



# 2024

# TRACK AND FIELD PRE-MEET NOTES



## HIGHLIGHTS OF RULES CHANGES

### 01

#### **False Starts:**

Extraneous motion before the device is fired does not necessarily require a false start to be charged unless the runner leaves their mark with hand or foot after the set command or leaves their mark with forward motion without the starting device fired.

### 02

#### **Hurdle Infraction:**

Clarifies that a hurdle displaced by hand is an infraction.

### 03

#### **Breaking Ties (Vertical Jumps):**

An athlete withdrawing from a jump-off concedes the higher place but does not negate the performance in the event nor is it unsporting conduct.

### 04

#### **Participation Limitations:**

The change gives state associations the flexibility to modify the number of events for each athlete provided it does not exceed six events.

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## 02 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

### 1. Fair Starts

It is the starter's responsibility to ensure a fair and legal start and anticipate problems. The interval between the set command and the firing of the starting device should be approximately two seconds. After a starter gives the order "set," if any competitor is in motion, the starter shall not fire the starting device. Firing the starting device too soon doesn't allow athletes to get ready and firing the starting device too slow also creates a situation of unfairness.

Starters may for any reason cancel a start by directing all competitors to "Stand Up." The following are some of the reasons that a starter may cancel a start in races with legs of less than 800 meters:

- Noise at the start line,
- Starting block problem,
- Obstruction on the track,
- Slow athlete getting set,
- Misfire of starting pistol,
- Hands on the line,
- Extraneous movement after the set command.

In distance races the following are some of the reasons that a starter could halt or recall the start:

- Runners not steady,
- Toes on the line,
- Failure to come to the line in a timely manner,
- Impeding a position of another athlete,
- Fall during first 100 meters due to contact.

Starters play a huge role in fair, consistent and legal starts for student-athletes across all events.

### 2. Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship rules help officials, parents, coaches and student-athletes develop and reinforce values that apply to the development of the whole person. Respect for others, honesty, fair play, learning and understanding the rules are critical life skills that, when practiced, will enhance any individual's character. The absence of good sportsmanship jeopardizes one of the fundamental principles of participation in education-based athletics and complicates the team-building process. A sportsmanship priority is keeping winning and losing in perspective. Understanding that losing with dignity is an important lesson, everyone must learn and practice. A collaborative, working relationship should be a priority between officials, game administration, coaches and student-athletes to promote good sportsmanship during a track meet. This includes treating people with respect and using appropriate language, actions and language that build people up and values each person.

It is critical to remember that winning means you were the best version of yourself that day. The beauty of track and field is that one is constantly tested against one's best time, height or distance. Continual improvement is a hallmark of successful student-athletes, programs, teams and coaches. This improvement also involves positive sporting behavior, a fundamental ingredient of education-based high school sports.

### 3. Cross Country Safety

Training for cross country is unique in that there are so many options afforded to runners to accomplish their workouts. Not being limited to the track allows runners access to parks,

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

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

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

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

## 03 HYDRATION STATIONS FOR SAFETY AT CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK & FIELD MEETS



### Who authorizes hydration stations?

The NFHS rules specify the duties of officials at a track and field or cross country meet. The games committee duties are defined in Rule 3-2-1 thru 8. Rule 3-2-4u was added in recent years and states, "The games committee also may provide liquids during competition." Meet Management may also establish hydration stations at any meet.

### What conditions warrant hydration stations?

The NFHS has produced a document with definitions, conditions and guidelines to help schools and meet managers determine if conditions warrant the provision of hydration stations. This document can be found here <https://www.nfhs.org/media/1014751/nfhs-hydration-position-statement-final-april-2018.pdf> and should be downloaded and made available to all head coaches, trainers, and meet directors. Many state high school associations also have weather guidelines that games committee members should consult as part of their decision-making.

### Who administers hydration stations?

This should be delegated to personnel like athletic trainers positioned at the finish line, athletic department administrators or volunteers. Parents who want to be close to the action are often eager to help with this.

### What if hydration stations are not authorized and hydration is administered?

Authorization is not needed for hydration provided in non-restricted areas. Because the games committee determines which areas are restricted, these individuals also need to proactively determine if it will provide hydration, allow teams access to restricted areas to provide their own, or not allow hydration in restricted areas. Should the group not provide hydration in restricted areas, those who do so are subject to report to a referee who will decide on any consequence.

### When provided, what does it look like?

Host schools can provide adequate hydration, e.g. water jugs and cups, for all participating athletes at the finish line or at each event venue. The games committee may authorize hydration stations along a cross country course or a distance race on the track, when weather conditions warrant, understanding that those are restricted areas. In such a case, a meet host would station personnel at appropriate distances along the track or cross country course to ensure athletes can hydrate without interfering with other athletes while ensuring equal access to liquids.

Alternatively, some state associations or games committees have chosen to request every team participating in a meet bring its own hydration. When a games committee makes that request, all teams should be notified of this requirement at least 48 hours prior to the meet.

