



## **Corrected 2017 Track and Field Points of Emphasis**

### **Heat Acclimatization and the Prevention of Heat Illness**

Exertional Heatstroke (EHS) is the leading cause of preventable death in high school athletics. Students participating in high-intensity, long-duration or repeated same-day session sports during the summer months or other hot-weather days are at the greatest risk. EHS also results in thousands of emergency room visits and hospitalizations throughout the nation each year.

The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) has published a position statement and the NFHS has created a free online course “Heat Illness Prevention” at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com), regarding this life-threatening topic. The position statement is intended to provide an outline of “Fundamental Musts” and to be used as a guiding document for each state association. Further and more detailed information will be found within the NFHS online course, as well as the fourth edition of the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook, and the NFHS SMAC position statement “Recommendations for Hydration to Minimize the Risk for Dehydration and Heat Illness” and other resources.

The position statement and online course are intended to reduce the risk and incidence of EHS and the resulting deaths and injuries. The NFHS recognizes that various states and regions of the country have unique climates and an assortment of resources, and that there is no “one-size-fits-all” optimal acclimatization plan. However, the NFHS and the NFHS SMAC strongly encourage member state associations to incorporate all of the “Fundamental Musts” into any heat acclimatization plan to improve athlete safety. In addition, the online “Heat Illness Prevention” course should be required viewing for all coaches.

### **Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention Keys for Coaches**

- Recognize that Exertional Heatstroke (EHS) is the leading preventable cause of death among high school athletes.
- Know the importance of a formal pre-season heat acclimatization plan.
- Know the importance of having and implementing a specific hydration plan, keeping your athletes well-hydrated, and providing ample opportunities for, and encouraging, regular fluid replacement.
- Know the importance of appropriately modifying activities in relation to the environmental heat stress and contributing individual risk factors (e.g., illness, obesity) to keep your athletes safe and performing well.
- Know the importance for all staff to closely monitor all athletes during practice and training in the heat, and recognize the signs and symptoms of developing heat illnesses.
- Know the importance of, and resources for, establishing an emergency action plan and promptly implementing it in case of suspected EHS or other medical emergency.

### **Fundamental Musts of a Heat Acclimatization Plan**

1. Physical exertion and training activities should begin slowly and continue progressively. An athlete cannot be “conditioned” in a period of only two to three weeks.
2. Keep each athlete’s individual level of conditioning and medical status in mind and adjust activity accordingly. These factors directly affect heat illness risk.
3. Adjust intensity (lower) and rest breaks (increase frequency/duration), and consider reducing uniform and protective equipment, while being sure to monitor all players more closely as conditions are increasingly warm/humid, especially if there is a change in weather from the previous few days.
4. Athletes must begin practices and training activities adequately hydrated.
5. Recognize early signs of distress and developing exertional heat illness, and promptly adjust activity and treat accordingly. First aid should not be delayed!
6. Recognize more serious signs of exertional heat-related distress (clumsiness, stumbling, collapse, obvious behavioral changes and/or other central nervous system problems), immediately stop activity and promptly seek medical attention by activating the Emergency Medical System. On-site rapid cooling should begin immediately.
7. An Emergency Action Plan with clearly defined written and practiced protocols should be developed and in place ahead of time.

### **Use of Rubber Discus in Practice and Competition**

NFHS Track and Field rules allow the use of a discus made of rubber, plastic, wood, fiberglass, carbon fiber or metal alloy. Regardless of the material composition of the implement, the nature of the event itself will eventually lead to a discus that does not comply with established weight and measurement standards and therefore should not be allowed for use during competition.

In general, a rubber discus is more susceptible to physical and environmental factors that affect its size, shape and weight. Because of cost, most track and field programs implement inventory will include more rubber discuses when compared to discuses made of other types of materials. As such, rubber discuses are widely used at all levels during practice and competition.

Irregularities in a rubber discus occur more frequently because of contact with the ground, cage, and other hard surfaces and therefore it should be evaluated periodically during the season by coaches and participants to ensure that the discus meets weights and measurements standards. Practicing with an implement that will not pass these standards is not restricted but can adversely affect athlete performance if the implement is disallowed for competition.

Meet officials are reminded that an implement can pass inspection prior to the event but any implement can become illegal during competition and should be disallowed if this occurs. A rubber discus in particular is susceptible to nicks, notches, cuts, and indentations after contact with hard surfaces and therefore needs special attention during the event. Athletes should always check-in two implements in the case that one does not pass weights and measurements or becomes illegal during competition.

## **NFHS Track and Field Uniform Regulations**

Rule 4-3 and 9-6 outline NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country uniform regulations. In most cases the clerk of the course has the responsibility to check and enforce uniform, visible apparel and shoe regulations. The ultimate responsibility regarding uniform compliance rests with the school coach. If the school does not issue some component of the required uniform, it is the coach's responsibility to educate parents and student-athletes regarding garments that will comply with NFHS rules prior to purchase.

Garments worn under the track bottom that do not extend below the knees are considered "foundation" garments and therefore are not subject to color or logo restrictions. A sports bra and/or boxer style undergarment, if worn as the intended, are considered foundation garments therefore could contain more than one color in the fabric and/or have multiple logos.

If two or more athletes participating as a member of a cross country team or as relay team members are wearing visible undergarments extending below the knees, the rules require the color of the undergarments be the same regardless of length of the undergarment worn by the remaining members. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that members of any cross country or relay team are easily identifiable to meet officials and competitors.

## **Sportsmanship**

Sportsmanship rules exist to help officials, parents, coaches, and student-athletes develop and reinforce values that are applicable to the development of the whole person. Respect for others, honesty, fair play, and learning and understanding the rules are critical actions/skills that when practiced will enhance any individual's character. The absence of good sportsmanship jeopardizes one of the fundamental principles of participation in education-based athletics and complicates the team building process.

A sportsmanship priority is keeping winning and losing in perspective. Understanding that losing with dignity is winning is an important lesson everyone must learn and practice. Accepting responsibility for a losing performance rather than blaming the outcome on officials or fellow competitors is a skill that will manifest itself in all areas of life.

It is important to understand that winning means you were the best that day, and you can always continue to improve and no one wins every time. Individuals who promote sportsmanship are the first to congratulate their opponents and to thank those individuals who have helped them to be successful. Winning is the easy part. The hardest part is understanding how to be a good winner. This is the action most people will use to judge your character.

Student-athletes should always show respect to coaches, teammates, opponents, and meet officials. Learning what showing respect means is as simple as treating each individual as you would like to be treated.