

2026 OHSAA Cross Country Coaches' Manual

COACHES' MANUAL



Respect
THE
GAME

Updated 7-13-2026

A Message From The OHSAA | BJ Duckworth

Sport Administrator & Director of Officiating Development

Track & Field and Cross Country

Coaches and Administrators,

Thank you for the work you do for our student-athletes in your role as coach or administrator. Without our coaches, administrators, and officials we would not be able to give our student-athletes the fantastic experiences they receive.

This manual is designed to be a guide and first stop for information; **changes for 2026 are reflected in red text in this document.** **Items in blue are editorial changes or text changes for clarification.** In addition to this manual, regular communication will be sent to coaches and school administrators addressing the most frequently asked questions and important updates.

Please utilize the below steps for finding information before reaching out to the OHSAA; this helps ensure a timely response to inquiries.

1. Coaches should review this document for answers. For competition rule-related questions, coaches should also review the NFHS Rule Book that was provided to your school or the OHSAA Officials Manual that can be on the OHSAA webpage.
2. A uniform tutorial can be found on the OHSAA webpage.
3. Reach out to your schools' athletic administrator.
4. Review the [Cross Country Webpage](#); this page has additional information including tournament regulations, sport regulations, uniform guidance.
5. Contact the sport administrator via email after exhausting the above options.

All rules governing OHSAA Track & Field come from the National Federation (NFHS) and the OHSAA. The NFHS governs the majority of the competition rules, with OHSAA Sports Regulations and General Sport Regulations managing the sport's administration. Additionally, the OHSAA has made some adoptions to competition rules as approved by the NFHS; those can be found in this document. No coach, administrator, league/conference, games committee, DAB, or contest official has the authority to modify or set aside these rules.

Thank you for the important role you play in our sport and in the experiences of our student-athletes.

Sincerely,

BJ Duckworth

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

Important Dates and OHSAA Contact Information

Important Dates

State Rules Meeting Begins: [July 20, 2026](#)

First Day of Coaching: [August 1, 2026](#)

OHSAA High School Early Season Invitational: [August 21 \(D1 & D2\) and August 22 \(D3 & D4\)](#)
(Fortress Obetz & Memorial Park)

FINAL Day for Completion of State Rules Meeting before \$50 late fee: [August 24, 2026](#)

Regular Season Contests May Begin: [August 24, 2026 \(No scrimmages allowed\)](#)

State Rules Meeting \$50 late fee begins: [August 25, 2026](#)

Non-Interscholastic Date: [October 5, 2026](#)

FINAL DAY for Completion of Rules Meeting with late fee: [September 28, 2026](#)

(Teams will be withdrawn from the OHSAA tournament if the meeting has not been completed by this time.)

Tournament entry/withdrawal date: [September 28, 2026](#)

District Championships: [October 24, 2026](#)

7th & 8th Grade State Championship: [October 25, 2026](#)

(Fortress Obetz & Memorial Park)

Regional Championships: [October 31, 2026](#)

State Championships: [November 7, 2026](#)

(Fortress Obetz & Memorial Park)

Season Ends: [November 7, 2026](#)

OHSAA Track & Field and Cross Country Contact Information



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Track & Field and Cross-Country Support Personnel



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Additional OHSAA Contacts

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Dr. John Kronour | Director of Sport Administration | jkronour@ohsaa.org

Scott Kaufman | Director of Sport Administration & Operations | skaufman@ohsaa.org

Ronald Sayers | Director of Eligibility & Technology | rsayers@ohsaa.org

Andy Bixler | Director of Eligibility & Student Services | abixler@ohsaa.org

Lizzy Wilson | Manager of Eligibility | lwilson@ohsaa.org

Alexis Holderman | Manager of Membership | aholderman@ohsaa.org

Full OHSAA Staff List With Photos & Biographies | [Click Here](#)

Who To Contact

Eligibility Questions | Ronald Sayers, Andy Bixler, Lizzy Wilson

Appeals (Student Eligibility) | Alexis Holderman

Custody Change | Ronald Sayers

International Exchange Students | Lizzy Wilson

Self-Supporting Students | Ronald Sayers

Moves Into the District | Ronald Sayers

Transfer Back to Residential District | Ronald Sayers

Sport Specific Questions | BJ Duckworth

Officiating Issues | BJ Duckworth, Beau Rugg

Rule Interpretations | BJ Duckworth, Bob Meuleman, Steve Hurley, or John Daubenspeck

Cross Country Informational Links

OHSAA Cross Country Webpage: ohsaa.org/sports/track

NFHS Track & Field Webpage: nfhs.org/activities-sports/track-fieldcross-country/

2025 OHSAA Track & Field Sports Regulations: ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/Track-Field/Track&FieldRegs.pdf

Coaches Education: nfhslearn.com

Coaches Tool Chest: coachestoolchest.com

Ohio Association of Track & Cross-Country Coaches: oatccc.com

Ohio Association of Track & Cross Country Coaches

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jdahler@oatccc.com

The Ohio Association of Track & Cross Coaches (then named the Ohio Association of Track Coaches) was formed in 1941 as the brainchild of Ed Barker. During the late 70's, the name was changed to the Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches. The goals and purpose of the OATCCC are as follows:

- Promote track, field and cross country in all of the junior and senior high schools of Ohio. We also extend support to those programs in the state's colleges and universities.
- Cooperate with and assist the OHSA and Ohio's colleges and universities in all matters pertaining to maintenance, promotion and improvement of track and field and cross country.
- Recognize and award outstanding achievement and/or contribution by athletes, coaches, officials or supporters.

OATCCC District Contact Information Can be Found at:

<https://www.oatccc.com/Contact-Us/>



Track & Field and Cross Country Officials Association

President

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jbpscuba@yahoo.com

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The Ohio Track & Field & Cross Country Officials Association (OT&F&CCOA) was formed in 1985 with the purpose of promoting the sports of track and field and cross country in Ohio, and recruiting and retaining officials for those two sports.

The OT&F&CCOA is open to any current track/cross country official in good standing with the Ohio High School Athletic Association. Dues are \$25 per year, with half of the money earmarked for scholarships and the rest to fund annual Clinic expenses.

The annual OT&F&CCOA Clinic is held the third weekend of January in the Columbus area.

The OT&F&CCOA annually awards Contributor Awards, Scholarships to children/grandchildren of officials, Joe Lenge Service Awards, and the association's highest honor, the Fredrick Cope Award to an outstanding track & field/cross country official.

The OT&F&CCOA website can be found at:

<https://otfccoa.wixsite.com/ohiotrackofficials>



Coaches Code of Ethics

From the NFHS Track & Field Rules Book



The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student should be treated with the utmost respect and his or her welfare should be considered in decisions by the coach at all times.

Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The Coach shall be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.

The Coach shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. IN all personal contact with students, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.

The Coach shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse.

The Coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct the program in harmony with the total school program.

The Coach shall master the contest rules and shall teach them to his or her team members. The coach shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.

The Coach shall exert his or her influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, pep club sponsors, booster clubs, and administrators.

The Coach shall respect and support contest officials. The coach shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.

The Coach should meet and exchange cordial greetings with the opposing coach to set the correct tone for the event before and after the contest.

The Coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give students special consideration.

The Coach shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school athletic association.

Professionalism

Your professionalism is of the utmost importance. Your athletes and fans will follow your lead. If you are respectful of the game and the officials, your athletes and fans are more likely to do the same. If you are disrespectful of the game and the officials, it will be reflected in the words and actions of your athletes and fans. Officials aren't perfect and mistakes will be made, but it is all part of the learning process for our young student-athletes. So please take those disappointments and turn them into positive learning experiences. What you permit, you promote.

Sportsmanship

As we prepare for the upcoming seasons, the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) wishes to emphasize to each of you the importance of your leadership role in the promotion of sportsmanship, ethics and integrity. The professional manner in which officials and coaches conduct themselves prior to, during and following a contest unquestionably impacts the behavior of others who may be involved.

The OHSAA has joined the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) in its quest to improve sportsmanship, ethics and integrity. We are involved in an ongoing campaign in every sport to do just that. Printed below is the mission statement of the NFHS concerning sportsmanship, ethics, and integrity. Please take the time to read and digest this statement and then carefully consider your impact upon students, officials, coaches, and fans. Thank you and have a great season!

The Ohio High School Athletic Association challenges all of us in the Track community to take positive steps toward the goal of attaining the high ideal of good sportsmanship. It is the responsibility of each of us to serve as a positive role model and set high expectations for others.