### What guidelines should be utilized when setting up a hydration station?

Stations are best placed in unrestricted areas as defined by the games committee. Provision of liquids in restricted areas is permitted by rule when the games committee allows and determines the process.

1. These stations should be observed by umpires and/or marshals and should not be on the racing line.
2. Competitors seeking liquids should veer off the racing line to either their own school's station, or a neutral station if provided.

3. Coaches/trainers/volunteers must not encroach on the course to a point where they present an obstacle or distraction to the competitors.
4. Drinks should be held out for the competitors (the use of paper cups is preferred).
5. If a competitor fails to take a cup, the competitor may not be pursued by anyone to bring water. The athlete may turn around and come back to the station.
6. Any competitor who deliberately knocks water off the table to prevent others from having water is subject to disqualification for unsporting conduct.
7. A competitor may pass liquids or sponges to other competitors but shall not do so repeatedly. Such action will leave that competitor and those repeatedly assisted liable for disqualification.
8. Discarded cups should be cleared from the course or area as quickly as possible when it is safe to do so. There should also be a station beyond the finish line (far enough to not cause any back-ups) so that competitors may begin to rehydrate as quickly as possible after the race.

Remember that field event competitors, officials and volunteers all need to stay hydrated and are likely to be out in the heat longer than the runners in a given race. They too need liquid stations, although they have time to help themselves.

**Summary:** The NFHS understands the need for adequate and appropriate hydration for athletes in all sports. Track and field and cross country athletes are trained by their coaches to be ready to compete, one aspect of which is proper hydration. A games committee must look at upcoming meet conditions, venues, weather, number of athletes, and more when determining how hydration will be allowed and/or provided at the meet.

These stations are becoming more essential in both cross country and track and field. When determining a site that will be restricted to athletes, officials, medical personnel, and meet hosts/games committees, considerations for the weather conditions need to be considered as decisions are made about hydration stations. More and more areas are seeing extreme weather conditions, and every effort to help coaches ensure their athletes have access to water will help the athletes compete safely.

## 04 CONSISTENCY IN OFFICIATING FALSE STARTS – THE RULE

Starters play a key role in the smooth and efficient operation of a track & field meet. Their role, responsibility and duty include actions and decisions that are highly visible and some that are subtle and quietly go unnoticed. The NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Book clearly defines several of these roles of the starter:

1. Full responsibility of the competitors on the start line during a start.
2. Decide without protest whether a start is fair and legal.
3. Determine which competitor(s) are charged with a false start.

In 2024, NFHS Rules 5-7-4c, d NOTE and 8-4-4 NOTE 2 seek to clarify and more objectively address what is or isn't a false start, providing clarity and more consistency for officials, coaches, competitors and spectators.

***Extraneous motion before the device is fired does not necessarily require a false start to be charged unless the runner leaves their mark with hand or foot after the set command or leaves their mark with a forward motion without the starting device being fired.***

Prior to the 2024 rule change, Rule 5-7-4c identified this particular violation as a false start:

***“Failure to remain motionless after assuming the set position prior to the starting device being fired.”***

One starter's idea of "failure to remain motionless" was not always the same as others and inconsistencies in enforcement were common. Consequently, competitors were sometimes disqualified for trembling, twitching, correcting their position for imbalance, or other "extraneous" movement.

### What Constitutes a False Start

The rule change removes any doubt about what motion constitutes a false start. A false start occurs when the competitor leaves mark with:

1. hand or foot after the set command;
  - one or both feet leaving the starting block pedals
  - one of both hands leaving the ground
2. with a forward motion without the starting device being fired.

Whether the starter is working alone or with assistants, remember that all decisions will be made and rendered by the starter. The starter:

1. has full responsibility for the competitors on the starting line and during the start,
2. shall decide whether a start is fair and legal.



Photo provided by Minnesota State High School League.

## 05 CONSISTENCY IN OFFICIATING FALSE STARTS – THE DISCUSSION

How can we ensure false starts are officiated consistently? Starters must understand the new rule thoroughly, be patient, and have no fear about standing the athletes up (or “roll back” for wheelchair athletes) to prevent unfair situations that might result in false starts.

### **PRIOR TO THE RACE - Preventive Officiating/False Starts**

1. Before the start of the race, the starter should ask for quiet at the start line to aid the starting process.
2. If there are no clerks or assistant starter(s) to assist with competitor instructions, prior to the competitors being brought to the starting line, the starter should inform the competitors of the starting commands specific to each type of race. Providing the instructions to the competitors clearly and consistently should reduce the contested false starts.



**EXAMPLE:** Upon your final start command - "Remain steady until the sound of the starting device. If there is movement, it could result in a false start. If you are uncomfortable in your start position, immediately after you hear 'On Your Marks,' raise your hand." At that point the starter(s) will announce "Stand Up" or "Roll Back" and reset the start of the race.

## DURING THE START OF THE RACE

### A. Disconcerting Start Line Actions

The starter(s) must be particularly attuned not only to the actual starting line, but the start line area. Noises and sounds could be distracting to the competitors. They include:

1. noise from the stands;
2. talking in the starting line area;
3. cheers or calling out competitor's names;
4. distracting motion in the starting line area;
5. the passing of motor vehicles, trains, planes, etc.;
6. camera shutters or clicks.

