



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Risk Minimization in Pole Vaulting Competition Emphasized at Track and Field Rules Committee Meeting

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (June 19, 2003) — In line with one of the most important goals of all National Federation of State High School Associations rules committees, the NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee focused its efforts on minimizing risk in the pole vaulting competition at its annual meeting on June 8-9 in Indianapolis.

Several changes were made to pole vaulting rules in order to reduce the risk of injury to the competitor.

The most important change is to Rule 7-5-19l, which sets the pole vault crossbar to a minimum of 15½ inches beyond the vertical plane of the back of the planting box. By requiring a deeper penetration into the pit, this minimizes the chance of a pole vaulter landing in the planting box.

“This teaches athletes to vault a little deeper and leaves more room to land once the vaulter plants and leaves the ground,” said Cynthia Doyle, assistant director of the NFHS and liaison to the NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee.

Rule 7-5-5 was added to eliminate the practice of “taps,” or an individual pushing vaulters lightly on the back before take-off to help increase speed. According to Doyle, some vaulters have come to rely on these taps to help clear the crossbar. Without the use of taps, officials and coaches will have the opportunity to observe the proficiency of the vaulter during the warm-up.

Rule 7-5-9 will minimize obstruction to the bend of the pole by requiring the front buns cutout to be tapered away from the planting box to allow the pole to bend uninhibited.

Rule 6-6-3 allows the use of a painted arc when throwing the javelin. The arc may be on any surface, and requires the athlete to demonstrate control by exiting behind the intersecting lines. The foul-line arc shall be marked with white marking material or a white metal, plastic or wood band 2-3/4 inches in width.

Rule 6-2-13 requires the supervision of a coach or official before competitors may warm up in any throwing venue. In addition, Rule 7-2-9 states that warm-ups shall not be allowed in any jumping venue unless supervised by a coach or official. These rules were created to reduce the risk of injury to competitors or spectators.

In cross country, three clarifications have been made:

Rule 9-3-1 states that a cross country race begins when the competitors are called to the starting line for final instructions. A race is considered to be official and concluded when places have been determined and the results have been recorded at the finish line.

Rule 9-3-2 defines that, when using a handheld or picture-based timing system, a competitor in a cross country race finishes a race when the runner's torso breaks the finish line. Rule 9-3-3 states that computerized chips may be used to record a finish in a cross country race provided the chips are attached to the competitor's two shoes. When computerized chips are used, it is the position of the chip attached to the running shoe, not the torso, that determines the finishing position of the runner. According to Doyle, in many cases, competitors fall across the finish line torso-first. If, when computerized chips are used, another competitor's feet should cross the finish line before the fallen competitor's, the second competitor would finish ahead. Technology does not yet allow the chip to be located and read from the torso.

"This is technology that has been used for years in some states," Doyle said.

Other rules changes approved by the committee:

- Rule 3-2-3f provides the games committee with the authority to designate which items are allowed for marking acceleration zones of relay races.
- Rule 4-3-2 states that uniforms shall be worn as intended by manufacturers.
- Rule 4-5-9g clarifies that viewing any form of visual aid, not just videotape, prior to completion of the competition would be deemed an unfair act.
- Rule 4-6-2 states that a field event begins at a time designated by the games committee and concludes when the places have been determined and the field event judge has recorded the results.
- Rule 5-7-1 states that when a pistol is used as a starting device, a .32 caliber blank is recommended for outdoor venues and a .22 caliber blank is recommended for indoor venues.
- Rule 6-2-4 states that three preliminary trials shall be taken in flights of four to 12 in the order contestants are listed for completion.

- Rule 6-6-11g requires a javelin competitor to exit the runway behind the foul-line arc and the perpendicular side extensions after the javelin has landed, in a manner consistent with other throwing events.
- Rule 9-4-2b states that, for clarification purposes, certain rules of sporting conduct, uniforms, etc. that apply to cross country and track, should be included in Rule 9.

Outdoor track and field is the second-most popular sport for girls at the high school level with 415,677 participants and third-most popular sport for boys at the high school level with 494,022 participants during the 2001-02 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks second in school sponsorship for both girls and boys, with 15,151 schools offering the sport for girls and 15,261 schools offering the sport for boys.

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