

GYTOA Local Rules and Suburban League Coaches meeting

August 20, 2026

Austintown Fitch Cafeteria

Suburban League Procedures,
Rule Changes, Points of Emphasis,
Start, Scoring, Uniforms

Schedule

- The league schedule is available at gytoa.com.
- Championship will be on Tuesday, Sept 22.
- No rain dates are scheduled.

Awards

- Same as in previous years
- Regular season Top 25 in each regular season race (HS & MS)
- Top varsity boys and girls teams at end of season
- Championship Meet
 - Top 5 varsity teams
 - Top 14 varsity runners - plaque
 - Next 7 – medal
 - Ribbons through 50th
 - Top 2 MS teams
 - MS – top 14 – medals
 - Ribbons through 50th

Meet procedures

- Report on time for each race (10 minutes before scheduled start)
- NOTE START TIMES
- Turn in stickers on time – 10 minutes after next race starts
 - If you have a large roster, get top 7 in right away!
- Runners who cannot complete the race in 30 minutes (20 min MS) may have an alternate finish area adjacent to the regular chute. We may not be able to time these athletes!
- Coaches who have a runner who will not finish in 30 minutes and will affect team scoring (top 5) must notify the finish officials ASAP. Those coaches are responsible to collect the finish label and give it to the official scorers promptly.
- Suggestion: Print your own labels with athletes' names and school; our labels are 1" x 2 ½"
- Scoring – x out stickers if less than 5/more than 7 runners
- Reporting results to newspapers – league responsibility
- Weather considerations – access to emergency help, availability of water at finish, potential for extreme heat

Additional races

- Some host sites will be holding extra races for elementary age (and other?) runners
- These are not part of the Suburban League schedule
- They are solely the responsibility of the host site
- Each host site holding such races will communicate information to you regarding distance, entry procedures, cost, etc.

Championship meet info

- **Tuesday, September 22**
- Canfield Fairgrounds
- Entry procedure – Athletic.net – coaches please make sure you have an account set up well in advance

Expectations

- The league will provide each host site with:
 - Clerk, starter/referee, finish judge, timer (with printing stopwatch), 2 scorers, and a reporter, and will report results to newspapers
 - All necessary scoring material – posters, stickers
 - Ribbons for each race
 - League will report results to newspapers
 - Team scores and top 25 runners will be listed at gytoa.com. Coaches should record any additional info they want before leaving the meet.

Note: Officials will be responsible for bringing ribbons and scoring materials to each meet, as well as reporting results to newspapers

Expectations

- Each host school is expected to provide:
 - Adequate parking directions, with helpers as needed
 - Safe, well marked and **measured** course. Please include a 3 meter line behind the start line.
 - please send map to jdaubenspeck@gytoa.com to be posted on GYTOA web site.
 - Finish chute**
 - Responsible personnel to distribute scoring stickers and place ribbons in the chute**
 - Adequate water in the finish area
 - Access to medical attention if needed (have appropriate phone numbers and cell phone ready)

Expectations

- All coaches are expected to:
 - Submit complete rosters and verification forms via Google document
 - Know and teach the rules to their athletes, especially (but not only) the uniform rules
 - Be aware of weather conditions such as heat/humidity, and know your athletes' preparation for the conditions
 - Varsity coaches please communicate with middle school coaches and other members of your program
 - Pacing – educate parents/athletes
 - Holding hands during race
 - Spectator/parental interference with officials
 - Get your team to the starting line on time!**
 - Report dropped runners
 - Legibility of stickers
 - Get scoring stickers turned in promptly!** Complete and submit scoring stickers within 10 minutes after the start of the next race. Stickers submitted later than that may not be included in the scoring. We suggest printing small labels with each runner's name and school on them that can be stuck on the scoring sticker. This will save you and the scorers' time, and improve legibility.
 - Be good guests – police your teams' camps before leaving each site. Most host schools rely on public parks for their facility and your help and cooperation helps insure their future availability.
 - Emphasize good sportsmanship

Tournament information

- Remember there will be 4 divisions again this year, not 3! Check your division assignments at the following:
- Northeast District schools check at:
 - <https://www.ohsaa.org/Northeast-Sports-Tournaments/Cross-Country>
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- Team count (for next year's assignments) is based on 5 finishing, NOT "5 on the line"

State Rules Meeting and Manual

- Online state meeting required for tournament officiating
 - Via Dragonfly
 - Must be completed by midnight, August 18**
- Manual for Coaches and Manual for Officials are available on line. Links are on the OHSAA Track and Field page.

Starting Mechanics

- OHSAA Officials manual, pages 51-53.
- The starter shall wear a brightly colored sleeve on the arm holding the starting device. A different colored sleeve may be worn on the opposite arm.
- While not all-inclusive, the following are some examples of when a Starter should halt the starting process:
 - Distractions in the starting area.
 - A sound which might simulate a start such as a clicking camera or exploding paper cup.
 - Person(s) or an object coming onto the course
 - The starter moving ahead in the starting sequence when all competitors are not ready.
 - Runner(s) having difficulty holding the set position because of balance or strength, but not because of rolling through the set position.
- Late technical problems: incorrect position, timing or meet official difficulties, or announcer interference.
 - Red flag from the finish line or FAT operator.
 - One or more competitors false starting before the starting device has been fired. When this occurs, the competitors should immediately be called up in a relaxed manner rather than firing the starting device and then firing the starting device a second time to indicate a false start. This procedure must never be used to "save" a competitor using a rolling technique from committing a false start.