The OAT&CCC and Sportsmanship

The Ohio Association of Track & Cross Country Coaches stands tall in its commitment to good sportsmanship. The school-based experience is one that affords tremendous opportunities to student-athletes that they will remember for a lifetime. Those experiences are dependent on the role model the head coach provides. The OAT&CCC encourages all coaches to exhibit behavior that serves as a role model for the student-athletes we serve. In conjunction with the OHSAA's Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity (SEI) Committee, the OAT&CCC annually selects recipients of the SEI Award that is recognized at the state tournament.

The Administrator's Role in Sportsmanship

Athletic departments are comprehensive, pre-eminent teaching departments with a subject matter all their own: self-confidence, leadership, teamwork, discipline, perseverance, respect for others, strategic thinking, dedication, the importance of rules, and sportsmanship. These are true life lessons and participation in athletics provides another forum for learning. Coaches and Officials are responsible for promoting sportsmanship and positive behavior on the field. Administrators, we need your continued assistance in promoting sportsmanship and controlling fan behavior in the stands! Let the parents and fans know what you expect!

The Coach's Role in Sportsmanship

Your athletes will demonstrate the attitudes and behaviors they have learned from you, either through direct instruction or through observation of your actions. ***Never underestimate the influence you have on participants!*** You must:

- Abide by and teach the rules of the game in letter and in spirit.
- Set a good example for players and spectators to follow.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. Treating them with respect, even if you disagree with their judgment, will serve to create a positive impression of you and your team.
- Display modesty in victory and graciousness in defeat.
- Develop a program that rewards participants and spectators for displaying proper sportsmanship and enforces penalties on those who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.

It is difficult to develop a great pitcher, a great catcher or a great outfielder. That is true. However, your greatest challenge is to develop mature young adults who will become great citizens and role models in your community.

The Student-Athlete's Role in Sportsmanship

You serve as a role model for your younger siblings, young fans in the stands, your teammates, and your classmates. Set high expectations for everyone and help them follow-through! You must:

- Accept and understand the seriousness of your responsibility, and the privilege of representing your school and the community.
- Live up to the standards of sportsmanship established by the school administration and the coaching staff.
- Learn the rules of the game thoroughly and discuss them with others. This will assist everyone in the achievement of a better understanding and appreciation of the game.
- Treat opponents as you would like to be treated with respect.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. Treating them with respect, even if you disagree with their judgment, will serve to create a positive impression of you and your team.

The Official's Role in Sportsmanship

Your job is not an easy one, but the official must be aware that they are an important component in the educational development of students. To carry out this responsibility, you must:

- Know the rules and mechanics of our sport and the philosophy behind them.
- Get fit and stay fit. An official with all of the rules and mechanics knowledge and people skills in the world does no good if he or she cannot physically keep up with play.
- Maintain professional and ethical relationships with athletic administrators, especially in the area of fulfilling game contracts.
- Work cooperatively with fellow officials during games and within the referees' association to improve members' performances.
- Maintain at all times and when interacting with all participants, an attitude of civility and professionalism.
- Practice effective preventive officiating as much as possible before, during, and after a game. The quiet word, proper signals, timely verbal instructions, a simple thank-you to a player for avoiding an unsporting act, and well-thought-out pre-game conferences with the teams and other game officials will result in an improvement of sportsmanship by eliminating the chance for things to go wrong.

The National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) conducted a survey of 550 sports officials and asked "*what is the number-one problem in our games today?*" Not too surprising, the number one response was "Poor Sportsmanship." As a result, the NASO brought together some of the best and brightest in youth, high school, collegiate and pro sports

to examine the issue and explore the official's role in promoting positive on-field behavior. The results were published in the book at the right and identified 3 critical ideas:

1. What exactly is at Stake
2. What is Expected of Officials, and,
3. What steps need to be taken

As a result, the following are important results of this study and publication:

1. 65% of respondents indicated their respective associations do not do *enough* to help improve sportsmanship.
2. 89% of officials responding consider themselves PARTNERS with players, coaches and administrators in improving sportsmanship.
3. 54% of officials responding indicated they felt they DO have the training, authority and knowledge to make an impact.

Sportsmanship for Parents

The NFHS has made a NO COST online course available to PARENTS to help them understand their role in their son/daughter's athletic career. The course is titled "The Role of the Parent in Sports" and is easily accessible through the "Learning Center" at www.nfhslearn.com. And, again, it is FREE and a good tool for coaches to use in dealing with parents.

Conclusion

Good sportsmanship is everyone's responsibility. It is the essence of interscholastic athletics. Remember, some may question an official's call or a coach's substitution, but no one can question the value of good sportsmanship.

Rules Interpretation Meetings

The annual, mandatory Cross Country State Rules Meeting will take place per the chart below; it will only be available online. Failure to complete the meeting by the due date **will result in your team being ineligible for the postseason.**

Meeting Starts	Late Fee Starts	Meeting Closes
July 20	August 25	September 28

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. Please remember that completion of the Rules Interpretation Meeting is **MANDATORY** for coaches and officials.

Directions:

1. Login to your myOHSAA account (<http://officials.myohsaa.org/Logon>)
2. Click on the "Rules Meeting" icon
3. Click on "Find a State Rules Meeting"
4. Search for your sport specific State Rules Meeting using the 'Sports' and 'Meeting Type' drop-down menus
5. Click on 'View Meeting' once the State Rules Meeting has gone live

Scheduling & Out-of-State Contests

The first date your team can participate in a **REGULAR SEASON CONTEST** is **August 24, 2026**.

- The only contest that can be participated in prior to this date is the OHSAA Pre-Season Invitational that is held on **August 21 & 22, 2026**

End of Season Date

Relative to regular season "in-state" contests: Teams may schedule contests right up until the board adopted "Season End" date of **November 7, 2026**. This means that, even though you are in the OHSAA tournament or eliminated from the OHSAA tournament, you may still schedule (usually 'make up') a contest until this date. Keep in mind that playing this date also eliminates any opportunity for an athlete to participate in non-interscholastic track & field until the school season is complete.

School Team Participation in Competition After Season

It is a violation of the regulation that prescribes the school season for a school to schedule competition after the final day of the season listed in the sport regulations. Individuals may compete non-interscholastically, but school team competition must cease as of the end-of-season date.

Athlete Limitation

An athlete may **NOT** participate in two meets in one day.

Scheduling Conflicts / Over Scheduling

Scheduling conflicts are going to arise. **Please coordinate with your athletic administrator to ensure that officials are notified in advance of any changes.** When dates, times and/or locations are changed, it not only affects the officials scheduled for that game, but also other games they are scheduled to work. Scheduling more contests than the sport's regulations permit in any sport is **NOT PERMITTED.** Overscheduling will lead to contract disputes and, if not settled, could result in financial penalties being levied by the OHSAA even if there is no financial clause listed on the contract.

Scrimmages or Previews

According to the definitions adopted and printed in the Sports Regulations, scrimmages and previews are **not permitted** in cross country. Cross Country is considered a sport of individuals with accumulative scoring applications resulting in a team score. Any type of interscholastic competition is considered a contest and subject to contest limitations.

Scheduling Two Meets in One Day

This is permissible, but each meet must be listed on the school's schedule and counts in the maximum of 16 permitted for each individual competing. An athlete may **NOT** participate in two meets in one day.

Scheduling & Out-of-State Contests

Teams may travel out-of-state to compete in contests in states OR provinces in Canada that border Ohio regardless of distance, including:

- Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ontario

Teams may travel to a non-bordering state **ONE TIME ONLY** per season only and must ask the OHSAA permission by using this form

- <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Eligibility/forms/NonBorderingStateApproval.pdf>
- In all contests competed outside Ohio, each school shall follow all Ohio eligibility standards, general and sport-specific regulations as well as the playing rules (NFHS or national governing body) as adopted by the host state association.
- The penalty for schools that participate in a regular season contest before the official start of the season or travel to a non-bordering state more than one time per season shall be **INELIGIBILITY FOR THE OHSAA TOURNAMENT!**

NFHS Sanctioning of Contests

Whether a contest/event is in Ohio or outside of Ohio but still within the United States, the host of the event must secure a sanction through the National Federation of State High School Associations for competition by a member school in any of the following contests:

- (a) ANY event which includes an Ohio AND an out-of-state school that is co-sponsored by or titled in the name of an organization outside the school community;
- (b) Events involving non-bordering states where five (5) or more states are involved;
- (c) Events involving non-bordering states if more than eight (8) schools are involved;
- (d) Events involving two (2) or more schools that includes a team from a foreign country, with the exception of Canada and Mexico.

