

DATE: April 1, 2025

TO: All Track & Field / Cross Country Officials

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

RE: April Officials' Memo



### State Rules Meeting for Track & Field

The mandatory state rules meeting is now live online via DragonFly. **This meeting is mandatory to renew your license and to officiate Track & Field.** Completion of the meeting at this point will require the payment of a \$50 late fee.

Meeting Begins	Late Fee (\$50) Begins	Meeting Closes
January 29, 2025	March 26, 2025	April 15, 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.*

**For full instructions, please refer to the email you received from Keaton Jones via DragonFly on January 29, 2025.**

### Virtual Local Meetings

The second virtual local rules meeting will be sent to officials very soon and will be completed via DragonFly.

### Is It OK to Only Allow Three Attempts in Horizontal Field Events?

Allowing three attempts without finals is **NEVER** acceptable at any meet (high school or middle school) and is **prohibited** under NFHS rules. NFHS Rules 6-2-10 and 6-3-17 state that the only allowable options are three attempts with three additional attempts in the finals, or everyone gets four attempts. The choice between the two options is a decision of the games committee, as per NFHS Rule 3-2. An official or meet only allowing three attempts with no finals would be like a baseball umpire only allowing two strikes or a football referee only allowing three downs; **it simply is not acceptable.**

The above does not alter the referee's or the games committee's ability to suspend or cancel an event due to weather or darkness.

### 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 bull horns, 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.

### Situations

As you may be aware, the first virtual local meeting was a quiz format rather than a traditional video. Over the next several months, I will be sharing situations discussed in the quiz, including the correct answer and the rationale.

**Situation #1:** In a regular season invitational, the 800 meters is run with three runners assigned in each lane. The starter signals the start, and you are the assistant starter (AS). When the runners pass, you fall in behind them and as the runners in lane one reach 60M from their start line, one of the runners is clearly bumped, stumbles, and falls. None of the other runners have reached the 50M mark from their start line. What do you do?

**Answer #1:** Do nothing until the end of the race when you report what you saw to the head umpire or referee.

**Reasoning #1:** While all of the athletes have not moved past the 50M mark, the athletes involved in the contact and fall have and therefore the contact and fall does not allow for a recall. The Assistant Starter shall report what they observed to the Head Umpire (if there is one) or Referee, the referee will then make a determination on possible violations.

**Situation #2:** In a regular season invitational, the 800 meters is run with three runners assigned in each lane. The starter signals the start, and the assistant starter (AS) falls in behind them and as the runners in lane one reach 60M from their start line, one of the runners stumbles, falls, and does not complete the race. No recall is signaled.

You are the referee and the coach of the athlete who fell comes to you insisting his athlete was tripped. The AS reported that the athlete who fell may have been bumped by the runner in a red uniform also running in lane 1. No other official saw what happened.

**Answer #2:** Thank the AS for the report then rule no interference occurred as the AS was unsure that a tripping had occurred.

**Reasoning #2:** As an umpire, you should always report what you see or "think" you saw, the referee will then need to make a decision based on your report and the report of other officials. If the only reports are that we "think" we saw someone, a disqualification should not be issued. We can only issue disqualifications based on what we know, not what we think.

**Situation #3:** In a regular season invitational, the 800 meters is run with three runners assigned in each lane. The starter signals the start, and the assistant starter (AS) falls in behind them and as the runners in lane one reach 60M from their start line, one of the runners stumbles, falls and does not complete the race. No recall is signaled.

Following the race, one umpire reports they "think" they saw the athlete in red bump the athlete who fell and a second umpire reports they had a clear view and the athlete in red did bump the athlete who fell causing the fall. As the referee, you disqualify the runner in red. What do you do next?

**Answer #3:** Nothing. There can be no rerun because this is the 800m and it is a one-day meet.

**Reasoning #3:** While the referee is the sole decision maker related to reruns, as the meet is taking place in one day, the race should not be rerun per NFHS 3-4-3a3. Reruns shall only be considered in races or relays with legs of 400m or less when the meet is one day.

**Situation #4:** In an OHSAA District Tournament, the 800 meters is run with three runners assigned in each lane. The starter signals the start, and the assistant starter (AS) falls in behind them and as the runners in lane 1 reach 60 m from their start line, one of the runners stumbles, falls and does not complete the race. No recall is signaled.

Following the race, one umpire reports they "think" they saw the athlete in red bump the athlete who fell and a second umpire reports they had a clear view and the athlete in red did bump the athlete who fell causing the fall. As the referee, you disqualify the runner in red. What do you do next?

**Answer #4:** Offer the fouled runner the opportunity to rerun, along with any other eligible runners from the first race who wish to run to protect their position. Runners who decide not to rerun are scored in the race according to their time from the first race.

**Reasoning #4:** The referee is the sole decision maker related to reruns. NFHS 3-4-3a3 states that reruns should only be considered in races or relays with legs of 400m or less when the meet is one day. As this is an OHSAA Tournament, and they are two-day events, the race can be rerun.

### Electronic Starting Device (ESD) Update

A decision has been made to make a SLIGHT modification to our [tournament regulations](#) related to ESDs for district & regional tournaments in 2025. The modifications for this season are outlined below.

