

DATE: December 11, 2025

TO: All Track & Field and Cross Country Officials

FROM: BJ Duckworth | Sport Administrator & Director of Officiating Development

RE: December Officials' Memo



### Specialty Relays

In 2017, the NFHS added a provision to Rule 7 requiring that all specialty relays **must** follow either USATF Youth Regulations or any applicable state association rules. Because the OHSAA did not have its own regulations at that time, the USATF Youth Rules applied by default.

Over the past two seasons, we have seen a growing number of questions and reports from coaches and officials regarding specialty relay events. A review of these concerns showed that many coaches and officials have been widely disregarding the NFHS requirements in Rule 7. **It is important to emphasize that neither coaches nor officials have the authority to modify, ignore, or create their own rules—including inventing new specialty relay events.**

Once this issue was identified, it became clear that corrective action was necessary. Two options were considered:

1. Enforcing the existing USATF Youth Rules  
or
2. Developing and enforcing Ohio-specific specialty relay regulations

We determined that the second option was the best approach, with input from our member schools. Creating Ohio-specific regulations provides greater flexibility in deciding which relays are permitted and makes implementation easier by aligning the rules with the NFHS framework used in education-based athletics.

In August, a survey of coaches was conducted to help shape these new regulations. Using the survey results and feedback from the Assistant State Rules Interpreters, a new set of specialty relay rules is now being finalized. These rules will appear in both the State Rules Meeting as well as the Track & Field Coaches and Officials Manuals, available in January. **Moving forward, only the relays listed in those documents will be permitted, and all must comply with the regulations provided.**

Full regulations will be provided in January, however for planning purposes the allowable specialty relays will be:

- 100/110 Shuttle Hurdles
- 4x1600 Relay
- Distance Medley (1200, 400, 800, 1600)
- Sprint Medley (100, 100, 200, 400)
- Intermediate Relay (800, 400, 400, 800)
- 1600 Meter Relay (200, 200, 400, 800)
- Swedish Relay (100, 300, 200, 400)
- Mixed Gender Relays (4x100, 4x200, 4x400, 4x800, 4x1600)
- Team Field Events
- Games Committee's retain the ability to run any allowed relay for a specific group of athletes such as throwers. Pending the event follows NFHS and OHSAA regulations.

## Permit Renewal

If you have not yet renewed your permit for the 2025–26 season, please complete your renewal by December 31, 2025 to avoid a late fee. Renewals submitted in January 2026 will still be accepted but will include a \$50 late fee. **Please note that officials who have not renewed by December 31, 2025, will not be eligible to officiate in any tournament events.**

## Tournament Questionnaire

The 2026 Track & Field Tournament Questionnaire will be sent to officials on January 5 or 6, 2026, and will close at 11:59 pm on January 31, 2026. Only eligible officials will receive the questionnaire via email to complete. If you do not receive it and feel you should have, please first check your spam folder and then reach out to Keaton Jones ([kjones@ohsaa.org](mailto:kjones@ohsaa.org)) or myself. Failure to complete the questionnaire will mean you are not eligible to officiate at the District, Regional, or State Tournament.

## State Rules Meeting for Track & Field

The mandatory state rules meeting will go live in DragonFly per the chart below. **This meeting is mandatory to renew your license and to officiate Track & Field.**

Meeting Begins	Late Fee (\$50) Begins	Meeting Closes
January 28, 2026	March 25, 2026	April 15, 2025

*If you are a coach AND an official, you must complete both State Rules Meetings.*

Full instructions will be sent out when the meeting launches.

## DragonFly Pass / OHSAA Permit Card

Several officials have asked whether their DragonFly Pass/OHSAA Permit Card grants free admission to sporting events. It does **not**. This pass/ID does not provide admission to any events; it is simply an optional item for officials who want identification that verifies their status as an official.

## Register Now: 2026 Ohio Track & Field and Cross Country Officials Association Clinic and Awards

Join the OTFCCOA on January 23–24, 2026, at The Ohioan (formerly Nationwide Hotel & Conference Center) in Lewis Center, Ohio.

### Clinic Theme: Safety

This year's program will focus on safety and include sessions on officials' wellness, umpire safety, and the only in-person state rules meeting—plus much more!