NOTE 1: In (b) and (c) above, no sanction is required if the contest(s) only involve Ohio schools and/or schools which border Ohio.

NOTE 2: If the contest is taking place outside of the United States, no NFHS sanction is required even if any aforementioned criteria are met.

OHSAA Regulations Points of Emphasis

10 Practice Acclimation Period

Each competitor (HS & MS) must practice a minimum of 10 days under supervision of the individual or coach authorized by the Board of Education before competing in a contest.

Non-Interscholastic Participation

General Sports Regulation 7 prohibits a member of the school team from competing with any non-interscholastic program while a member of the school team. Please remind your student-athletes of this rule, as penalties shall apply if this Regulation is violated. Anything outside of high school are considered **non-interscholastic**.

An athlete officially becomes a member of the school team once they have participated in a contest with the school team. With that being said, OHSAA Regulation would permit a student-athlete to participate with a non-interscholastic program up until that student participates in their first contest for the school. As soon as they participate in a contest for the school team, they may no longer participate with a non-school program.

Individual Skill Instruction (Non-School Coaches During the Season)

MANY questions arise regarding players receiving individual instruction **during the season** from individuals not associated with the school's program, including (but not limited to) instruction from private running, jumping, or throwing coaches. The OHSAA's Sports Regulation 7.11 addresses the specifics of instruction DURING or OUTSIDE the season. GSR 7.11.1 reads: *"Individual skill/coaching instruction may be received by a member of an interscholastic team at any time from either school or non-interscholastic coaches or instructors."*

Non-Interscholastic Date

Though participation in any form of non-interscholastic Cross Country while a member of a school team is prohibited, any participation in a non-interscholastic contest **on or after this date** for a student who has not yet joined your interscholastic program results in the individual being ineligible for the OHSAA tournament in addition to any other possible penalties.

Transfer

In the referendum vote which took place in May 2018, the member high school principals voted to change the transfer consequence for those students who change high schools and do not meet a transfer exception from the first half of the season to the second half of the season plus the OHSAA tournament. Once the first 50% of the maximum allowable regular season contests have been competed, the student becomes INELIGIBLE for the remainder of the regular season plus the OHSAA tournament. **The current regulation in cross country** is that the student becomes ineligible at **Meet 9**.

Ensure Your Students Are Eligible

Coaches, parents, and student-athletes are strongly encouraged to review online the OHSAA Athletic Eligibility Guide, which is written to explain the rules to coaches and student-athletes and their parents. Simply go to the OHSAA website (www.ohsaa.org) and click on "Eligibility." There you will find a variety of links to help answer numerous questions.

Physical Fitness or Conditioning Programs Prior To Season

There are no restrictions for pre-season conditioning in this sport except programs are limited to calisthenics, weight training and running. The running shall consist only of jogging with no sprint or interval training or any activity where coaching and instruction are involved.

Pre-Season Meeting

The OHSAA mandates that all coaches/administrators conduct pre-season orientation meetings for student-athletes and their parents. These meetings afford the coach the opportunity to present information pertaining to school policy, athletic codes of conduct, OHSAA eligibility rules and details concerning the program. The eligibility guides could be presented at this time. Please remember that when parents sign their consent for their student's participation in interscholastic athletics on the OHSAA authorization form, they also indicate that they have read and understood the OHSAA rules for eligibility. **Please also use this meeting to ensure parents understand:**

- The role they play in good sportsmanship
- The important role officials play in high school sports
- They should contact the coach or athletic administrator, NOT the OHSAA office, with any questions.

During your pre-season preparations, invite a local official(s) to meet with your squad during pre-season workouts or at your parents' meeting. This allows the officials to meet your athletes and discuss new rules. It also gives your athletes an opportunity to ask questions and discuss them prior to competition days. If you would like assistance in this area, please contact BJ Duckworth at bjduckworth@ohsaa.org.

Also, a course titled "The Role of the Parent in Sports" has recently been offered by the NFHS and is FREE to parents. Encourage them to watch this very informative video course. This and other appropriate courses are available through the www.nfhslearn.com website. Schools are encouraged to invite local officials to meet with their team and parents at these meetings. This allows the officials to meet the athletes and discuss new rules and gives athletes an opportunity to ask questions and have a discussion prior to game days. Again, it provides a forum for healthy discussions and an opportunity for parents to learn more about the game.

Practice of Individual Events Prior to or After the Season

Individual skill/coaching instruction by the school coaching staff may take place prior to the opening day of practice per General Sports Regulation 7.11. Members of a school's staff may coach athletes from the school during the school year outside the season.

Opening up a gym or an outdoor facility for athletes to practice without the instruction and direct supervision of a qualified coach **is not a recommended practice**. There are also no restrictions regarding individual athletes attending clinics or instructional programs prior to or after the interscholastic track and field season.

Comments to News Media

Each year, unpleasant situations arise as a result of comments made to the news media by coaches. The OHSAA Constitution and Bylaws reads in part "Great care shall be exercised in the selection of officials, well in advance of the contest and agreed upon by schools involved" and goes on to say "Public criticism of officials is a direct reflection upon those who were responsible for assigning the officials to the game. Officials/Umpires are trained and expected to make no derogatory comments directly to the media or through the use of social media regarding other officials, the players, coaches or schools. Coaches and participants are expected to follow the same procedure and make no derogatory public comments directly to the media or through the use of social media regarding not only the officials, but also the players, coaches or schools. Failure to follow this request will result in penalties as outlined in Bylaw 11.

Videotaping Regulations

Regular Season Contests

- It is permissible for a school or a school representative to videotape or photograph regular season contests of the team or individuals from one's own school. Such videotapes or photographs may be used for "in-game" coaching purposes only if it is specified in the national playing rules of the sport or in the specific sport regulations.
- It is permissible for a school or a school representative to videotape or photograph regular season contests (including previews, scrimmages and/or practices) of teams or individuals not from one's own school only with the written consent of all schools participating in the contest(s).

OHSAA Tournament Contests

Videotaping and Photographing by Participating Schools

- Videotaping OHSAA tournament contests of the team or individuals from one's own school participating in the contest is permitted provided prior arrangements are made with the tournament manager, and it is done at the expense of the school involved. A maximum of two individuals per school are permitted to videotape.
- All photographs and videos taken by school representatives of the team or individuals from one's own school at OHSAA tournament contests are for school use ONLY. The use of photographs or videos taken by school representatives for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited. Such videotapes or photographs may be used for "in-game" coaching purposes only if it is specified in the national playing rules of the sport or in the specific sport regulations.
- It is permissible for a school or a school representative to videotape or photograph tournament contests (including practices) of teams or individuals not from one's own school only with the written consent of all schools participating in the contest(s).
- It is permissible for a school or school representative to *utilize* video and photographs of tournament contests (including practices) of teams or individuals not from one's own school only with the written consent of all schools participating in the contest(s).

The use of drones at OHSAA contests is prohibited.

Coaches Must Have Pupil Activity Permit & Coaches Tool Chest

Per Ohio Administrative Code, any high school or middle school coach (volunteer or paid) must have a valid Pupil Activity Permit (PAP) issued by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Athletic Administrators are responsible for maintaining records of compliance for each of the following:

1. Completed background checks
2. Completed course from an approved First Aid for Coaches provider
3. Completed course from an approved Concussion provider
4. Completed course from an approved Sudden Cardiac Arrest Training provider, including Lindsay's Law
5. Completed course from an approved Coaching Fundamentals provider
6. Completed training course in CPR from a course approved by your school or District
7. Completed mental health course from an approved provider



COACHES'
TOOL CHEST

The OHSAA has partnered with Coaches' Tool Chest (www.coachestoolchest.com) as a single source, online provider for each of the courses needed to obtain a PAP. CTC helps ensure coaches have the knowledge they need to best serve their student athletes. This annual course is updated with current best practices and training and provides a single certificate for all the coaching requirements in Ohio.

Specific information about alternative single source courses, additional details and application information can be found: <https://sboe.ohio.gov/educator-licensure/apply-for-a-new-license/pupil-activity-coaching-permits>

Concussion Legislation as it relates to Coaching Requirements

Though the entire law is explained later, all coaches today must complete one of two (2) approved Concussion Education programs online upon renewal of their Pupil Activity Permit any time after April 26, 2013. Individual student-athletes removed from contests with a suspected concussion are no longer permitted to return to play on the same day of the contest, regardless of the diagnoses. If they are removed by one of the individuals given this authority, they simply cannot return to play the same day. Written authorization is required to return anytime thereafter and must be kept on file with the school athletic administrator indefinitely.

