



April 1, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

Excused Athlete: NFHS Rule 3-2-3p specifies that the games committee determines both the time limit and the procedures to follow when a competitor is excused. State associations may adopt different policies regarding excused athletes and can enforce rules that are stricter than NFHS guidelines. It's also important to remember that track and field is education-based, so officiating should prioritize fairness and support rather than a “gotcha” approach.

6.2.3 SITUATION D: Guidelines for a competitor who has been excused from a field event to compete in another event include:

- a. The competitor must receive permission from the head event judge.
- b. The head event judge must record the time excused.
- c. The head event judge may allow the competitor to take a trial/attempt out of turn before being excused.
- d. The head event judge will use some judgment in extending the time excused under special circumstances, e.g., 3200-meter run.
- e. In the high jump and pole vault, if the competitor has failed to return in the allotted time and all other remaining competitors have passed, failed or cleared the existing height, the crossbar may be raised to the next height, and the judge will automatically pass the excused competitor to the new height.
- f. Coaches must take into account the limited time allowed to compete in another event when determining the events any individual competitor enters.
- g. When an unusual circumstance, injury, reruns, etc., occurs that will prolong the absence of the excused participant, it shall be the competitor's responsibility to communicate this to the head event judge.

SITUATION: During the pole vault competition, the bar is at 14 feet, 0 inches. A1, who has not started vaulting, is excused to participate in the 100-meter dash. When A1 returns 15 minutes later and finds the bar at 14 feet, 6 inches, and is told by the head event judge that they only have two attempts/trials remain because a trial/ attempt was counted for A1's failure to return within the excused time limit. The decision is protested to the meet referee. **RULING:** The protest should be upheld. **COMMENT:** When A1 failed to return in the allotted minutes, A1 forfeited the trials at that height and should be recorded as passed trials/ attempts. While the crossbar will not be lowered, A1 is allowed to enter competition at the new height, with three trials remaining. [6-2-3]

SITUATION: In the finals of the long jump, A1, who has the second-best jump in the prelims, is excused to compete in the 4x400-meter relay. A1 takes the option, from the head event judge, to take a second trial/attempt immediately following the first round of trials before reporting to the relay clerk.

A1 has not returned prior to the third round of trials and when the judge calls the competitors for the final trial, B1, who is last in order, refuses to take the final attempt until A1 has taken a final attempt.

RULING: B1 has earned the right to make the last attempt/trial, and the request will be honored.

COMMENT: If A1 fails to return within the limit, and there are no extenuating circumstances that would warrant any special consideration, the head event judge could declare that A1's third and final attempt/trial is forfeited. [6-2-3]

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