

TRACK and FIELD

PRE-MEET NOTES 2025

Do You Recall?

2025 Rule Change Shortens Recall Distance for Some Events



Effective with the 2025 season, races in high school track and field will be recalled in the first 50 meters when a competitor falls due to contact with another competitor. This change, which was one of eight revisions recommended by the NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Committee at its June 10-12 meeting in Indianapolis, relates to races not run in lanes, or when two or more competitors are assigned to a single lane.

All the committee's recommended changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Julie Cochran, NFHS director of sports and editor of the NFHS Track and Field Rules, said the committee determined that 50 meters is sufficient in calling a fair start, which previously was listed at 100 meters.

Under a new rule for 2025, in races not run in lanes, if a competitor falls due to contact with another competitor in the first 50 meters, the race can be restarted. Previously, the recall distance was 100 meters.

"Athletes are accelerating and are up to racing speed well before the 100-meter mark," Cochran said. "In addition, the current recall distance is problematic depending on the number of officials on the track and location of field events that may obstruct the view of the 100-meter distance around the entire curve."

In other changes, the committee approved a reorganization of Rules 5-10 and 5-11 regarding relays and relay infractions. All infractions were moved into Rule 5-11, which will be easier

for officials to use and enforce. While none of the infractions are new, the revised rule provides a listing of the 14 occurrences when a relay team will be disqualified.

The committee also provided clarification to a change in field events that was implemented last year. Last year, the revision to Rule 6-2-2 permitted one minute for the first trial of a competitor first entering the high jump and pole vault competition. This year, the committee approved the following two notes for additional clarification.

Rule 6-2-2 NOTE 1 states that “at any given bar height, the time for all competitors remains the same until the next bar height is established,” and 6-2-2 NOTE 2 states that “regardless of the number of competitors remaining, the first attempt of a competitor entering the competition – at any height – is one minute.”

The committee approved four other field events revisions. In 6-2-2 regarding general rules for field events, a new sub-article (f) was approved regarding the one-minute time limit to compete. Rule 6-2-2f states that “the competitor shall be warned either verbally or by signal when

15 seconds remain in the time allowed.”

In 6-3-2 NOTE 1 regarding breaking ties, language was added to provide directions to officials and event judges for the starting height in a jump-off when athletes exit the event at varying heights due to passes. The jump-off will begin at the next height in the progression after the tying height.

In Rule 6-8-2 regarding vertical jumps, the committee provided clarification in definitions for an active flight (five-alive) and a continuing flight (straight-through). The revised rule is as follows:

“When the number of entries

dictates, the games committee may assign competitors to active flights (five alive) of no less than five competitors or may conduct the event in continuing flights (straight-through). In active flights, the five competitors, as determined by the games committee, constitute a flight.”

In Rule 6-9-22 regarding venue specifications, an additional sentence states that “the plane of the crossbar shall not be less than 4 inches from the landing pad.”

A final change included clarification provided for Rule 5-13-1 regarding infractions for races not run in lanes. ■

NFHS 2025 Points of Emphasis

The NFHS Track and Field Committee has issued four points of emphasis for the 2025 season. They are not listed in priority order and are considered of equal importance:

Managing Vertical Jump Landing Systems

The high jump and pole vault events demand attention to their landing systems to ensure athlete safety and event integrity. Officials overseeing these events must be knowledgeable about the setup, maintenance, and management of landing areas.

Landing systems are comprised of landing pit with multiple layers of foam cushions, while the pole vault’s landing system also includes a plant box at the take-off point surrounded by a box collar pad, front bumpers which cover the

surface outside of the plant box, base pads for standards and a cover for the entire system. Occasionally there will be additional padding to cover surfaces outside of the landing systems in both the high jump and pole vault.

Prior to any meet, officials should check the landing mats for wear and tear, ensuring the mats are in good condition, free of rips, and have adequate cushioning. Officials also need to verify that the landing system is on a level surface and all padding around the uprights and other hard surfaces is securely attached and sufficient to prevent injuries. The mats need to be secured and properly aligned to cover the designated landing area. The surrounding area within the event needs to be clear of obstacles and other hazards.

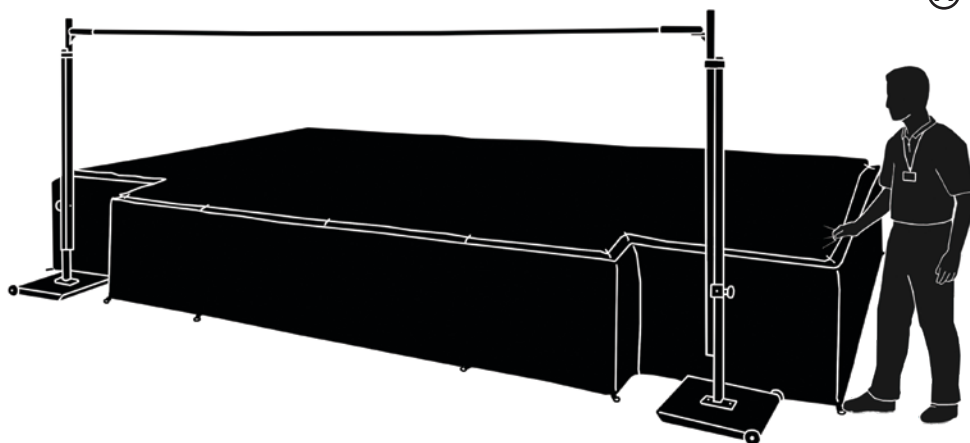
During the event, monitoring the landing system is critical. As shown in PlayPic A, regularly checking the landing mats between attempts for any displacement or damage and making immediate adjustments if the mats do shift or if any padding becomes dislodged provides a safe environment for all competitors.

By following best practices, officials can ensure that the vertical jump landing systems are managed effectively, while promoting safety and fairness in track and field competitions.

Excused Athletes

Current NFHS rules allow an athlete to be excused to compete in another event. Time limits for competitors excused to compete in another event shall be determined by the games committee for each meet. Due to the various locations of field event venues across the country, those time limits will vary from site to site. While excused to compete in another event, a competitor will not be called for a trial during that time, and in the vertical jumps, the games committee needs to decide whether or not they will raise the crossbar to a succeeding height until the time limit expires. The games committee also needs to determine the protocol to use if an athlete does not report back to the event prior to the expiration of the excused time limit.

The head event judge may change the order of competition in the preliminary or



final rounds to accommodate an athlete competing in another event. Successive trials are also an option to consider for those athletes. If a competitor must be excused during the final round of competition, the competitor with the best mark in the preliminaries has earned the right to make the last attempt of the competition and may choose to wait until after any excused competitors have taken all their trials.

