

Officiating Tips for Coaches #3

This is the first event/role-specific article. The primary focus in all articles is on **SAFETY**. They are not intended as rule reviews. The most reliable way to keep up to date on current rules is to **READ** the pertinent rules before **EVERY** meet. Because a **SAFE** venue, along with the appropriate application of the rules, ensures a **FAIR** competition.

In general, the keys to ensuring a safe event are 1) the steps taken preparing the venue **BEFORE** the competition starts, and 2) the officiating crew being alert for safety issues arising **DURING** the competition.

In the pole vault, the lead/head official should have a current Pole Vault Safety Certification Board (PVSCB) membership.

Vertical Jumps (high jump & pole vault)

PADDING

The minimum size of the landing areas for high jump and pole vault are specified in the NFHS rule book (**Rule 6-9, art. 20 for HJ; art. 26, 27 & 33 for PV** in the 2022 book). Landing areas made of multiple sections need to be connected and have a one piece cover pad to protect athletes from “falling through the cracks”. Hard surfaces surrounding the landing areas must be padded (**Rule 6-9, art. 21 and 28**). It is also important to pad protruding parts of the standards (for example, the height adjustment bracket), especially in the pole vault.

Bottom line: the more padding, the better

STANDARDS and BARS

In both the high jump and pole vault, the standards should be plumb (that is, perfectly vertical), and the bars marked and set with the sag down. This ensures that the height measured from the ground in the HJ, or top of the back of the plant box (zero line) in the PV to the top of the center of the bar will be consistent from jump to jump.

In the high jump, because athletes approach from either the left or right, the bar ends must be the same distance from the ground; this will account for any side-to-side slope of the apron.

In the pole vault, because athletes approach down the center, the bar must be level so that the bar height is the same whether the athlete holds the pole on the left or right.

Remember: except in the case of a jump-off to break a tie for 1st (or 2nd at district championships), the bar is never lowered. So, opening heights should be set to accommodate the level/skill of the athletes competing.

APRON and RUNWAY

The high jump apron and the pole vault runway must be kept clear of debris, standing water, snow and ice. This also applies to the pole vault plant box. These areas should be cleared in preparation for the event, and inspected and cleared regularly during the competition.

To prevent individuals not involved with the event from wandering onto the venue, barriers (for example, flagging or even hurdles) can be set around the HJ apron or PV runway. Nonetheless, the officiating crew needs to **STAY ALERT** for intruders throughout the competition, be they human, animal or otherwise (for example, a discus rolling onto the HJ apron).

RECORDING

In the vertical jumps successful jumps, misses and passes are recorded in a specific way to avoid confusion that may be caused by unclear

marks made in the “heat” of the competition:

successful jump: '0'

miss: 'X'

pass: '-'

A final key to a safe and fair competition is **CLEAR COMMUNICATION** between the officiating crew and the athletes, coaches and spectators.