If any of these actions occur and the starter(s) determines that the actions have caused a disturbance in the start of the race, the starter(s) should announce "Stand Up" or "Roll Back," reset the competitors, and then resume the start.

### B. Competitor(s) Movements/Motions

Once on their marks, pay attention to competitors':

1. motion or rocking;
2. fidgeting or nervousness;
3. delays in responding to the start commands;
4. losing balance;
5. appearing uncomfortable in their starting blocks.

These are instances that could cause unnecessary motion and the potential for false starts or unfair starts. If an athlete were to lose balance, the starter(s) should announce "Stand Up," or if the signal has been fired, a recall signal should happen immediately. Reset the competitors and then resume the start.

If these above actions persist, standard practice calls for the starter(s) to announce "Stand Up" or "Roll Back" to the competitors and verbally inform the individual(s) of a potential for disqualification (DQ) if these actions continue. The starter(s) should be mindful that extraneous motion from one athlete may cause another athlete (usually in the adjacent lane(s)) to exit their blocks prematurely. The starter will have to use their best judgment in this instance to either issue a warning or issue a DQ.

**Note:** A "flinch" or "buck" is not a false start. If the athlete commits either of these acts, their feet are still on the pedals and hands are on the ground. They have simply tensed their muscles; however, the intent to commence a start (leave their blocks) does not exist.

It should be noted that for Para-Events in the sprint races, some athletes may have balance issues due to their disabilities and should not be disqualified if they lose balance or fall at the starting line.



Photo provided by Minnesota State High School League.

### If a False Start Occurs:

1. Immediately recall the race by firing the starting device.
2. The starter(s) should quickly gather and discuss the potential violation.
3. The resulting ruling should immediately be verbally communicated to the competitor(s) and the group.

Remember, it is the starter's duty to ensure and provide a fair start. The starter(s) must be fully attentive to the field of competitors, as well as the area surrounding and affecting the start.

"No competitor should gain an advantage and no competitor should be disadvantaged."

**NOTE:** Each state association may, in keeping with applicable laws, authorize exceptions to NFHS playing rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities and/or special needs. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage.

## 06 PREVENTIVE OFFICIATING IN CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK & FIELD – OFFICIALS CHECKLIST

The NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Case Book provides examples of situations to fine tune an official's understanding of the nuances and interpretations of the rules. USATF has many checklists and a Best Practices library covering numerous subjects. These are important resources available to officials to assist in proactively addressing issues prior to the competition. In addition, state association modifications to NFHS rules should be communicated or reviewed for understanding.

**Preventive officiating** describes techniques used by officials to avert potential problems. This process begins well before the athlete steps on a track, reports to their field event or arrives at a cross country course.



Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.

A good official adapts to the age of participants, their skill levels, their maturity, their grasp of the event's protocols, the complexity of their strategies, and the overall context of event situations. Therefore, as an event unfolds, the official may have opportunities to gently guide the athletes to avert actions which are encroaching on not being legal or safe. During competition, preventive officiating may take several forms:

1. Assisting competitors to avoid technical violations (i.e., not wearing bib numbers or checking in)
2. Notifying competitors not to commit a foul (i.e., running on the inner lane line or running in the reverse direction on the horizontal runway)
3. Advising competitors to adhere to course markings and flags on a cross country course.

As officials, we all desire events to run flawlessly. To ensure such an outcome, the preparation begins well before the event and continues after the event concludes. Preparedness begins with the head official.

### Host Schools

1. Refer to checklists provided by the NFHS or state association to ensure minimum standards of safety.
2. Provide NFHS or state association event-specific documents for each field event venue.
3. Send an email to officials with meet information, schedule, facility map and any event specific details prior to the meet.
4. In cross country, email a course map to officials.

### Prior To The Meet

The head official(s) and the supporting officials need to:

1. Ensure that all lanes of the track are in proper order and present no safety issues.
2. Review exchange zone markings and share with the clerks.
3. Review safety protocols on the track.
4. Address safety preparedness of the equipment at each field event venue.
5. Review safety protocols at each field event venue.
6. In field events, affirm the procedure for the preservation of performance marks.



7. Determine expectations from the timing company.
8. Conduct pre-meet volunteer meeting to discuss their roles and responsibilities.
9. Become aware of the location and procedures for the trainers and emergency medical services.
10. Inspect the starting blocks to determine functionality.

Any issues with items 1-10 above should be shared with the games committee to facilitate corrections prior to the start of competition.

## Coaches and Officials Meetings

Review the following:

1. Meet time schedule,
2. Officials and competitors event report times,
3. Running event check-in procedure,
4. Field event check-in procedure,
5. Field event check-out procedure
6. Procedure to preserve performance marks in field events,
7. Procedure for communicating conflicts in running and field events,
8. If awards are being distributed, procedures for handing out awards.

When possible, include the meet announcer to improve communication among all parties involved with the meet.

