

2026

GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

CROSS COUNTRY COACHES' HANDBOOK



Tanya Anderson, Associate Director
tanyaanderson@ghsa.net
151 South Bethel Street
Thomaston, GA 30286
706-647-7473 x 129



2026 GHSA Cross Country Coaches' Handbook

Table of Contents:

P 3	Dates and Deadlines
P 4-5	Constitution and By-laws
P 6	Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity
P 7	Electronic Submissions
P 8	State Meet Coaches Instructions
P 9	GHSA Uniform Rules Clarification
P 10	GHSA Uniform Rules Guidelines
P 11	NFHS Uniform Guidelines
P 12	Wearable Technology



2026 GHSA Cross Country Dates and Deadlines

Monday, July 27	Online Cross Country Rules Clinic Opens (https://learn.ghsa.net)
Monday, August 14	Deadline for completion of Online Cross Country Rules Clinic for all coaches
Monday, July 27	Earliest Date for Cross Country Practice
Monday, August 10	Earliest Date for Cross Country Meet
Monday, October 26	9:00 a.m. Deadline for registering maximum of 14 athletes on MileSplit GA for Sectional Meets
Saturday, October 31	All Sectional Meets
<u>Sectional Results should be finalized immediately following the Sectional Meet.</u>	
Monday, November 2 - 5:00 pm Deadline for reviewing all Sectional Results on MileSplit.	
Friday-Saturday, November 6-7 - State Meet in Carrollton, GA	

- State Information may be found at [ghsa.net:](https://www.ghsa.net/ghsa-state-cross-country-championships-presented-atlanta-track-club)
<https://www.ghsa.net/ghsa-state-cross-country-championships-presented-atlanta-track-club>



2026 GHSA Cross Country Constitution and By-Laws

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- A. Cross Country is a team championship sport for boys and girls for all classes, A-6A and Private (2A-4A).**
- B. The distance for both boys and girls Cross Country will be approximately three (3) miles or five (5) kilometers.**
- C. All GHSA Cross Country meets will be run in accordance with the rules as published in the National Federation Track and Field and Cross Country Rule Book with any exceptions as may be found in this section.**
- D. The maximum number of competition dates in Cross Country shall be 10, exclusive of sectional and state competitions.**
 - 1. It is permissible for coaches to use "split squads" during the regular season. However, the use of split squads will count as two (2) of that school's maximum allowed competitions.**
 - 2. Any meets involving eight (8) or more schools must be approved by the GHSA Executive Director in accordance with the process found in By-Law 2.64.**
 - 3. No individual athlete may compete in more than one (1) race per day.**
- E. All competitors shall have legal uniforms in compliance with GHSA and NFHS uniform rules.**
- F. The use of WBGT for ALL Cross Country contests is mandated as follows:**
 - 1. WBGT must be measured 15 minutes prior to start of contest and coaches notified.**
 - 2. If WBGT is equal or above 86.0 F, an ice immersion tub must be present and ready for use at finish line.**
 - 3. If WBGT is equal or above 88.0 F, A minimum of two (2) hydration stations must be placed throughout the racecourse as well as at the finish line.**
- G. Beginning and ending dates for practice and competition can be found at the front of this publication.**
 - 1. There will be no interscholastic practices in Cross Country.**
 - 2. Athletes may run in non-GHSA events as long as they do not represent their school, do not wear the school uniform, and are not coached at the event, or transported to the event, by their high school coach ("unattached runner").**
 - 3. Communication through electronic devices is not allowed during competition.**
 - 4. The State Championship course is off limits beginning August 1 of each year until all state championships are concluded (unless a GHSA sanctioned/scheduled meet is run during the regular season on the course and a school participates in the event).**



2026 GHSA Cross Country Constitution and By-Laws

SECTIONAL COMPETITION:

- A. The initial team roster of fourteen (14) runners must be submitted on MileSplit GA.
 - 1. Changes to the roster may be made until the deadline established for Sectionals.
 - 2. No replacements may be made in the list submitted to the Sectional Meet Director.
 - 3. Five (5), six (6) or seven (7) of the fourteen (14) athletes may compete as a team in the Sectional Meet to qualify for the State Meet.
 - 4. Individuals may compete at the Sectional Meet to qualify for the State Meet.
- B. All Sectional Meets will be held on Saturday, *October 31*.
 - 1. Twelve (12) teams in each Sectional Meet will advance to the State Meet.
 - 2. The first twenty (20) individual finishers from each Sectional in all classes will qualify for the State Meet regardless of whether they are a member of a qualifying team.
 - 3. Sectional qualifiers must be finalized by electronic submission on MileSplit GA *immediately following* the completion of the Sectional Meet.

