

Track and Field Points of Emphasis - 2018

By NFHS on October 26, 2017

Uniforms-Waistbands, Trim, Accents and Compliance

More than one million student-athletes representing 16,000 high schools participate in track and field programs that follow NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country rules. The NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee is charged with the responsibility to codify rules that allow the flexibility for high schools to properly equip their athletes in the type of uniform design that best suits their program vision, are in compliance with the rules requirements and provide meet officials the opportunity to clearly and accurately identify the represented school when required.

The NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee's task has become more difficult given the increasing number of programs nationwide that are allowing individual team members the option of independently purchasing either part or all of their team uniform. The nature of the competitive event may lend itself to a different style uniform rather than one style for all. In addition, some styles of uniform bottoms are more personal and not redistributed from season to season. This, combined with variations in product lines from manufacturers from year to year, leads to the potential for unlimited combinations of uniform configurations that "almost" match but might vary slightly in design, accents or color. However, these uniforms are, on many occasions, labeled and distributed under a brand and model number that has been available in previous years. These factors have played a role in making it increasingly more difficult for the school to purchase and issue or approve uniforms that are fully compliant by the strict interpretation of the rules.

While the optimal relay or cross country team uniform is to be the same, the realities mentioned above have created the need to further clarify the parameters related to "color" and "design" described in Rule 4-3-2 for state associations and their member schools as well as officials. It is important to note that the committee strongly agrees that it is appropriate to apply a more stringent standard to the uniform top, given that it is one of the key identifiers for meet officials when violations occur and must be adjudicated.

Uniforms can fade over time and pantone color can vary slightly when ordering replacements. When evaluating color of uniforms, slight variations in shade of the color should not be considered an automatic violation of Rule 4-3-2. The color should be identifiable as the same color such as navy blue to navy blue, even though fading may prohibit the shade to be the same.

Variations to accent and/or trim on the uniform bottom often are at the core of Rule 4-3-2 issues. Adding or modifying these attributes can lead to vastly different designs. However, in many cases these changes are subtle and do not negatively impact a meet official's ability to identify the correct school if required for reporting a potential violation. Examples of uniform attribute design changes that may not necessarily be considered rule violations could include differing number of stripes (all placed in the same direction), the addition of small accent trim or reflective pattern due to the newer types of material.

It is expected that all relay team members or cross country team members can be clearly identified as representing the same school. The degree of variation, if any, allowed in the examples above is dependent upon the respective state high school association and collective consensus of those meet officials responsible for uniform compliance.

As emphasized on numerous occasions, multiple, visible manufacturer's logos on the uniform item make the item non-compliant with the rules. When competitors wear a uniform item that displays the multiple logos, such as on the leg and around a visible waistband, during competition the uniform is non-compliant.

Providing Fluids to Competitors at Cross Country Competitions

Considering the negative outcomes associated with dehydration, it is important that athletic administrators, appropriate health-care professionals and coaches work together to educate parents and student-athletes about developing a season-long hydration plan. Properly hydrating will have a positive impact on performance and minimize the risk of heat illness during the season.

Coaches should ensure that student-athletes have access to water prior to, during and after practice and encourage all to hydrate whenever they feel it is necessary. Various factors have a direct impact on hydration, therefore, implementing systems to monitor athletes during the season will ensure that they are maintaining proper levels.

NFHS Track and Field Rule 3-2-4u grants the Games Committee the authority to provide liquids during a competition. Event organizers are encouraged to work with meet officials to develop a plan to ensure all participants have access to water during events. Participating schools should expect the availability of water unless meet organizers have specified otherwise in advance. In that case, the burden of providing access to water or other types of fluid replacements rests with authorized school personnel. Rule 3-2-4u does not exclude coaches from providing water to their athletes during events given they follow established guidelines set forth in the meet administrative information. It is the desired goal that the host school and games committee have provided ample access to fluids to minimize the need for individual coaches to hydrate the athletes. However, each coach knows his or her athletes the best.

When creating an event hydration plan, meet organizers should consider the potential impact of heat on not only the athletes, but meet officials and others in support roles working the event. The goal is to promote appropriate hydration for all involved.

Entry Limits for Individual Contestants

Under Rule 4-2, Participation and Entry Limitations, a contestant shall not compete in more than four events, including relays. If a contestant is entered in four individual events, he/she may not be listed for any relay as the contestant has already met the participation limit with the four individual entries. If a contestant is entered in three or fewer individual events, he/she may also be listed in one or more relays. (See chart on next page) A contestant exceeds the participation limit whenever he/she reports to the clerk of the course, or the field event judge, in the excess event. The contestant may be listed on relay teams(s) but is not a competitor until he/she reports to the clerk of the course. When the meet director, prior to the start of competition, recognizes the contestant is entered in more than four events, he/she shall scratch the athlete from the excess event starting from the bottom of the order of events and working upward. If the excess event is a field event, the athlete should be scratched from the last occurring field event in which he/she is entered.

Contestant may officially enter:

Four individual events	No relays allowed
Three individual events	May be listed on any number of relays but compete in only one relay.
Two individual events	May be listed on any number of relays but compete in only two relays.
One individual event	May be listed on any number of relays but participate in only three relays.
Zero individual events	May be listed on four relays and may compete in four relays.

Officials Safety and Recommendations in the Long Throws

Anytime objects are thrown and flying through the air danger exists. This is especially true with the throwing field events.

Risk minimization in the throwing events begins with proper and effective event management – the way the event venue is set-up, the monitoring of the warm-up and competition periods, and the manner in which the event is conducted. Each of these factors must be properly and carefully addressed and is essential to conducting a safe, efficient and athlete-centered competition.

The venue for each throwing event should always be laid out with safety and risk minimization as the primary concerns. When possible, the events should be staged away from other events, and away from any obstructions that may interfere with the safety of athletes, officials and spectators. The use of pennants or other physical barriers to prevent persons from straying into the impact area is a must. Signage noting the dangers is suggested for participants, coaches and officials as well as spectators.

Monitoring warm-up throws, and keeping competitors from entering the impact area/safety zone is a very important aspect of maintaining a safe warm-up and competition period. Only those marking the attempts and retrieving the implements should be inside the safety zone. Implements should always be carried back to the competition area, and never thrown back. Some schools only allow adults in the impact area as they tend to pay more attention to the thrower.

The head event judge should review with his/her crew how each person's task shall be accomplished and again emphasize the importance of always being alert for his/her own actions and the actions of others during the event's competition and associated warm-ups. All competitors should also be instructed on the conduct of the event, their responsibilities to follow all safety rules.

Don't allow the next competitor to initiate an attempt until all eyes are paying attention to the competitor, and the attempt can be executed safely. Many times, an orange cone is placed in the circle or approach to signify the venue is closed until all are ready for the next competitor's performance. All eyes must be on the competitor during competition as well as during warm-ups. This applies to officials and coaches as well as spectators that may wander into a restricted area.

By using common sense, being vigilant and attentive to the conditions during the warmup and competition, and controlling the flow and pace of competition, any throwing event can be conducted safely.