Ultimately coaches need to know the event schedule and what possible conflicts could arise within the meet prior to submitting meet entries. The athlete is responsible for going to the head event judge to inform the official of the event conflict and to receive permission to be excused from the event. If the athlete fails to notify the head event judge, the athlete is not afforded the same excused protocol and is subject to being called up to compete in the event and being timed out

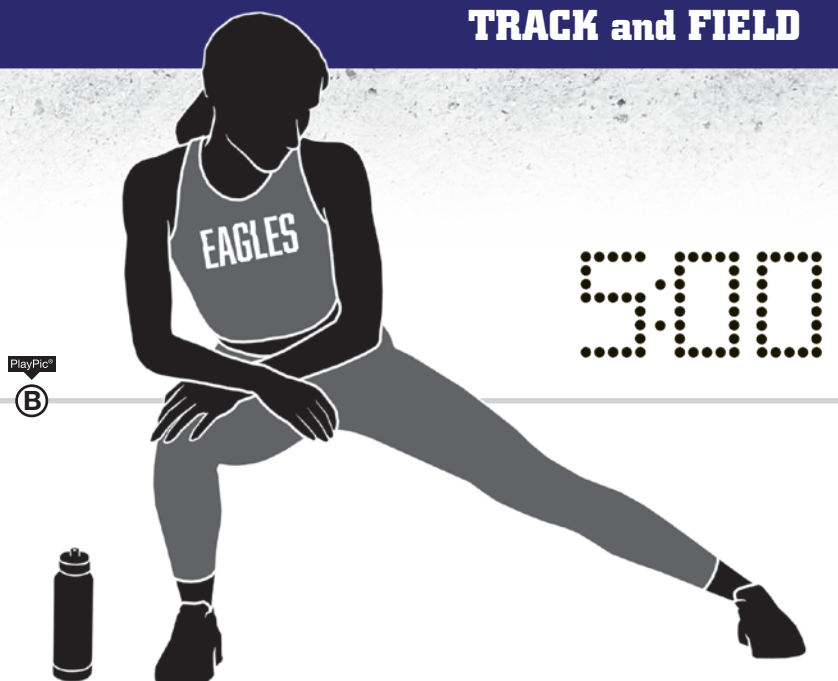


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of one or multiple trials. See the NFHS Case Book for NFHS Guidelines for Competitors Being Excused to Compete in Another Event. [6.2.3 SITUATION D]

Times Limits in Vertical Jumps

In field events, all competitors must initiate their attempts within a standard time limit. The event time timetable within the rules book has been updated to help officials navigate these different times.

In the vertical jumps, specific variations can occur. For example, competitors may choose to wait until the bar is set at a higher height before entering the competition. Regardless of when a competitor enters the competition or the number of competitors left in the competition, those entering for their first time have one minute to begin their attempt. If the competitor misses their first attempt and will take consecutive attempts, they are granted two minutes in high jump and three minutes in pole vault for the subsequent attempt. If the athlete becomes the final competitor after clearing the bar, they have won the competition. If the competitor wishes to continue jumping for a record or personal best, they are granted five minutes for attempts at subsequent heights, as shown in PlayPic B.

False Starts

Fair starts are crucial to the success of any track event. It is the ultimate responsibility of the starter to provide fair starts and enforce the rules governing the start. Inevitably false starts will happen, and the penalty for them is immediate disqualification. Because of this severe penalty, in 2024 the NFHS revised the definition of a false start to eliminate many false start disqualifications that were made because of incidental/extraneous motions that did not result in anyone leaving their marks.

Nothing else changed with this revision of the rule. Any forward motion noted before the start signal that is not attempted to be halted that inevitably results in the competitor leaving their mark as the signal happens (frequently referred to as a “rolling start”) has always been a false start and is still a false start.

Ensuring fair starts involves an active and positive approach to the task accompanied by an attitude of preventive officiating. Starters and assistant starters should never be reluctant to utilize the command of “Stand up” to halt the starting process to ensure fair starts. They should also not be reluctant to warn those competitors responsible for delays in the start process. ■

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Flashback: 2024 Rule Changes

In an effort to more clearly define false starts in high school track and field events, two new starting violations were adopted for the 2024 season.

In Rule 5-7-4c, the previous language which required participants to remain motionless after assuming the set position prior to the starting device being fired, was replaced with the following: "If a runner leaves their mark with a hand or foot after the 'set' command but before the starting device is fired."

In addition, a new violation in (d) calls for a violation "if a runner leaves their mark with a forward motion without the starting device being fired."

Further, a new NOTE in Rule 5-7-4 states that "extraneous motion before the device is fired does not necessarily require a false start to be charged unless the criteria in the rule are met. If the starter thinks the movement creates a situation of unfairness to any of the competitors, the starter may cancel the start with the command 'stand up,' or if the device has been fired, recall the race as an unsteady or unfair start and redo the starting procedure." This NOTE was also added to Rule 8 regarding cross country.

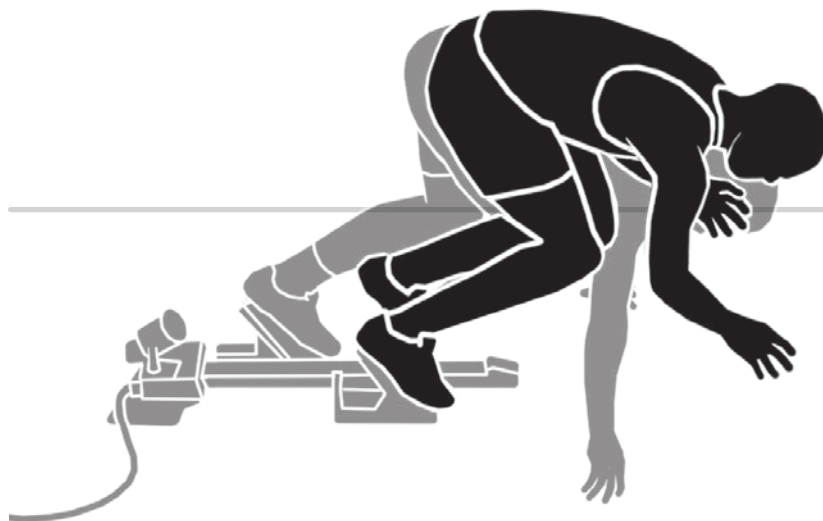
A significant change was approved by the committee in Rule 6 regarding field events. In the discus, shot put and javelin, athletes will be permitted to apply tape to their fingers as long as the fingers are not taped together, and all fingers can move independently.

