



October 14, 2026

NFHS Cross Country Weekly Rule Interpretations

Clerking

Rules References: 3-2-4, Rule 4, Rule 8

As we head into postseason meets, fields get larger, box space gets tighter, and starting lines get louder. The job of the officials (clerks) is simple: eliminate the chaos before the starter ever climbs the stand. When clerking is proactive, uniform checks are handled early and box discipline is strictly kept, the administrative noise disappears. Here is our weekly rules review and best practices for managing championship starting lines.

SITUATION 1: The clerk of the course reviews instructions with the competitors in a cross country invitational. The clerk notices one of the competitors is wearing a stocking cap and instructs the runner to remove the hat as headwear is not permitted. The runner would like to wear the hat, and the school coach presents the question to the referee that no action by the games committee restricted the wearing of headwear. The referee is aware of no action by the games committee to prohibit headwear, so the referee instructs the clerk to permit the headwear. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** There is no rule that prohibits the wearing of headwear. The restriction by the games committee must occur prior to the meet and any such restriction must be conveyed to the officials and coaches. Head coverings worn for religious reasons are permitted without approval from the state high school association. (3-2-4)

SITUATION 2: Team A decides to replace uniforms during the season. When the cross country team checks in, the clerk notices three runners have three different logos on the shorts of the uniform, while the remaining runners on the team have no visible logo. All shorts are the same color and style, yet none are identical because of the variance in logos. The official shall: (a) instruct all members of the cross country team to roll the leg of the shorts to hide the logo, (b) instruct only the three with different logos to hide the logo, (c) disqualify the team for having different uniforms, (d) ignore the differences since none of the logos exceed the size limit. **RULING:** (a), (b) and (c) Incorrect procedure. (d) Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Having different legal logos (or lack of a logo) is not a violation of 4-3-1b. (4-3-2)

SITUATION 3: After being called to the starting line at a cross country meet for the starter's final instructions, all members of Team A run away from the starting line for a team cheer. The starter warns the team that if any further runouts occur before the start, those involved will be disqualified for unacceptable conduct. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Once teams have been called to the

starting line by the starter for final instruction, no further runouts shall be permitted. Any second violation shall result in a disqualification. (8-4-4)

SITUATION 4: It is discovered during a regular season cross country race that competitors from Team A have different uniforms. A1-A5 are in blue shorts and solid yellow singlets, A6 is wearing yellow shorts and blue singlet, and A7 is wearing blue shorts and yellow singlet with thick blue stripe down back. The school's colors are blue and yellow. **RULING:** A warning is issued for A6 and A7 to the coach following the race. **COMMENT:** All cross country team members must wear uniforms clearly indicating through predominant color, school logo and color combination of all outer garments worn as a uniform, that members are from the same team. A7's yellow singlet with blue tick stripe on back of uniform does not allow the competitor to be identified as being from Team A. A6's uniform, while the school colors, makes it difficult to identify that A6 is from the same team because the shorts and top colors are the reverse of the majority of team members. (4-3-2)