Communication to Coaches

The OHSAA will continue to send information to member school superintendents, principals and athletic administrators electronically with timely updates and reminders on a variety of topics through the *OHSAA Administrator Update*. These bulletins are usually sent weekly and are also posted on the OHSAA website. Additional communication with track and field-specific information will be emailed periodically to head coaches and athletic administrators as needed and will also be posted on the OHSAA website.

What is Coaching?

The definition of coaching is providing instruction or being present with a team or individual during contests, tryouts, training and practices—*this applies to any school coach, volunteer or paid*. Specific activities include, but are not limited to, practice or other instructional situations in which the coach conducts specific drills, teaches skills, supervises competition-like activities or in any other way supports the instructional environment; competition situations in which the coach sits on the team bench, is in the direct vicinity of the competition in areas reserved for coaches and/or delivers instruction to athletes while they are competing.

Receiving Outside Private Instruction

While it is not the position of the OHSAA to encourage outside instruction during the school Cross-Country season, Individual skill/coaching instruction may be received by a member of an interscholastic team at any time from either school or non-interscholastic coaches or instructors, provided that these individual skill instructions do not violate any Board of Education, school administrators' or coaches' policies.

OHSAA Cross Country Competition Rule Reminders

Use of Video/Electronic Systems for Making Officiating Decisions

Video replay or television monitoring equipment **shall not** be used to make decisions related to the competition except for finish line placement. Coaches and/or others associated with the team are prohibited from showing video to officials per NFHS Rule 3-2-8. Coaches and/or others associated with the team that show officials video or attempt to show officials video are subject to disqualification from the meet (ejection) per NFHS Rule 3-2-8. Disqualification from the meet does also bring administrative penalties including suspension from future competitions. Officials must follow the ejection process as outlined in this document.

Modified Scoring

In accordance with NFHS Rule 8-2-3 the OHSAA has adopted modified scoring. Modified scoring is a scoring procedure that would allow teams with less than five runners to score in a regular season meet. It can only be used when approved by a meet's games committee and all participating schools have been notified in advance of the meet verbally, in writing, or in the contest contract. Modified scoring does not allow games committees to change/modify any other element of the scoring process. Modified scoring shall not be used in OHSAA tournament competitions. If modified scoring is used, it **MUST** follow the procedure outlined below:

After runners in excess of each team's allotted 7 athletes are removed and the remaining runners re-ranked, the next place in the ranking will be added to each team with 4 runners. The next 2 places will be added to each team with 3 runners, and so on to give each team 5 places to be scored. This means that all teams without 5 finishers shall be awarded the same position(s) for their next scoring position(s). Therefore, if there are 109 finishers (after removing those who are not in their team's top 7), ALL teams with fewer than 5 finishers will be awarded 110th place, ALL those with fewer than 4 finishers will also be awarded 111th place, etc. until 113th place is awarded to all teams having only one runner.

Ninth Grade Students/Students Below Ninth Grade

Ninth grade students in all schools are high school students and shall compete in athletics in accordance with high school bylaws and regulations. Ninth grade students are not permitted to compete in interscholastic competition on the same team or squad with students below ninth grade.

Students below the ninth grade are not eligible to compete in athletics with high school students unless they meet an exception as outlined in Bylaw 4-2, Age Limitation.

Referee's Jurisdiction

By rule, the referee shall remain available for 30 minutes after the conclusion of the competition in case a protest has been filed or if there are questions still unanswered. If there are no protests or unanswered questions, officials may leave earlier.

Officiating Requirements

A minimum of one OHSAA Class 1 Track and Field official is required at all high school track & field and cross country contests. This official shall be the meet referee. It is the responsibility of the host member school to ensure compliance with this important regulation. If the school delegates the responsibility of contracting officials to a certified OHSAA assignor, then the responsibility for compliance rests with the certified assignor. The penalty for failure to adhere to this regulation is a fine of up to \$100 for the school or certified assignor and the officials involved who are not properly licensed. Registered officials should always be used, if available.

No Contest

Any race not competed due to weather or darkness shall be scored as a no contest. Related to tournament competition, all events must be completed, you cannot have a no contest. [A meet that is canceled and scored as a no contest does not count as one of the maximum allowed contests.](#)

No Jury of Appeals in Ohio

In 1999, the NFHS rules changed, thereby eliminating the choice of using the Jury of Appeals either as a final arbiter or in an advisory capacity. Therefore, in OHSAA track and field and cross country competition, regular season and tournament, no Jury of Appeals shall be appointed. The games committee, as per rule, may serve in this capacity but may only advise the referee. **The referee shall have the final decision in all appeals. Refer to NFHS Rule 3-5 for additional information on the appeals process.**

Please note: In all situations involving ineligible participation, the Commissioner of the OHSAA retains final authority to rule on such participation. The Commissioner has the authority to disqualify participants who are ineligible under the Bylaws and sports regulations of the OHSAA.

Required Roster

Each school must provide a roster of athletes.

- If the meet has been managed using software like MileSplit, Baumspage, etc., then the coach does not need to provide an additional roster as it has already been uploaded electronically.
- If the meet has not used registration software, a paper roster must be provided.
- Competition must be delayed until the roster is provided.

Sub- or Non-Varsity Competition (Cross Country)

There is no distinction between varsity and sub-varsity participation when a single team from a school is entered into a contest. All members of said team are subject to the same uniform rules. At the meet manager's discretion, a school may enter more than one team in the competition; pending the same opportunity has been given to all participating schools and all teams are eligible to score.

Pre-Meet Conference and Coaches Verification

Coaches must provide to the referee prior to the contest a signed verification of sporting conduct and legal equipment/uniforms.

- For ALL meets using MileSplit, the verification form was signed during registration for the meet and NO additional form is needed.
- This new process should help eliminate waste and streamline the process for coaches and officials.
- For the OHSAA Tournaments, coaches will complete the verification form on MileSplit when registering for the District Tournament and it will follow qualifiers through to the next round.
- If the meet was not hosted on MileSplit, a verification form MUST be completed and turned in. Electronic collection of these forms (Google Forms, etc.) is allowed.

Scratch or Exhibition Competition

"Scratch" or "exhibition" competition is not permitted under OHSAA Bylaws, all athletes must be eligible to score. **EXCEPTION:** The OHSAA Board of Directors may authorize exhibition competition in events within specific sports in order to accommodate students with disabilities without affecting team scoring in those sports. When authorized, a waiver from the OHSAA will be provided by the school/coach.

No school, coach, athletic administrator, or any other individual may change the rules by mutual agreement. Officials do not have the authority to waive the rules.

Medical Devices

Medical devices can be utilized by athletes in track and field as it is considered a non-contact sport. These devices include but are not limited to inhalers, EpiPens, insulin pumps and heart monitors.

Per OHSAA policy, “such medical necessity shall be specified in writing and signed by the prescribing physician. The device shall be attached to the body in a manner fitting with the device that is safe for the athlete and does not cause danger to other athletes. Items may be carried by hand or in a pouch/fanny pack if they cannot be safely attached to the body in another manner. The medical statement shall be **shown** to the head contest official prior to the athlete’s being permitted to participate; this statement can be shown on paper or electronically. Examples of approved medical devices include but are not limited to EpiPens, inhalers, insulin pumps, glucose monitors and heart monitors. Athletes participating with these devices are still subject to NFHS Rules if their medical device is dropped or becomes dislodged from the body and interferes with other athletes.”

- **No waiver is needed from the OHSAA office.**
- Water cannot be carried in a bottle or camel back pack by an athlete; this is considered an aid.
- Water can be distributed by meet management to all runners as allowed by NFHS rules.
- Headgear worn for medical reasons is **NOT** considered a medical device and **DOES** require a waiver from the OHSAA office if it does not comply with headgear regulations.

Finish Line Aids

Finish line aids of soft wool yarn or other soft breakable or unbreakable material are prohibited.

The Use of Lead Carts

If the games committee authorizes the use of a lead vehicle, they **MUST** ensure that:

- Vehicle is operated by a responsible adult, no one under the age of 18.
- No students, even if they are over the age of 18.
- There is a safe distance maintained between the vehicle and the lead runners.
- The vehicle is fast enough to not cause a risk to the student athletes.
- No passengers are allowed unless approved by the referee.
- A time clock may be carried on the back of the vehicle if it is properly secured.
 - Time clocks on lead vehicles are PROHIBITED at tournament competition.

Obstacles & Water Crossings (Cross Country)

Per NFHS Rule 8-1-2c obstacles such as hay/straw bales, logs, hurdles, etc. are prohibited; additionally “Water crossings” are prohibited. When a course contains an obstacle or water crossing, the referee **MUST** suspend competition until the course can be altered to become compliant. If it cannot be made compliant, the meet shall not be allowed. A game report should be filed regardless of if the issue is corrected.