STATE MEET:

- A. The State Cross Country Meet for all classifications will be held at Carrollton High School on the dates indicated on the Beginning and Ending Dates table at the front of this publication. The running order may be found on the Cross Country page of the GHSA web site (www.ghsa.net).
 - 1. There will be an admission fee posted on the GHSA web site for all spectators.
 - 2. Awards will be presented at the conclusion of each classification.
- B. A minimum of five (5) and a maximum of fourteen (14) runners will be allowed free admission for each team that qualified. Individual qualifiers also will be admitted free. Coaches will be admitted on their GHSA coaching passes.
 - 1. The first five (5) finishers for each team will count for the total team score.
 - 2. Each team must begin and end the competition with a minimum of five (5) runners. If, for any reason, a qualifying team does not have five (5) runners, that team will not be allowed to compete in the State Meet.
 - 3. Each member of a qualifying team, as well as individual qualifiers from each region, is considered to be in contention for individual honors.
 - 4. Practice times and Team Instructions for the State Meet will be announced on the Cross Country page of the GHSA web site (www.ghsa.net) approximately one month prior to the State Meet.



2026 GHSA Cross Country Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity



2.67 Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity

(a) Schools must follow the statewide policy for conducting practices and voluntary conditioning workouts (this policy is year-round, including during the summer) in all sports during times of extremely high heat and/or humidity that will be signed by each head coach at the beginning of each season and distributed to all players and their parents or guardians. The policy shall follow modified guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine in regard to:

- (1) The scheduling of practices at various heat/humidity levels.
- (2) The ratio of workout time to time allotted for rest and hydration at various heat/humidity levels.
- (3) The heat/humidity levels that will result in practice being terminated.

(c) A scientifically-approved instrument that measures the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature must be utilized at each practice (prior to October 1) to ensure that the written policy is being followed properly. WBGT readings should be taken at a minimum of every 30 minutes, beginning 30 minutes prior to the start of practice. All WBGT monitors shall be calibrated, at a minimum, every two (2) years or earlier if recommended by the manufacturer.

WBGT ACTIVITY GUIDELINES AND REST BREAK GUIDELINES:

Under 82.0 Normal Activities - Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 minutes each during the workout.

82.0 - 86.9 Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; watch at-risk players carefully. Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.

87.0 - 89.9 Maximum practice time is 2 hours. For Football: players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice, and all protective equipment must be removed during conditioning activities. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing football pants without changing to shorts. For All Sports: Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.

90.0 - 92.0 Maximum practice time is 1 hour. For Football: no protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. For All Sports: There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.

Over 92.0 No outdoor workouts. Delay practice until a cooler WBGT level is reached.

(d) Practices are defined as: the period of time that a participant engages in a coach-supervised, school approved sport or conditioning-related activity. Practices are timed from the time the players report to the practice or workout area until players leave that area. If a practice is interrupted for a weather-related reason, the "clock" on that practice will stop and will begin again when the practice resumes.

(e) Conditioning activities include such things as weight training, wind-sprints, timed runs for distance, etc., and may be a part of the practice time or included in "voluntary workouts." Conditioning activities are not permitted to be used as punishment.

(f) A walk-through is not a part of the practice time regulation, and may last no longer than one hour. This activity may not include conditioning activities or contact drills. No protective equipment may be worn during a walk-through, and no full-speed drills may be held.

(g) Rest breaks may not be combined with any other type of activity and players must be given unlimited access to hydration. These breaks must be held in a "cool zone" where players are out of direct sunlight.

(h) When the WBGT reading is over 86, ice towels and spray bottles filled with ice water should be available at the "cool zone" to aid the cooling process AND cold immersion tubs must be available for the benefit of any player showing early signs of heat illness. In the event of a serious EHI, the principle of "Cool First, Transport Second" should be utilized and implemented by the first medical provider onsite until cooling is completed (core temperature of 103 or less).

