CHSAA POLE VAULT SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Rule Change affecting Pole Vault: Run backs are not allowed during warm-up or competition! Rule 6-2, Article 6.

In 2020, all pole vault coaches must have proof of NFHS Course; Coaching Pole Vault: Successful Skill Development. Send certificate to Lane at iververs@chsaa.org. A list of coaches who have submitted a valid certificate to the CHSAA office can be found by going HERE. (The course is free through NFHS)

Athletic Directors and coaches need to inspect their track equipment and venue on a regular basis to ensure safety and compliance with NFHS and CHSAA rules and guidelines.

Prior to every competition, the host school coach, meet director/manager or head field judge and event officials must inspect the venue to ensure it is safe and set up properly. Most pole vault accidents are attributed to things that are controllable, and thus, preventable.

Landing Pad: Is the landing pad legal size (minimum 19’8” wide by 20’2” deep), is the pad too soft, is it set the proper distance from the takeoff box (3” maximum) and is there a common top cover or pad extending over all sections of the pit? Consider the location of the landing pad. Is the landing pad too close to the track? Is it possible that poles or crossbars could land on the track and hit a contestant during a race? If so, the pole vault event may have to be conducted at a separate time, either before or after running events. (See NFHS Rule 6-5 Articles 7 and 8)

Standards/Uprights: Are the standards properly aligned with the zero indications? Is the width between the standard pins more than 13’8” and less than 14’8” apart? Will the crossbar remain on the pegs for all heights and standards settings with the end pieces in the correct position? Are all exposed portions of the standard framework padded? Are the standards anchored or weighted to prevent them from tipping over? Are there any gaps that need additional padding between the standards and the landing pad? (See NFHS Rule 6-5 Articles 10 and 11)

Hard Surfaces: Concrete, metal, wood or asphalt that extend from under the landing pad or between the planting box and the landing pad shall be padded with a minimum of 2 inches of dense foam or other suitable material. (See NFHS Rule 6-5, Article 9, 14, 22). Although polyurethane, rubberized surfaces or even hard/frozen grass surrounding the pole vault pit are not addressed, CHSAA recommends padding these surfaces. We have been asked how far should one place additional padding out from the pole vault pit? In most cases, three to four feet of additional padding may be sufficient.

Planting box: The front edge of the planting box shall not extend above the grade of the runway surface. Planting box padding meeting the applicable ASTM Specification Standards is required. (See NFHS Rule 6-5 Articles 12, 14 & 22). The ASTM F-2949-18 box collar padding must be anchored to the ground or inner walls of the plant box.

The NFHS and CHSAA committee requested that coaches, officials, and meet directors be notified about ASTM Specification Standards and the proper installation of the planting box padding for pole vault.

Illegal Poles: Cut poles, incorrectly labeled poles and pole labels with handwritten numbers are considered illegal. Coaches are responsible to understand what constitutes a legal pole and to ensure their athletes are using a legal pole. Poles with a weight rating below the vaulter’s weight are not allowed in warm-ups or competition. Officials will inspect poles prior to and during competition. (See inspection checklist under Event Judge). (See NFHS Rule 6-5 Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and Rule 3-10 Article I)

Note: Typically, 5 to 7 poles are found to be illegal and subsequently disqualified each year at the state meet. Everyone needs to be aware of what constitutes legal poles.

Please note: Adherence to the NFHS rules may not eliminate all possible injuries. However, we must continually strive to reduce the potential for injury relating to the sport of pole vaulting.

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