A referee that allows a meet to take place that is not compliant with NFHS 8-1-2c as outlined in this presentation, takes personal responsibility for any injuries that may occur and likely will not be covered by their liability insurance.

Standing Water <i>Not an issue or perceived violation</i>	Water Obstacles <i>Would be considered a violation</i>
Puddles	Creeks
Wet courses (from rain)	Streams
Low lying area that may have some ponding from recent rain.	Drainage ditches with or without water.
	Manmade water crossings
The above are EXAMPLES only and not an exhaustive list of what is legal or illegal. The list is meant to provide guidance as to what IS and IS NOT considered a violation of NFHS Rules. This is NOT a new rule	

NEW: Sportsmanship and Enforcement of NFHS Rules 4-6-1 & 4-6-2

Below is a list of items/actions that shall be considered a violation of NFHS Rules 4-6-1 & 4-6-2. The list is not all inclusive and items/actions not on this list may occur. When an item/action not on the list occurs, a decision will need to be made by the meet referee on enforcement.

Items/Actions that shall be interpreted as a violation of NFHS Rule 4-6-1 resulting in disqualification from the meet (ejection).

- Intentional contact such as but not limited to: punching, slapping, pushing others as well as hitting with any item such a baton, block, field event implement, etc.
- Vulgar language or profanity directed toward another individual.
- Encouraging the crowd to boo/chant at officials.
- Encouraging the crowd to boo/chant negatively at other athletes/teams
- Continual failure to follow the direction of a meet officials, i.e. a second offense. This shall only be enforced after a disqualification from an event has been issued to the same athlete for the same offense or a coach has been warned previously that the behavior is not allowed.
- Falsifying identity or information to participate in an event under another person's name or number. Accidentally putting on the wrong number does not constitute falsifying identity; however competing with the wrong number is a violation of NFHS Rules 4-1-4 & 4-3-1b1.
- Taunting / Unsporting Conduct.
 - Spontaneous celebratory actions such as the below shall NOT be considered taunting or unsporting conduct.
 - High Fives with teammate(s) or competitors
 - Jump & chest bumping with a teammate(s) after an event or attempt
 - Simulate a cross on their chest at any time
 - Pointing to the sky after winning or immediately prior to crossing the finish line
 - Pointing their hand/arm in the air indicating # 1 after winning or immediately prior to crossing the finish line
 - Yelling aloud (not using profanity or derogatory comments) that is not directed at any person
 - Throwing a relay baton, not thrown at someone, even if bounces and hits someone. This, however, would be a violation of NFHS Rule 5-11-n.
 - Finishing with their arms held horizontally to the ground like they are breaking through a "finish tape". If this action causes interference to other athletes, appropriate penalties shall apply per NFHS Rule 5

- Yelling, cheering, clapping, fist bumping, and any other method of encouraging other competitors both on their team and on other teams.
- Celebrations at their team camp
- Actions such as the below **shall be** considered taunting.
 - The use of props of any kind in a celebration such as a wrestling championship belt, sledgehammer, fire extinguishers, etc. when they take place in any area other than their team camp.
 - Turning and running backwards before crossing the finish line.
 - Pointing or gesturing at athletes from other teams or the crowd both during and immediately following the conclusion of the race or trial. Including gesturing at others to be quiet, waving goodbye, etc.
 - The use of vulgar, profane or derogatory language toward another individual
 - The use of violent gestures or simulations such as a throwing a spear, shooting bow and arrow or gun, sheathing a sword, etc. regardless of if they are directed at another
 - Back or front flip during or immediately following the race or attempt.
 - Posing as if taking a selfie alone or with a teammate(s)
 - Any choreographed or pre planned celebratory displays.

Items/Actions that shall be interpreted as a violation of NFHS Rule 4-6-2 but NOT a violation of 4-6-1 resulting in disqualification from the event.

- Swearing or the use of vulgar language that is not directed at someone.
- Failure to follow the direction of a meet official.
- Throwing a baton in anger not at someone. This is also a violation of NFHS Rule 5-11-n.
- Intentionally kicking, hitting, or knocking over a cone, pilon, or other crowd control device.
- Other items as outlined in NFHS Rule 4-6-2

Ejection Information

- ALL ejections REQUIRE a report to be completed and filed with the OHSAA.
- Ejection Reports are completed and submitted electronically through Dragonfly.
- In the event of a coach or player ejection, he/she is ejected from ALL GAMES for the remainder of the day of the ejection PLUS all contests at all levels until two regular season/tournament contests are played at the same level of the ejection or disqualification. Coaches may also be required to pay a fine and/or complete mandatory training.
- Ejected **COACHES** are required to LEAVE the premises immediately. If no assistant coach is present, that team must leave the meet; if no other teams are at the meet, the meet ends.
- Ejected **PLAYERS** are to remain in the BENCH AREA under the supervision of the coach.
- The offending school (coach, athletic administrator or principal) must file a written report with the OHSAA anytime a coach or player is ejected from a contest, home or away.
- In the event of a coach or player ejection, he/she is ejected from ALL GAMES for the remainder of the day of the ejection PLUS all contests at all levels until two regular season/tournament contests are played at the same level of the ejection or disqualification. Ejected coaches may have additional penalties
- As of 2001 – Any player or coach ejected for fighting is ejected from ALL GAMES for the remainder of the day of the ejection and will be ineligible for all contests at all levels until **FOUR** regular season/tournament contests are played at the same level as the ejection or disqualification.
- **ALL EJECTIONS ARE FINAL AND NOT PERMITTED TO BE APPEALED** per the OHSAA's Board of Directors.

- Though every ejection has its own story, do not call the OHSAA office asking for an appeal of the ejection. It will not and cannot be overturned. The circumstances surrounding the ejection can and should be expressed on the “School Response Form” that will be received by the school after the ejection occurs.

After an Ejection	
<u>PLAYERS</u>	<u>COACHES</u>
• Remain supervised in team area • Ineligible for all remaining play that day • Ineligible for next two or more contest • May travel to or sit with team	• LEAVES the facility • Ineligible for all remaining play that day • Ineligible for next two or more contest • May not travel to or sit with team • Pays \$100 fine • Completes NFHS Course

Uniform, Jewelry & Headgear Regulations

Shoes

The rules require all cross country competitors to wear on both feet shoes with an upper portion and a definitely recognizable sole and heel. The shoes must be fastened securely to the foot with laces, zippers, Velcro or other closures. Slippers and socks do not meet the rule requirements.

Removal of Any Part of the Team Uniform

Excluding shoes, while in the area of competition as defined by the games committee, is illegal. This shall lead to a warning and, if repeated, to disqualification from the event. If the incident recurs, the contestant will be disqualified from further competition in the meet. (OHSAA ejection policy would apply in this case!)

Uniform Tops/One-Piece Uniforms

Each athlete must wear a full-length uniform top or a one-piece uniform issued or approved by the school. Tops must be full-length (i.e., either tucked into the bottoms or hanging BELOW the waistband of the bottoms when the athlete is standing erect). Shirts are not required to be tucked in unless they obscure a hip number. Bare midriff tops are not allowed. The top shall not be knotted or have a knot-like protrusion.

Uniform Bottoms/One-Piece Uniform

Each athlete shall wear bottoms and/or a one-piece uniform issued or approved by the school. The loose-fitting boxer-style shorts are permitted for boys and girls. The waistband of a competitor's bottom can be rolled but must be worn above the hips as per Rule 4-3-1b4.

Legal Items on School Uniforms

School identification on the tops and/or bottoms and one-piece uniform; athlete's name on the top of the one-piece or two-piece uniform; a single manufacturer's logo/trade name, no more than 2 ¼ square inches with no dimension more than 2 ¼ inches on each item of apparel. NOTE: Rule 4-3-1 now permits logos larger than 2 ¼ or multiple logos on the waistband of a uniform bottom ONLY. The American flag, not exceeding 2 x 3 in permitted on EACH item of uniform; one commemorative/ memorial patch is permitted per uniform subject to the same dimensions as a manufacturer's logo.

Visible Undergarments

Any visible undergarment worn under the uniform top and/or bottom is now considered a foundation garment. Foundation garments are not subject to logo/trademark/reference or color restrictions

Misc. Uniform Topics

Headgear, headbands, socks and shoes are not part of the competitors' uniforms and therefore **DO NOT** need to match.