## Communication Devices

Preventive officiating for cross country meets and field events, where the distances between facilities can create communication difficulties includes:

1. Providing a list of phone numbers for meet management, timing, medical, security, referee, etc. to officials.
2. Ensuring the number of radios are adequate and in working order.

It takes a community to have a successful athletic event. The officials and meet management have a common goal to run a successful and safe event. The correct application of a preventive mindset sets the tone for everyone.

## Cross Country

The meet referee should arrive early to review the following:

1. Start and finish lines meet the NFHS minimum standards
2. Placement of 100-meter recall mark.

3. Location of meet management, coaches meeting, timing, etc.
4. Ensure the course (cross country) is appropriately marked within the rules and presents no hazards.
5. Review any hazardous area(s) and, if it cannot be fixed, the course should be altered for the safety of the competitors.
6. Compare the maps provided to the competitors and coaches to confirm the course markings match the map.
7. If working a new venue, the head official should visit to inspect the course and discuss any possible issues with the meet manager, so they have the chance to make adjustments prior to the meet.

**EXAMPLE:** *At a cross country race, the course map showed the course would follow the long curve of an adjacent sidewalk. The course was marked with red/yellow/blue flags. There was no white line marking the course. A yellow flag (right turn) was at the start of the curve. The next flag was red (left turn) at the end of the curve. Teams were following the map as they practiced. NFHS Rule 8-1-3d, states "In case of a discrepancy in the course marking, directional flag markings take precedence over any other course markings."*

Preventive officiating would recommend the addition of more flags to reflect the intended curve more clearly. Keeping the perspectives of coaches and athletes in mind, officials perform actions to level the playing field, promote fairness and assist the hosts in creating the course they envisioned.

When witnessing actions in warm-ups that create or could create dangerous situations in the competition itself (or lead to rule violations), officials should address those actions immediately for safety reasons and to educate the athletes (and their coaches). This is especially important during early season meets as new rules may be overlooked (or not yet explained to the athletes).

The primary role of the official is to ensure a competitive environment that does not heighten the risk of injury, and to ensure that the actions of competitors, coaches and other team personnel follow the rules. When opportunities present themselves for providing teachable moments make sure you take them. Utilizing available resources and preventive officiating will help every official ensure this primary goal in interscholastic track and field.

## 07 OFFICIATING HURDLES

There are two very different types of hurdle races, the short hurdles and the long hurdles. The short hurdles are on the straightaway and the long hurdles involve a turn. The short hurdles are normally run at 100 meters for girls and 110 meters for boys. The long hurdles are either 300 or 400 meters. The two types of races are officiated slightly differently.



Photo provided by Minnesota State High School League.

### Officiating Short Hurdles

1. It is helpful to have an umpire on each hurdle flight, although it can work with each umpire covering two flights of hurdles.
2. Umpires are looking for the athlete to attempt to clear each hurdle without interfering with the athlete on either side.
3. Competitors in the outside lanes may lead with or drag a leg outside the hurdle so that needs to be observed.

**Note:** If a race does not have all lanes full, it can be helpful to leave hurdles in all lanes to ensure that competitors are not dropping a lead leg or trail leg below or around a hurdle.

**POSITIONING OF UMPIRES:** The umpires should be positioned between the flights of the hurdles. Now, what if you don't have umpires to make these calls? What if you are the only official at the meet? If this is the case, the starter is also an official. For the short hurdles, after the start of the race, the starter will need to walk out on the track and watch the race from behind and do the very best at making any of these calls. The official must be very certain of the infraction. It is very difficult to determine if a hurdle was legally cleared the last five or six flights of hurdles.

At regular-season meets frequently there are no umpires assigned and the referee is the starter, umpire, field referee and meet referee all in one. You should try to place yourself in a position to clearly view as many hurdles as possible. This could be from the infield if the space is mostly clear. It could also be from a high point at the stadium, either in stands, press box or somewhere on the track. Keep in mind, that the farther away from the hurdles, the more difficult it will be to make a good call.

If you have three officials (two starters and one referee): The two starters should observe from behind as explained above. The referee should be positioned after the finish line looking at the incoming hurdlers as they finish, or the meet referee can be positioned between flights 5 and 6. This allows the referee to observe the hurdlers throughout their race.

### Officiating Long Hurdles

The long hurdles present a different set of challenges for the official. Except for the hurdles on the home straight, every hurdle presents a possible lead or trail leg violation.

1. To be able to view the trail leg, the official needs to have eyes level with the height of the hurdles.
2. Ideally, one or two umpires should be stationed at each set of hurdles.
3. If you have limited umpires, then the referee should take a position between the curve and the final straightaway on the outside of the track.
4. The two starters can watch the first straightaway of the race and the referee can watch the curve and the final straightaway.

In either type of race, the umpires need to be aware of hurdles that are knocked over or displaced and if interference with another athlete took place. This report needs to be very detailed so the referee can decide whether interference took place. In addition, prior to each race and heat, each flight of hurdles must be inspected to ensure proper placement and height. (See Case Book ruling 5.14.2 Situation F).