- For 2025, any FAT Contractor who has a two-speaker ESD must use it for the district tournament. In 2026, no FAT contractor that does not have a two-speaker ESD system will be allowed to time a tournament. Two speaker systems will be mandatory for districts in 2026.
- All regionals must use ESDs; two speakers will be allowed this season; if the FAT contractor has three speakers, they must use all three. In 2026, all regionals must have three-speaker ESD systems.
- The state meet will have a three or four-speaker system.
- More information can be found in the Tournament Regulations in section 23.
- For district meets in 2025, my office will ship district sites that have contractors that cannot comply with the above ESD regulations .32 cal shells for the meet.

### Important Notes Regarding ESDs

- The mandate for the use of ESDs applies to the OHSAA tournaments. Any legal starting device may be used during the regular season. It is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** that the tournament regulations be followed anytime an ESD is used. However, the regulations only apply to the post-season.
- Any entity that received a grant from the OHSAA for the purchase of their ESD must use it at all meets they perform FAT services.
- For the OHSAA tournaments, black powder shells will not be used for recalling false starts or the signaling of "gun lap". Recalls shall be done with a second firing of the ESD or air horns. "Gun laps" shall be signaled with the sounding of a bell or air horn. While the purchase of the ESD is the responsibility of the FAT contractor, the purchase of the air horn or bell is the responsibility of the contest official.
- For the second year, the OHSAA has provided an [Electronic Starting Guide](#) for officials and coaches to use. It includes suggested speaker locations, sample PA announcements, and more details to help with the implementation of this technology.

## Benefits of Local Associations

While local association membership is not mandatory it does bring countless benefits. Local associations serve many roles and are critical to the success and growth of our sport.

Local associations:

- Provide in-person educational opportunities for members
- Help serve as a connection between officials and schools/leagues in need of officials
- Provide access to local rule resources through their local rules interpreters
- Providing access to local secretaries who are a great first step for most officials' questions
- Provide camaraderie and socialization opportunities
- Provide mentorship and development through connections with veteran officials

If you are not a member of a local association, **I strongly encourage you to join one near you**. If you don't have the contact information for a local association, please reach out and I can assist in connecting you.

## Officiating Survey – 2026 Tournament Expansion

To better understand the availability of officials in relation to an expanded Track & Field State Championship in 2026, we are conducting a short survey. Please take 2-3 minutes to complete this survey; your feedback will be extremely helpful in putting together a plan. The survey will be open until June 7, 2025.

Click [HERE](#) to complete the availability survey.

## Save The Date – 2026 Ohio Track & Field and Cross Country Officials Association Clinic and Awards.

The 41<sup>st</sup> 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.

For more information, contact Dennis Sabo, [densabo@gmail.com](mailto:densabo@gmail.com).

## 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)

Important Dates		
	2025 Cross Country	2025 Track
	<small>All 2025 dates are subject to change</small>	
OTF&CCOA Officials Clinic	January 23-24, 2026	
OATCCC Coaches Clinic	January 29-31, 2026	
First Day of State Meeting <u>for Officials</u>	TBD	February 4, 2025
First Day of State Meeting <u>for Coaches</u>	TBD	February 10, 2025
First Day of Coaching	August 1, 2025	February 24, 2025
Early Season Invitational	August 16, 2025	
Season Begins	August 18, 2025	March 29, 2025
State Meeting Late Fee Begins <u>for Officials</u>	TBD	March 26, 2025
State Meeting Late Fee Begins <u>for Coaches</u>	TBD	March 30, 2025
Deadline To Declare for Tournament	TBD	April 21, 2025
State Meeting Ends <u>for Officials</u>	TBD	April 15, 2025
State Meeting Ends <u>for Coaches</u>	TBD	April 21, 2025
Non-Interscholastic Date	September 29, 2025	May 5, 2025
7th & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade State Championship		May 17, 2025
District Tournaments	October 18, 2025	May 19-24, 2025
7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Post-Season Invitational	October 19, 2025	
Regional Tournaments	October 25, 2025	May 28-31, 2025
State Championships	November 1, 2025 <small>@ Fortress Obetz</small>	June 6-7, 2025 <small>@ Ohio State</small>
OHSAA State Championship Officials Clinic	November 1, 2025	June 6-7, 2025
Season Ends	November 1, 2025	June 7, 2025
OATCCC Cross Country Clinic	November 14, 2025	

Important Documents/Resources		
	2025 Cross Country	2025 Track
OHSAA Sport Webpage	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Sport Regulations	TBD	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Tournament Regulations	TBD	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Uniform Guidance Video	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
Coaches Manual	TBD	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Officials Manual	TBD	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Seated Athlete Manual		<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Electronic Starting Guide		<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Verification Form	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
Mixed Gender Relay Waiver		<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
Medical Waiver	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
Non-Bordering State Waiver	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
OHSAA Officials Handbook	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
OHSAA School Handbook (Constitution, Bylaws, GSR)	<a href="#">Click Here</a>	
NFHSLearn.com   Fundamentals of Coaching	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
NFHSLearn.com   Sport-Specific Coaching	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>
NFHSLearn.com   Sportsmanship Course	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
NFHSLearn.com   Track & Field Officiating	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	
NFHSLearn.com   Interscholastic Officiating	<a href="#">Click HERE</a>	

Tournament information can be found by clicking the appropriate links on the sport-specific OHSAA Sport Webpage.