Additional Restrictions for Cross Country Competition

Each team member shall wear the same color and design of school uniform, although the length of the top, bottom or one-piece uniform may vary. Visible garments worn under the top/one-piece uniform and/or the bottom/one-piece uniform do not have to be the same color. If worn by more than one team member, that apparel does not need to be the same color nor necessarily the same length.

NFHS Rule 4-3-2: All relay and cross country team members must wear uniforms clearly indicating, through predominant color, school logo and color combination of all outer garments worn as a uniform, that members are from the same team. The official should be able to observe that all members are from the same team. For examples of legal and illegal uniforms, please refer to the state rules interpretation meeting. Manufacturer logos do not need to match.

Headgear, Hair Control Devices & Headbands

Hats, caps and headbands that are; not offensive or unsporting, not abrasive or hard, properly secured, and do not pose a danger to themselves or other competitors **are allowed**. The referee may ask a competitor to remove a hat, cap or headband if it is not properly secured, if it poses a danger to the competitor/other competitors, or if it could damage equipment. The referee has the authority to decide what **is safe**.

Section 1. Competitors may wear a Navy Watch-Style knit cap.

Section 2. Competitors may not wear a hat with a bill.

Section 3. Competitors may wear a headband with or without ear protectors, provided the headband is properly secured to the head and does not interfere with another. The headband does not need to be worn as the manufacturer intended and may include decoration.

Hair control devices and/or hair accessories are permitted. Bandanas, pre-wrap, or other items not intended to be used as headbands or hair control devices **are legal** as long as they are not offensive or unsporting, not abrasive or hard, properly secured, and do not pose a danger to themselves or another competitor.

Jewelry

Jewelry is allowed. The referee may ask a competitor to remove an accessory if it is not properly secured, if it poses a danger to the competitor, or if it could damage equipment.

Athletes Carrying Cell Phone & Wearing Smart Watches

The carrying of a cell phone by athletes is NOT prohibited; no doctor's note or waiver is needed to carry the device. This means that cell phones should be treated much like a smart or GPS watch; the athlete can carry them, however, they cannot use the prohibited technology in the device.

Things that would be **allowed** per NFHS Rule 4-6 include:

- Use of the stop watch or standard watch features in a smart watch.
- Use of medical apps in the smart watch or cell phone to record and store medical data. The device may transmit this data, however, it cannot be used for immediate coaching.

Things that would be **prohibited** per NFHS Rule 4-6 include:

- The use of GPS functionality.
- The use of the device to receive or send communication to a coach or other individual.
- The use of the device for audio or video recording.

Referees must be 100% certain that an athlete or coach has used the technology for a prohibited purpose before taking any punitive action. This means an official **MUST** see or hear it directly. Also, officials **MUST NOT** ask the athlete to demonstrate the devices capabilities.

Religious Apparel

Any athlete who presents that they need to wear headgear, skirts, pants, etc. for religious purposes must be allowed to participate without delay. No waiver is needed for the wearing of any religious items regardless of if it complies with uniform rules in NFHS Rule 4. Garments worn for religious reasons (e.g. dark skirts or pants) do not need to match the color and design of uniforms worn by other relay/cross country team members.

2026 NFHS Rule Changes

4-6-5 — The change affirms that the safety of student-athletes is a top priority and supports the use of appropriate health-care professionals to evaluate a downed competitor on the course when designated by the games committee. This evaluation may occur without resulting in disqualification, provided the competitor is not assisted in progressing along the course. This interpretation maintains the integrity of the competition while ensuring that timely medical evaluation can occur when necessary. It reinforces the balance between competitive fairness and the health and well-being of participants.

4-6-6c — The rule clarifies that athletes are not permitted to wear any audio or video recording or transmitting devices during a race, trial, or while in restricted areas. This restriction minimizes potential distractions and interference with performance. This language is consistent with policies found in other NFHS rules books and reinforces a uniform standard across interscholastic sports.

2026 NFHS Editorial Changes

4-3-1b(8), 6-4-2, 9-1-1

2026 NFHS Points of Emphasis

There are no Cross Country related NFHS Points Of Emphasis the 2025 season.

Interpretations for the 2026 NFHS Rule Changes

These are located on pages 4 and 5 of the 2026 NFHS Case Book.

2026 NFHS Points of Emphasis

These are located on pages 4-6 of the 2026 NFHS Rules Book.

NFHS Permitted State Adoptions from Ohio

The OHSA has maintained a stance of being “100% compliant” with NFHS Cross Country Rules. The NFHS Rules carefully permit each state the right to adopt certain rules that are specific to that state and are known

as **“State Adoptions.”** These “State Adoptions” do not cause any fundamental change in the contest from state to state. These permitted cross country “State Adoptions,” and Ohio’s decision on the adoptions are as follows:

High School Modifications

Rule	Modification
Rule 3-2-3a	In High School the referee/starter is required to be a Class 1 registered official; In 7 th & 8 th Grade the referee/starter may be a Class 3 registered official.
Rule 3-2-6	Conferences may not adopt special rules for interrupted events
Rule 3-2-1 3-2-4k 3-5	No Jury of Appeals in Ohio
Rule 3-4-1	Referee MUST be Class 1 registered official for high school meets (recommended for middle school)
Rule 4-2-4	OHSAA has established limitations as described in the Track and Field & Cross Country Manuals. Schools and Conferences may not put aside these event entry limitations.
Rule 4-3-1a3	Spikes are limited to ½” unless the games committee stipulates a shorter length.
Rule 4-3	Head gear may be worn, including but not limited to headbands (with or without sequins) and/or ear covers and navy watch style caps.
Rule 5-8-2	Finish line aids are NOT permitted
Rule -8-2-3	The OHSAA has accepted modified scoring.

Middle School Modifications

None

Clarification on Appeals

NFHS Rule 3-5-1 stipulates that a Jury of Appeals, **if appointed**, shall serve as the final board of appeals. When the NFHS changed this rule in 1999 and designated the Jury of Appeals as the final arbiter of all appeals with authority to overrule the referee, the OHSAA determined that no Jury of Appeals should be appointed in any contests sponsored by the member schools of the OHSAA in the sports of Cross Country and Track and Field. **OHSAA Bylaws requires that the decisions of the contest officials (in Cross Country and Track and Field, the Referee) are final.**

In OHSAA Tournament competition and many invitational tournaments, a Games Committee may be appointed. The Referee always retains the option to consult with members of the Games Committee as well as Head Finish Evaluators utilizing fully automatic timing systems in rendering decisions. By rule, when the situation under consideration is not specifically covered by the NFHS rules, the Referee may also confer with the Head Umpire and/or contest officials.

Regarding perceived or real failure of the **approved** F.A.T. systems (primary and all back-up systems), including microchips in the Cross Country event, the referee has the authority to hold up the official results until the

correct results can be ascertained from either the primary system or the back-up system(s). **This is applicable whether an appeal has been lodged or not.**

Appeals concerning correction of errors that result from a failure of the F.A.T. system or systems, a misapplication of the rules or failure to follow the prescribed conditions of competition shall be filed within 30 minutes after results have been posted or made official. **However, it is not necessary for an appeal to be filed** if, in the opinion of the referee or other contest officials, there has been an error in any of these situations, including but not limited to a failure of the F.A.T. system, which results in the misplacement of student-athletes. The primary responsibility of officials is to ensure fair competition and to correct errors whenever possible. To this end, it is required that the referee remains at the competition site for at least 30 minutes after the posting or announcement of the results.

Athletic Districts

Representation to the regional tournament (the number of Regional ‘qualifiers’) from district winners is determined by a formula based upon the number of teams participating in the previous year’s tournament. With a few exceptions, most schools in the counties listed below are assigned sites from the respective District Athletic Boards. You are encouraged to visit their websites for additional information.

Central District: www.ohsaa.org/cdab

East District: www.ohsaa.org/edab

Northeast District: www.ohsaa.org/nedab

Northwest District: www.ohsaa.org/nwdab

Southeast District: www.ohsaa.org/sedab

Southwest District: www.ohsaa.org/swdab



General Message On Health & Safety

The safety of our student-athletes is of utmost concern at all times. Information regarding the following important topics can be found at www.ohsaa.org and at www.nfhs.org:

- Heat Stress and Athletic Participation
- Recommendations for Hydration to Prevent Heat Illness
- Suggested Guidelines for Management of Head Trauma in Sports
- Communicable Disease Procedures (can also be found in the NFHS 2008-09 Rules Book)
- Disordered Eating
- Information on Nutritional Supplements

Concussion Management

Implementation of State Law and NFHS Playing Rules Related to Concussed Athletes and Return to Play Protocol

It is important for all individuals involved in interscholastic athletics to recognize the potential for catastrophic

injury and even death from concussions. Thus, it is extremely important that each coach, administrator, contest official and medical support personnel review their responsibilities in protecting students. Further both students and parents have responsibilities in this area as well.

