

GYTOA Local Rules Meeting

August 27, 2026
Austintown Fitch Cafeteria

Cross Country Officiating Roles

Updates

- Officiating contracts for the Suburban League have been issued on Dragonfly
- This is to make sure you are all covered in the event you would need to access the NFHS/OHSAA catastrophic insurance policy
- It also enable you to file game reports
- Online local meetings – use Dragonfly number for credit!
- New uniform policy – cyan blue shirts phased in beginning in 2027-2028; see recent memo via email

OTFCCOA Updates

- Clinic will be Fri/Sat, Jan 22/23
- Credit for 2 local meetings plus state meeting if you stay the whole time
- 1st year officials get clinic fee waived (still pay for membership)
- Nominations for officers must be in advance
- Watch for mailing!

Games Committee/Meet Director

- NFHS Rule book 3-3, 8-4-1; NFHS Manual 6.1, p 54
- Dates and times
- Length of course
 - Measurement rule
 - Limitations on length (5000 m/3200 m)
- Three meter line
- Starting positions of teams – assigned in advance, and needs to be RANDOM
- Order of races, time schedule
- Facilities
- Appointing of officials
- Procedures, medical, etc.

Referee

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-2, 8-4-3; NFHS Manual 6.1, p 54
- When should you be there?
- What should you bring?
 - Rule book, case book, OHSAA manual
 - Writing material
- Pre-meet meeting with coaches and/or team captains – can be via written communication
 - Good sporting conduct
 - Get verbal or written confirmation from coaches regarding uniforms and equipment
 - Any special circumstances
- Makes all decisions regarding DQ's
 - Get appropriate info from official regarding possible DQ

Clerk

- The Clerk shall perform their duties at the starting line, meaning they must be mobile and move along the line. They will be assigned a section of the starting line/designated boxes to check in. They shall:
- Check the athlete into the race.
- Check the names and numbers of each athlete(s) participating, ensuring they match what has been provided and working with the referee or designated individual to make corrections.
- Perform a full uniform inspection, ensuring all parts of the uniform are compliant with all regulations and all teams are dressed appropriately. No uniform rules may be ignored or set aside.
- Check the athletes' spikes for compliance with the Games Committee specifications.
- Provide the athlete/team with starting box positions.
- Count the number of athletes who check-in and report that to the Head Clerk. The Head Clerk will total the athletes from all clerks and report that information to the Referee or designated official.
- The Clerks will serve as Backup Starters as appropriate.

Clerk

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-5; NFHS Manual 6.1, p 55
- When should you get there?
 - Number of teams/athletes, number of clerks
- What should you bring?
 - Writing material
- Checking in athletes
 - Be familiar with current uniform rules, requirement set by games committee
- Accurate count – report to finish line, scorer (total plus who has full teams)

Starter

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-4 ; NFHS Manual 6.1, p 54; 6.2, p 55
- When should you get there?
- What should you bring?
 - Sleeve, flag, whistle, gun, shells
 - 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.
- Pre-race meeting with athletes
 - Review starting commands
 - Final uniform warning
 - Possibility of recall gun
- Positioned “well in front of the runners”

Cross Country Starting Procedure

- **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.

Cross Country Starting Procedure

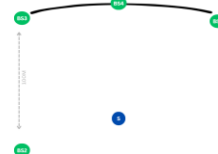
- **The Start**
- Hold the red flag and starting device parallel to the ground
- Signal with one long whistle blast. The red flag and starting device are slowly raised overhead at the same time
- Runners step up to the line and become motionless
- The Backup Starters, positioned on the ends and/or behind 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.

Cross Country Starting Procedure

- 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

Cross Country Starting Procedure

- 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 importance as indicated by the numbering in the diagram.



