



September 16, 2026

NFHS Cross Country Weekly Rule Interpretations

Conduct

Unsporting conduct is behavior that is unethical or dishonorable. It includes but is not limited to: disrespectfully addressing an official, any flagrant behavior, intentional contact, taunting, criticizing or using profanity directed toward someone. Unsporting conduct violations are a disqualification from the event and further competition in the meet.

Unacceptable conduct by a competitor includes but is not limited to willful failure to follow the directions of a meet official, using profanity that is not directed at someone or any action which could bring discredit to the individual or the competitor's school. Unacceptable conduct is disqualification from that event.

There is a distinct, critical line between an athlete releasing pure, natural adrenaline and an athlete actively trying to demean an opponent as is interpreted in other NFHS rules codes.

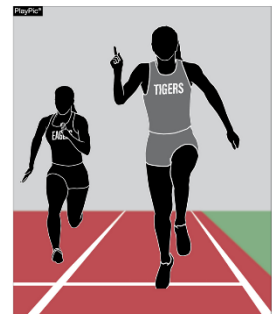
SITUATION: After a frustrating cross country performance and the race has officially concluded, the referee hears A1 uttering profanities. The referee disqualifies the runner and A1's finishing position is removed from the scoring. A1's coach protests to the referee and then appeals to the jury of appeals saying the disqualification occurred after the race had concluded and was official. **RULING:** Appeal upheld. **COMMENT:** The jury of appeals determined that the infraction occurred after the race had concluded (4-7-1). The jury of appeals should also report the behavior to the state association as unsporting conduct for consequences from the state association.

SITUATION: At the conclusion of race (a) A1 cross the finish line holding up the number 1 that is not directed towards any individual,



(b) A1 and A2 chest bump each other after the finish line cheering over their finish,

(c) A1 screams in the face of B2 that they are number one.



RULING: In (a) and (b) the athletes are expressing pure joy and not directing this at any specific individual or team. These are examples of spontaneous celebratory actions that are not considered taunting or unsporting conduct. In (c) the referee disqualifies the A1 for unsporting conduct (taunting) directed at an individual.

SITUATION: During the state cross country championships, the umpire at the 2000-meter turn observes A1 thrusting an elbow into B1 causing B1 to slow down and be passed by several other runners. The umpire signals with a yellow flag and reports the incident to the referee at the conclusion of the race. **RULING:** A1 is disqualified and Team A's total points (top 5 places) are re-scored as if A1 did not compete in the race.

COMMENT: Although there are frequent incidental contacts (especially on turns) in cross country, flagrant and unsporting conduct cannot be tolerated.

SITUATION: The manager from Team A is observed directing profanities toward competitors on the course of the cross country race. The umpire reports the infraction to the meet referee who disqualifies the offenders from the meet for unsporting conduct and disqualifies the offending school's team from the event. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** A cross country team consists of coaches, contestants, managers, trainers and other school personnel. Therefore, when a team member(s) acts in an unsporting way, the team must be penalized. (4-6-1 PENALTY)