Note: It has always been the ultimate responsibility of the coaching staff, in all sports, to ensure that students are only put into practice or contests if they are physically capable of performing. However, all individuals involved in the conduct of interscholastic competition have responsibilities in this endeavor.

In January 2011, the OHSAA Board of Directors adopted a sports regulation which incorporated the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) playing rules related to concussion recognition and management. On April 26, 2013, legislation adopted by Ohio's General Assembly on concussion and head injuries in youth sports became effective. On February 14, 2013, the OHSAA Board of Directors mandated that these regulations become effective on April 26, 2013, for the remainder of the spring sports season and thereafter. This OHSAA regulation, as amended to incorporate this recent legislation, now reads:

Any student, while practicing for or competing in an interscholastic contest, who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the practice or contest by either of the following:

- The individual who is serving as the student's coach during that practice or competition.
- An individual who is serving as a contest official or referee during that practice or competition.

Return to Play Protocol

If a student is removed from practice or competition due to a suspected concussion or head injury, the coach or referee who removes the student shall not permit the student, **ON THE SAME DAY THE STUDENT IS REMOVED**, to return to that practice or competition or to participate in any other practice or competition for which the coach or contest official is responsible. Thereafter, which means no earlier than the next day, the coach or contest officials shall not permit the student to return to practice or competition until both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- The student's condition is assessed by either of the following:
 - A physician, who is a person authorized under Chapter 4731 of the Ohio Revised Code (OCR) to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine or surgery (M.D. or D.O.)
 - Any other licensed health care provider that the school district board of education or other governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school, authorizes to assess the student who has been removed from practice or competition.
- The student receives **written authorization** that it is safe for the student to return to practice or competition from a physician or other licensed health care provider authorized to grant the clearance. Click here <http://ohsaa.org/medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf> to retrieve the OHSAA's Medical Authorization to Return To Play (RTP) form.

A school district board of education or governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school may authorize a licensed health care provider who is NOT a PHYSICIAN to make an assessment and grant authorization for a student to return to participation ONLY if the provider is acting in accordance with one of the following as applicable to the provider's authority to practice in Ohio:

- In consultation with a physician;
- Pursuant to the referral of a physician;
- In collaboration with a physician, or
- Under the supervision of a physician.

Note: A physician or other licensed health care provider who makes an assessment or grants clearance for a student to return to participation may be a volunteer.

Coaches Requirements

All coaches, paid and volunteer, must possess a current Department of Education-issued Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit. When renewing this permit, the coach will be required to complete an online concussion education course as stipulated in the section entitled **Approved Online Concussion Education Course**. This course is valid for three years.

Contest Officials Requirements

New legislation signed into law by the Governor provides that no school “shall permit” an individual to referee interscholastic athletic contests unless the individual holds a Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or has successfully completed within the last three years a training program in concussion recognition. Therefore, all OHSAA licensed officials shall possess either a current Department of Education-issued Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or show evidence of completing an approved online concussion education course as stipulated in the section entitled Approved Online Concussion Education Courses. This course is valid for three years from the date of completion.

Student and Parent Requirements

All students and their parents or legal guardians shall review and sign the “Concussion Information Sheet” which has been developed by the Ohio Department of Health and which shall be distributed by OHSAA member schools to all students and their parents prior to each sports season. Students and parents shall review and sign this form each year and should keep a copy of the form. In addition, parents and students are encouraged to complete an approved concussion education course.

NFHS Suggested Medical Clearance Return to Play Protocol

- 1.) No exertional activity until asymptomatic.
- 2.) When the athlete appears clear, begin low-impact activity such as walking, stationary bike, etc.
- 3.) Initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as running or skating and may also begin progressive strength training activities.
- 4.) Begin non-contact skill drills specific to sport such as dribbling, fielding, batting, etc.
- 5.) Full contact in practice setting.
- 6.) Game play/competition.
 - Athlete must remain asymptomatic to progress to the next level. (It is often suggested that an athlete not be allowed to progress more than one level per day.)
 - If symptoms recur, athlete must return to previous level and should be reevaluated by an appropriate health care professional.
 - Medical check should occur before contact. (Final written clearance from the medical professional shall be obtained before the athlete engages in any unrestricted or full contact activity.)

Quick Links From The Ohio Department Of Health

[Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet](#)

[Online Concussion Management Training](#)

[Ohio’s Return to Play Law: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Ohio’s Return to Play Law: What Coaches and Referees Need to Know](#)

[Ohio’s Return to Play Law: What Parent/Guardians Need to Know](#)

Additional Concussion Resources

[ODH Violence and Injury Prevention Program](#)

[Nationwide Children's Concussion Information Toolkit](#)

[CDC Information on Returning to Schools](#)

[Brain Injury Association of Ohio](#)

OHSAA Concussion Authorization to Reenter Form

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports-Medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf>

OHSAA Concussion Report Form

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports-Medicine/OHSAAConcussionReport.pdf>

Communicable Disease Procedure

Though most schools have a Certified Athletic Trainer present at Varsity contests and all coaches are required to maintain a valid Pupil Activity Certificate through the Ohio Department of Education that includes a Sports' First Aid component, it is important to keep up to date on the remote risk that blood borne infectious diseases can be transmitted during basketball practice and contests. For example, Hepatitis B can be present in blood as well as other bodily fluids. Procedures for reducing the potential transmission of these infectious diseases should include, but should not be limited to the following:

1. The bleeding must be stopped, the open wound covered and if there is an excessive amount of blood on the uniform, it must be changed before the athlete may participate.
2. Routine use of gloves or other precautions to prevent skin and mucous-membrane exposure when contact with blood and other body fluids is anticipated.
3. Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces if contaminated (in contact) with blood or other body fluids. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves.
4. Clean all contaminated surfaces and equipment with an appropriate disinfectant before competition resumes.
5. Practice proper disposal procedures to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels and other sharp instruments or devices.
6. Although saliva has not been implicated in HIV transmission, to minimize the need for emergency mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, mouthpieces, resuscitation bags, or other ventilation devices should be available for use.
7. Athletic trainers/coaches with bleeding or oozing skin conditions should refrain from all direct athletic care until the condition resolves.
8. Contaminated towels should be properly disposed of/disinfected.
9. Follow acceptable guidelines in the immediate control of bleeding and when handling dressings, mouthguards and other articles containing body fluids.

For more information, go to the OHSAA's website at: <https://www.ohsaa.org/communicablediseases>

Heat Stress & Athletic Participation

The following information should be reviewed with coaching and sports medicine staff prior to any interscholastic practice where there is a risk of exertional heat illness. While the sport of volleyball does not

have a required acclimatization period, please keep the following in mind when dealing with hot gyms and any outdoor activities. *Acclimatization is a period when players can become accustomed to the heat and humidity.*

All coaching and medical staff personnel shall observe the following precautions for **all sports competed outdoors and/or in a hot, humid environment.**

- **Stress to participants the importance of properly hydrating** during the day leading up to the contest/training, and to drink 8-to-12 ounces of water or sport drinks 20 minutes prior to the contest or any training session. This procedure can help prevent problems during practice and contests.
- **Schools shall have unlimited amounts of water** and sport drinks on hand during practices and contests, and coaches in team sports should be prepared to play a lot of players rather than just the starters.
- **Contest officials are permitted to establish predetermined breaks** during contests, such as halfway through each period. At that time, players can drink water and remove their equipment, which should also take place at halftime (the more skin that is exposed, the more cooling that can take place). **This provision also applies to all sports.**
- **Contest managers are advised to monitor conditions** for others affiliated with the contest, like cheerleaders, band members, coaches, officials and especially spectators.
- **Know both the Temperature and Humidity.** The greater the humidity the more difficult it is for the body to cool itself. Test the air prior to practice or a game using a wet bulb, globe, temperature index (WBGT index) which is based on the combined effects of air temperature, relative humidity, radiant heat and air movement and is the recommended standard of care for assessing risk of exertional heat illness.