Starting Mechanics

- 3-5 Minutes Before the race**
- Final instructions are given (including uniform warning), and athletes should remove warm-ups upon return.
- Runners to the line**
- Once runners return to the line, no additional run-outs are allowed.
- Runners line up 3 meters behind the line and wait for starting commands.
- Clerks/Backup Starters may walk the starting line to ensure athletes are ready **BEFORE** the long whistle blast **ONLY**, if they are not able to confirm athlete readiness verbally.

Starting Mechanics

- **The Start**
- Hold the red flag and starting device parallel to the ground
- Signal with one long whistle blast. The red flag and starting device are slowly raised overhead at the same time
- Runners step up to the line and become motionless
- The Backup Starters, positioned on the ends and/or behind the line signal with a white flag when all runners are motionless. The starting device must not be fired until receiving the white flag from the Backup Starters. A recall should be issued by the assistant if the starting device is fired before they signal with the white flag.
- The Starter fires the starting device and drops the red flag at the same time.
- Move to the side as quickly as possible. If moving to the side is not possible, please stay motionless and let the runners know you will not be moving in your instructions.
- Fire the starting device again if a recall is needed within the first 100M and repeatedly wave the red flag up and down.

Starting Mechanics

- Cross Country Start Officials Positioning
 - When Backup Starters are not available, the clerks and referee or finish line officials shall serve as Backup Starters. For the tournaments, clerks and the Referee will be assigned as Backup Starters
 - When a limited number of Backup Starters are available, they should be added in the order of.
 - The Clerks will serve as Backup Starters as appropriate.

Breaking ties

- 6th man, or add top 4 runners
- Applies to all team places, not just first

Note on weather conditions

We intend to provide opportunities for athletes to compete each week.

If you feel the heat is excessive, it is up to you to decide whether any or all of your athletes participate.

Additional points...

- All teams must submit rosters before the meet
- Verification forms are required for each meet
- Course marking clarification – consistent throughout course
- Course obstacles
- Providing aid
- Jersey numbers - may have some with, some without
- Distance of races
- Water provided on course is permitted
 - Carrying of water is not allowed
- Scoring – by place only, but modified scoring is OK
- Lead vehicle – safe distance, clock on back secured
- Use of video prohibited, penalty for coaches and athletes
- Modified scoring (not being used in Suburban League)

Modified scoring

- In accordance with NFHS Rule 8-2-3 the OHSAA has adopted modified scoring. Modified scoring is a scoring procedure that would allow teams with less than five runners to score in a regular season meet. It can only be used when approved by a meet's games committee and all participating schools have been notified in advance of the meet verbally, in writing, or in the contest contract. Modified scoring does not allow games committees to change/modify any other element of the scoring process. Modified scoring shall not be used in OHSAA tournament competitions. If modified scoring is used, it MUST follow the procedure outlined below:
- After runners in excess of each team's allotted 7 athletes are removed and the remaining runners re-ranked, the next place in the ranking will be added to each team with 4 runners. The next 2 places will be added to each team with 3 runners, and so on to give each team 5 places to be scored. This means that all teams without 5 finishers shall be awarded the same position(s) for their next scoring position(s). Therefore, if there are 109 finishers (after removing those who are not in their team's top 7), ALL teams with fewer than 5 finishers will be awarded 110th place, ALL those with fewer than 4 finishers will also be awarded 111th place, etc. until 113th place is awarded to all teams having only one runner.

Uniform rules

- Uniform rules can be found in the officials manual on pages 20-22 and on pages 27-28 in the coaches manual.
- Newer uniforms may look slightly different – same color, logo, general design
- Tights having waist band with multiple logos are now legal if worn as uniform bottom
- No waiver or prior approval is needed for any athlete who presents religious requirements for variations from the uniform rule.
- Tucking in jerseys required in tournament – can be a games committee requirement
- All athletes from a school must have matching uniforms even if less than 5!
- Removing uniform in competition area is illegal
- Waist band must be worn above hips (can be rolled)
- Jersey must cover waist band when athlete stands erect

Uniforms (continued)

- Hats/gloves at referee's discretion –stocking cap or other headwear approved by the referee – hats with stiff bills are not permitted.
- Headbands
- Socks, sleeves – no restrictions
- Manufacturers' Logos – number and size limitations
- Knots in jerseys not allowed
- Pre-race meeting with referee constitutes everyone's warning!
- ***Jersey numbers no longer required!***
- ***No longer any restrictions on undergarments or jewelry***
- Atomizers (or other medical requirements) – doctor's note ***stating that it is required for competition***
- GPS watches are allowed to be worn, but GPS and communication capabilities cannot be used.
- Only warning is given by starter/referee immediately before the start, and violations after that warning warrant a disqualification.

Additional Information

- Use of video for anything except order of finish is **PROHIBITED!**
- Heat illness
 - Signs and symptoms
 - Immediate care
- Service animals
 - Only dogs are allowed
- Next meeting: Thursday, August 27, 6:45 pm,
Fitch cafeteria