



2022

TRACK AND FIELD PRE-MEET NOTES



HIGHLIGHTS OF RULES CHANGES

01

Headwear and Garments:

Clarifies that religious headwear is permitted and no prior authorization is needed and garments with logos completely around the waistband on uniform bottoms are legal.

02

Exchange Zones:

Clarifies when each exchange zone is to be used when races are run in lanes or with incoming legs of 200 meters or less.

03

Warm-up Areas:

Clarifies that running in a direction other than how the event is conducted is prohibited in warm-ups for horizontal jumps, pole vault and javelin.

04

Pit Area:

Clarifies that an athlete is not penalized for a hat or sunglasses falling in the pit after they have made their mark.

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02 POINTS OF EMPHASIS



Exchange Zone

Recent changes within multiple track and field rules codes regarding the definition of relay exchange zones prompted the rules committee to adjust NFHS exchange zone rules.

The rule change does not require that tracks be repainted or resurfaced in order to be in compliance with NFHS rules. There is no immediate cost to schools as the current track markings can be utilized with minor modifications.

The acceleration zone is now incorporated into the exchange zone, thus creating a 30-meter exchange zone. Existing acceleration zone markings (triangles, squares) or colored tape placed at that location, may be used to denote the beginning of the exchange zones on a track.

In sprint relays such as the 4x100 meter and 4x200 meter, and other relays with legs of 200 meters or less, the outgoing runner, while waiting for the baton, must be positioned entirely inside the 30-meter exchange zone.

The exchange zones for relay races with legs more than 200 meters are not impacted by this rule change.

Use of Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices is permitted in unrestricted areas and coaches' boxes in a meet

Photo provided by XL Sports Photography, New Mexico.

provided it does not interfere with the progress of the meet. Coaches and athletes can review video in these areas and discuss techniques and strategies.

When a competitor views video or uses wireless devices in a restricted area during competition (on the clock for a trial in field events or in a race for running events) they have gained an unfair advantage over their opponents. This is an infraction to the rules and will lead to disqualification from the event.

The games committee for each meet will determine all restricted and unrestricted areas. Restricted areas are limited to competitors, officials, and event personnel only.

State associations may also have policies in place to further address the use of electronic devices.

Adapted Athletes

NFHS playing rules allow each state association, in keeping with applicable laws, to authorize exceptions to NFHS Track &

Field and Cross Country rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities and/or special needs, as well as those individuals with unique and extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete or others or place opponents at a disadvantage.

Existing playing rules can be adapted to include students with disabilities and many times do not require undue administrative burden. In addition, the same track & field venues can be used with little to no modifications needed in this area.

An allowance to include student-athletes with disabilities and/or special needs is permitted within NFHS rules, with each state association authorized to provide exceptions for these reasonable accommodations to occur. There are also several resources available, on the NFHS website, to state associations and schools looking to provide opportunities to all students.

03 HOW TO OFFICIATE UNSPORTING CONDUCT

There are two types of Unsporting Conduct as described in NFHS Rules 4-6-1 and 4-6-2. **Unacceptable** conduct by a competitor “includes, but is not limited to: willful failure to follow the direction of a meet official, using profanity that is not directed at someone or any action which would bring discredit to the individual or his/her school.”

The penalty for unacceptable conduct is disqualification from that event. Preventive officiating can be used to make athletes aware that their action can result in disqualification from the event. If, in the judgment of the official, an athlete acts in a courteous manner, regretting action after the heat of the moment, a disqualification may be unnecessary. It is recommended that the coach be informed of the incident and outcome of the event.

The second, and more serious type, is **unsporting** conduct, which applies to all coaches, contestants and other team/school personnel. Unsporting conduct is behavior that is unethical or dishonorable and includes but is not limited to: “disrespectfully addressing an official, any flagrant behavior, intentional contact, taunting, criticizing or using profanity directed toward someone.”

The penalty for athletes is disqualification from that event and further competition in the meet. The penalty does not remove places or points earned in events completed prior to the unsporting conduct. The penalty for coaches or other personnel will be disqualification from further participation in the meet. Many state high school associations require that the incident be reported to their office and impose a suspension of at least one contest or event, so make sure you check your state regulations.

Officials should establish positive rapport with coaches and athletes. This would include treating them respectfully and fairly. When informing the competitor and the coach of a disqualification, be firm but be prepared to listen to them rather than react. Understand that a coach may be disappointed by your call and advocate for less severe or no penalty for their athletes. Be prepared to describe the specific action and whether you observed it directly or if it was reported by another official. Always have the rule reference to show the coach, and don't forget to use the case book for specific examples.

04 LAP COUNTING IN HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL RACES

NFHS Rule 3-4-7 gives the responsibility of counting laps for competitors to the meet referee or an individual the meet referee designates. While the responsibility for completing the course remains with the competitor, the meet personnel tasked with counting and indicating laps need to be experienced and knowledgeable. To avoid costly mistakes, this task should preferably be designated by the referee to a group of individuals so that each lap counter only counts laps for three to four competitors.