In other changes to field events, further definition related to breaking ties was added to Rule 6-3-2b. To address the situation when two or more tied competitors withdraw from the competition/jump-off at the same time, the committee added the following language to determine first place:

Rule 6-3-2b(4)(b) states that "if all competitors eligible for a jump-off withdraw from the competition before the jump-off begins or at a height change, those competitors shall tie for first place, and any team points shall be added together and divided equally among the tying competitors."

In addition, a NOTE was added to the rule stating that an athlete who

PlayPic



withdraws from a jump-off concedes the higher place, but the withdrawal does not negate the athlete's performance in that event up to the point of withdrawal. In addition, withdrawing from a jump-off is not unsporting conduct.

Another field event change was approved for Rule 6-2-2, stating that in the high jump and pole vault, one minute shall be allowed for the first trial of a competitor first entering the competition. The committee noted this additional language clarifies how the rule is to be interpreted and adds support to the official's decisions when a competitor enters the vertical jumps after the event has started.

In other changes to Rule 5 - Running Events, some of the specific language regarding track markings in Rule 5 was deleted and replaced with the following general statement: "Staggered markings are dependent on the geometry of each individual track." In addition, a NOTE was added to the rule stating that a competent surveyor should determine the lane staggers. The same language was added to Section 9 regarding indoor track and field.

In other Rule 5 changes, a clarification was provided to the section on hurdling infractions. It is an infraction if a competitor knocks down or displaces any hurdle by hand. The addition of displacement of any hurdle was added to give guidance to

officials when ruling on infractions.

In Rule 4 regarding "Competitors and Competition," state associations will be permitted to allow participants in a high school track and field meet to compete in more than four events, effective with the 2024 season.

Rule 4-2-1 stating that a competitor shall not compete in more than four events, including relays, remains intact; however, a NOTE was added to the rule for flexibility for state associations as follows: "State associations may adopt different participation limitations, not to exceed six events."

Cochran said the addition of this state association adoption adds flexibility for state associations. Ultimately each state will determine the number and type of events best suited for its state and student-athletes – not to exceed six total events.

Other rules revisions approved by the Track and Field Rules Committee include the following:

- Rules 8-1, 8-5: Clarifies the cross country course layout and reorganizes the rule.
- Rule 9-6-1: New rule offers guidance on the relay exchange zone for indoor track and field.
- Rule 3-8-1: With technology advancements, changed the requirement for two appointed officials when FAT timing is used to one appointed timing official. ■

Go the Distance

How to Officiate Distance Races

In many high school regular season meets, you will be working alone or with one other official. This necessitates expanding the start team to include coaches and volunteers to perform the tasks such as clerking, lap counting and umpiring the races. Individual Track & Field races of 800m or greater are considered distance races.

Tasks Prior to the Meet

Arrive 60 minutes before the start of the meet to:

1. Walk the track to note the markings for each race.
2. If no marks exist for the "step-up start", use chalk to mark "X", 3 meters behind the start line (follow the curve as appropriate).
3. Determine if there are lanes to avoid using due to unsafe conditions.
4. If the track has no curb, place cones (if available) around the curves.
5. Position yourself or the starters stand (if available) to determine sight lines for each race.
6. Evaluate if field events will impact the start of races.
7. Confirm if a lap counter is available to count laps and if there is a bell for last lap.
8. Attend the coaches meeting to:
 - a. Report any concerns, rule clarifications, and remind all of the NFHS Points of Emphasis.
 - b. Determine number of umpires and placement around the track.
 - c. Confirm if lap counters or coaches are available to count laps.
 - d. Determine who rings the last lap bell on races over 400 meters.
 - e. Verify expected number of entries for distance races, to determine the type of start to be utilized.

If starting a race alone, a starting ladder or platform greatly improves your line of sight at the starting line. This provides a better vantage point to observe the runners in the 50 meter recall zone in distance races (see new NFHS Rule 5-7-6).

At the Start Line

The clerk should provide instructions to the athletes as follows:

1. Announce the start line color and method of starting each race (lanes, alleys or waterfall).
2. Direct competitors to stand at the mark behind the start line and step up on the command: "On your marks."

If no clerks and two officials are present, one gives instructions to the competitors while the other starts the race.

1. Upon completion of instructions, the second official becomes the recall starter. The recall starter:
 - a. Takes a position about midway around the turn.
 - b. Is positioned either inside or outside the track, depending on whether a field event is being contested.
 - c. Observes and follows the start through the 50 meter recall zone.
2. Determine the method of starting each race (lanes, alleys or waterfall).
3. If the start is from a waterfall, the recall starter:
 - a. Positions on the outside, looking down the waterfall line.
 - b. Checks that all competitors have their feet entirely behind the line on the command, "On your marks."
 - c. Allows a competitor with their foot on the line to self-correct, if they do not, say "Stand up."
 - d. Provides the starter a signal when all competitors are set.
4. The starter and the recall starter follow the runners through the 50 meter recall zone.

If one official is present, that official is also the clerk. Provide instructions, get on the ladder, start the race, and watch the race through the 50 meter recall zone. Be ready to recall the race after the start if necessary.

During the Race

Once the race has successfully started, officials proceed to the finish line area to:

1. Observe the race for violations and infractions.
2. Maintain the proper lap count on the leader and the number of laps remaining for all competitors.
3. Ring the bell lap for the leader.

At the Finish of the Race

As competitors complete the race:

1. Direct finishers to proceed to the right, beyond the finish line.
2. Ensure the safety of fallen competitors by:
 - a. Standing between them and incoming competitors.
 - b. Directing subsequent finishers around them.
 - c. Maintaining this position until medical personnel, teammates or coaches assist fallen competitors.

Once all competitors have completed the race:

3. Survey the track for any umpire yellow flags, indicating an infraction or violation of rules.
4. Determine if a violation occurred, and if it did:
 - a. Notate circumstances including:
 - Competitors involved.
 - School colors.
 - Location and time.
 - b. Report disqualification to timing service.
 - c. Notify coach of disqualification.

With proper planning and communication, whether officiating with another official or officiating alone, distance races can be safely, efficiently and effectively officiated. ■

DID YOU KNOW?

Applications, reminders, and tips to utilize when interpreting and applying rules.

Rule 5-13-3: "A competitor may leave the track to retrieve a dropped relay baton provided no interference occurs and no advantage is gained."

Application: Many officials are interpreting leaving the track to retrieve the baton as an automatic disqualification. That is not the case unless it causes interference or an advantage is gained.

Cross Country Course Markings: Ensuring Safety and Clarity for Competitors

Cross country courses should be designed to accommodate the available space while adhering to NFHS guidelines to ensure safety and clarity for competitors. Rule 8-1 in the NFHS Rules Book outlines the essential standards for cross country courses. This guide provides practical advice for marking the start, race, and finish areas, ensuring a clear route for runners and minimizing the risk of injury.