**Note:** *Umpires should always report anything that does not seem or look right. The referee can then determine if any action needs to be taken.*

## 08 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 RIO™) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO is currently collecting the 18th year of sports exposure and injury data.



Among the 20 sports currently under surveillance in High School RIO, during the 2021-22 academic year, the overall injury rate in boys track and field ranked 17th, and the overall injury rate in girls track and field ranked 13th. The most commonly injured body parts in both boys and girls track and field were the hip/thigh/upper leg (boys: 43%; girls: 30%) and lower leg (boys: 20%; girls: 25%). The most common injury diagnosis sustained during competition for both boys and girls track and field was strain (boys: 63%; girls: 32%). Strains were also the most common injury diagnosis sustained during practice (boys: 44%; girls: 30%).

Injury mechanisms were similar between boys and girls track and field with acute no contact as the most common competition-related injury mechanism (boys: 37%, girls: 45%) and overuse/chronic as the most common practice-related injury mechanism (boys: 47%, girls: 71%). In boys track and field in 2021-22, 50% of dislocations/subluxations were recurrent while none of the dislocations/subluxations in girls track and field were recurrent.

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@datalyticscenter.org](mailto:highschoolrio@datalyticscenter.org). Please visit <http://datalyticscenter.org/resources/high-school-rio-annual-reports/> to access the annual summary report referenced above.



Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.



This spring, **NFHS Corporate Partner Brooks** will be donating another \$500,000 in gear and cash to deserving Track and Field programs across the country. Grant recipients will receive shoes and apparel for up to 50 runners per team up to \$17,000 MSRP. Each team also receives \$1,000 to help with expenses, including pay-to-play fees, meet entries, transportation costs, etc.

To learn more about this program and to apply, please visit the following link: **Brooks Future Run Team Grants | Run Community | Brooks Running**. Applications must be entered by **January 26th** for the Track and Field grants. *A link to the terms and conditions is here.*

## 09 UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT – DON'T GET DISQUALIFIED



Photo provided by Minnesota State High School League.

### What is Unsportsmanlike Conduct?

Unsportsmanlike conduct can take many forms. It can be flagrant and easily detectable, or it can be subtle. It detracts from the integrity of the sport as well as diminishes the enjoyment for the competitors and spectators. There are two types of unsportsmanlike conduct as described in NFHS Rules 4-6-1 and 4-6-2: unacceptable conduct and unsporting conduct. Both violations are applicable to competitors as well as coaches and other team personnel.

**Unsporting Conduct** is the more serious of the two. It is defined as behavior that is unethical or dishonorable and carries the penalty of disqualification from the event if one is in progress and the remainder of the meet. It includes:

- Disrespectfully addressing an official,
- Swearing or using profane language directed at another person,
- Verbally taunting another competitor,
- Intentional physical contact or physical taunting of another competitor such as clapping in the face or standing over a fallen competitor in an intimidating manner, or
- Any other flagrant behavior.

**Unacceptable Conduct** is the lesser violation. It is not as clearly defined in the rules. The penalty for unacceptable conduct is disqualification from the event, but not the remainder of the meet. It includes:

- Willful failure to follow the direction of a meet official,
- Using profanity that is not directed at another person,

- Showboating or gloating in a way that endangers the safety of other participants or impedes the conduction of the meet, or
- Any other action that would bring discredit to the individual or the individual's school.

### Enforcing Rules of Unsportsmanlike Conduct

The rules do not carry any provision requiring a warning by an official to a competitor or team personnel regarding their conduct and coaches should recognize that when a warning is given it should be followed up with explanation in order to prevent disqualification.

Officials should practice preventive officiating, which includes providing a warning regarding actions that may not yet rise to the level of unsporting behavior but have the potential to cause issues. Often an official's presence at 'hot spot' locations such as the finish line may be enough to prevent unsporting acts. (See charts on the following page)

As the rules are not all encompassing, the following are points to consider in the decision to enforce a penalty for unsporting conduct or unacceptable conduct.

- Does an athlete's celebration rise to the level of unsporting? Actions like yelling and gesturing as a runner crosses the finish line or completes an attempt in the field events are rarely unsporting. Unless an official can identify actions being directed at a competitor or they interfere with the conduct of a meet, a disqualification is rarely warranted.
- Is the individual committing an act that could be considered illegal? Fighting, vandalism, use of tobacco or alcohol or other potentially illegal acts fall strictly under unsporting conduct
- Is the athlete/team personnel not complying with instructions in a truly willful manner? An effort to effectively communicate with the individual should be made before deciding the penalty.

As you see from the tables below and the suggested points to consider, the judgment of the referee and meet officials are paramount. In many cases, understanding the intent of the athlete is necessary to determine if the infraction is an unacceptable conduct or an unsporting conduct.

**EXAMPLE** - Case Book 4.6.1 Situation D: During the first exchange in the 4 x 200 relay, Team A drops the baton and makes no effort to retrieve it, but the relay members continue running, slapping their hands for an exchange.