Chute Director (or Corral Director)

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-6, 7; NFHS Manual 6.3, 6.4, p 56
- Supervise finish chute (or corral)
- Assign stand-ins (fillers) for runners who can't continue through chute
- Assign gate controllers if more than one chute
- Assign marshals to keep chute area free of unauthorized individuals
- Be certain other chute/corral personnel are in place as runners approach finish

Finish Judges

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-8; NFHS Manual 6.5, p 56
- Stand "on" the finish line (outside the chute)
- Call out order of finish – ID by bib number, school, jersey color, hair color, etc.
- Can only be overturned by referee
- Backup scoring systems
 - Video
 - Caller/checker list
 - Tear tags

Chute Umpires

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-9; NFHS Manual 6.6, p 57
- Supervise competitors after they enter chute
- Keep in order, adjust as needed – listen to finish judges

Course Umpires

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-12; NFHS Manual 6.8, p 57
- Make sure competitors run proper course
- Report any infraction to referee
- How to properly ID competitor

Head Umpire

- The head umpire shall have general supervision over the Umpires and Marshals and shall be responsible for assigning these officials to positions from which the umpire may clearly carry out official responsibilities. A map indicating location shall be provided to all umpires and marshals. The referee shall approve the umpire locations prior to the start of the meet. The Head Umpire is also responsible for general Umpire responsibilities. In larger meets, when the Head Umpire is not needed to officiate in a set position, they shall follow the final runner, checking in with each umpire as they pass.

Umpire

- Umpires are responsible for viewing all races from their assigned position and reporting any possible violations. Cross Country Umpires DO NOT need to utilize yellow and white flags. They must be knowledgeable of all regulations and are responsible for the positive identification of violations. When reporting a violation, they must report the team name, uniform color, number, and a detailed description of the possible violation.
- Umpires **must** report all possible violations per the details above to ensure the Referee has the information needed to make a final decision. The umpire's role is to report information, not determine if a disqualification will be issued. **The mantra of "if you think you saw it, it didn't happen" is not the standard that shall be used for what is reported by umpires. Umpires must report all information they have on possible violations and allow the referee to make the decision.**
- The referee will ensure you are 100% in what you saw, and if you are not, they likely will not issue a disqualification; that is the referee's decision. The concept of "if you think you saw it, it didn't happen" is a referee responsibility not that of an umpire.

Callers/Checkers

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-10, 11; NFHS Manual 6.7, p 57
- Call number of each competitor in order
- Record accurately and legibly

Tag puller/stringer

- Take tear tag from each competitor's bib number
- Place on stringer in order

Timers

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-13; NFHS Manual 6.9, 6.10, p 57
- A timer may be assigned to call out times at a designated place along the course
- Record time of each runner as they cross the finish line (torso)
- Occasionally check with recorders to make sure you are on the same number
- Manual timing vs FAT

Marshall

- NFHS Rule Book 8-4-14; NFHS Manual 6.11, p 58
- The primary role of a Cross Country Marshall is crowd control. While Marshalls primarily focus on their priority area of crowd control, they are responsible for all the duties of an Umpire. Common locations where Marshalls will be used are at the finish line to ensure athletes keep moving, or in the area immediately before the finish line to ensure no spectator interference. The assignor or meet manager will assign specific areas of responsibility for a Marshall.

Scorer(s)

- Rule 8-2; NFHS Manual 6.10, p 57
- Add up top 5
- Athletes on teams with less than 5 runners don't count in scoring (re-score)
- Don't count athletes who are 8th runner on team and beyond in re-score
- Tie-breaking – 6th runner, or top 4 if neither has 6 runners – all places, not just for 1st

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.

Meets using FAT or chip timing

- Rule 8-3-4
- Chute director, finish judges, chute umpires, callers/checkers, tag puller/stringer, timers all have different roles
 - Keep athletes moving through finish area
 - Make sure chips get turned in
- Count finishers, check with FAT operator periodically
- Chip timing is not necessarily FAT – starting device must start clock
- Backup on scoring and timing
- Keep athletes moving beyond immediate finish area
- Assist athletes as needed
- Help athletes get chips removed and returned?
- Cleaning and sorting chips?

Other Noteworthy Points

- NFHS Officials Manual pages 54-58, Part 6
- Disqualifications
 - False start
 - Failure to complete the prescribed course - "Cutting" the course – course markings
 - Interference
 - Unsporting or unacceptable conduct
 - Receiving assistance
 - Pacing
 - Medical forms for inhalers, etc.
 - Not wearing assigned number or transponder(8-3)
 - Uniform violation (4-3-2)
- Weather decisions
- Uniforms – pages 27-28 of OHSAA Manual for Coaches, 20-22 of Officials Manual
 - rules, situations
- Undergarments – no longer any restrictions
- Jewelry – no longer any restrictions (safety)
- Water on the course
- Holding hands
- Chips – rule now specifies the torso, regardless of chips