

DATE: October 7, 2025

TO: All Track & Field and Cross Country Officials

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

RE: October Officials' Memo



Cross Country Assignments

Congratulations to the officials assigned to the OHSAA Assigned Key Regional Tournament Positions and State Championship, please click [HERE](#) to view the list of assigned officials. The assignments were made in accordance with the approved assignment processes and procedures, which can be found by clicking [HERE](#).

Officials Role in Eligibility

Officials are responsible for the enforcement of contest rules as outlined in the NFHS Rule Book, Officials Manual, Sport Regulations and Tournament Regulations. **Officials are NOT responsible for, nor do they have a role to play in ANY eligibility related items including gender, age, grade, etc.** If officials suspect there is an eligibility issue, they can report that to me AFTER the meet takes place and I will ensure the appropriate staff in our office are made aware. The same applies to contracted FAT providers; contractors should not be involved in making any eligibility decisions.

If coaches approach you with eligibility related questions, please refer them to our office and we can address the issue/question with them after the meet. Student-athletes should never be prohibited from participating in a meet due to a suspected eligibility issue by an official, contractor, or coach. The rule of thumb is that if they are on a roster/entered in the meet, they compete, and our office will sort out any issues after the fact.

For many years Track & Cross Country had a combined Coaches and Officials Manuals as well as State Rules Meetings causing officials to be exposed to eligibility information meant for coaches, illuding that officials should be enforcing those regulations; they should not. This meeting and manual structure was changed in recent years to help reinforce that officials are only responsible for competition rules.

Athletes Carrying Cell Phone & Wearing Smart Watches—**UPDATED INFORMATION**

In previous Medical Device communications, we have shared that athletes carrying cell phones as medical devices would require a waiver from the OHSAA office as they are prohibited. Based on updated interpretations I have received, **the carrying of a cell phone by athletes is NOT prohibited**; no doctor's note or waiver is needed to carry the device. This means that cell phones should be treated much like a smart or GPS watch; the athlete can carry them, however, they cannot use the prohibited technology in the device.

Things that would be allowed per NFHS Rule 4-6 include:

- Use of the stop watch or standard watch features in a smart watch.
- Use of medical apps in the smart watch or cell phone to record and store medical data. The device may transmit this data, however, it cannot be used for immediate coaching.

Things that would be prohibited per NFHS Rule 4-6 include:

- The use of GPS functionality.
- The use of the devices to receive or send communication to a coach or other individual.
- The use of the device for audio or video recording.

Referees must be 100% certain that an athlete or coach has used the technology for a prohibited purpose before taking any punitive action. This means an official **MUST** see or hear it directly. Also, officials **MUST NOT** ask the athlete to demonstrate the devices capabilities.

If you encounter an athlete that is carrying a cell phone or wearing a smart watch, remind them that while those items can be carried or worn, the use of the communication and audio/video recording is prohibited.

Audio or Video Recording Devices

The use of GoPro (or similar) cameras, glasses with cameras in them, or audio recording devices **is prohibited**, as the use of electronic devices is prohibited by NFHS Rule 4-6. This differs from the carrying of a cell phone or wearing of a smart watch as the simple carrying of those devices does not constitute a violation, only the use of the prohibited technology in those devices.

OHSAA Medical Device Policy

The OHSAA Medical Device Policy as outlined in General Sports Regulation 20.3 is listed in full below. In summary, a doctor's notes **must** be provided to the meet referee prior to each contest anytime an athlete is utilizing a medical device such as an epi pen, inhaler, glucose monitor, etc. **The use of these medical devices does not require a waiver from the OHSAA as they are allowed by rule with a physician's note.**

However, if there is a need to utilize a prohibited item for medical purposes such as a hat with a bill, etc. a waiver would be needed from our office. If you are ever unsure if the item needs a waiver or physician's note, please reach out to me via email.

General Sports Regulation 20.3 Uniforms/Medical Devices

Unless the specific rules code stipulates otherwise, athletes in sports of a collision/contact nature should not be permitted to wear devices such as insulin pumps, heart monitoring equipment and/or other diagnostic or therapeutic appliances while participating in interscholastic contests. In the event that a physician requires a student-athlete to wear or carry a medical device during competition in a non-contact sport, such medical necessity shall be specified in writing and signed by the prescribing physician. The device shall be attached to the body in a manner fitting with the device that is safe for the athlete and does not cause danger to other athletes.