The Start Area

The start area of a cross country race is designed to give all competitors a fair and organized beginning.

- **Starting Line:** The starting line must be 2 inches (5 cm) wide.
- **Straightaway:** The course must have a straightaway of at least 100 meters before any significant turns.
- **Team Boxes:** Competitors start in team boxes that are at least 6 feet wide. The number of boxes depends on the number of teams, with additional boxes possible for individual competitors. Boxes should be numbered from left to right when facing the running area, and assignments are typically random.

The Race Course

The race course should be well-defined and marked to ensure a clear and safe path for all competitors.

- **Course Length:** The course must be between 2500 and 5000 meters (1.5 to 3.1 miles), measured along the shortest possible route a runner may take.
- **Course Layout:** Boundaries must be clearly marked using natural or artificial markers, such as trees, fences, buildings, mowed paths, cones, flags, or painted lines. The course must be continuously marked from start to finish to effectively guide runners. Turns and guidelines should be clearly marked, and the course should be at least 3-feet wide at its narrowest point, with no narrow section longer than 10 feet.
- **Safety Considerations:** No overhead obstacles lower than 8 feet above ground are allowed. The running surface may include grass, dirt, asphalt,



Flags, cones and painted lines are some of the ways to clearly delineate a course layout.

or other materials, but hard, unyielding surfaces should be avoided where possible. Ground obstructions that could cause tripping or injury must be removed, and potential hazards like tree roots should be marked with non-toxic paint or cones.

Course Markings

Course markings play a crucial role in guiding runners effectively and ensuring every runner stays on the designated path.

- **Marking Materials:** Use materials

that are safe for both eyes and skin, such as field paint or chalk.

- **Flags and Signs:** Directional flags and signs are recommended to help guide runners:
 - Red Flag: Turn left (runners stay on the right side of the flag).
 - Yellow Flag: Turn right (runners stay on the left side of the flag).
 - Blue Flag: Proceed straight (runners may run on either side).

Small survey flags or cones, at least 12 inches high, can be used instead of painted lines or chalk.

The Finish Area

The finish area should be clearly organized and marked to ensure a fair conclusion to the race.

- **Finish Line:** The finish area should be clearly marked with flags, cones, or other indicators. There should be at least a 150-foot straightaway leading to the finish, ending in a funnel (chute) that is 15 feet wide at the entrance. The finish chute should extend 15 to 25 feet beyond the finish line.

- **Timing Systems:** Regardless of whether electronic timing is used, the finish area should be clearly organized

to facilitate the collection of results. Diagrams illustrating the appropriate use of chute systems or finish corrals can be found in Rule 8-1-5 (pages 67 & 68).

Safety and Inspection

Ensuring a safe competition requires careful planning and attention to detail. Officials must inspect the course upon arrival to verify compliance with all NFHS standards and guidelines. A supply of red, yellow and blue surveyor flags should be available to clarify the course as needed. The course must prioritize competitor safety, with a

focus on surface conditions and proper markings.

Creating a well-marked cross country course is essential for ensuring a fair and safe competition for all participants. By adhering to NFHS guidelines and paying close attention to the details of course design, marking, and safety, organizers can provide an optimal racing experience. Clear and consistent markings, along with thorough inspections, help guarantee that all competitors can navigate the course confidently and focus on performing at their best. ■

Administering Tie Breakers in Vertical Jumps

You find yourself officiating a vertical event. All is going smoothly until you get to the end and discover that you have a tie. What do you do and how do you do it?

First, start by confirming that you have a tie. Rule 6-3-1 states: "A tie in a field event occurs when two or more competitors finish with the same best distance or height."

In vertical jumps, a tie exists when competitors have each jumped the same height with the same number of misses. The competitor with the fewest number of trials at the height which the tie occurred (last height successfully cleared) is awarded the higher place. If tie remains then you will go to the fewest total number of unsuccessful trials throughout the competition including the height last cleared. (Note: passed trials do not count as misses.)

As an official, you should start looking to see if a tie is possible when the field starts thinning so that the athletes are alerted not to leave the venue for another event, after they missed their third attempt. The last thing you want to have happen is for competitors to disperse so that no tie-breaking jump-off is possible.

But what happens when one or more jumpers have passed a bar? What if three athletes tie? What if they all say that their bus is going to leave and they don't want to jump-off? For 2025, the NFHS Rules Book provides clarification and guidance to address these situations.

For events which are determined by height, the procedure for breaking ties for final places is extensive and could lead to the tied competitors receiving additional attempts/trials. Rule 6-3-2b

outlines the procedure to be applied to break ties in the vertical jumps. If the tie concerns any place other than first, the competitors shall be awarded the same place. However, if after applying the tie-

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breaking procedure a tie still exists for first place, the administration of a jump-off for first place is necessary.

Jump-Off Procedure

1. The tied competitors shall make one more attempt at the height that they failed.
2. If no decision is reached, as they both failed the additional attempt, the bar is lowered 1 inch (2 cm) in the high jump or 3 inches (7 cm) in the pole vault.
3. If no decision is reached, as they both cleared the additional attempt, the bar is raised 1 inch (2 cm) in the high jump or 3 inches (7 cm) in the pole vault.
4. Each competitor shall attempt one trial at each height until a winner is determined.

The following situations provide clarification for addressing some of the many varied circumstances that may arise.

Situation 1: Three competitors all tie at the same bar with the same number of misses. **Ruling 1:** A fourth attempt is made at the height they all missed. If one athlete makes and the other two miss, the competitor who cleared wins

and the other two tie for 2nd. If two or more clear the bar, they continue while any athlete who did not clear is out of the jump-off and takes third place. The remaining two competitors will continue to jump-off for 1st.

Situation 2: All competitors decide to forego the jump-off for whatever reason.

Ruling 2: All withdrawals are accepted. They are each awarded a tie for 1st place and points shall be added together and divided by the number of competitors who are involved in the tie.

Situation 3: A1 and B2 are tied for 1st Place and A1 decides to withdraw and not jump. **Ruling 3:** B2 is declared the winner, as a competitor withdrawing shall concede the opportunity for a higher place (the withdrawal shall not negate a competitor's performance in that event up to the point of withdrawal). Note: Withdrawing from a jump-off is not unsporting conduct.

