

Effective with the 2017 high school track and field season, a participant who assists an injured/ill competitor shall not be disqualified if an appropriate health-care professional is not available.

The NFHS Board of Directors recently approved all rules changes recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Track and Field Rules Committee at its June 13-15 meeting in Indianapolis.

Becky Oakes, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Track and Field Rules Committee, said the committee determined that this act of sportsmanship extended to an injured/ill competitor when a health-care professional is not readily available should not result in a penalty.

“The committee wanted to recognize the importance of appropriate healthcare of an ill/injured competitor as well as recognize that at times there may be fellow competitors who may need to assist others who cannot continue,” Oakes said. “Therefore, the committee felt that disqualification shouldn’t be the result of a sportsmanship act.”

In order to be consistent with current sport trends, the committee revised Rule 5-7-3, which reinforces the concept that competitors in distance races only use a standing start and shall remain motionless for the start without their hand(s) touching the ground.

The rules committee voted to combine Rule 6 (Throwing Events) and Rule 7 (Jumping Events) into one rule titled “Field Events” to eliminate duplication of definitions and unnecessary language and the possibility of making a change in the throws and missing it in the jumps.

“The last couple of rules cycles the committee has been trying to eliminate unnecessary and repetitive language. This is the last phase of the clean-up – creating one rule that covers multiple events,” Oakes said.

For purposes of risk management, the committee revised Rules 6-2-14 and 7-2-5, which state that all warm-ups in a field event may not take place until the venue is declared open and required supervision is in place.

In Rule 5-6, the committee moved the Note in Rule 5-6-4 to the new Article 4. Oakes said the results of running events are based on head-to-head competition and all contestants should

have the opportunity to compete in the heat earned by the competitor's place and/or qualifying times.

The committee also approved a change to Rule 3-6-1, which now grants authority to disqualify a runner for a false start to the starter as well as the referee. Also, the starter will now give a signal at the beginning of the last lap in individual races of two laps or more (previously three).

Another change was made in Rule 3-2-4u, which states that the games committee – not the coach – should have the responsibility of providing liquids during the competition.

In Rule 3-10-7, when flags are not utilized, the head event judge utilizes the mechanics to call “fair” or “foul.”

Other changes approved by the committee include:

- The removal of the Note in 4-3-1b(5), which contradicts the rule by limiting the placement of the American flag to one piece of uniform apparel.
- Rule 4-6-5g, which states that it is an unfair act when a competitor receives physical aid from any other person during a race or trial, except as provided in Rules 4-6-5 and 9-7.
- Rule 5-1-3, which notes that, in absence of a curb, if cones are used, they should just touch the inside of the line and be placed about 5 feet apart around the curve.
- Rule 6-2-17, which clarifies how trials are recorded when a legal implement breaks during competition.
- Rule 6-5-9e, which notes that if a shot put competitor touches the top or end of the stopboard before leaving the circle, it is a foul.
- Rule 9-1-3b for cross country states that the race course should include either directional flags and/or directional sign posts.
- Rule 10-2-2, which notes that when multiple takeoff boards are used in the long jump and triple jump, the 20-meter distance shall be from the foul line farthest from the pit.

A complete listing of the track and field rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page, and select “track and field.”

According to the 2015-16 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, there are 578,632 boys participating in outdoor Track and Field at 16,358 schools and 478,726 girls at 16,309 schools.