

# 2023 Track and Field Points of Emphasis

By NFHS on January 19, 2023

## **Track & Field/Cross Country**

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### Sportsmanship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Protest/Appeal Process**

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

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

Coaches may **NOT** protest

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

Situations which are subject to protest/appeal include:

- Misapplication of the rules which must be filed within 30 minutes after the announcement of event results.
- Correction of clerical or team scoring errors which may be corrected up to 48 hours after the end of the meet, unless another time period is specified in advance by the games committee or meet director.

- Correction of meet results involving an ineligible participant which may be made at any time when discovered.
- Failure to follow a procedure contained in the terms and conditions of competition announced in advance by the meet director or games committee. This would include such items as the time schedule, the number of qualifiers to advance, number of trials, etc.

### **Cross Country Safety**

Training for Cross Country is unique in that there are so many options afforded to the runner(s) to accomplish their workouts. Not being limited to the track allows the runners access to parks, city streets, highways and country roads. However, each of these options creates safety concerns that all runners and coaches should keep in mind. Workouts and runs should be fun, relaxing, carefree experiences. Sadly, the need for runner safety tips is evidenced by a dramatic increase in pedestrian deaths in the United States, as well as eight reported running-related motor vehicle crashes resulting in nine deaths and two disabling injuries among middle school and high school cross country and track and field runners between 2011 and 2021.

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

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

Coaches need to plan when developing a road route where stop lights, routes, and heavy traffic exist.

Educating the athletes on where to go for safety in case of weather, emergency situations and hydration stops is crucial to athlete safety.