Situation 4: With two competitors remaining in the high jump, both A1 and B2 successfully clear the bar at 6 feet, 4 inches on the first attempt. When the bar is raised to 6 feet, 6 inches, A1 elects to pass and B2 misses all three

trials, the bar is then raised to 6 feet, 8 inches and A1 also misses three trials at that height. Both A1 and B2 have the identical number of unsuccessful trials throughout the competition. There is a discrepancy as to whether A1 must make one additional attempt at 6 feet, 8 inches, while B2 makes an attempt at 6 feet, 6 inches. **Ruling 4:** The jump-off should start at 6 feet, 6 inches. New in 2025, Rule 6-3-2 clarifies the starting height in a jump-off with competitors of varying heights. This addition aligns language with other rule books and current situations and interpretations.

Reminder: In the vertical jumps, competitors shall be credited with their best achievement including performances made in the jump-off for a first-place tie (6-3-3).

Determining vertical jumps place finishes present many unique and varied circumstances. By reviewing the NFHS rules prior to the meet for determining places by heights, the official places themselves in a position to effectively, efficiently and accurately administer tie-breaking procedures in the vertical jumps. ■

Track and Field Injury Surveillance Study

As participation in high school track and field continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries may also increase. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees use data from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIOTM) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO is currently collecting the 19th year of sports exposure and injury data.

Among the twenty sports currently under surveillance in High School RIO, during the 2022/23 academic year, the overall injury rate in boys' track and field ranked 14th, and the overall injury rate in girls' track and field ranked 15th. The most commonly injured body parts in both boys' and girls' track and field were the hip/thigh/upper leg (boys': 41%; girls': 31%) and lower



leg (boys': 22%; girls': 24%). The most common injury diagnosis sustained during competition for both boys' and girls' track and field was strain (boys': 56%; girls': 57%). Strains were also the most common injury diagnosis sustained during practice (boys': 42%; girls': 38%). Injury mechanisms were similar between boys' and girls' track and field with acute no contact as the most common competition-related injury mechanism (boys': 53%, girls':

52%) and overuse/chronic as the most common practice-related injury mechanism (boys': 51%, girls': 46%). In boys' track and field in 2022/23, 50% of dislocations/subluxations were recurrent while none of the dislocations/subluxations in girls' track and field were recurrent.

Understanding patterns of injury in track and field is one important tool when considering injury prevention efforts to keep track and field athletes as safe as possible.

If you are interested in more information about the High School RIO Study or you are a certified athletic trainer who is interested in becoming a reporter for track and field, please email the High School RIO team at highschoolrio@datalycenter.org. Please visit <http://datalycenter.org/resources/high-school-rio-annual-reports/> to access the annual summary report referenced above. ■

It's About Time

Time Limits for Vertical Jumps

For 2025, the NFHS made time limits in vertical jumps one of its points of emphasis. Those time limits are outlined in various parts of Rule 6-2-2.

Time Limit for First Attempts

The time limit for a competitor's first attempt when first entering the competition is one minute, regardless of the number of competitors remaining in the competition.

Situation 1: At a new height there are only two athletes left in the competition. A1 has made successful attempts at previous heights while B2 is making a first attempt in the competition. **Ruling 1:** A1 is allowed three minutes per attempt at that height (according to the time chart entry for two or three competitors remaining). B2 however, gets one minute for their initial attempt in the competition, and then three minutes for attempts thereafter.

Time Limit Changes

The time limit for attempts is determined by the number of competitors remaining in the competition at the start of a new height — including those who have passed and those who have not yet entered the competition — and does not change during that height. But, there are three exceptions to this:

1. A first attempt in the competition, as mentioned above.

Situation 2: At a new height there are six remaining competitors. Three pass that height so only three will jump at the height. **Ruling 2:** The time limit is one minute for each of them since there are six remaining in the competition.

2. A consecutive attempt.

Situation 3: At a new height there are six remaining competitors and all will jump at that height; therefore the time limit is one minute for each of them. On first attempts, four clear the height and two miss. On second attempts, only two competitors are jumping, but six remain in the competition. **Ruling 2:** The time limit

for their second attempts remains one minute.

As a result of those second attempts, the following may occur:

- If both have a miss, then they both have a time limit of one minute for their third attempts.

- If the first of the two has a miss and the second has a make, then the first jumper's time limit remains one minute for the third attempt.

- If the first of the two has a make and the second has a miss, then the last jumper's third attempt is consecutive, and the time limit is two minutes (HJ) or three minutes (PV).

3. The competitor has won the competition.

Situation 4: At a new height, there are two remaining competitors. A1 has

two misses at the previous height and then passed to the next height. B2 has no misses and cleared the previous height. A1 misses their attempt at the new height. **Ruling 3:** B2 is declared the winner. If B2 continues to jump, B2's time limit is five minutes.

Time Limit Expiration Warning

There is now a requirement that competitors "will be warned verbally or by signal at 15 seconds" prior to the expiration of the time limit (6-2-2f). This is normally accomplished by raising a yellow flag with 15 seconds remaining, or it can be done by telling the competitor that they have 15 seconds left on their time. The event briefing to athletes should specify which procedure is used.

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Competitors must initiate their attempts prior to the expiration of the time limit, which can vary depending on the circumstances.

Initiation of Attempt Within Time Limit

Once a competitor's clock has started, they must initiate their attempt before the expiration of the time limit ("initiation" is continuing forward movement toward the pit). If they begin their approach before time expires, then even if time expires during their approach on the runway or apron, there

is no time violation. However, if the attempt is not initiated within the time limit, then when time expires, the yellow flag is lowered and a red flag is raised to indicate a miss due to time violation.

Summary:

- For a first attempt in the competition, the time limit is always one minute.

- Time limits do not change within a height, except as noted above.

- Competitors are warned verbally or by signal when 15 seconds remain on their time.

- Once on the clock, competitors must initiate their attempt before expiration of the time limit. ■

Perfect Recall

How to Provide a Safe, Fair and Equitable Start

Whether in lanes or waterfalls, perfect weather, "acts of God" or other weather-related occurrences, there are times in track and field when races will need to be recalled. At the end of the day, the goal at the start line is to provide a safe, fair and equitable start. To do this, the starters must be aware of all that is taking place in the vicinity of the start area, as well as situations associated with the start that might arise.

False Start

The most obvious situation is the false start. Rule 5-7-4 was revised in 2024 and defines starting violations that constitute a false start. In review, a false start includes: "If a runner leaves their mark with hand or foot after the 'set' command but before the starting device is fired," or, "If a runner leaves their mark with a forward motion without the starting device being fired."

Note that firing the starting gun is not required for a false start. If that forward motion happens with a hand or foot leaving the ground yet the gun has not been fired, it is still a false start, as shown in the PlayPic.