**RULING:** If, in the opinion of the referee, the conduct of the relay was to circumvent or make a travesty of the rule, unsporting conduct would be appropriate and meet disqual-

ification in order. If, on the other hand, the relay team simply did it to complete the race, a disqualification from the event would be sufficient.

Preventive officiating can be used to make athletes aware that their action(s) can result in a disqualification from the event.

For all involved, **BE A GOOD SPORT – WIN OR LOSE!**

### The following tables are designed to help differentiate the penalties for a variety of infractions.

Infraction	No Penalty	Warning	Event DQ	Meet DQ
Pacing by participating team member			X	
Pacing by non-participating team member			X	
Interference by participating team member			X	
Interference by non-participating team member				X
Removing any part of the team uniform in the area of competition		X	X 2 <sup>nd</sup> time	X Additional
Practicing in a closed venue		X	X 2 <sup>nd</sup> time	X Additional

Receiving Assistance During Competition	No Penalty	Warning	Event DQ	Meet DQ
<input type="checkbox"/> Due to injury			X	
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-injured - holding hands			X	X possible
<input type="checkbox"/> Receiving whistle commands during a race			X	X possible
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicating using electronic devices during competition			X	
<input type="checkbox"/> Team personnel using electronic devices to transmit information during competition				X
<input type="checkbox"/> Using a watch with an audible “beep”	X			
Using an aid during competition			X	
Receive coaching in a restricted area			X	

Failure to Follow an Official's Directive	No Penalty	Warning	Event DQ	Meet DQ
EXAMPLE: Athlete is told wearing a ball cap is illegal				
<input type="checkbox"/> Athlete complies	X			
<input type="checkbox"/> Athlete puts cap on at a later point in time and finish competition with the cap on.				X
Uses profanity - not directed toward another person		X possible	X	
Disrespectfully addressing officials, including profanity				X
Uses taunting, ridicule, humiliation, teasing, or other demeaning action toward another including ethnic or racial slurs, statements based on gender or sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or “trash talk”				X
Throws a baton, sand, or other meet equipment in anger - not directed at another person			X	X possible
Throws a baton, sand, or other meet equipment in anger - directed at another person				X

## 10 ESD – ELECTRONIC STARTING DEVICE

### Considerations:

Although there is no rule being implemented at this time requiring electronic starting devices to begin running events at track and field meets, there are increasingly more questions that are raised. This document is for timers, starters, meet managers, schools, and administrators who are considering this route of starting track events and the benefits of these devices.

Electronic starting devices, over time, decrease the cost of starting track and field meets with .22 or .32 caliber blanks. It also alleviates the difficulty in finding available blanks for purchasing at different times of the year, and, in today's climate, safeguards against handheld devices which are easily misidentified as potential weapons.



ESDs also reduce delays from reloading traditional pistol blanks while improving the reliability of FAT systems. The time spared from reloading issues is better served to provide instructions for the next race, lining up another heat, or observing runners during the race just started. Time is also saved by reducing the number of bad starts. Such false starts often occur when the starting transducer interprets the noise of the sensor hitting an object, or a whistle being blown as the starting signal. If an FAT timing operator isn't watching closely, they could miss this erroneous start and when the official pistol starting sound is created seconds later, the times will be incorrect. Avoiding the need for runners to re-race must be the No. 1 priority. ESDs reduce such situations and make starts much more reliable.

All manufacturers of electronic starting devices are compatible with at least one major FAT system, such as Finish Lynx, Flash Timing or Eagle Eye. Some companies, like VS Athletics' LITE, connect with all three current models of transducer with which the starter can move around the track. These transducers send the signal either by hard-wire or radio-wave to the timing system and sync the starting signal with the video image at the finish line; this is what makes the timing accurate to within one, one-thousandth of a second (.001).

Another advantage is the decreased damage caused by excessive exposure to the 150+ decibels of sound generated by a traditional pistol with 22 caliber blanks and the 160+ decibels of sound generated by a traditional pistol with 32 caliber blanks. No speakers used with ESDs produce more than 120 dB; medical studies show that ear damage occurs when decibel exposure is greater than 120 dB. That said, administrators are reminded of the recommended 90+ decibels of sound for track meet speakers, and must avoid speakers which cannot deliver at that level.

### Challenges:

The first major challenge is speakers. With the unidirectional design of most speakers, starting events like the 4 x 200m and 4 x 400m necessitate a second speaker positioned near lanes 8, 7, 6 and 5 to ensure all athletes can hear the start. The need for multiple high-quality speakers that operate off battery, and that have Bluetooth capability to be able to project an inputted starting sound from one speaker to another as well as additional Bluetooth capability so that the starter can make announcements to the athletes, can be somewhat expensive. But with the cost of starter's blanks, the cost of an electronic starting device and speakers can pay for themselves within two years.