- Attendees will earn one local meeting credit per day of attendance.
- All officials will receive a mailed paper registration form, also available by clicking [HERE](#).
- New this year: Register online (fees apply) by clicking [HERE](#).
- Also new in 2026: Register by January 5<sup>th</sup> and receive your 2026 NFHS Rule & Case books at the clinic.

### Hotel Information

- A special OTFCCOA room rate of \$148.00 (plus tax) is available at The Ohioan.
- Reserve by December 23, 2025, by calling 614-880-4300 or clicking [HERE](#).
- Use Group ID: 373446 when booking.
- Your stay includes Wi-Fi and a complimentary breakfast buffet.

### Questions?

Contact Dennis Sabo at [densabo@gmail.com](mailto:densabo@gmail.com).

*This is NOT an OHSAA event; it is an OTFCCOA event.*

## Tournament Updates

The list of regional sites, as well as the regional and district time schedules, are now available on the [District & Regional Tournament Webpage](#). Two sites are still listed as TBD, and details such as start times for many locations are also pending. The document will be updated as new information becomes available. Time schedules have been implemented for the Regional Semi & District Final to ensure consistency and proper athlete rest time.

This year includes several new sites, and some locations that have hosted in the past are now assigned to different divisions. These adjustments were made based on the geographic alignment of the schools feeding into each region. Please take time to review the updated site list before completing the upcoming questionnaire, as the meet(s) you previously worked may have changed.

## Situations

**Situation 1:** You have been assigned as the **Field Referee** at an invitational. A coach disagrees with a foul call in the shot put and asks you to overturn the call of the event official. You determine that the decision of the event official is correct and tell the coach you are upholding their judgement call (there is no official appeal filed). Upon receiving your decision, the coach then files an official appeal with the Running Referee (the appeal form is completed correctly) and the Running Referee overturns the decision of the Field Referee. Is this the proper process?

**Decision 1:** No, The Field Referee's decision is final and cannot be changed by the Running Referee.

**Note 1:** When both a Running Referee and a Field Referee have been assigned to a meet, their respective decisions for their events are final and cannot be overturned by the other. Meaning the Field Referee has jurisdiction over all field events and the Running Referee has jurisdiction over running events. This is also the case in a meet that has hired a Boys Referee and Girls Referee with one having jurisdiction over one gender or the other.

There is a distinct difference between the responsibilities and authority of a Head Field Judge and a Field Referee; both positions are allowed under NFHS Rules. It is important that officials identify if they have been assigned as a Head Field Judge or Field Referee so the appropriate process can be followed. The OHSA utilizes the Head Field Judge position at all three levels of the tournaments, while Field Referee is allowable during the regular season.

**Situation 2:** The starter for a cross country race should assume a position in front of the competitors, use the audio visual start, and recall the race if a runner falls due to contact with another runner within the first \_\_\_\_ meters.

**Answer 2:** 100

**Note 2:** While rules 3-6-3 & 5-7-6 were changed for Track & Field related to the start of a race, Rule 8-4-4a was NOT changed. In track distance races, a starter should recall a race due to contact in the first 50 meters. In Cross Country, a starter should recall a race due to contact in the first 100 meters.

**Situation 3:** At the opening height in the high jump (where 5 alive is being used), competitors A, B, and D clear the height on the first attempt; competitors C and E miss the first attempt. The official should make the call following E's unsuccessful attempt as:

**Answer 3:** "F up, G on deck, C on hold, H and E alive."

**Note 3:** Each jumper should always have 4 attempts by other jumpers BETWEEN their own attempts (unless there are less than 5 competitors left in the rotation). Five Alive MUST be used by officials anytime there are nine or more athletes participating at the start of a height and must be used for the entire height. Using Five Alive at one height does not mean you must use it for the entire competition. Five Alive is NOT meant to save any time. It is a process used that benefits the student-athlete by minimizing their time between attempts.

## **BJ Duckworth**

### **Sport Administrator & Director of Officiating Development**

Track & Field and Cross Country

Ohio High School Athletic Association

Office: 614-859-0747 | [bjduckworth@ohsaa.org](mailto:bjduckworth@ohsaa.org)