Lap Counters

Meet management should attempt to have a sufficient number of trained lap counters for each race of two laps or more. Pre-race time should allow lap counters to visually identify the competitors for which they will be responsible. It will be helpful for the lap counters to note any identification that may help them pick out their competitor (Hip numbers, Bib numbers, uniform colors).

On a sheet designated for such a purpose, each lap counter should record the race time that their competitors cross the finish line on each lap. It is not critical that the time be accurate, just that there is a time that serves to verify that the competitor completed the lap. When the competitor has a lap to go, a verbal indication to the competitor may be made. It may also be appropriate to notify the FAT operator or Place Judges, or in the case of the race leader- whomever is responsible for signaling the final lap.

There are significant resources available online for lap counting information when multiple counters are available. Please see this link from USATF: <https://www.flipsnack.com/USATF/finish-line-lap-scoring/full-view.html>.

Single Lap Counter

More commonly at the high school level, it is not always possible for enough lap counters to be assembled for a race. One official should be designated and given only this responsibility for the races over two laps. The primary focus of a single lap counter should be keeping track of the laps of the lead competitor(s), while also keeping count of the competitors who have been lapped.

Having a device of some sort for keeping track of laps run or laps remaining is certainly the starting point, whether it's a commercial lap indicator, a homemade set of cards to hold up, or marks on a clipboard. The official needs to always know who the lead runner is and how many laps that runner has run and needs to complete to finish the race. If the race field is close together, each runner then has that same number of laps.

As the race field separates, the official maintains focus on the lead runner but now begins to note the tail runners as well. On a clipboard, the tail runners' numbers (bib or hip) or other identifiers would be noted. If the lead runner passes a tail runner, the official can make a "tick" mark for the passed runner on the clipboard. This indicates the marked athlete has an additional lap to complete compared to the field. Continuing this process for any others, the lap counter ends up with the lead runner counted correctly, due to the focus on that competitor and knows which runners in the field have any additional laps to complete, from the tick marks on the clipboard. All runners behind the leader and with no notations on the board are on the same lap as the leader and finishing the race.

Use of a Visual Indicator

If a visual indicator is used, then one lap counter or finish line personnel should oversee its operation. Preferred placement is the inside of the track 3-5 yards in front of the finish line such that runners have clear vision as they run down toward the finish line.

The visual indicator should show the remaining laps for only the race leader and should be changed as the leader enters the home straightaway. Competitors who are lapped should be given a verbal indication as to how many laps they have remaining. Flipping the visual indicator should be avoided for any competitor other than the race leader.

Electronic Lap Counting

In meets where the use of FAT or RFID technology is in place, it may be possible to obtain and display lap counts and times. The use of this technology must not replace the use of manual lap counters, as power can go out and technology

can fail to capture competitors as they pass the finish line on each lap. If a display board is used, it should be placed in a location that it readily visible to oncoming competitors.

Paperwork

In all situations, the officials should keep track of things on a paper-and-pencil form for backup of decisions made. The USATF link cited above has examples. Any form used needs to contain pertinent information, including:

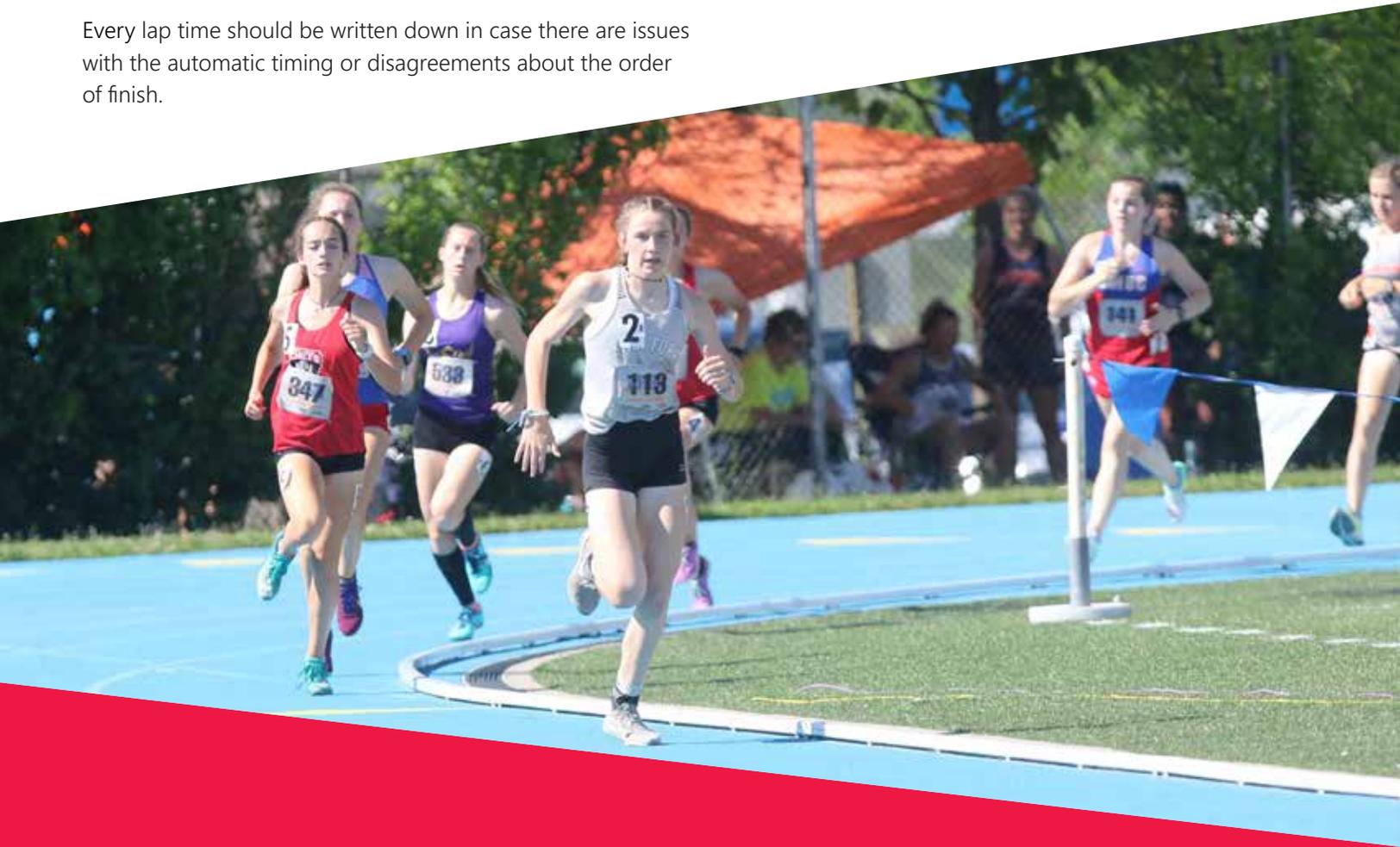
- Date
- Event
- Type of race
- Competitor name
- Hip number
- Bib number
- Team and uniform color
- Each lap number and a space to write the time of lap

Every lap time should be written down in case there are issues with the automatic timing or disagreements about the order of finish.

In summary, for typical high school races where staffing is relatively minimal:

- The referee or designee is the lap counter
- Paper/pencil records should be used with lap times noted
- Count the laps for the lead runner(s) and note the people passed by the leader(s) and how often
- Let each runner know how many laps remain each time the athlete passes the finish line area

Diligence in lap counting pays additional dividends to the officials as protests are minimized or become non-existent and the practice of doing it well becomes habit for the officials and improves their skillsets. Races finish correctly, competitors know their places in their races, and the meet continues to run smoothly and efficiently.



05 IMPORTANCE OF HAVING UMPIRES AT TRACK MEETS/ ESSENTIALS OF UMPIRING

The most overlooked officiating assignment in track and field officiating is likely the umpire. In a sport in which success is heavily dependent on the quality of information the meet organizers receive from its officials, the role of the umpire, although vital to the success of the meet, oftentimes goes under-assigned, overlooked and unnoticed.

Why Have Umpires?

It is impossible for one person to see everything that is happening at a track and field meet, and it is imperative to have observant, keen and discerning umpires who can be the “eyes and ears” of the meet. The umpires gather data and report their observations to the head umpire or the referee. The referee has the duty of making sense of the incoming information and that the running events generate. Umpires maintain the integrity of the meet, ensuring that no competitor gains an advantage, and no competitor is disadvantaged.

Role of the Umpire

There’s more to just having enough people available to umpire. Umpires must know where they need to be at various times during the meet for the many different running events that occur. Umpires are assistants to the referee assigned to report any infractions of NFHS rules. Their duty is to watch for breaches or violations of the NFHS rules; however, they have no power to render any decisions. They stand or sit at such points as the head umpire or referee shall determine. Any infractions or incidents observed should be reported to the referee or head umpire after indicating the occurrence of such by raising a yellow flag. Otherwise, an all-clear signal may be indicated by raising a white flag. From the time the starter begins the race until the finish line personnel determine the results, the umpires become the subjective interpreters of the competitors’ actions. Ever alert, the umpire must know the intent of the rules of competition and their appropriate application to the situations. The umpire must be observant for a wide variety of possible infractions or violations. It is particularly important to review the NFHS rules book just before the meet to make sure you make the appropriate decision, based on the race and situation.

Coaches may educate and train their athletes and make

sure they understand the rules, but competitors may make mistakes and those mistakes may well cause them to gain an advantage the rules don’t allow. Umpires are needed to ensure the competitors compete within the rules.

Umpires must know what to watch for and what to do when they observe a possible infraction. The following are several infractions that umpires are watching for:

- Impeding or jostling
- Illegal hurdling
- Unfair assistance or contact
- Exchanging the baton prior to or beyond the relay exchange zone
- Failing to run in a direct line on the final straight
- Running on or over the inside lane line on a curve.