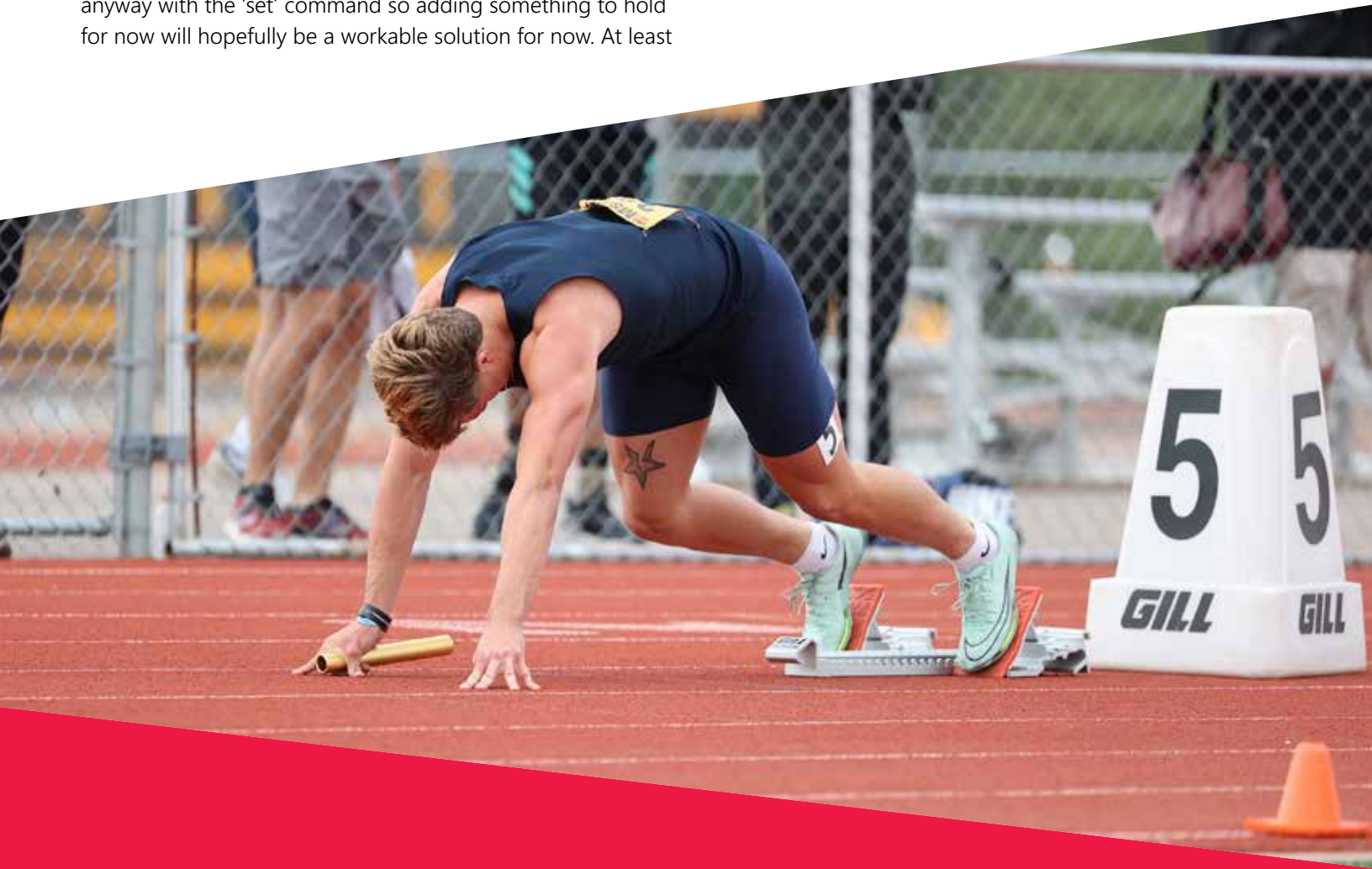
The next major challenge is setup and portability. Depending on the budget of the starter, school or timing company, they might only have the capital for a single speaker or two, which would require moving those speakers from starting position to starting position throughout the meet. Every track meet and every facility is different. So, too, have been the solutions. Some facilities strap large-capacity speakers to the back of a golf cart and drive the starter from starting

position to starting position. Other facilities have not provided speakers and the starters have had to bring whatever they could move around themselves. This is typically some type of rolling speaker, but with limited volume coming from just one speaker, the consensus of runners, coaches and spectators has been less than satisfactory.

When using ESDs to start meets that are timed by hand timers, it can be difficult to see the LED light or strobe when the button is pressed by the starter when standing at the 100m, 200m, and 300m starting positions. Clear blue-sky days and setting suns in the background are particularly difficult to see in. This can be dramatically helped by placing a black background behind the starting device. A piece of black cardboard or a black clipboard held by the other hand improves visibility a lot. Normally that other hand comes up anyway with the 'set' command so adding something to hold for now will hopefully be a workable solution for now. At least

one manufacturer is working on a permanent solution and will commercially mass produce something once the demand comes to fruition.

Lastly, there is debate over which starting sound should be used. Almost all the devices on the market today can produce, to varying degrees of replication, a pistol-like sound as well as a tone sound. The tone sound has been universal in swimming for the last 30 years but has received varied responses from track & field coaches nationwide. While the transition for coaches has been slower, athletes have not expressed nearly as much concern; once given a practice signal or two, there has not been any difference in reaction time, according to any published study. Because the tone sound is recognized as being more crisp and sharp athletes have stated that they felt like they reacted faster.



