

DATE: August 15, 2022

TO: All Track & Field / Cross Country Officials

FROM: BJ (William) Duckworth  
Director of Officiating Development & State Rules Interpreter  
Track & Field and Cross Country



RE: Cross Country Pre Season Notes

Click [HERE](#) to view a brief pre-season video message before reading below.

### **OHSAA Cross Country Officials Manual**

Going forward, there will no longer be a combined coaches and officials manual for Track & Field and Cross Country. I will publish one manual each year that will cover both track and field and cross country and it will focus on information specific for officials. Dustin, Sports Administrator, will publish a manual for each sport separately that will cover information specific to coaching. Both manuals will be available for coaches and officials to view via the OHSAA website.

Starting in 2023, the OHSAA Track & Field and Cross Country Officials Manual will be posted in February to both sports pages. As both sports use the same rule book, I felt it appropriate to combine the manuals. The plan is that there will be no changes to the manual between the spring and fall seasons. If there is a need for a change for the fall season, it would be made, a new manual posted and officials notified.

The 2022 OHSAA Track & Field and Cross Country Officials & Coaches Manuals can be found by clicking [HERE](#).

### **Religious Apparel – New Rule in 2022**

New this Cross Country season is a change in how we handle athletes wearing religious apparel. This new rule applies to both Track & Field and Cross Country. In accordance with Ohio Law (Senate Bill 181) and OHSAA General Sport Regulation 20 no waiver is needed for the wearing of **any** religious items regardless of if it complies with uniform rules in NFHS Rule 4. **Religious items worn DO NOT need to match their teammates uniforms.** Any athlete who presents that they need to wear headgear, skirts, pants, etc. for religious purposes should be allowed to participate without delay. If the item poses a clear danger to others, the referee should make every possible accommodation to allow the athletes to compete as dressed.

### **GPS Watches**

Per NFHS Rule 4-6-5, a wristwatch, secured to the person, may be worn in Track & Field and Cross Country competition. The OHSAA has modified NFHS Rule 4-6-5 and per this modification GPS watches are considered an aid and, therefore, illegal. Due to the extreme difficulty in identifying and determining the legality and illegality of electronic devices, officials must be **completely certain** that, in fact, the electronic device is being used as an aid. Hearsay (or the opinion of a third party) is NOT an acceptable manner of determining whether or not the device is used as an aid.

Proper enforcement of this OHSAA Modification is as follows:

- Ask the athlete if the watch has GPS capability.
  - If they say yes, they must remove it.
  - If they say no, they can run with the watch.

## Heat Safety

The cross country season starts off HOT, please make sure you plan in advance for the weather, not just rain and lightning but also the heat. Make sure you take care of yourself by wearing sunscreen, drinking plenty of fluids before and during the meet and wearing a head covering if needed. Keep an eye on your fellow officials too. If you see someone in need of a break, more water or exhibiting the signs of heat illness, please take action to get them what they need. Please click [HERE](#) for more information on heat illness.

## Date Correction – OHSAA Middle School Cross Country Invitational

There was a typo in the State Rules Interpretation Meeting. The date of the OHSAA Middle School Cross Country Invitational was listed incorrectly. This meet will be held on Saturday, October 22, 2022. All Arbiter contracts issued for this meet have the correct date. The Officials Manual and Virtual Local Meeting have been updated to reflect the correct date. I apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

## Cross Country State Rules Meeting

The 2022 State Rules Interpretation Meeting will be 100% virtual this year. The meeting went live on July 21 and must be completed by August 23. Those who don't complete the meeting by the due date will have until October 4 to complete it with a late fee. The OHSAA will send a reminder to complete.

## Cross Country Local Rules Meetings

Officials can attend local meetings starting on July 5 until October 10. During this timeframe, I will be posting a virtual meeting that will count as one local meeting credit. The OHSAA will notify you when this meeting has been posted.

## Cross Country Tournament Assignment Selection Policy

In November 2021, a taskforce was assembled to review the current processes used and make recommendations for changes. The group worked through the fall and winter, making a proposal to me this past spring. Combining their recommendation with my own, the OHSAA approved a new process in June. The full policy is posted [HERE](#). I encourage you to take a few minutes to view a video detailing the new policy by clicking [HERE](#).

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Sincerely,

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OHSAA Track & Field and Cross Country