

2019 NFHS Track and Field Points of Emphasis

Uniforms

It has become increasingly more difficult to officiate the uniform rule given the increase in the number of programs nationwide that are allowing individual team members the option of independently purchasing either all or part of their team uniform. The slight differences in design of a uniform do not negatively impact the identification of a relay or cross country team by an official. The expectation of this rule is that all relay and cross country team members can be clearly identified as representing the same school through predominant color, school logo, and color combinations of all outer garments.

Through the results of the 2018 Track and Field and Cross Country Questionnaire, the clear majority of coaches, officials and state association personnel surveyed across the nation were in favor of a simplification of the rule. The rules committee took action to help minimize issues related to garments worn underneath the uniform and provide meet officials more flexibility to determine if relay or cross country team members can be clearly identified as representing the same school. Any garments worn under the uniform are not subject to logo/trademark/ reference, color or length restrictions. Variations in trim and/or accents within members of the same relay or cross country team should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not these variations negatively impact a meet official's ability to identify teammates. Officials should be able to observe that all members are from the same team.

Under Rule 3-2, the games committee will continue to have the authority to restrict or permit the wearing of any item outside of the required school uniform.

Wearable Technologies

The availability of wearable technologies that allow individuals to monitor a variety of body functions, including but not limited to, heart rate, blood pressure, pace and distance traveled are readily available and cost effective. Nearly all these wearable technologies can both transmit and receive collected data from other mechanisms. This data can be used to evaluate how the body is performing, and the user can adjust as needed based on that data.

This type of technology is being incorporated into watches, garments, shoes and jewelry and, in most cases, is nearly impossible to distinguish from the same item type that does not include the technology (e.g., Apple watch vs. traditional watch).

NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules do not prohibit the use of wearable technologies, but Rules 3-2-8a and 4-6-5d state that no competitor may receive electronically transmitted data from a coach or other third party. If such communication is observed by an official, the competitor should be disqualified.

While preventative officiating helps to avoid issues in any event, it is obvious that those trying to police wearable technologies by restricting what can be worn by competitors is asking event officials to perform an impossible task. Restricting the wearing of a watch because it contains GPS capability is futile when the same technology is available in the shoe, the sports bra they have on or the ring they are wearing.

The market for wearable technology is forecasted by most sales and marketing experts to continue to grow – some estimate that nearly 500 million wearables will be sold by 2021. This massive expansion creates the potential for more coaches and athletes to be "connected" through some type of wearable technology. It is important that all involved (administrators, coaches, parents, student-athletes) understand the privacy and legal issues surrounding the sharing of personal biometric information. Discussions and steps should be taken to ensure that compliance with any Federal and State policies or laws are addressed appropriately.

Officials Safety and Recommendations in Vertical and Horizontal Jumps

The safety of the athletes and officials is most important before, during and after the competition in vertical and horizontal jumps. The safety of athletes is paramount by eliminating hazardous conditions from the venue. This includes foreign debris in the landing area, inspection of the runway for tripping hazards and removing equipment out of harm's way. Always be prepared for the unexpected even though the event seems to be progressing as planned.

In horizontal jumps, make sure pits are full of sand and turned, shovels and rakes are placed tines down after use to avoid accidental injuries. Inspect each takeoff board and pit edges. Also instruct those raking the pit to keep the sand off the track as much as possible.

In vertical jumps, make sure the pits meet the rule standard, they are the correct size and properly padded. Check that each crossbar meets standards and is clearly marked. In pole vault, double check standards and extenders, and that the planting box is free of water and in good condition.

Do not allow multiple jumpers on the runway at the same time during competition. During warm-ups, pay special attention when athletes are trying to set their marks and other competitors are on the runway or apron. Athletes running away from the pit or mat to set their marks with or without implements can be hazardous to other competitors and officials in the area if no one is paying attention. Remember to control the runway during practice and during the competition. If another event (i.e., throwing) is in progress near your venue, warn the athletes to pay attention when participating and leaving the event. Officials should always stop the event when safety might be compromised.

Always be attentive when you are at the venue particularly when track events are in progress. Instruct the athletes as to which direction to exit the pit or mat so as not to interfere with oncoming runners or adjacent events.