Straightaway Races

For the straight sprints, infractions may occur when a competitor is running out of the designated lane and/or interfering with another competitor. Each competitor must start and finish in the lane assigned. Interference does not require touching another athlete. For example, in the 100-meter race, Competitor A moving from lane 8 to lane 7 where Competitor B is running and being ahead of Competitor B, can impede the runner in lane 7 since Competitor B has no way to pass Competitor A.

Races Run Around a Curve in Lanes

When races are run in lanes around the curve, the most common infraction is running out of the assigned lane, by stepping on the left-hand boundary line. Each lane is marked so the left-hand boundary line is outside the competitor’s lane and the right-hand boundary line is within the lane (Rule 5-2-4, page 27). The left-hand lane line of Lane 4 is fully inside Lane 3. If a competitor touches any area on or over that inside line for three or more consecutive steps with either or both feet, this is a violation (Rule 5-12-1a, page 38). Umpires on the curve observe the feet of the competitors and note any infractions of the rules.

Distance Races

In a race involving a curve when lanes are not specified, a competitor may move toward the inside or outside of the



Photo provided by South Dakota Public Broadcasting.



Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.

track provided the competitor is one full running stride ahead of the competitor whose path is crossed. It is not a foul if the competitor crosses to the inside if the action does not interfere in any way with another competitor.

A lane violation that could occur is stepping on the inside lane line of the track. Often this line is marked with a curb, making the job of the umpire much easier. However, if no curb is used, then the umpire must be ever observant.

Another infraction the umpire needs to watch for relates to bumping or jostling during a race. Competitors may well make contact with each other, but if that contact is incidental, no rule violation is determined. An example of incidental contact would be two 1600-meter competitors bumping arms while one is passing the other.

Umpires should be prepared to tell the referee exactly what happened when the two competitors come into contact. Remember that the umpire does not disqualify a competitor as this is a determination made by the referee after evaluating all information disseminated by the umpire. It is imperative that umpires report anything that they observe that might be an infraction.

Hurdle Races

Hurdle races bring their own unique set of concerns. Hurdlers must attempt to clear each hurdle, in their assigned lane, and can't knock down a hurdle by hand. Each leg and foot must get at least as high as the hurdle while the body clears the hurdle. It is a violation if a hurdler's foot passes alongside or below the height of the crossbar. It is possible for a hurdler to attempt to clear the hurdle and knock it over with the foot.

This usually occurs when the hurdler's steps or rhythm are disrupted due to contact with a hurdle. This is still an attempt to clear the hurdle and it is not a violation. An athlete may not run over a hurdle not in the assigned lane nor around a hurdle. Interference with another hurdler is also a violation that an umpire needs to keep an eye on. An example of interference in the 110 high hurdles is if Competitor A hits a hurdle and also displaces a hurdle in an adjacent lane. Competitor B, in the next lane, is unable to clear the displaced hurdle. The umpire will notify the referee of the infraction. The referee disqualifies Competitor A and declares a rerun for Competitor B. (5-14-2)

Relays

Relays present their own set of umpire observable concerns. The outgoing runner must start within the zone and the baton can only be touched by both runners, when the baton is within the zone. If the baton is dropped within the zone either athlete may retrieve it. If this occurs, be prepared to let the referee know where the baton was dropped and why. If either runner leaves the lane, the runner may not shorten the distance to run when the runner returns to the lane, nor can the runner interfere with the competitors in adjacent lanes. If the baton is dropped outside of the exchange zone, it must be retrieved by the individual who dropped it. Additionally, an incoming runner may not assist a teammate by pushing them.

Umpires serve a vital and necessary role at a track and field meet. It is a position that is oftentimes overlooked and/or under-assigned. Securing and assigning umpires must be a priority for meet management when organizing a meet to maintain the integrity of the running events.

06 STARTER/ASSISTANT STARTER BEST PRACTICES – POSITIONING, COMMANDS, CURVED STARTS

Starting races involves many variables for officials not experienced by officials in most other sports. Our goal is to provide an overview of things to consider to improve your skills and enhance the experience for the athletes and the coaches.



Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.

Position of the Starter and the Assistant Starter for Non-Stagger Starts

(60m & 100m Dash, 60m, 100m & 110m Hurdles, Hurdle Shuttle Relays) Examples in the NFHS Officials Manual Page 73.

- 1) Position of the Starter
 - a. The Starter takes a position on the infield 1 to 2 meters inside of Lane 1 and 5-8 meters in front of the starting line. The starter needs to view all the runners without having to turn their head. The starter will use sound reinforcement as needed so all competitors hear the commands. *
 - b. The Starter is responsible for the athletes in all the lanes, but especially those on the opposite side of the track.
- 2) Position of the Assistant Starter
 - a. The Assistant Starter's position is the opposite side of the track and a meter in front of the starting line.
 - b. The assistant is responsible for athletes in all lanes, but especially those on the opposite side of the track.
 - c. The assistant starter will make sure all athletes are positioned with their hands and feet behind the starting line.
 - d. When all runners are still and ready, the assistant starter gives the appropriate quiet signal to the Starter that all runners are ready for the SET command.