Occasionally a competitor may make a second move coming to the set position. If possible, the starter should withhold firing the starting gun, allow the competitor to establish a motionless position then fire the starting gun or

direct all competitors to “stand up” immediately. The starting process can then be restarted.

When there is a need to recall runners, fire the starting gun immediately. A recall starter should also fire the gun. There is a practice for all starters to fire their guns, but if the initial firing is enough to get the sought-after reaction from the competitors, then there is no need for further shots. If, for any reason, the starter(s) feels that the start was not fair, the race should be recalled without any penalty. In conferring, recall starters should “report and retreat,” providing the starter of the race with the information needed to execute a swift decision and then continue with a restart of the race.

Numerous situations can arise that necessitate a race recall. The most common are:

1. Blocks slippage.
2. A fall due to contact (within 50 meters of the race).
3. Objects entering the track that affect the start.
4. Noises capable of creating an unfair start.
5. Failure of the timing system to start.

Below are some of the most common situations. However, the best way to learn, adapt and grow as a starter is to talk to other starters and share situations. It is impossible for any one official to experience every scenario that could take place.

Situation 1: (Race in Lanes/Straight or Curve.) As the starter begins to pull the trigger, A4 in lane 4 starts moving forward and one hand leaves the track and then the gun fires. **Ruling 1:** Recall. This is a false start. A4 should be disqualified.

Slipped Blocks

Slipped blocks can occur at any time. Poor track quality and/or the condition of the starting blocks can be factors. It is best to observe the competitor(s) set and take their practice starts to see if this may be an issue to address.

Note: Starters bear the responsibility to see that blocks are in good order. Make it a practice to report 60 minutes prior to the start of the meet to check the blocks.

Situation 2: (Race in Lanes/Straight or Curve.) Simultaneously with the firing of the starter’s gun, an assistant starter notices that the blocks in lane 6 slide backward two inches. A1 stumbles



but recovers his or her footing. **Ruling 2:** Recall. The start is unfair because the athlete experienced the block slipping.

Note: Block slippage does not always warrant a block holder. Verify that the athlete anchored the blocks appropriately by watching them push out after resetting the blocks.

Situation 3: (Race in Lanes/Straightaway.) In a hurdle race after the report of the gun, A2 in lane 2 pushes out of the blocks and the right pedal proceeds to roll behind him or her. A2 continue to accelerate to the first hurdle. **Ruling 3:** Recall. There was a malfunction of the block — unfair start. The race should be recalled.

New in 2025 is Rule 5-7-6 which adjusts the recall zone to 50 meters when a competitor falls due to contact with another competitor. This commonly occurs with waterfall starts but could also occur if two or more competitors are assigned to the same lane. This is a common practice utilizing alleys in an 800 meter race, with more than eight competitors in the race, on an eight-lane track.

Situation 4: (Waterfall/Alley.) After

the report of the gun, A1 bumps into A2, and A2 stumbles and falls 25 meters into the race. **Ruling 4:** Recall because the athlete fell due to contact and it was within 50 meters of the start.

Timing Issues

The timing tent may have FAT or other technology issues where they did not receive the sound from the timing and backup sensor(s). They may communicate to have the race recalled by means of a red flag, verbal instruction, using their own starting pistol, or a verbal command from a timing assistant that will be with the starting crew (usually at larger track meets).

Situation 5: (Any Race.) The timing crew has an issue and radios to the start crew to recall. **Ruling 5:** Recall the race. The games committee may give the timing company the ability to recall any race directly to make sure each race is captured by the timing system.

Noise Disturbances

The Officials Manual in section 2.4 outlines situations where the starting process should be halted. This includes situations when, if they happen as the gun is fired, the race should be recalled. Here are a few examples:

Situation 6: (Block Race/Straight or Curve.) There is an excited family member in the stands, close to the start area. As athletes are brought to set, the family member blows a horn. A8 in lane 8 reacts to the noise and leaves the blocks. **Ruling 6:** Recall. This is an unfair start because of the outside noise produced by the horn. The same would hold true for other noises capable of disrupting the start. If a large group of people gather at the start line, a reminder from the starter to keep still and quiet is warranted. If it gets to be too much of a problem, ask meet management to move the people if possible.

Situation 7: (4x200 meter.) The athletes are brought to set and while the starter is scanning the start line, the recaller notices the athlete in lane 7 is tilting forward with arms shaking, with one arm buckling as the gun is fired. **Ruling 7:** Stand up. The athlete was unsteady prior to the report of the gun. The race should be reset, with all competitors competing. Starters should not hesitate to use the “stand-up” cue as another tool to make sure races are started fairly.

Athletes with Hearing Impairment

For athletes who have a hearing impairment, the starter should move down the track around 20-30 meters so to be easily seen by the runners. This way, if there is need for recall, the starter is far enough in front to be able to wave arms in a signal for runners to return to the start. Sometimes those athletes with a hearing impairment will have an interpreter to make sure they understand the instructions.

Para Athletes and Athletes with Accommodations

Those with cerebral palsy or traumatic brain injury may have balance issues. The starter should have a quicker “set-bang” than typical race starts. If athletes are held too long, causing balance issues at the starting line, do not hesitate to tell the competitors, “stand up,” and then restart the race.

When a recall is needed at the starting line for wheelchair/frame

runner athletes, a verbal command “roll back” or “wheels back” should be used. Do not say “stand up.”

Try to be keenly aware of the surroundings of the start. In doing this, a starter can minimize the need to recall races. The starters all should feel free to abort the start when unsteadiness or other disruptions are present. The purpose of the starter (start team) is to work with each other to provide a safe, fair and equitable start. ■

Infractions for Races Not Run in Lanes

When races are run in an assigned lane, the lane defines a specific space in which the competitor must run. There are rules which define what occurs when they leave that space during the race. But what happens when races are contested and the competitors do not have an assigned lane? What rules govern these races as they run in a pack, group or bunch?

Interference

Rule 5-9-1 defines interference: “Interference is any action by a competitor that unfairly changes the course or natural running rhythm of a competitor during a race. This may include bumping, tripping or running across the competitor’s path.”

These actions may be intentional or unintentional, voluntary or involuntary, and purposeful or non-purposeful. Any way you view them, they must be addressed and evaluated to determine if the rules have been violated. And if so, a disqualification must be ruled.

Situation 1: As the competitors come off the final curve, A1, who is in the lead, drifts into lane 2. As B2, the competitor assigned to lane 2, begins to take the lead, A1 returns to lane 1 to maintain the lead. **Ruling 1:** A1, the leader, has changed course, running across a competitor’s path to prevent a fellow competitor from taking the lead. This is interference and A1 should be disqualified.