Specific to Cross Country Contests:

F. The use of WBGT for ALL Cross Country contests is mandated as follows:

- 1. WBGT must be measured 15 minutes prior to start of contest and coaches notified.**
- 2. If WBGT is equal or above 86.0 F, an ice immersion tub must be present and ready for use at finish line.**
- 3. If WBGT is equal or above 88.0 F, A minimum of two (2) hydration stations must be placed throughout the racecourse as well as at the finish line.**



2026 GHSA Cross Country

Electronic Submissions

ga.milesplit.com

Check your school's contact person on MileSplit.

Only certified coaches or Athletic Directors should have access.

MileSplit communication features may be used by Meet Directors.

- **Electronic submission of Sectional Rosters**

- The team roster of fourteen (14) maximum athletes, or individual participants if a team cannot be formed, must be submitted **electronically** at MileSplit GA. The official Sectional Meet will be set up on MileSplit GA and entries should be made by the AD or Head Coach.
- **Coaches will be responsible for their entries in the official meet on MileSplit that displays the GHSA Cross Country logo, or students will not be allowed to compete.**
- Changes to the roster may be made until the **DEADLINE, Monday October 26 9:00 a.m.**
- Rosters should list fourteen (14) contestants, but only five (5) six (6) or seven (7) may compete as a team in the Sectional Meet. If a team cannot be formed, individual athletes should be entered by the deadline on the MileSplit link

- **Electronic submission of Sectional Meet Results**

- Each Sectional Meet Director will be responsible for submission of finalized Sectional Meet Results on MileSplit GA.
- **The Deadline for results is immediately following the meet.**

- **Confirmation of State Meet Qualifying Team Participants**

- Coaches will be responsible for reviewing the advancement of State qualifiers on MileSplit GA immediately following the Sectional Meet, but no later than 5:00 on Monday following the Sectional Meet.

➤ Sectional and State Information
may be found at [ghsa.net](https://www.ghsa.net):
<https://www.ghsa.net/cross-country>



2026 GHSA CROSS COUNTRY STATE MEET COACHES' INSTRUCTIONS



The State Championship course for all classifications is off limits beginning August 1st of each year until all State Championships are concluded, (unless a GHSA sanctioned/scheduled meet is held during the regular season on the course and a school enters the event).

1. Course Preview, Practice and Early Packet Pickup Times:

COACHES ONLY are allowed to pick up team packets.

Early packet pickup available and replacements on roster declaration forms accepted

- a. **Thursday, November 6: 4:00-6:00pm** – Course open for preview and practice only for participants in Friday's races.
- b. **Friday, November 7: 4:00-6:00pm** – Course open for preview and practice for participants in Saturday's races. The course is **CLOSED** on Friday after the conclusion of Friday's races until 4:00 pm in order for Meet Management to re-mark and re-condition the course.

NOTE: Coaches and runners must adhere to the published times for which the course is open for preview and practice. The Carrollton Greenbelt is adjacent to the Carrollton Elementary School campus for practice.

No teams or individual athletes competing on Friday will be allowed on the course on Thursday, other than during the published 4:00-6:00pm time.

No teams or individual athletes competing on Saturday will be allowed on the course on Friday, other than during the published 4:00-6:00pm time.

2. Bibs with chips will be assigned ONLY to the seven runners, who have been confirmed by each qualifying team coach. Athletes must wear assigned numbers, unaltered and clearly visible.
3. On race day, qualifying team coaches may make necessary changes for the seven athletes who will compete by using a declaration form to finalize any REPLACEMENTS for the original seven runners. The declaration form should be submitted to Meet Management at the packet pick-up area (**Deadline** is 30 minutes before each race start time). If there are NO CHANGES, the form does NOT need to be completed. Complete the form before leaving the check-in area.
4. At the team area, distribute the bibs with chips to the assigned runners. The bib number must be attached, unaltered, to the front of the uniform top. Make sure your athletes attach the bibs securely before running. **Instruct athletes not to raise their arm to stop watches while crossing the finish line. This action will obstruct timing.**

NFHS RULE 8-3-3: ...A competitor shall wear the assigned contestant number and/or computerized transponders/chips during competition. The number and/or transponder/chips shall be worn, unaltered, for purposes of official timing and place finish.