[NOTE A] – When the Assistant Starter thinks everyone is ready, that Assistant Starter should give the signal to the Starter that was discussed before the meet. Each state/association/governing body has some variations to what it deems appropriate. Most importantly, it should be silent and inconspicuous so as not to draw any attention from the athletes. As an example, in USATF it is rotating the non-gun hand from showing the back of one's hand to show one's palm. Subtle and silent.
- 3) After the start, both the Starter and Assistant Starter should step out onto the track and observe the race from behind the runners. This is a good time to reload their gun before the next race ("pull one, replace one").

Positioning of the Starter and the Assistant Starter for Stagger Starts

Examples in the NFHS Officials Manual Page 73.

- 1) Position of the Starter
 - a. The Starter takes a position on the infield equidistance from the runners in Lanes 1 and 4/6/8/9. The starter should use sound reinforcement as needed so all competitors can hear the commands.*
 - b. The Starter is responsible for all athletes in all the lanes if that individual is only starter.
 - c. One Assistant Starter: The Starter is responsible for the outside lanes (lanes 5 through 8 on an 8-lane track) and watches all the lanes while focusing on the outside lanes.
- 2) Position of the Assistant Starter(s)
 - a. The Assistant Starter takes a position on the opposite side of the track from the Starter. The assistant is on the track in Lanes 6 or 7 and positioned to have a clear view of the runners in Lanes 1 through 4. The assistant

stands in the Starter's line of sight between runners 4 and 5 without standing behind a runner from the Starter's perspective.

- b. The Assistant Starter focuses on the competitors in the inside lanes, Lanes 1 – 4. If using a nine-lane track, the Assistant Starter is responsible for Lanes 1 – 5.
- c. If using additional assistant starters, there may be a second assistant outside Lane 8 or 9 about 5-10 meters from Lane 8 runner and a third assistant starter may be inside the track and about 3-5 meters behind Lane 1 runner. See NFHS Officials Manual Page 73 for examples of positioning.

** This positioning provides that all competitors hear the report of the starting device at the same time. If you stand at either end to have all of the runners in a narrow view, the runner furthest from you hears the sound of the start last (by as much as half a second given perfect weather conditions). It is worse on a windy day. The narrow view does not make for a fair and equitable start.*

Commands of the Starter and the Assistant Starter for Starts of 400m or Less

The use of a whistle blast before commencing a starting sequence helps competitors and spectators understand the need for quiet at the start of each race.

- 1) There are only six words needed by the Starter:
 - a. **"On Your Marks"** – This is a command (not a question or a suggestion); clearly state it as a fact.
 - b. **"Set"** – once all are settled and "physically quiet" in their blocks give the command "Set" (still a fact). Note: the farther you are from the athletes, and depending on the wind/noise at the meet, you need to be sure that every runner has heard and responded to the command "Set."
 - c. **Fire the Gun** after all have achieved and held the Set position.
 - d. **"Stand Up"** – give this command if the field cannot achieve the Set position or other issues arise.
 - If a runner did not respond to the Set command, abort the start. "Stand Up" and go to Step 1a.
 - If anyone is not steady, abort the start. "Stand Up" and go to Step 1a.
 - Discuss any issues with the Assistant Starter, inform competitors(s) of the appropriate decision, and restart the race.
 - Make sure the Clerks and Timers are aware of any

decisions and make notes so you can address any issues with the Referee, Meet Management, Coaches, etc.

- 2) The Assistant Starter should raise One or Both Arms conspicuously to gain the Starter's attention if there is an issue requiring a need to abort the Start (if the gun has not yet been fired).
 - a. They can direct athletes to make sure they are behind the starting line, there are no more run outs, and to answer questions regarding running the current event. Their focus needs to be on the competitors and on the Start itself.
 - b. The assistant starter should not be coaching the athletes.
 - c. It is appropriate to ask for quiet at the Start Line to aid the start process.
 - d. Refer all clerking-related questions to the Clerk.

Commands of the Starter and the Assistant Starter for Starts of over 400m – "Step-Up Starts"

The use of a whistle blast before commencing a starting sequence helps competitors and spectators understand the need for quiet at the start of each race.

- 1) There are only five words needed by the Starter:
 - a. **"On Your Marks"** – This is a command (not a question or a suggestion); clearly state it as a fact. The Competitors step-up the three meters to the starting line and need to come to a complete stop.
 - b. **Fire the Gun** after all the runners are steady and motionless without their hand(s) touching the ground
 - c. **"Stand Up"** – give this command if the field cannot stop their motions at the line or other issues arise.
 - If anyone is not steady, abort the start. "Stand Up" and go to Step 1a.
 - Discuss any issues with the Assistant Starter, inform competitors(s) of the appropriate decision, and restart the race.
 - Make sure the Clerks and Timers are aware of any decisions and make notes so you can address any issues with the Referee, Meet Management, Coaches, etc.
- 2) The Assistant Starter should raise One or Both Arms conspicuously to gain the Starter's attention if there is an issue requiring a need to abort the Start (if the gun has not yet been fired).
 - a. They can direct athletes to make sure they are behind

the starting line.