Situation 2: A1, who is in the lead, comes off the final curve and swings



For races not run in lanes, officials need to be aware of interference and runners leaving the track — and how to enforce the rules.

wide to the right and continues to drift to the right as B2 attempts to seize the lead, on the right. **Ruling 2:** In an effort to maintain the lead, A1 has caused B2, the runner coming from behind, to change their course. A1 should be disqualified for interference.

Reminder: Infractions can occur without physical contact.

Leaving the Track

Rule 5-13-1 states: “Any competitor shall not deliberately run on or inside the track curb (or painted line), and thereby gain an advantage including

but not limited to improving or shortening the course.”

Situation 3: Coming off a curve during the 3200-meter run, A1 begins running on the left of the leader, B2, who is in front of them. A1 bumps B2 and steps on the curb or painted white line or inside the curb, to gain an advantage to seize the lead. **Ruling 3:** Multiple violations have occurred. This is interference. A1 improved their position in the race by leaving the track. A disqualification should be applied.

Situation 4: In a distance race, as the competitors run on the curve to avoid contact with A1, who is in front of them, B2 steps over the painted white line and in doing so passes A1. **Ruling 4:** B2 has gained an advantage in the race by stepping off the track and should be disqualified.

Break Line

Rule 5-12-2 states: “The break line is a place in each lane, usually at the point of curve, that marks the end of a lane stagger. Competitors shall run the entire distance to the break line in their assigned lanes before breaking to the pole position.”

Situation 5: The 800-meter run is being conducted in alleys with three competitors in each alley of two lanes. A1, who is in the alley — lanes 7 and 8 — crosses the break line in Lane 6.

Ruling 5: As A1 did not run the entire distance to the break line in the assigned alley, A1 should be disqualified.

Situation 6: At the start of the 800-meter run, the competitors must stay in their alley or lanes until they cross the break line at the beginning of the back stretch. A1 crosses the break line in a lane to the left of their assigned lane.

Ruling 6: A1 cannot step on or over

the curb or painted curb line, or inside lane or alley line, for three or more consecutive steps with either or both feet. As A1 did not cross the break line in their assigned lane, A1 or the team will be disqualified.

Officials observing the break line should station themselves several meters after the break line, so they create a better angle to view of the competitors as they cross the break line.

It is important to remember that in a race involving a curve where lanes are not specified, a competitor may move toward the inside or outside of the track provided the competitor is one full running stride in advance of the competitor whose path is crossed. It is not a foul if a competitor crosses to the inside or outside if this action does not interfere in any way with another competitor. ■

It's About Time: Administering Time Expiring Warnings in Field Events

Each field event has a time limit within which competitors must initiate their attempt/trial.

New in 2025 is NFHS Rule 6-2-2f: “The competitor shall be warned either verbally or by signal when 15 seconds remains on the time allowed.”

This aligns the NFHS Rules Book with other track and field rule codes.

The rules and requirements of each field event are explained to competitors before the event starts by the “head” of that event or their designee.

Competitors shall be advised: “In all attempts/trials a visual or verbal warning will be given to competitors with 15 seconds left on the time clock before the clock reaches zero.”

Here is how the procedure should be implemented:

1. When 15 seconds remain, the yellow flag is raised.
 2. If the attempt is not initiated and the clock reaches zero, the yellow flag is lowered and the red flag is raised.
- The raising of the flag should be

done calmly and discreetly. Snapping the flag or violently waving it only serves as a distraction to the athlete. A calm and gentle lifting is all that is needed.

Having a clock in plain sight of the competitors and allowing the clock to show the countdown is ideal, but it is not required under NFHS rules. Some clocks are equipped with a flashing strobe to indicate the last 15 seconds. But at most high school meets, there is no visible clock and the official must rely on a stopwatch.

If the competitor has not started an attempt/trial before the time has run out, the competitor will be given a “foul” for that attempt/trial.

The official needs to be cognizant of the athlete at all times. Shouting a 15 second warning or snapping the yellow flag while the athlete is starting their motion would only be a distraction.

Pausing a second or two may be advised. If the athlete has initiated their motion, then not verbalizing the warning may be preferable.

As officials we should put the needs of the athlete first, with a safe and consistent application of the rules, without interfering with the athlete’s performance. ■

DID YOU KNOW?

Rule 6-4-1: In the Shot Put, tape may be used on the hand and fingers provided that no two fingers are taped together. The tape may be continuous and connect to the wrist, but all fingers must be able to move independently. A wrist wrap used in lieu of tape is acceptable and is not considered an artificial aid provided there are no hard pieces in the wrap to keep the wrist stiff.

NOTE: Gloves are not permitted; however, a support belt may be worn.

Reminder: This rule was revised in recent years and is in alignment with other rule books.

Off Track: Navigating the Rules Covering Stepping Out

When an athlete leaves the track during a race, as shown in the PlayPic, it raises the question of whether the athlete should be disqualified.

Let's take a closer look at the rules and circumstances that determine when stepping off the track leads to a penalty.

Races Run Entirely In Lanes

Rule 5-12 states: "When a race is run in lanes, competitors are expected to run the entire race in their assigned lanes. Competitors who inadvertently run out of the assigned lanes on a straightaway or in the lane to the competitor's outside on a curve are not in violation provided the competitor does not interfere with another runner."

Keep in mind that according to Rule 5-12-1d, "the competitor must finish in their assigned lane and must not have interfered with another competitor."

Races Not Run in Lanes

Some races may be partially run in lanes, like an 800 meter that stays in lanes or alleys until they pass a break line, and the 1600 meter or 3200 meter that use a single or double waterfall. What happens if an athlete leaves the track on either straight? Did the competitor inadvertently step off the track and then immediately return, or did the athlete step off the track to gain an advantage? Rule 5-13-1 now applies: "Any competitor shall not deliberately run on or inside the track curb (or painted line), and thereby gain a meaningful advantage, including but not limited to improving position or shortening the course."

If the athlete tries to pass on the inside and steps off the track because there is no room, this would then be deliberate. A disqualification should be issued.

Relay Races

The running of the relay is not any different than mentioned in the prior discussions. However, the relay adds



another dimension to the race. What if the baton is dropped and rolls off the track? Rule 5-13-3 states: "A competitor may leave the track to retrieve a dropped relay baton provided no interference occurs and no advantage is gained."

If the baton is dropped inside of the exchange zone, then either competitor may leave the track and retrieve it as long as they don't interfere and the pass is made within the limits of the exchange zone (5-10-7). If dropped

outside the exchange zone, that competitor needs to retrieve it and come immediately back on the track. Officials must assess whether there was an advantage gained or interference with another athlete.

