

DATE: August 5, 2025

TO: All Track & Field / Cross Country Officials

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

RE: August Officials' Memo



State Rules Meeting for Cross Country

The mandatory state rules meeting is live on DragonFly, the \$50 late fee will take effect on August 19. **This meeting is mandatory to renew your license, to officiate Cross Country during the regular season, and to officiate the postseason.**

Meeting Begins	Late Fee (\$50) Begins	Meeting Closes
July 17, 2025	August 19, 2025	September 10, 2025

If you are a coach AND an official, you must complete both State Rules Meetings. While the content in both is similar, each is customized to its specific audience.

Permit Renewal

As a reminder, if you plan to officiate cross country, your officiating permit must be renewed for 2025/26 prior to the start of the season. If you are not officiating cross country, you have until December 31 to renew your permit for track.

Virtual Local Meeting

The OHSAA will produce one virtual local meeting for Cross Country. The meeting will be available on or around August 18 and will be available for approximately 10 days. The meeting will review heat illness for officials, changes to the Cross Country Tournament Officials Assignment Policy, and changes to the Cross Country Tournament Structure.

Cross Country Tournament Officials Assignment Policy Updates

As part of our continual evaluation of our assignment policies, several small modifications have been made to the Cross Country Tournament Officials Assignment Policy. These changes will be reviewed in the virtual local meeting and will also be posted to the OHSAA DOD page in the coming days. To view the documents click [HERE](#) and scroll down to my section.

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 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 years 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, densabo@gmail.com.

Use of Bull Horns, Cow Bells, Whistle Blasts, Etc.

Per NFHS Rule 4-6-5d “communicating with a competitor through the use of any device” is considered an unfair act and is not allowed. While the use of, cowbells, whistle blasts, etc. by fans is **NOT prohibited** (if they do not interfere with the start of the race), their use to communicate with athletes, including bells or whistles in a rhythm to communicate pace to athletes, is a violation. As an official, you will have to make a judgment call on their use based on the situation at hand. If you cannot see who is using the device and it is someone yelling encouragement or randomly sounding the device during a race, it is likely not something to worry about. However, if you can see it is a coach using the item or the sounding of the item is in a distinguishable rhythm, it is likely something to address. This is not an item with a one-size-fits-all answer.

2026 NFHS Track & Field Rule Changes

Last month, the NFHS announced rules changes that will take effect with the 2026 Track & Field & Cross Country seasons. You can click [HERE](#) to view a brief outline of the 2026 changes; click [HERE](#) to view the NFHS press release. As the national rule interpretation meeting will not take place until January, we will not be able to answer any questions related to the rule changes until the 2026 OTFCCOA Clinic. I encourage you to refrain from making assumptions about the changes and wait until full details of the rule changes, points of emphasis, and the new case book are available.

As a reminder, these changes, including those related to Cross Country, DO NOT take effect until 2026.

2026 Track & Field Sport Regulation Changes

In June, changes for the 2026 OHSA Track & Field Sport Regulations were approved. The regulations are not yet posted online; once they are, a direct link will be sent to all officials. While there were several additions for 2026, only the one listed below relates to officials and competition.

Specialty Relays: To provide consistency in how specialty relays are conducted and what relays are competed across the state, specific directions will be outlined in the coaches and officials manual this coming spring. The regulations outlined in the manual, including a list of allowable specialty relays, **must** be followed and cannot be modified by a games committee, conference, official, etc.

Game Reports

Game Reports are now completed in DragonFly and are filed by accessing your meet assignment. To help officials better understand where to find and file Game Reports in DragonFly, please click [HERE](#) to view a brief video put together by Assistant State Rules Interpreter and Greater Youngstown Track Officials Association Local Interpreter, John Daubenspeck. I thank John for taking the time to put this together.

Situations

Below are four situations reviewed in the first Virtual Local Track & Field Meeting from the spring.

Situation 1: During the 1600 Meter Run, an umpire sees an act of interference by A1. However, the official was unable to get the number of A1. The Referee should?

Answer 1: Not disqualify A1 unless his/her identity can be absolutely by another method such as “the only blue uniform in the race”.

Rational 1: A disqualification should never occur unless there is absolutely no doubt as to the identity of the offender.

Situation 2: At a district tournament, high jumper A1 reports for the high jump, but tells the event judge that she forgot her school issued jersey. She also notes that her parents are bringing the jersey. The judge should?

Answer 2: Check the athlete in, then issue a uniform warning, and then inform her that she can pass heights until the uniform arrives, but she cannot compete further until she is wearing a proper uniform.

Rational 2: Although the competitor is prohibited from “further competition” until the uniform is made legal, nothing in the rule prohibits a contestant from becoming a competitor – even if the uniform is not legal. Good preventative officiating procedures would encourage an event judge to look at the uniform and encourage the contestant to make it right BEFORE checking in. But, there is no rule support for making this a requirement in order to check in. Warming up is not competing, so there is no rule that would prevent warm ups in this situation.

Situation 3: In a dual or tri meet, the games committee has not declared the infield to be a restricted area. Despite it being a hot day, the committee has not provided hydration stations. During the 3200/5000 meter run, A1’s teammates are seen standing inside the oval on the back stretch and handing him/her paper cups filled with water. The coach of Team B protests that that A1 should be disqualified. The Referee should?

Answer 3: Do nothing unless another competitor is interfered with as a result of these actions.

Rational 3: NFHS interpretation via Case Book Situation 4-6-5 M.

Situation 4: The games committee has announced as a part of the meet terms and conditions that the clerks shall give ALL instructions for the races. After the clerks do this and place the athletes on the starting line, the starter repeatedly calls the athletes together to review starting line colors, starting commands, and cut lines so that no athlete will misunderstand what they have been told. This procedure is?

Answer 4: Not correct regardless of the games committee's decision.

Rational 4: While it is common at smaller meets for a starter to also clerk, in this situation there have been officials assigned specifically to clerk. These duties are specifically assigned to the clerk by rule, and the starter is responsible for avoiding unnecessary delays such as are caused by these repetitions. Rules 3-6-1 and 3-7-2

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