleared.

NOTE: If the height of the last attempt by the tied competitors is not the same because of a passed height by one of them, the bar for the jump-off shall commence at the next height in the original progression, after the tying height. (Rule 6-3-2b-4 Note)

1. The tied athletes take one additional attempt at this height.

2. If they both make the height, they are still tied, and the bar is raised (1 inch or 2 cm in high jump and 3 inches or 5 cm in pole vault).

3. If they miss and are still tied, the bar is lowered by the same increment and the competition continues.

The bar shall continue to be raised and lowered as necessary until a single competitor clears the height. At this point, that person shall be declared the winner.

NOTE: A competitor shall be credited with their best achievement, including performances made in the jump-off for a first-place tie.

All jumpers, A, B, and C cleared 1.77m on their second attempts and did not clear any subsequent height. Rule 6-3-2b(2) is now applied.

1. The judge calculates the total number of unsuccessful trials, up to and including the height last cleared, for each competitor.

2. Jumper C has more unsuccessful trials than either A or B and is therefore awarded third place.

3. Jumpers A and B have the same number of unsuccessful trials; they must jump-off to determine first place.

The next height in the announced

### Vertical Jump Scoresheet Sample

Chart 2															Best	Place
O	I	O	I	O	I	X	X	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	2.30	5
I	-	I	-	O	I	X	X	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	2.45	4
I	-	I	-	I	-	O	I	O	I	X	X	I	I	I	2.75	3
I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-	I	I	I	X	O	X	X	3.50	1
I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-	I	I	I	X	O	O	I	3.35	2

## Illustration of Jump-off Example

Chart 3

						Total # of Unsuccessful Trials	Jump off			Best Height	Place
	1.62	1.67	1.72	1.77	1.82	1.87		1.82	1.80	1.82	
A	O	XO	O	XO	XX—	X	2	X	O	X	1.80
B	O	O	XO	XO	—	XXX	2	X	O	O	1.82
C		XO	XO	XO	XXX		3				1.77
											3

progression, after the tying height of 1.77m, is 1.82m. Therefore, 1.82m is the height at which the jump-off will start. The tie for first was broken on the third height change in the jump-off when Jumper B cleared 1.82m and A failed that

height. Jumper B is awarded first place at 1.82 and Jumper A second place at 1.80.

There may be some meets that will require the tie-breaking procedure to be used for more than first place (e.g., a meet where the top three places qualify for

the state meet). In these cases, be sure to know in advance the procedures specified by your state association governing body. For any such jump-off, follow the same procedure as used for first place to determine which competitor receives the higher place. That jump-off will occur at the conclusion of the event.

NOTE: Determine the tie during the competition and request the tied competitors remain in the competition area.

The scoring of field events may initially appear to be an overwhelming task, as procedures vary from horizontals and throws to vertical events. Adhering to the step-by-step scoring guidelines outlined in the NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rule Book will transform the process into a "can-do" task. ■

## Referee's Role in Determining Violations and Protest Procedures

The NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Book charges the Meet Referee with a very wide range of responsibilities. Rule 3-4, establishes the depth and breadth of this authority, beginning upon arrival at the site and concluding thirty minutes after the results of the last event become final. Throughout all of this, the Referee's primary responsibility remains the same:

Ensure a safe competition and ensure the rules are applied equitably so each competitor has the best chance to perform to the best of their abilities.

However, accomplishing those goals will differ depending on several factors, most of which are beyond the Referee's control. As a result, one of the most important things a Referee brings to each meet is their mindset.

A "Referee Mindset" always incorporates:

1. Thorough knowledge of the rules,
2. An awareness of each venue's configuration,
3. An understanding of the meet's purpose, and
4. A collaborative attitude towards all



PlayPic®

officials, coaches, student-athletes, meet personnel, and spectators.

A successful Referee also remembers their core functions and knows that there are times when it is not possible to resolve a situation to everyone's satisfaction. A referee listens before speaking and has good communication skills.

Because it is impossible to anticipate every possible situation, the Referee must develop a process to address situations as they arise.

1. Communications, preparation, and observation make the job easier.
2. Check the track and field event venues for safety concerns.
3. Become familiar with the track markings.
4. Check the field event sectors for compliance with the rules.
5. Be familiar with the meet procedures.

Communication with the meet director and FAT crew to obtain the list of running heats and field event flights before the meet is very helpful and a reference in case of disqualifications.

Before the meet begins, the referee should meet with the coaches to emphasize that all decisions regarding infractions are made by the referee, who will personally notify the coach if one of their athletes is involved. Similarly, the referee should meet with all officials to introduce themselves and review specific operating procedures for the meet. The referee must also be familiar with the key personnel, including the heads of starting, clerking, umpiring, finish line, lap counting, each field event, and implement inspection.