No violation occurs when a competitor runs on the inside of the track or out of their lane on a straightaway as long as no advantage is gained, no interference occurs, and if it is a race run in lanes and they finish in their assigned lane. ■

Standard Practices for Event Judges in Administering Field Events

Field event judges' primary responsibilities are to ensure safe and fair competition. They may be licensed officials, or they may be coaches, school staff, parents or other interested parties, so providing standard practices will aid in efficiently and accurately running events and a successful track and field meet.

Pre-Meet

(Arrive 60 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the field events.)

1. The field/meet referee should meet with event judges to answer questions and review key points, policies and procedures, including measuring precision; fair and foul attempts; method of competition (open pits, flights, five-active, 1-1-1, etc.); length of time for competition; and number of athletes moving to finals, number of places scoring, etc.

2. Event judges should be provided with a copy of the NFHS event sheet for their event and any state adaptations or meet information that is pertinent and relevant.

3. Prepare venue, including inspecting the venue to ensure it is safe for athletes, coaches and spectators. Also ensure that necessary equipment is available, including tape measure; marking sticks/rods; required padding/landing mats; and shovels, brooms, rakes, towels, etc.

4. Inspection of implements, weigh in of pole vaulters and inspection of poles (when appropriate).

If it is not possible for the referee to meet with each event judge, a written reference sheet outlining these points of emphasis is helpful. This is often referred to as a technical sheet.

Materials for Event Judges

1. A cone or marker to indicate the field event venue is closed.

2. Colored flags, including white (fair attempt/trial), red (failed attempt/trial) and yellow (to indicate 15 seconds remaining to initiate an attempt/trial).

PlayPic



3. Appropriate clipboard(s) and pencils.

4. Two-gallon bag or other means to keep papers dry during inclement weather.

5. Stopwatch.

Pre Event

(Prior to and during warm ups.)

At the conclusion of the pre-meet meeting, event judges need to report directly to their field event. Remember, warm-ups cannot begin until the event judge is present (or coach from each school that has athletes competing) and the venue is declared open. Head event judges shall:

1. Inspect implements, weigh in pole vaulters and inspect poles (when appropriate).

2. Check competitors into the event - (coaches, teammates or friends cannot check them in).

3. Obtain competitors opening height and pole standard measurement (where appropriate).

4. Record take-off board the competitor wishes to use (where appropriate).

5. Ensure uniform is legal and spikes and other equipment are compliant.

6. Assign tasks and review safety measures with assistants and volunteers.

Pre-Event

(After warm-ups.)

The event judge shall conduct a meeting with all competitors, prior to the beginning of the event, to communicate:

1. Check-out procedure and time limits for check out.

2. Time limit for each attempt/trial.

3. Manner of competition (5-active, 1-1-1, open pit, trials and finals or finals only, etc.).

4. Number of competitors qualifying for finals (where appropriate).

5. Time limit for completing competition (where appropriate).

During Competition

The event judge conducting the actual event should ensure that the event is carried out in a way that no athlete receives an advantage or is put at a disadvantage.

1. Be vigilant in regard to safety during the entire event.

2. Always keep your eye on the runway or circle.

3. Competitors should be called in order, using the commands "up," "on deck" and "on hold."

4. Record the "check out" and "check back" time of competitors in simultaneous events.

5. Results should be recorded clearly on the event sheet: "X" for a foul; "-" for a pass; "O" for a valid attempt in the high jump and pole vault; and the distance recorded (utilizing the proper increment in the horizontal jumps and throws).

6. At the completion of trials, the event judge will identify the best effort of each competitor, competitors

qualifying for the finals and when the finals will take place.

Remember, the finals are conducted in reverse order of the competitors' best qualifying mark in the trials. If any problems or questions arise during the event, the event judge should suspend the event and call the field/meet referee. No changes should be made to the results of the trial or conditions under question. Any marks made should not be removed, bars should not be replaced, standards should not be reset.

Post Event

At the completion of events, the event judge:

1. Records the best effort (from trials or finals).
2. Assigns the appropriate places to competitors in the finals.
3. Appropriately breaks ties.
4. Signs the results and records the time on the event sheet.
5. Turns the results in to the field/meet referee for confirmation.
6. Takes crossbars down, covers landing pads, puts cones in throwing

circles and on runway (indicating the venues are closed and not to be used for the remainder of the meet).

Remember, the field event venue should be left in the same condition it was prior to the event.

Event judges are there to support the competitors as well as conduct the event in a safe, fair, and efficient manner per the NFHS rules with association adaptations. With adequate preparation and focus on fairness and safety, a field event judge helps ensure a well-run event and meet. ■

Vertical Jumps: Active Flight (Five Alive) Versus Continuous Flight

NFHS Rule 6-8-2 allows the games committee to specify the method — active flight (also known as five alive) or continuous flight — that will be used to conduct the high jump and pole vault at a meet.

The decision should prioritize the method that provides the best chance for an equitable competition and gives each competitor the best chance to achieve their highest mark.

Here is a breakdown of the two methods:

Active Flight (Five Alive)

1. Assign competitors to active flights of no less than five competitors.
2. Every time a competitor either clears the bar/passes the height/is eliminated, another competitor is added to the grouping.
3. Competitors in the active group will wait no more than five other jumpers before their name is called again.
4. To ensure equity throughout a round, the number of competitors must remain constant.
5. The competitors' order is as the names appear on the event sheet.

An active flight is appropriate when

the field size is large (greater than 16). It ensures that a student-athlete waits less time between attempts, so the chance of "getting cold" is lessened. It is especially useful when poor weather conditions are expected throughout the competition.

Continuous Flight

1. Each competitor makes an attempt in the assigned order.
2. The only time competitors jump in an order different from the event card is if they are excused to compete in another event.

Continuous flight is the better option if:

- Noise during the event makes it difficult to hear the flight coordinator's voice announce the jumping order.

- Changeable weather conditions are forecast during the competition.

- Student-athletes are entered in events taking place at the same time.

- The range of abilities (based upon entry marks) is substantial.

- The event judges are not proficient in managing an active flight.

If the games committee determines that the active flight method is best, the flight coordinator must explain the procedure to all competitors prior to the event's start and specify how many student-athletes attempting a particular height determines if the active flight will be used for that height. If eight student-athletes elect to jump at the opening height, a continuous flight will be used. If 12 attempt the opening height, an active flight will be used.

For an active flight to be used, the games committee must publish/post the use (or possible use) of an active flight in the vertical jumps competitions in the meet information prior to the meet.

Coaches bear the responsibility of explaining/teaching the active flight procedures to their student-athletes before the day of a meet. A competitor who understands both methods is better prepared for the stresses of a meet and is more likely to have a successful competition. ■