- b. The assistant starter should not be coaching the athletes.
- c. Refer all clerking-related questions to the Clerk.

Stagger Start Items

(200m, 300m Hurdles, 400m, 4x1 Lap Relay, 400m Relay (4x100), 800m Relay (4x200), 1600m Relay (4x400m))

The Stagers – Outdoors

- **One Turn Stagger** – There are three on the track– the 200m Start Line at the beginning of the curve diagonally opposite of the Start/Finish Line; the 300m Hurdle Start Line is usually at the end of the first turn; and the 800m Start Line (which doubles as the 200m on tracks set up to run in both directions).
- **Two Turn Stagger** – 400m Start Line & 400m Relay Start Line.
- **Three Turn Stagger** – 1600m Relay (4x400m)
- **Four Turn Stagger** – 800m Relay (4x200m)

It is very important to learn the color of the start lines at each track. While there are “standard colors” suggested, there is enough inconsistency in construction as to make assumptions foolhardy. The best lane to focus on in deciphering the pattern is Lane 2. Most every track is labeled in this lane.

Outdoor Meets

The Starter should request Meet Management’s assistance with keeping the infield of the track clear of anyone who is not an official, a competitor in the current event, or someone in the line up for the next event. This proves to be an issue as a meet progresses. The more cooperation you receive, the better the meet will flow.

If using hand timing, make certain the timers and timing stand are positioned to provide a clear view of the runner in Lane 1. Address this before the meet starts so the timing stand does not need to be moved later in the meet. Ideally the stand should be two meters from the track and positioned so the timers are on the left side of the stand facing the finish line for each race. This should provide enough clearance to provide a view of lane 1 for the 400m, 400m Relay (4x100), 800m Relay (4x200), 1600m Relay (4x400m) starts.

The Stagers – Indoors

There is less consistency in Indoor venues as many schools do not have a 200-meter facility. Ask the host school if they have a chart listing the colors for each event. It is common for numerous colors to be used based upon unusual set-ups. Some of those tracks started as tracks based upon yards rather than meters and then were converted. Discuss your positioning with the clerks and timers before the meet starts.



Photo provided by Paynter Pics, Arizona Interscholastic Association.

Emphasize the need for a clear view of all athletes, especially of the athlete in lane 1.

Indoor Meets

- 1) Position of the STARTER
 - a. Many indoor tracks are only 4 – 6 lanes wide, with all other available space utilized for field events and spectators. The Starter needs help from meet management to keep noise to a minimum. This is both from spectators and from adjacent events. The use of a whistle blast before commencing a starting sequence helps competitors and spectators understand the need for quiet at the start of each race.
 - b. Expect you will not be able to stand equidistant to every runner. It is more important to see every runner to make sure that they all respond to the SET command. You will need to position yourself based upon the confines of the facility. A staggered start race might begin on a straightaway. You need to stand so you can see everyone.
 - c. If you have an Assistant Starter, discuss each event separately to have the simplest coverage of all the runners and a line of site for each other. Discuss each position before the meet begins and make notes.
 - d. **BE FLEXIBLE.** Everything you plan for in the prior step may prove unworkable once you have a full venue with spectators and athletes milling about.

Not everyone has attended an indoor meet. They may not understand the runners actually run on the track and lean in on the turns. You do not have the luxury of bleachers outside of a fence to herd the non-participants (both teammates and spectators).

Indoor Meets – Other Considerations

Many indoor meets are seen more as practice meets to prepare for the outdoor season. Coaches want everyone to have their opportunities and get home for homework. The facility may have an event scheduled after the meet ends, especially multi-purpose facilities. Work with the host school to facilitate a good meet for all. Keep in mind travel conditions for visiting teams can be more of a burden with inclement weather. This is also true for the spectators (parents) who deal with these conditions as well. Be aware they may come in late and enter the track surface in the middle of a race. You may need to discuss asking if doors will be secured.

Talk with the clerks before the meet to discuss where you will stand to start each race. This is especially true for the 200 meters in the older facilities with limited space. Pick your spot on the infield and ask the clerk to have all the runners line up in heat order and out of your line of sight so you have a clear view of the runners. The next athletes in line can assist with the blocks and remove them after the start so they can begin to adjust for their heat.



Photo provided by Paynter Pics, Arizona Interscholastic Association.

There are delays as athletes learn to use blocks and acclimate themselves to how meets work. This is especially true for meets with younger athletes. Be patient and try to keep things moving.

With closer proximity of spectators and athletes, as well as posts and workout rooms in some venues, it is more difficult to make eye contact with hand timing crews. You may start some races using your weak hand so you can keep seeing the runners and the timers can see the smoke. Practice using either hand so you are ready for the conditions. Be flexible. Think safety. Check to make sure the track is clear for lap races. The host school needs to assist you as you may not be able to see the entire track.



