



April 15, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION: Ten days after the meet, officials discover Team A used an ineligible participant in the 4x100-meter relay. Team A, which finished first in that relay, won the meet by two points. **RULING:** Team points and places in the 4x100-meter relay are forfeited by Team A. Team A forfeits the meet championship to the newly adjusted point leader. **COMMENT:** The rule provides for correction of the meet results at any time, unless determined otherwise by the state association policy, when involving a participant who is disqualified from further participation in the meet. [2-3-2]

SITUATION: In the 4x100-meter relay, Team A wishes to place a mark on the track outside the exchange zone to aid the outgoing runners in timing their start. The mark, or marker, is: (a) half of a colored tennis ball placed in Team A's lane; or (b) a colored tongue depressor; or (c) a chalk mark. Meet management approves the marking in (a) and (b), but prohibits any markings such as chalk, water-soluble spray paint, etc. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The games committee and/or meet management is within its authority to prohibit all markings on any surface, including the running track. (3-2-4, 3-2-3h)

SITUATION: Following the 4x200-meter relay, it is discovered that the clerk of the course assigned Team A to the incorrect starting line and the referee orders the race to be rerun. During the original race, the head umpire reports that A1 and A2 did not complete the exchange within the limits of the exchange zone and Team B was guilty of a lane violation. Team C requests to use one of its alternate runners in the rerun. **RULING:** If the referee believes the incorrect starting line may have contributed to the relay-exchange violation, Team A would be permitted to participate in the rerun. Team B will be disqualified and not eligible for the rerun, and Team C may substitute an alternate runner in the rerun provided that runner was listed as one of the eight possible entries on its relay entry card. (5-10-2, 5-11-1, 5-12-1)

SITUATION: At the start of the 4x100 race, Runner No. 3 is bouncing around in and out of the exchange zone to warm up. As Runner No. 2 approaches, Runner No. 3 enters the zone and clearly stops to prepare to receive the baton. They then run forward farther into the zone and exchange the baton inside of the zone. The umpire recommends they be disqualified for not being in the zone at the start of the race. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling because the athlete made a deliberate stop within the zone to prepare. **COMMENT:** The rule is intended to have the runner stationed inside the exchange zone before receiving the baton and not necessarily when the race is started. [5-3-3]

SITUATION: In the boys 4x400-meter relay, Team A is running in Lane 6. Approximately 5 meters from the finish line, A4's baton drops after hitting A4's leg. It flies through the air in front of the runner and: (a) A4 catches it about 3 meters before crossing the finish line, or (b) A4 catches it just after crossing the finish line. The coach of Team B, which finished second behind Team A, protests to the referee citing that Team A did not legally cross the finish line and should be disqualified. **RULING:** If in (a) the head umpire and referee

determine A4 was in control of the baton when A4 crossed the finish line and no interference occurred and no advantage was gained, it is legal. In (b), since A4 was not in control of the baton as A4 crossed the finish line, Team A is disqualified. [5-10-6]

SITUATION: During a relay, A1 passes the baton to A2 in assigned Lane 1. A1, steps off the track. During the actual exchange, A1 was running on the grass surface outside the lane, but within the exchange zone while A2 remained within the assigned exchange lane and zone. The baton was: (a) within the exchange zone, (b) outside the lane and zone when it was exchanged. No interference with any other competitor occurs.

RULING: It is an illegal exchange in both (a) and (b). Team A is disqualified. **COMMENT:** The exchanges are illegal because in (a), A1 is off the track and in (b), the baton is not handed off in the exchange zone. It is not legal for the outgoing runner to touch the baton outside of the exchange zone. [5-10-7]