## Recommendations:

If a starter, school, booster club or administration decides to pursue an electronic starting device, the following should factor into purchasing considerations:

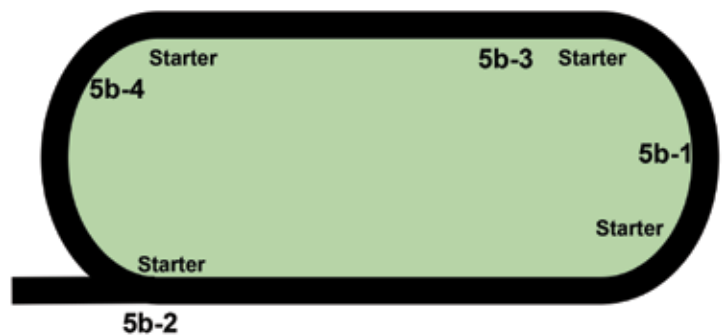
1. Seek recommendations as to which device projects the clearest sound. The quality of sound is determined both by the electronic starting device and the quality of the speaker projecting the sound.
2. With heightened sensitivity to gun-like, and taser-like devices, it is incumbent upon management and administration to utilize technology which renders such shapes obsolete.
3. With heightened sensitivity to gun-like sounds on campuses, and in public in general, the decision to use the tone sound is worth the extra consideration and provides sound rationale in response to coaches who might question the change. Consider using a whistle for the assistant starter to indicate false starts and recalls.
4. Determine who will purchase and store all parts of the system. It may be best for starters to have their own devices, while the schools – which know how large their meets will be, and how noise travels in their stadiums – can best plan that part of the purchase. Additionally, knowing that schools can also use these speakers at school-wide events, it may be the most efficient use of purchasing power for schools to do so.
5.
  - a.) Ideally, a starter would have one large speaker positioned near them to be able to make announcements as they moved around the stadium to different starting locations. This primary starting speaker would have the capability of Bluetooth connection with the other speakers around the stadium when in range for those events.
  - b.) Having a second speaker, either permanently placed or brought there by meet workers, to the following locations would be ideal: (**\*\*see stadium drawing at the end of this document**) Each of the speakers would ideally be on a tripod to better resonate the sound of the starting device. Again, these speakers could be placed and left at the start of the meet or could be moved as needed by designated helpers.
6. One final consideration is for the spectators and coaches in the bleachers. Having an additional speaker at midfield sending the start sound towards them, could be an option, but it may be impractical and unnecessary. Most timing companies or schools that are timing are synced to various online results-reporting websites. When parents and coaches want to know the results of athletes, they are finding it easier and more accurate just to get the fully

automatic time from the designated website rather than the often inaccurate hand time in front of them.

Having a digital display clock at the finish line also alleviates the need for numerous unofficial stopwatches in the bleachers.

For any additional information regarding these devices or recommendations for ideal systems for facilities, feel free to contact:

\*\* Possible second speaker placements:



**\*It's recommended that the "Starter" have the 'primary' speaker near the location noted on the map above. The secondary locations could be speakers set up before the meet that the starter plugs into or 'syncs' (Bluetooth) with once they go to that event.**

**5b-1.)** Infield starting apron, parallel to lane six approximately 30 feet inside, the track.

**5b-2.)** Outside of the track by just a few feet next to lane eight or nine, approximately 30 feet down from the start of the 100 m dash.

**5b-3.)** Infield starting apron, parallel to lane six approximately 30 feet inside, the track for the start of the 300m hurdles.

**5b-4.)** Infield starting apron, parallel to lane six approximately 30 feet inside, the track for the start of the 200m dash.



# 11 DID YOU KNOW...

## Applications, Reminders, and Tips to Utilize When Interpreting and Applying Rules.

**Rule 6-9-15** – On hard surfaced runways a painted foul line of a contrasting color and with the same size specifications may be utilized in lieu of a take off board.

**Application:** Many officials are interpreting this as “NO Tape Boards.” This is not the intent of the rule. YES, a taped board of the same size is acceptable.

**Rule 6-2** – When applying the Time Chart For Field Event Attempts, officials should remember – “One minute shall be allowed for the first trial of a competitor first entering the competition”.

**Reminder:** The application of this is not reflective of the number of competitors remaining in the competition, at the beginning of a bar height.

**Rule 6-8-13** – In the high jump measurement shall be taken from a point on the same level as the takeoff to the lowest point on the upper side off the crossbar.

**Accuracy Tip:** When taking a measurement, pull the tape behind the bar. This provides a more enhanced visual view of the alignment of the top of the bar and the tape measure.

**6-3-2b NOTES (3)** – Any athlete withdrawing from a jump-off concedes the higher place but retains their performance in the event.

**Reminder:** The competitor retains all previous marks and place finishes. Withdrawing is not unsporting conduct.



Photo provided by Visual Image Photography, Illinois.



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