The wet bulb temperature should be measured prior to practice, every 30 minutes at minimum during practice, and the intensity and duration of practice adjusted accordingly. Recommendations are as follows:

- Under 79.7 F** Normal activities – three separate 3-minute breaks per hour
- 79.8-84.6 F** Three separate 4-minute breaks per hour
- 84.7-87.6 F** Maximum practice time of 2 hours; four separate 4-minute breaks per hour; consider postponing practice to later in day
- 87.8-89.7 F** Maximum of 1 hour of training with four separate 5-minute breaks; no additional conditioning; consider postponing practice to later in day
- 89.8+ F** No outdoor workouts and no indoor workouts unless air conditioned

The OHSAA advises careful monitoring of the weather and plans to modify training and competition including:

- 1) Modification of equipment, if applicable to the sport
- 2) Allowance for more frequent rest breaks and the use of shaded areas for those breaks
- 3) Modification of practice time
- 4) Availability of water always
- 5) Availability of cold water immersion tubs for onsite cooling
- 6) If exertional heat stroke is suspected, immediate onsite cooling using cold water immersion before transport by EMS
- 7) *Review and practice of the OHSAA's recommended Emergency Action Plan, "Anyone Can a Save A Life," or similar plan for all sports teams with special emphasis on the heat illness section.*

Lindsay's Law

Lindsay's Law, Ohio Revised Code [3313.5310](#), [3707.58](#) and [3707.59](#) became effective on August 1, 2017. In accordance with this law, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio High

School Athletic Association, the Ohio Chapter of the American College of Cardiology and other stakeholders jointly developed guidelines and other relevant materials to inform and educate students and youth athletes participating in or desiring to participate in an athletic activity, their parents, and their coaches about the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest.

The following resources were developed to implement Lindsay's Law:

*For **parents/guardians** and **student- athletes** in grades 7-12 in Ohio schools:*

- [Required video](#)
- [Required SCA Informational Handout](#)
- [Required Signature Form](#)

*For **coaches**:*

If you are a coach for an interscholastic sport and are licensed by the Ohio Department of Education (all paid and volunteer coaches in Ohio), please visit their [website](#) for information about their training requirements around Lindsay's Law <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/landing/Lindsays-Law.aspx>. The required video, informational handout and post assessment test will be available shortly through the ODE's website. We will inform you when that component is available. If, however, you want to have your coaches view the video and review the information immediately, you may access those items below. Please be advised that as a school district, your superintendent must be able to verify that coaches have seen this video and read the informational handout if you choose to implement this requirement before it is available through ODE's LMS.

- [Required video](#)
- [Required SCA Informational Handout](#)

These educational materials are all free of charge and are the only materials authorized for compliance with this state law. No other course or training material is acceptable.

Lightning & Weather

Recognition

Coaches, certified athletic trainers, athletes and administrators should be educated regarding the signs indicating thunderstorm development. Since the average distance between successive lightning flashes is approximately 2-to-3 miles, anytime that lightning can be seen or thunder heard, the risk is already present. Weather can be monitored using the following methods:

- **Monitor Weather Patterns** – Be aware of potential thunderstorms by monitoring local weather forecasts the day before and morning of the competition, and by scanning the sky for signs of potential thunderstorm activity.
- **National Weather Service** – Weather can also be monitored using small, portable weather radios from the NWS. The NWS uses a system of severe storm watches and warnings. A watch indicates conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area; a warning indicates severe weather has been reported in an area, and everyone should take proper precautions.

Management

- **Evacuation** – If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators shall evacuate to available safe structures or shelters. A list of the closest safe structures shall be announced and posted at all athletic venues.

- **Thirty-minute rule** – Once lightning has been recognized, competition shall not be resumed until at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is witnessed or thunder is heard to begin or resume a contest. Given the average rates of thunderstorm travel, this would allow the storm to move 10-to-12 miles away from the area and significantly reduces the risk of local lightning flashes. **Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count should reset the clock, and another count should begin.**



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OHSAA TRACK & FIELD and CROSS COUNTRY

**COACH'S VERIFICATION OF SPORTING CONDUCT & LEGAL EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS
FOR USE IN REGULAR SEASON & TOURNAMENT COMPETITION**

SCHOOL NAME _____

DIVISION _____ BOYS _____ GIRLS _____

HEAD COACH'S NAME _____

OHSAA standards require contest officials to enforce all NFHS rules relating to sporting conduct, ethical behavior and legal uniforms and equipment. Acts that intend to demean opposing competitors, team members, spectators and officials are not in keeping with the ideals of interscholastic athletics and will not be tolerated. Let this competition reflect mutual respect!

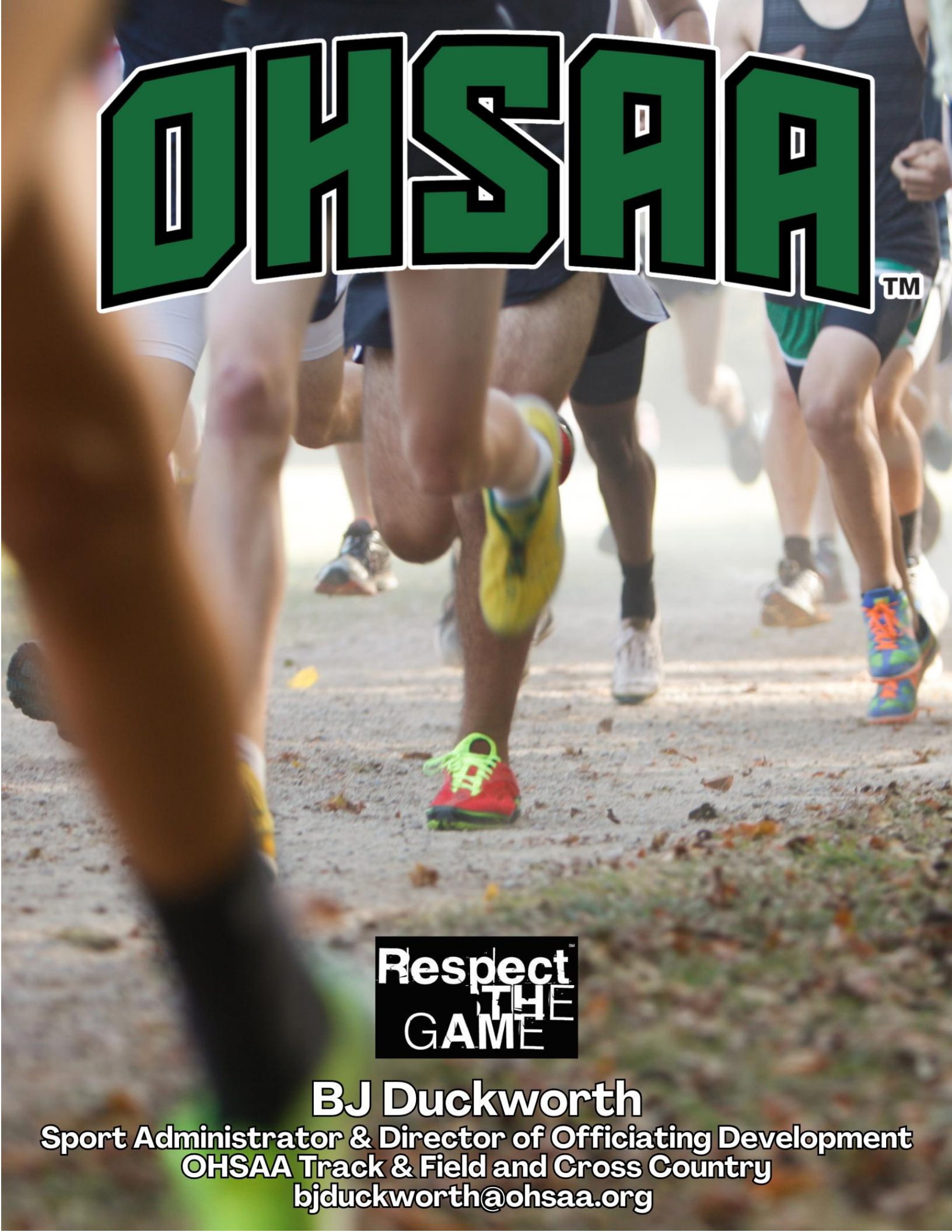
Coach's Verification

I certify to the tournament referee that all contestants under my supervision are legally equipped, attired in legal uniforms and free of all dangerous jewelry in accordance with NFHS rules. I further certify that all student-athletes and other team personnel have been advised of their responsibilities relative to good sporting conduct during this competition. In addition, I understand and accept responsibility for adhering to the OHSAA participation limitation of four events per individual athlete per tournament contest.

Coach's Signature _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to area designated by the meet officials or games committee.

OHSAA™

A low-angle, slightly blurred photograph of several runners in motion on a paved track. The focus is on the lower legs and feet of the runners, with various colored sneakers visible. The background is out of focus, showing more runners and a bright, possibly sunny, outdoor setting.

**Respect
THE
GAME**

BJ Duckworth

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