

DATE: June 13, 2024

TO: All Track & Field / Cross Country Officials

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

RE: June Officials Memo: Post Season Recap & New Sport Regulations



### **Thank You**

The 2024 season has come to an end and hopefully everyone is taking some time to relax, recharge and refresh. I wanted to personally extend a thank you to each of you and your families for all of your work this spring and your time away from your loved ones. Your work helps ensure our student athletes have the best experience possible.

### **Ignoring Rules Doesn't Help Student Athletes!**

Very similar to following the cross country season, one big theme that has emerged following this spring season is the inconsistent application of the rules during the regular season. Choosing to not enforce certain rules or "let things slide" during the regular season does nothing to help the sport nor the student athletes we serve. We are actually hurting the students, as we are setting them up to fail later in the season when the rules are enforced by another official. There is a big difference between preventative officiating and ignoring items. Many of the issues that came my way during the tournaments were directly related to rules not being enforced during a regular season.

I am not asking officials to hand out more disqualifications; however, we cannot choose to ignore rules we don't like. We are all humans, and mistakes will be made, but ignoring things is not a mistake. It is an intentional action. While we do have tournament regulations, the rules in the NFHS Rule Book and OHSAA Officials Manual apply to both the regular season and tournaments the same.

### **2024/2025 Track & Cross Country Sport Regulations**

On June 7, 2024, the OHSAA Board of Directors approved several changes to the Track & Field and Cross Country Sport Regulations. While some of the regulations are new items/changes, the majority of what was added is clarifying language meant to help coaches, officials, and administrators understand the regulations more clearly. The regulations are not yet posted; once they are, I will send a link. However, general points on the items pertinent to officials can be found below.

Tournament regulations for Cross Country will be approved in August and in January/February for Track & Field. NFHS changes for 2025 will also be announced at a later date. Coaches will receive a similar outline of regulation changes in the coming days.

### **Track & Field**

- Hammer throw is now a prohibited event in Ohio. Officials may not officiate the hammer or javelin during the OHSAA season, and OHSAA member schools may not participate in the event.
- All outdoor track events must take place outdoors.
- Exhibition/scratch competition remains prohibited. New language clarifies the prohibition and the penalties for schools that host and/or participate in it.
- Clarification was added on how 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school competitions can take place concurrently at the same meet.
- Previously, our sport had no specific no-contest regulations. Therefore, we had to fall back on the general sports regulations stating that if 100% of the event/meet was not completed, it was a no-

contest. Most did not follow that, leading to inconsistencies and uncertainty. We now have a regulation that outlines when each event or meet would be a no-contest.

### **Cross Country**

- Exhibition/scratch competition remains prohibited. New language clarifies the prohibition and the penalties for schools that host and/or participate in it. Open races must be scored, but awards do not have to be given.

Additional regulations were added on topics not related to enforcement by contest officials and thus they were not included in this memo.

### **Permit Renewal**

Permit renewal is underway and this year will take place in DragonFly, please review the information sent from the OHSAA office on the new process; it takes 5min or less to complete.

Officials planning to work Cross Country and Track must renew their permit by June 30, 2024. Officials who will only be working Track and Field in the spring have until December 31, 2024 to renew their permit without a late fee.

### **Local & State Meetings**

Again this year, the Cross Country State Rules Meeting will be available online **only**. It will be around an hour in length and will cover NFHS changes as well as important OHSAA information. It is mandatory for all officials who will be working any cross country meets this fall. I will also be producing one virtual local meeting that will be available to all officials and will count as one local meeting credit. The topic is TBD.

### **New Officials Courses & Testing**

The OHSAA recently moved all new officials courses from a model housed on MyOHSAA and managed by instructors, to a 100% automated system in DragonFly. This new process now allows prospective officials to start their coursework and testing immediately upon sign-up and not have to wait until the start of a new class. The changes are meant to help streamline the process and allow officials to get through the process quicker.

However, it does create some challenges related to connecting new officials to local associations and ensuring they have completed the needed mechanics training. We are working to close those gaps.

I want to thank Mariah Hohman for the work she did as our instructor when we moved to online only courses last year.

### **BJ Duckworth**

[bjduckworth@ohsaa.org](mailto:bjduckworth@ohsaa.org)

Sport Administrator & Director of Officiating Development  
OHSAA Track & Field and Cross Country