Items may be carried by hand or in a pouch/fanny pack if they cannot be safely attached to the body in another manner. The medical statement shall be shown to the head contest official prior to the athlete's being permitted to participate; this statement can be shown on paper or electronically. Examples of approved medical devices include but are not limited to EpiPens, inhalers, insulin pumps, glucose monitors and heart monitors. Athletes participating with these devices are still subject to NFHS Rules if their medical device is dropped or becomes dislodged from the body and interferes with other athletes.

Reminder on Team Uniforms

Per NFHS Rule 4-3-2 all relay and cross country team members must wear uniforms clearly indicating through predominant color, school logo and color combination of all outer garments worn as a uniform that members are from the same team; this rule applies even when a team has less than a full team in regards to scoring.

Regardless of how many athletes a team has, they all must comply with Rule 4-3-2. This rule applies to the regular season and post-season alike.

The only time a school would be allowed to have different uniform combinations would be when the school has split their team with the permission of the meet manager. For example, the competitors in the team race do not need to match the team in the open race. Another example would be when the school has been allowed to enter two teams in one race (i.e., A & B) teams. These separate teams would be in separate boxes, listed on the paperwork as two teams, etc.

At the regional and state meets, even when athletes have qualified as "individuals" and are not able to receive a team score, they all **must have matching school-issued uniforms** as they are competing for the same team.

2025 Cross Country Tournament Regulations

The 2025 Cross Country Tournament Regulations can be viewed by clicking [HERE](#). In addition, a brief video outlining the changes this year can be found [HERE](#). Notable changes are outlined below.

- Changes to the number of individual qualifiers that advance.
- Changes to the number of medals provided at each regional site.
- Coaches will be required to provide their pupil active permit number to receive course access.
- Individual qualifiers are not eligible for team scores.
- Individual qualifiers will be placed in groups of seven for box assignments, with priority within each box to the athletes with the better finish position at the previous level.
- Starting boxes must be exactly five feet.
- Team tunnels are allowed at the district and regional level (meet management decision) however, they are **not allowed** at the state meet.
- Air horns and mega phones may not be used by spectators.

Note: Not all changes directly impact officials, however reviewing them gives you a good picture of the overall tournament.

Track & Field Division Expansion

We continue to work on our plan related to tournament assignments for Track & Field and the changes that will be needed to support the expansion to five divisions, four more regional sites, and a four day state meet. I expect that information to be approved in time to share it at the January OTFCCOA Officials Clinic. Expansion will require us to suspend/modify some policies temporally such as rotations & representation. However, those modifications/suspensions are only temporary. We remain committed to the rotation process and transparency in assigning, while also recognizing the enormity of the changes necessitated by expansion to our tournaments.

2026 Ohio Track & Field and Cross Country Officials Association Clinic and Awards.

The 41st edition of the OTFCCOA Clinic will be held on **January 23-24, 2026** at Nationwide Hotel & Conference Center (now The Ohioan) in Lewis Center. Registrants will receive one local meeting credit for each day they attend and will be able to participate in and receive credit for the only in person state rules meeting that will be offered.

This year's clinic will feature an online registration option, and for those who register by the deadline, their rule books will be provided at the clinic.

For more information, contact Dennis Sabo, densaboo@gmail.com.

Situations

SITUATION 1: Team A arrives at their box to be clerked for the cross country invitational. The entire team is wearing watches. The clerk informs the athletes that they must remove their watches to participate in the race. The coach protests this removal to the meet referee.

RULING: Incorrect procedure by the clerk.

COMMENT: The jewelry restriction was removed from the NFHS rules book in 2015, and the Ohio modification prohibiting watches was removed in 2023. With this change came the ability for athletes to wear watches.

SITUATION 2: A competitor is seen using their watch to listen to their coach give them updates on other athletes on the course. An official on the course sees this occurring and reports it to the meet referee. The meet referee disqualifies the athlete.

RULING: Correct Procedure.

COMMENT: The jewelry restriction was removed from the NFHS rules book in 2015 and the Ohio modification prohibiting watches was removed in 2023. With this change came the ability for athletes to wear watches. However, as discussed earlier in this update, electronic devices are still not legal to transmit/communicate to a competitor during a race.

SITUATION 3: A1 reports to their starting box wearing compression shorts with a manufacturer's logo on the thigh just above the knee as well as around the entire waistband. The trademark around the leg is no larger than $2\frac{1}{4}$ square inches. A1 wins the race. After the completion of the race the coach of Team B protests to the meet referee that A1's uniform shorts are illegal.

RULING: A1 uniform is legal.

COMMENT: Bottoms may have manufacturer's logo/trademark/references larger than $2\frac{1}{4}$ square inches around the waistband. Additionally, there may be a logo on the thigh if it meets the $2\frac{1}{4}$ square inches requirement.

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