Photo provided by Texas University Interscholastic League.

Other Start Considerations

Starter and Assistant Starter are in their positions and the athletes are standing at their blocks. Before the ON YOUR MARKS command, consider asking the athletes in lanes 1 and 8 if they can hear you.

Suggestion for the Outdoor 200m and 300m Hurdles

When working the 200m dash & 300m hurdles at an outdoor meet, consider keeping the area between you and the runners free of "obstacles" to your view of the "active" runners. As you near the end of the meet, more people tend to migrate onto the infield. This impacts sight lines to athletes and timers. Consider the following option:

- The Clerk could line up each heat of competitors on the track in their lanes ten (10) meters behind the lane 1 staggered start line. The exchange zone marker provides this distance in Lane 1.
- If you have an Assistant Starter, you can send them to assist with this after the last 800m race starts.
- Emphasize any warm-ups or other clothing an athlete removes stay in that same area or kept on the infield behind the 10-meter line.
- Keep the block cart behind the same 10-meter line.
- Keep all others behind the same 10-meter line.

Result: All runners returning to collect their gear will not need to walk in the area between the Starter and the athletes currently competing. If they do wander, it is easier to ask them to move away since there is nothing in that area they need to collect.

Some tracks may have jumping venues (horizontal or pole vault) that interfere with your desired place to stand or your view of the runners. Treat it like an indoor facility. Adapt what you do as a Starter, keeping waiting athletes 10 meters behind the others still helps to run a smooth meet.

Starting a track & field meet involves many variables, by utilizing the guidelines presented in this article, an enhanced experience will be presented to the coaches, competitors, and spectators.

07 ELECTRONIC STARTING DEVICES

As the cost of purchasing .22 and .32 shells continues to rise, many schools are turning to “Electronic Starting Devices” to mitigate their track and field budgets. Under the category of Electronic Starting Devices, there are many varied devices covering a wide price range. They are being used at all levels of competition, from the professional ranks to high school and middle school meets across the country.



The “electronic gun” generates a flash and an electronic gun sound or tone through a single or multiple speakers. Many electronic devices can be connected to the facility speaker system. Some come with belt speakers and some with portable speakers. Also, options exist for wireless capability. For the cost of a season’s budget of home meet .32 shells, affordable units are available from the major track and field equipment sources.

Electronic guns generally provide an option to create either a tone or the gun shot sound. Just as competitors are instructed and taught in practice how to react to the report of a traditional starters pistol, coaches and officials should provide a similar experience to acclimatize competitors to the electronic starting device.

When deciding to utilize an Electronic Starting Device, the purchase of the electronic gun is the initial investment. Amplification of the sound is the major determinant in creating a delivery system which provides a fair and equitable start. Compatibility with your existing speaker system or the necessary to purchase a new companion system, may influence your Electronic Starting Device purchase.

As you contemplate if Electronic Starting Devices are appropriate for you and in your future, keep in mind your need/usage and your budget for initial investment for possible companion speakers or system. Some schools no longer permit starter pistols on campus and have purchased Electronic Starting Devices and amplification systems for those individuals officiating their meets. Having a basic knowledge of these devices and how to run them is good for any starter.

08 FIELD EVENT WARMUP RUNBACKS

In 2022, Rule 6-2-7 clarifies that running in a direction other than how the event is conducted is prohibited in warm-ups for all horizontal jumps, pole vault and javelin. If during warm-ups, an athlete is caught running in the opposite direction that the event will be conducted, the athlete is given a warning for the first offense. If the athlete repeats the offense during warm-ups, then the athlete will be disqualified from the event. If the incident continues to reoccur, the athlete will be disqualified from further competition in the meet.



Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.

The intent of the rule is to provide for safe warm-up conditions by eliminating possible collisions on the runways between competitors and allow for a much more organized warmup period. Coaches now need to emphasize the importance of competitors knowing their takeoff point, as a measured distance. Many meet managers put down a tape measure on the side of the runway, and leave it down for the warmup period and the competition itself.

Once an athlete is put on the clock during competition, the runway belongs to that individual. The athlete may abort an attempt and turn around and run down the runway in the wrong direction to get to their takeoff mark as long as they do so in the allotted time.

09 DISCUS AND JAVELIN VENUE SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

The approach to safety in these events should be done at both the “macro” level in terms of the overall placement of the discus and javelin venues in relation to other functional locations in the track meet. This should be accomplished at the meet management level in the weeks, preferably the months, prior to the meet. While it may be impractical to actually alter the venue site of the javelin and discus, consideration should be placed on changing the site of the clerking tent, track warm-up area or registration areas, for example, in proximity to these throwing events. Thought to the prevailing winds, in the facility, should also be taken into account in the placing of these other functionalities when planning a meet so that a stray discus or javelin not compromise the safety of competitors, other officials and spectators.

“Micro” level management for safety in the discus and javelin refers to the safety within these venues and is done at the

level of the head official and their crew. For any officials working these events, the primary overall obligation is to **stop the event when safety is compromised**.

