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NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

As the regular season concludes and state championship season begins around the country, the stakes rise not just for athletes and coaches, but for officials as well. Championship meets bring added pressure, larger crowds, stricter protocols, and tighter schedules. For officials, preparation is key to ensuring the event runs smoothly and fairly. Here's a checklist and a few essential tips to help you get ready.

Pre-Meet Checklist for Championship Officials

1. Review the Rules

- Revisit the NFHS Track and Field Rules Book.
- Pay close attention to recent rule changes and championship-specific modifications adopted by your state association.
- Review your state's terms and conditions for the meet.
 - Do they have any exceptions to NFHS rules?
 - Do they have policies in place for excused athletes?
- Know the difference between NFHS and other governing bodies (e.g., NCAA or USATF).

2. Know Your Event Assignment – state meets usually utilize more officials than regular season meets.

- Brush up on event-specific procedures, including relay zone exchanges, legal throws and jumps, and timing protocols.
- Know who to ask questions on the day of the meet.

3. Understand Meet Schedule

- Review the championship meet schedule and field layout.
- Be aware of any multi-venue logistics or unique formats such as prelims/finals, flight sizes, and advancement procedures.
- Is there a conflict sheet for athletes entered in multiple events?

4. Dress Appropriately for the elements

- Wear the correct uniform or attire as outlined by your state association.
- Be prepared for long hours in the sun or inclement weather. Pack: sunscreen, a hat, rain gear, water, and snacks.

Maintain a Championship Mindset

Athletes train all season for this moment, and your officiating should reflect that same level of excellence. Be alert, consistent, and confident in your calls. Remain professional and

approachable, recognizing that emotions can run high at championship meets. Staying composed, calm, and courteous goes a long way; a clear explanation delivered with a respectful tone can defuse most difficult situations.

Remain neutral and objective as you encounter unfamiliar teams, heightened emotions, and increased scrutiny. Stick to the facts, rely on the rule book, and trust your training. Prioritize athlete safety and fair play by monitoring venue conditions, ensuring legal equipment, and confirming proper warm-up areas. The integrity of the meet begins with the official's attention to detail.

Be familiar with your state protest and appeal procedures, as protests are more likely at championship events. Know how they are filed, who adjudicates them, and your role in the process. Always be a team player. Championship meets depend on a coordinated officiating crew that supports one another, communicates clearly, and willing to assist outside their assigned area when needed.

Championship meets celebrate high school athletics at its best. Your preparation and professionalism as an official are essential to providing a fair, safe, and memorable experience for every athlete.