



September 30, 2026

NFHS Cross Country Weekly Rule Interpretations

The Prescribed Course

Rules References: Rule 8 - 1 thru 3

SITUATION 1: Arriving at the cross country course for a meet, a coach from Team A protests the route as there is only an 80-meter straightaway up a hill before a slight curve to the right at the beginning of the course. The official informs the coach that the 100-meter straightaway is a recommendation not a requirement for a race course. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** A straightaway at the beginning of the course of at least 100 meters is required before any significant turns. (8-1-2)

SITUATION 2: While inspecting the cross country course prior to the meet, the visiting coach discovers that in several portions of the course, bales of hay or logs have been placed across the running course; theoretically, to make the course more challenging. The coach of the visiting team objects to the artificial barriers. **RULING:** The artificial barriers shall be removed. (8-1-2)

SITUATION 3: Upon arriving at the state championship cross country meet, which is held at a local golf course, Team A's coach protests to the referee that the course does not have painted or chalked directional lines to assist the runners. Instead, there is a series of small "surveyor"-type colored flags marking the course direction. **RULING:** The protest is denied. **COMMENT:** Survey-type flags are permitted when the venue will not allow the use of a painted or chalk line across the club fairways. (8-1-3)

SITUATION 4: In a regular season meet, a group of athletes on course that is marked with a single wide line only and meet management is using natural boundaries to indicate the correct course. The group makes a turn on the inside of the line and cuts the corner of rock on the course. The runners behind them make the same cut. Several coaches protest and the single referee does not disqualify the group because the course marking was unclear. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** When the use of a single boundary line and natural boundaries are unclear then flags or other markings should be utilized on a course. The referee and management should walk the course in advance to make sure all turns are clear. In absence of additional markings, the referee must rule on any irregularities. (8-1-3)

SITUATION 5: At a cross country meet with a single line defining the course, at a yellow flag, a competitor runs to the right of the flag rather than the left. The umpire on course reports the violation. The meet referee disqualifies the athlete. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** Yellow flags indicate a turn to the right on the course and runners must stay on the left side of the flag. Athletes who fail to complete the prescribed course are disqualified. (8-3-3)

- A red flag indicates a turn to the left. Runners must stay on the right side of the flag.
- A yellow flag indicates a turn to the right. Runners must stay on the left side of the flag.
- A blue flag indicates a course straight ahead. Runners may run on either side of the flag.



SITUATION 6: Runner A1 falls during the first 100 meters due to contact with runner B7. The meet referee recalls the race by firing the starting device. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** Unlike track and field, where the recall of a race is now 50 meters, the cross country recall is still 100 meters. (8-4-4)

Watches and Jewelry

Rules References: 4-6-5

SITUATION 1: Runner A1 is at the start line being clerked by the officials. An official notices that A1 (a) is wearing a watch, (b) is wearing earrings, (c) is wearing a necklace, (d) is wearing a medical alert bracelet. The official permits all situations. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** There is no NFHS rule that prohibits the wearing of watches, jewelry or medical alert devices. State associations may make watches and/or jewelry illegal by adoption. (4-6-5)