The following is a list of items that should be considered for both the discus and javelin. This list, *which is not all inclusive*, is taken from the 2018 USATF National Officials Committee Best Practices series.

- Report safety concerns to the referee and meet management and work with them to correct or mitigate the issues; if the meet referee determines that the event venue does not meet the criteria set forth in the rules, the referee shall declare the event will not be contested and points will be divided among the visiting teams.
- Ensure there’s no actual or potential overlap between event venues.
- Ensure runways, throwing areas and landing areas are flagged, coned or marshaled to control access and keep



Photo provided by Paynter Pics, Arizona Interscholastic Association.

all persons outside the venue and areas adjacent to marked landing areas.

- Ensure the landing area has no solid objects that could damage an implement or cause it to skip erratically; nor holes or objects that could trip an official or volunteer.
- If conditions develop such as weather, darkness, etc., that make the event unsafe, competition should be suspended. Portable lighting is rarely sufficient to safely conduct a throwing event.
- Designate safe areas for photographers outside the landing area.
- Ensure all officials and volunteers are physically able to safely perform the tasks assigned to them.
- Instruct athletes to not enter the sector; implements are retrieved and returned only by the crew.
- **Instruct all officials and volunteers to:**
 - ▶ **Never turn their back** on the circle or runway.
 - ▶ **Not use electronic devices** in any area of the venue.
 - ▶ **Not stand in groups or engage in conversation** inside or outside the landing area.
 - ▶ **Carry implements**, not throw or roll them, back to the athletes' area.
- An official should physically stand or place a cone in the way of athletes on the runway or at the entry to the circle, to prevent any attempt before all persons in the field are ready.
- An official must supervise all warm-ups at the competition venue, including javelin "picks"; no unsupervised warm-ups in adjacent areas, nor warm-ups/practice throws once the event has started.
- Keep officials, coaches, athletes, photographers and fans at least 6-8 feet from the circle or cage.

Javelin Venue Items

- Check the runway for cracks, tears, and holes – anything that could snag a spike.
- Ensure all individuals carry the javelins vertically.
- Ensure adequate supervision of warm-up "picks/sticking" throws.

Throwing Cage Items

- Check the dimensions of the cage – must meet minimum rules standards.
- Check to ensure the integrity of the cage – no rips, tears, holes; no weak or weathered material.
- Check to ensure adequate travel of the doors/panels/gates and an ability to secure them in place.

Throwing Circle Items

- Ensure the circle is smooth and free of debris; and the rim is rounded with no jagged edges.

- For portable circles, ensure it is secured so it does not move/slide.

In addition to the aforementioned, the throwing sectors should be checked prior to the event for any holes or divots made by the implements that would cause officials or volunteers to lose their balance and fall. In regard to the discus, advise inexperienced officials and volunteers working the sector that the discus may skip causing injury.

Also, the 2022 NFHS Track and Field Rules have been altered to include Rule 6-2-7 which is applicable to the javelin (among other events) and states that the running direction in warm-ups should be the same as the direction as actual competition. Any warm-ups not in the direction of the actual competition could, for example, compromise the safety of runners on the track since the javelin runway often crosses the track.

10 CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HEADWEAR

The practice of people wearing head covers for religious purposes is an integral part of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, as well as other faiths and cultures. The NFHS, in its effort to be a learning organization and one that is founded on the basis of inclusion, is striving to celebrate the beautiful diversity of our young participants. NFHS playing rules will always strive to keep kids safe and keep games being played the way they were designed to be played, but we do want to recognize the importance of a young person's identity.

In 2015, the NFHS Track and Field Rules Book removed the restriction on jewelry and hair accessories, making them no longer prohibited by rule. Hair accessories were classified as hair-control devices. It was determined that the coach and athlete have the ultimate responsibility to not wear items that take away from the integrity of the sport.

New in the 2022 NFHS Track and Field Rules Book is Rule 4-3-1b-8, which clarifies that religious headwear is now classified as a hair-control device. Since hair-control devices are not prohibited by the NFHS rules book, this rule change clarifies that there is no longer a need for an athlete to receive prior authorization from the state association to compete with religious or cultural headwear. The addition is more inclusive of participants' cultural and religious beliefs.



Contributors:

- Adams, George (Dallas, TX)
- DeYoung, Mary (De Pere, WI)
- Egan, Dan (Madison, WI)
- Gidari, Robert (Goffstown, NH)
- Gunn, Laurie (Atlanta, GA)
- Kessler, Steven (Vernon Hills, IL)
- Messenger, Richard (Weston, WV)
- Meyer, Dennis (Waukesha, WI)
- Nickels, Dave (Manitowoc, WI)
- Powers, Michael (Batavia, IL)
- Price, Bill (Smithsburg, MD)

- Sales, John (Altamonte Springs, FL)
- Springer, Bob (Seattle, WA)
- Sudrla, Terry (Sioux City, IA)
- Sutton, Phil (Silverton, OR)
- Utecht, Greg (Apple Valley, MN)
- 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



USATF

USA Track and Field

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