PENALTY: A competitor not wearing the assigned contestant number and/or computerized transponders/chips, or altering such items in a manner which interferes with the recording of place finish, is a rule violation resulting in disqualification from the race.

5. Find the order of finish and team scores on the results board or at MileSplit GA.



GHSA Uniform Rules Clarification



- Each Cross Country team member shall wear the same predominant color and design of school uniform.
- Undergarment tops and/or bottoms are not required to be the same color.
- Any other clothing items (socks, head wear, sleeves, gloves etc.) are not considered part of the school issued uniform. Although the wearing of these items is not prohibited, the wearing of any item (in excess of the school issued uniform) that is demeaning to the competition / sport will not be allowed.
- Gloves are permitted in severely cold weather.
- The ultimate responsibility for uniform compliance lies with the coach. Coaches should inspect any/all garments competitors wear to make sure they are in compliance with GHSA and NFHS uniforms rules. On the next page is a Uniform Guidelines document.

While Uniform rules are quite specific, there is always some gray area open to interpretation by meet officials. Coaches should anticipate the strictest interpretation of the rules that their team may encounter. As the season begins, make sure your athletes thoroughly understand the rules governing electronics and uniforms. Even though many of the early smaller meets may not strictly enforce these rules, impress upon your athletes the importance of being in compliance anyway. Prevent a pattern of competing while violating these rules, even if there are no apparent consequences for doing so. As important meets approach, reaffirm that all athletes are fully aware of, and in compliance with the rules. Again, try to anticipate the strictest interpretation and prepare accordingly.

NFHS and GHSA penalty for illegal uniform:

For the wearing of an illegal uniform, when a violation is observed and noted by a meet official, the competitor shall be required to make the uniform legal before becoming eligible for further competition and shall be issued a warning that a subsequent violation shall result in disqualification from the event. The referee shall be notified of the violation by the observing meet official, and the referee shall then notify or cause to be notified the head coach of the offending school of the competitor's violation and warning.



GHSA Uniform Rules Clarification

Typical Examples of Illegal / Legal Uniforms



ILLEGAL
One-piece Uniforms with multiple manufacturer logos / references.



ILLEGAL
Uniform Top
"bare midriff."



ILLEGAL
Uniform Bottoms
"French or High Cut"



LEGAL
"Closed-Leg"
Women's Brief
Uniform Bottoms.



LEGAL
Uniform Bottoms with multiple manufacturer logos / on waistbands are NOW legal.

Undergarments are not Uniforms

ILLEGAL
Uniform bottoms with crotch opening.



LEGAL
Uniform Bottoms single manufacturer logo, no crotch opening.



LEGAL
Undergarments are NO LONGER required to be of a single (same) color.



LEGAL
Uniform Bottoms with a single manufacturer logo. Multiple logos on waistband are now legal.

NOTE: The ultimate responsibility to have each competitor compliant with uniform rules is with the coach. Coaches should inspect any/all garments that competitors wear to ENSURE that they are in compliance with the GHSA & NFHS Uniform Rules



Wearable Technology - Electronic Devices



A watch may be worn in GHSA Cross Country, but an athlete will be disqualified if an official observes communication through the watch.

2026 NFHS Track & Field and Cross Country Rules Book

Rule 4-6-4 Notes read: 2. The use of a watch worn around the wrist is not considered an aid for racing.

Rule 4-6-6 reads: ART. 6 . . . Electronic devices may only be used in unrestricted areas and coaching boxes, providing the location does not interfere with progress of the meet as determined by the meet referee.

- a. Electronic devices shall not be used to transmit information to the competitor during the race or trial.
- b. Electronic devices shall not be used for any review of an official's decision.
- c. *No athlete shall wear audio (microphone) or video (camera) devices during a race or trial or in restricted areas.*
- d. State associations may also have policies in place to further address the use of electronic devices.

Penalties:

1. A competitor shall be disqualified from the event.
2. Team personnel (e.g., coach, manager, etc.) shall be disqualified from further participation in the meet for unsporting conduct.

In addition, the NFHS Track & Field and Cross Country Case Book provides specific situations in regards to video.

Instruct athletes not to raise their arm to stop watches while crossing the finish line. This action will obstruct timing if bib chips are used.



Have a great 2026 GHSA Cross Country Season