

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

NEWS RELEASE

Track and Field Rules Changes Reflect More Lenient Penalties

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Becky Oakes

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 1, 2010) — Several of the 15 new rules changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Committee have more lenient penalties than in the past, including a team warning for the first jewelry violation when observed during competition. The changes, which were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors, will take effect with the 2010-11 school year.

While jewelry is still prohibited in all track and field events under Rule 4-3-3, the first violation witnessed by an official will now result in a team warning. The observing official shall report to the meet referee, who will then notify the coach of the offending school. All subsequent violations will result in a disqualification of the athlete(s)/relay team from the event.

Becky Oakes, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Committee, said the committee was trying to remain consistent with other sports that prohibit jewelry without being too harsh. “Other than a handful of field events with minimal risk minimization concerns, there isn’t a real risk of injury in this sport from wearing jewelry,” Oakes said.

“The committee, after discussion and review of the questionnaire, believed this penalty was more appropriate.”

With regard to medical-alert medals, which are not considered jewelry and are allowed,

the rule now reads that the alert should be visible. Oakes said the committee thought medical alerts that aren't visible defeat the purpose of wearing information that may be important to those responding to an emergency, and responders may need immediate access to the alert.

The rule has also been updated to reflect new technology in medical-alert notification items. Any bracelet made of metal or an unyielding material still needs to be taped to the body, but a bracelet made of pliable material does not require taping. Medals worn on necklaces of any kind still need to be taped to the body.

Additionally, Rules 4-3-3 and 9-6-7 were amended to allow additional means of hair control. Unadorned devices, such as bobby pins, barrettes and hair clips, no longer than two inches, may be worn to control a competitor's hair. This rule was updated to reflect common practice in some states and achieve consistency throughout the rule's application. These items for hair control are not considered dangerous for the contestant and are not considered jewelry or adornment.

"The committee is open to other means of hair control, such as flat clips," Oakes said. "The rule change doesn't open up the wearing of adornments or other items that pose a risk of injury."

Other rules changes allow more leniencies in what is considered a foul, primarily in high jump and pole vault. Under Rule 7-2-12, if improperly fastened supports slip downward when a jumper hits the crossbar, it shall be ruled a no jump and the jumper will get another trial, regardless of the initial jump's result.

In the same vein, a note was added to Rule 7-5-29a that if a crossbar and/or uprights are placed incorrectly by the contest officials and the crossbar is displaced by the competitor, the trial is not recorded and the competitor receives an additional trial.

"All of these things used to be fouls," Oakes said. "But if equipment is placed improperly by the officials or there is an equipment malfunction, the rules should not penalize the jumper."

The committee also approved several other rules changes in field events. First, Rule 7-5-16 has been deleted and replaced with new guidelines for the warm-up of pole vault competitors who have passed three consecutive heights and not entered the competition. Those competitors are now allowed two minutes of warm-up jumps per competitor entering at that height. These competitors often sit out long enough that a proper warm-up is in order. Such a warm-up wasn't being provided by the old rule that allowed only one warm-up jump.

Rules 7-4-11 and 7-5-18 have been modified to clarify protocol when there is only one competitor left in a vertical jump competition. Only after that person has been determined the event winner may he or she determine successive heights of the crossbar.

Additionally, a revision to both throwing and jumping rules allows for a change in the order of competition. The head judge may now change the order, in both preliminaries and finals, to accommodate those who may be excused to participate in other events. Competitors may take more than one trial in succession.

Following are other changes made by the NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Committee:

- A significant editorial change that will affect all sports requires that any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, including but not limited to loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems, must be removed from the contest immediately and shall not return to play before being cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.
- In addition, Rule 4-4-1 was added, stating that if a hard or unyielding item, such as a guard, cast, etc., is worn, it is up to the referee to determine if padding is required. Such padding shall be closed-cell, slow-recovery foam no less than one-half-inch thick. Unaltered knee and ankle braces do not require any additional padding.
- Rule 4-4-2 clarifies the use of prosthetics in track and field. Each state association may authorize the use of a prosthesis, which in its opinion, is no more dangerous to competitors and/or equipment than the corresponding human body part(s) and does not place an opponent at a disadvantage.
- New to the rules book but commonly practiced, a letter of authorization shall be provided by the state association for any modifications to uniforms or equipment due to medical or religious reasons. The letter shall be made available to the meet referee prior to the beginning of competition.
- Rule 3-3-1 identifies the meet director as the official representative of host meet management; 3-3-2 makes that person responsible for handling unsporting conduct by spectators and other matters outside of competition

rules.

A complete listing of all rules changes approved by the committee is available on the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Athletics & Fine Arts Activities” on the home page, and select “Track and Field.”

Outdoor track and field is the second-most popular sport for boys, with 558,007 participants, and most popular sport for girls, with 457,732 participants, at the high school level, according to the 2008-09 NFHS Athletics Participation Survey. The sport ranks second in school sponsorship with 15,936 schools sponsoring the sport for boys and 15,864 sponsoring the sport for girls.

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This press release was written by Arika Herron, a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a senior at Butler (Indiana) University.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and Rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing Rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.5 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

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