

# Track & Field Points of Emphasis - 2024

By NFHS on February 07, 2024

## Fair Starts

It is the starter's responsibility to ensure a fair and legal start and anticipate problems. The interval between the set command and the firing of the starting device should be approximately two seconds. After a starter gives the order "set," if any competitor is in motion, the starter shall not fire the starting device. Firing the starting device too soon doesn't allow athletes to get ready, and firing the starting device too slow also creates a situation of unfairness.

Starters may for any reason cancel a start by directing all competitors to "Stand Up."

The following are some of the reasons that a starter may cancel a start in races with legs of less than 800 meters:

- Noise at the start line,
- Starting block problem,
- Obstruction on the track,
- Slow athlete getting set,
- Misfire of starting pistol,
- Hands on the line,
- Extraneous movement after the set command. In distance races the following are some of the reasons that a starter could halt or recall the start.
- Runners not steady,
- Toes on the line,
- Failure to come to the line in a timely manner,
- Impeding a position of another athlete,
- Fall during first 100 meters due to contact.

Starters play a huge role in fair, consistent and legal starts for student-athletes across all events.

## SPORTSMANSHIP

Sportsmanship rules help officials, parents, coaches, and student-athletes develop and reinforce values that apply to the development of the whole person. Respect for others, honesty, fair play, learning, and understanding the rules are critical life skills that, when practiced, will enhance any individual's character. The absence of good sportsmanship jeopardizes one of the fundamental principles of participation in education-based athletics and complicates the team-building process. A sportsmanship priority is keeping winning and losing in perspective. Understanding that losing with dignity is an important lesson, everyone must learn and practice. A collaborative, working relationship should be a priority between officials, game administration, coaches, and student-athletes to promote good sportsmanship during a track meet. This includes treating people with

respect and using appropriate language, actions, and language that build people up and values each person.

It is critical to remember that winning means you were the best version of yourself that day. The beauty of track and field is that one constantly tests themselves against one's best time, height, or distance. Continual improvement is a hallmark of successful student-athletes, programs, teams, and coaches. This improvement also involves positive sporting behavior, a fundamental ingredient of education-based high school sports.

## **CROSS COUNTRY SAFETY**

Training for Cross Country is unique in that there are so many options afforded to the runner(s) to accomplish their workouts. Not being limited to the track allows the runners access to parks, city streets, highways and country roads. However, each of these options creates safety concerns that all runners and coaches should keep in mind. Workouts and runs should be fun, relaxing, carefree experiences. Sadly, the need for runner safety tips is evidenced by a dramatic increase in pedestrian deaths in the United States, as well as eight reported running-related motor vehicle crashes resulting in nine deaths and two disabling injuries among middle school and high school cross country and track and field runners between 2011 and 2021.

It is critical that administrators, coaches and athletes promote and practice safety and risk minimization strategies as Cross Country runners share the road with vehicles and drivers that have become increasingly distracted on the roads. Some key safety measures that can be promoted by school coaches and others to their Cross Country runners include:

- Using sidewalks when available or run facing traffic.
- Stay alert and avoid wearing headphones and using electronic devices, including cell phones.
- Crossing roads at crosswalks and intersections, when available. If not, cross at a well-lit location.
- Avoid running when it is dark. If it is dark, wear bright, reflective materials and/or use a flashlight or head lamp.

- Follow the rules of the road.
- Avoid running along eastbound roads at sunrise or along westbound roads at sunset.
- Provide a safety orientation for first-year runners
- Run in pairs
- Never run against traffic lights
- Avoid running in higher traffic speed areas
- Run during lower traffic times if running along a road
- Avoid loitering along the road before and after runs

Coaches need to plan when developing a road route where stop lights, routes, and heavy traffic exist. Educating the athletes on where to go for safety in case of weather, emergency situations and hydration stops is crucial to athlete safety.