

DATE: May 10, 2025

TO: All Track & Field / Cross Country Officials

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

RE: May Officials' Memo



Tournament Assignments

Congratulations to the officials who have been assigned to the [OHSAA 7th & 8th Grade Track & Field State Championship](#), to serve in one of the 11 Key Positions at an OHSAA Track & Field Regional Tournament (Assignments [Part 1](#), Assignments [Part 2](#)), and the [OHSAA Track & Field State Championship](#).

You can view those assignments by clicking the meet listed above.

Measuring Attempts in Horizontal Events

Myself and the other state rules interpreters have had a lot of questions coming in related to measurements of distances in the horizontal events, specifically the throws. NFHS Rules give the games committee the ability to decide if athletes will get four attempts or three attempts with three additional in the final (only throwing three is never OK). The regulations also give games committees the ability to determine the order of the trials, AKA having athletes throw “2 and 2” (see note on 2 and 2 below) as well as the ability to determine the distances of throws to be measures AKA cut lines. However, NFHS rules DO NOT ALLOW games committee to determine what throws will be measured. Please see the two below situations for clarification.

Situation 1: At a tri-meet that has decided to allow unlimited entries the games committee has determined that all throwers must take two attempts at a time AKA “2 and 2” and that only the longest of the two attempts will be measured during each of their two opportunities to throw two attempts.

Ruling 1: INCORRECT PROCEDURE. While the games committee has the ability to determine that athletes will throw two at a time, they DO NOT have the ability to choose which of the two throws will be measured during each round. All attempts must be measured as the games committee has not determined a cut off distance for measurements. The meet referee MUST instruct the event official to measure all attempts.

Situation 2: At a tri-meet that has decided to allow unlimited entries, the games committee has determined that all throwers must take two attempts at a time AKA “2 and 2” and that only attempts reaching 100ft or more will be measured in the discus.

Ruling 2: CORRECT PROCEDURE. In addition to the ability to require athletes throw two at a time, NFHS rules give the games committee the decision to determine the lengths of the attempts to be measured, AKA “cut lines”

Note on 2 and 2: While “2 and 2” is permitted under NFHS rules. OHSAA tournament regulations prohibit its use at District, Regional, & State tournaments as well as at any 7th & 8th Grade State Meet Qualifier. It is prohibited as it drastically reduces the coaching time an athlete can receive, coaching time that we ensure they have during our tournaments.

Situations

Below please see three situations presented in the quiz used for the first virtual local meeting this spring.

Situation 1: Upon arriving at a school for a Middle School meet involving 10 schools, the coach of one of the visiting schools notices there is a distance of 8' from the take off board to the landing area in the long jump. There are 3' of runway material remaining after the take off board before it stops at approximately 5' from the pit. The coach is unsure if his girl long jumpers can all reach the sand pit from the original take off board. This coach asks if they can put tape or some other material such as a chalk line 1' from the end of the runway which would make it easier for his athletes to reach the pit. The event judge who is an assistant coach of the host school says no and everyone must jump from the take off board. The coach is not satisfied with this answer and seeks out the Referee. You are the Referee, what do you do?

Answer 1: Consult with the host school meet director and inform them that reasonable accommodations for safety purposes must be made and instruct the Head Field Judge or Event Judge to place an alternate foul line on the surface 1' from the end of the runway and allow any competitor to choose the line they wish to use.

Reasoning 1: In the note to Rule 6.9. Art. 17 – “The distance from the foul line or take off board may be adjusted to accommodate different levels of competition.” Being a middle school meet, and in the interest of safety, this is a reasonable accommodation. This accommodation should also be made at the high school level if there is a question of safety to any competitor.

Situation 2: In the 5000 meter run, a special event being competed at a large invitational in the Columbus area, an athlete who was added at the last minute before the entry deadline is assigned to run in lane 8. Upon reaching the start line, he asks the clerk (who is placing the runners in their assigned lanes) if he could run behind the 2 runners in lane 1 instead of his assigned lane 8, as there are a lot of spectators crowded around the outside of the track near his starting position. The Clerk should?

Answer 2: Grant the request with the agreement of the Referee and notification to the FAT operators.

Reasoning 2: Under Rule 3.7.3, the Clerk may make adjustments to the lane assignments with the approval of the Referee when unusual conditions make it unfair to a competitor. The fact that this is a “special event” does not impact the Clerk’s authority to make the change. One possible scenario is the crowd noise may, in this case, make it hard for the competitor to hear the starter commands. A Clerk will want to talk with the Referee before the meet begins and obtain the Referee’s permission to grant these type changes if they arise and the Referee is unavailable at the time the race is to start. See Casebook under 3.7.3 for further discussion.

Situation 3: In the shot put being conducted with 4 throws and no finals, a thrower is using the old style kick and slide method of throwing the shot. As the competitor currently in 2nd place begins their final attempt, and during the act of bending forward at the waist near the back of the circle, a necklace being worn hangs down and touches the ground outside the circle. The athlete completes the throw and the circle official raises the red flag and indicates a foul. The athlete and coach are informed that the foul was called because the necklace touched the ground outside the circle during the attempt. The attempt is not measured. The coach files a proper appeal with you, the Referee. What is your decision?

Answer 3: Grant the appeal as the touching of the necklace was unintentional and did not aid the attempt at all. Grant the athlete one more throw and recalculate the results if necessary.

Reasoning 3: Rule 6-4-3 says “it is a foul if a competitor after starting the attempt touches any surface outside the circle during the put”. In the casebook on page 69 in 6-4-3 situation A states, “The unintentional touching of personal equipment outside the circle does not by itself constitute a foul.”

NFHS Rules Questionnaire

If you have not already done so, I invite you to participate in the NFHS rules-writing process by completing the annual questionnaire. This questionnaire allows a national sampling of coaches and registered officials to provide feedback, which will be considered by the NFHS Track & Field Rules Committee. **Historically, response rates from Ohio have been very low; I strongly encourage you to take a moment to complete the survey and share your opinion.**

To participate, please follow the link below to the NFHS Questionnaire Menu, select your sport, and complete the rules questionnaire. You are not required to log in to access or complete the questionnaire. We appreciate your time and input. **Please note that the questionnaire will close on Tuesday, May 13, 2025.**

<https://www.nfhs.org/sports-resource-content/nfhs-sport-questionnaires>

Electronic Starting Device (ESD) Information

- 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.

Save The Date – 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.

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

Benefits of Local Associations

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

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.

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