The Referee Mindset approach should keep several keys in mind:

1. In an investigation, speak with all of the relevant people and reread the appropriate Rules Book and Case Book ruling(s);
2. Coaches and athletes may react emotionally; maintain a calm and professional demeanor, and do not take anything personally.
3. Consider all possible outcomes of a situation before acting.
4. Remember, high school athletics is an extension of the classroom, and competition is part of the learning process. Mistakes are how learning occurs, and most infractions are a result of a mistake.

5. Believe that everyone comes to the situation with "Clean Hands." Never ascribe a motive to an action or statement.

6. Handle protests or disputes calmly and fairly.

7. Interpret rules and make final judgments when needed.

8. Apply all rules consistently and evenly at all times but remember that the rules book anticipates that situations not covered by the rules will arise and gives the referee authority to rule on these infractions.

9. Remember that Rule 3-1-2 prevents the setting aside of any rule.

To put the Referee Mindset into operation, there are several suggestions that help.

1. Encourage the use of written records as much as possible.
2. Umpire's reports should be written, and an oral protest from a coach should never be accepted.
3. If you want to be proactive,

prepare your own infraction sheet listing all the infractions with a diagram of the track on the back to pinpoint the location of the infraction.

4. Equip umpires with flags and a list of heats so they can identify the athletes by event and heat.

5. Possibly having the clerks hip number all competitors to assist with easy identification.

6. Keep in touch with field event officials and make sure there is cooperation with clerks for athletes competing in both running and field events.

Protests or appeals must be submitted prior to 30 minutes after the results of an event are posted (Rule 2-3-3).

By keeping written records, a "paper trail" exists: it is easier for all involved to learn from the event and minimize misunderstandings.

Specifically, having the Umpire record, "Lane 3 took 4 consecutive

# VISIT THE NFHS OFFICIAL'S STORE



[NFHSOfficialsStore.com](http://NFHSOfficialsStore.com)

All your Officials Apparel and Equipment in one place.



steps on the curve with left foot," (Rule 5-13-2) and marking that on the track diagram on the back of the infraction sheet makes explaining the decision to disqualify the student-athlete to the competitor's coach simpler.

Likewise, requiring a coach to submit a written protest ensures a specific rule is cited and reduces the number of unacceptable protests. [i.e., protests of things like judgment calls.]

Talk to the officials first, then to the coaches whose competitors are

involved, to gather all sides of the incident. Remember, if you get stuck on the interpretation of a rule, your state association governing body's rules interpreter is just a phone call away.

In our technologically driven age, one of the greatest challenges involves the limits of technology. Aside from constantly reminding student-athletes that phones are not permitted within the competition area, the rules explicitly limit the technology a Referee may consult/review (Rule 3-2-7). Often,

coaches and others (frequently parents/guardians) persistently ask the Referee to "just look at this for a moment..." Having a standard, polite way to decline these requests is very helpful.

Finally, having a "Referee Mindset" means constantly reviewing events and searching for ways to improve. After a meet, regardless of its size, the Referee should reflect upon what went well, what did not go as planned, and try to find what (if anything) might have led to a better result. ■

## 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 Sport Rules Committees use data from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIOTM) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO is currently collecting the 20th year of sports exposure and injury data.

Among the twenty sports currently under surveillance in High School RIO, during the 2023/24 academic year, the overall injury rate in boys' track and field ranked 13th, and the overall injury rate in girls' track and field ranked 14th. The most commonly injured body parts



in both boys' and girls' track and field were the hip/thigh/upper leg (boys': 52%; girls': 34%) and lower leg (boys': 15%; girls': 24%). The most common injury sustained during competition for both boys' and girls' was strain (boys': 72%; girls': 37%). Strains were also the most common injury diagnosis sustained during practice (boys': 43%; girls': 36%). Injury mechanisms were similar for boys' and girls' track and field with acute no contact as the most common competition-related injury mechanism for boys (49%) and acute no contact and overuse/chronic for girls' (39% for both). Overuse/chronic was the most common

practice-related injury mechanism for boys' and girls' (51% for both). Boys' and girls' track and field had a lower rate of injuries that required surgical intervention than other sports.

Understanding patterns of injury in track and field 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](mailto:highschoolrio@datalyscenter.org). Please visit <http://datalyscenter.org/resources/high-school-rio-annual-reports/> to access the annual summary report referenced above. ■

### 2026 NFHS Pre Meet Notes Writers / Contributors

Adams Agtarap  
Alberto Alcaide  
Terri Bone  
Kyle Collier  
Mary DeYoung  
Jonathan Dias  
Duke Fuller  
Bob Gidari  
Mark Heckel

Jeremy Iwen  
Steven Kessler  
Robt. O. Kern  
Bill Leavy  
Gloria Louis  
Rose Mangogna  
Jay Marshall  
Matt Merrill  
Dave Nickels

Scott Phoenix  
Michael Powers  
Bill Price  
Betsy Reed  
Rich Schorenstein  
Joe Showker  
Bob Springer  
Terry Sudrla  
Greg Utecht