

CIF SOUTHERN SECTION

CROSS COUNTRY

2026-2027



SEASON
PREVIEW





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2026 CROSS COUNTRY CALENDAR DATES

The following is a capsule of the CIF Southern Section calendar for the Boys and Girls Cross Country season:

FIRST CONTEST:

The initial date on which a school may schedule and conduct an interscholastic contest is **MONDAY, August 17, 2026.**

SCRIMMAGE:

A scrimmage is defined as:

An activity involving teams or individual student-athletes from two or more different schools in a CIF approve sport; AND

Where no official score is kept; AND

Where regulation time is not kept; AND

Where substitute rules are set aside; AND

Where coaches may stop play for instructional purposes; AND

Where no score/results are released to the media.

Number of Scrimmages: A maximum number of two (2) scrimmages are permissible prior to the first interscholastic contest (league or non-league)

LAST LEAGUE CONTEST:

All league and non-league competition must end on or before **FRIDAY, November 6, 2026.**

MAXIMUM CONTEST:

An individual of a cross country team will be permitted to enter and participate in no more than a total of 14 dual, triangular or invitational (sanctioned) meets during the season, not including all-league or CIF Southern Section Championships.

COMPETITION IN ONE DAY:

An individual may compete in only one (1) cross country race in any one (1) day.

PLAYOFF DATES:

Prelims: Friday, November 13, 2026 – Div 5, Div 1
Saturday, November 14, 2026 – Div 3, Div 2, Div 4

Mt. San Antonio College
1100 N Grand Avenue
Walnut, CA 91789

Finals : Saturday, November 21, 2026 - Mt. San Antonio College

The STATE CROSS COUNTRY FINALS will be held at WOODWARD PARK IN FRESNO on **SATURDAY, November 28, 2026.**

APPROVED SANCTIONED EVENTS

Please refer to the CIF Southern Section website (www.cifss.org) for the latest Sanctioned Events, as events are updated daily.

Sanctioned Events download directions:

Click on *GOVERNANCE TAB* > click on *SANCTIONED EVENTS* > select *Cross Country* > click Search. This page will display the most up to date information on Cross Country Approved Sanctioned Events

IN SEASON RANKINGS / TOP 10 POLLS



CIF-SS Cross Country polls will be updated weekly in the season of sport and can be found at www.prepcaltrack.com. Polling is used to identify potential at-large entries into post season competition.



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CIFSSHOMe.org REQUIREMENTS/MILE SPLIT REQUIREMENTS

VARSITY COACHES

Attention Athletic Directors/Coaches: It is very important that you enter your Cross Country, Boys and Cross Country, Girls coaches (Head & Assistants) into CIFSSHOMe (www.cifsshome.org) no later than **Wednesday, November 4, 2026**.

Log in @ www.cifsshome.org (If you do not have a log in & password as a coach, check with your Athletic Director).

- Click on the “Users” tab, click on “User Manager”, click on the  in the upper right hand corner to add Coaches and Assistant Coaches. Enter the information requested on the “Add School User” page. Choose “Active” to provide the coach with access to CIFSSHOMe or “Inactive” for directory purposes only. Choose Yes or No to give the coach access to all sport, click **Submit**.
- Choose the applicable options on the Assign Coach to Team page, click Save or Add Another to add additional coach(s).

VARSITY TEAM INFORMATION (ROSTERS) - Eligibility Requirement

Attention Athletic Directors/Coaches: It is very important that you enter your entire Cross Country, Boys and Girls Varsity Cross Country roster into CIFSSHOMe (www.cifsshome.org) no later than **Wednesday, November 4, 2026**. **This roster is for ELIGIBILITY PURPOSES.**

Log in @ www.cifsshome.org (If you do not have a log in & password as a coach, check with your Athletic Director).

- Click on the “Teams” tab, click on “Teams Manager”, click on “Cross Country, Boys”, select 
- You can UPLOAD your roster using the instructions below (1) or you can enter each player one by one (2).

Required roster information for Cross Country, Boys is:

First Name, Last Name, Birth date, Year, Eligibility

(1) To ADD roster players one by one:

- Click on  and complete fields required for Cross Country, Boys.

(2) To Import a Roster using an Excel sample file:

- Download the [sample file](#) **and** delete the “contents only”.
- Copy and paste or type your roster information into the file as the contents and save the file to your computer.
- Only an excel file (xls) can be uploaded that is the exact same format as the sample file.
- Columns for information not required for your sport may be left blank, but the HEADER INFORMATION MUST REMAIN EXACTLY AS THE SAMPLE.
- **Required Columns for Cross Country, Boys are:**

First Name, Last Name, Birth date, Year, Eligibility

- Click on  to find your file, then click on 
- To confirm the roster has been uploaded, your players’ names will be uploaded in the “Official Roster” section.
- Click on the  next to the player’s name to view each player’s information.

IMPORTANT: Repeat above process for entering Cross Country, Girls Roster

2026-2027 CROSS COUNTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Over the past years, the CIF-SS office has worked with the concept of establishing advisory committees in most of the sports for boys and girls. The role of the advisory committee, comprised of coaches in the respective sport and an administrator from the CIF-SS office, may include the following:

1. Meetings
2. Recommendations for playoff sites, procedural changes and rule changes
3. Assistance to coaches and/or official's organizations
4. Liaison between coaches and the CIF-SS office

For your reference, members of the 2026-2027 Cross Country Advisory Committee and the Management Committee are:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE	MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Michelle Burns, Buena	Rich Benoy
Keith Chann	Keith Chann
Tom Colley, Sherman Indian School	Mark Gardner
Martin Dugard, Santa Margarita	Rich Gonzalez
Mark Gardner	
Rich Gonzalez	
Jonas Koolsbergen, Harvard-Westlake	
Tim McIntosh, St John Bosco	
Rich Medellin, Esperanza	
Mary Perez, Camarillo	
Richard Rico, Ontario	
Brian Shapiro, Palos Verdes	
Mike Tomasulo, Temple City	
George Varvas, Woodbridge	

RULES - BLUE BOOK BYLAWS - SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

Following are key points/highlights coaches should review with their assistants and participants in reference to the NFHS Rule Book and CIF-SS rules and regulations as defined in the 2026-2027 Blue Book.

NFHS RULE CHANGES – (Track Spring 2026/Cross Country Fall 2026)

None for Fall 2026

BLUE BOOK BYLAWS -

Following are key points cross country coaches should review with their assistants and participants in reference to CIF-SS rules and regulations as set forth in the 2024-2025 Blue Book. This list is NOT all-inclusive and only highlights some of the key areas.

- STANDARDS OF ELIGIBILITY – BYLAW 201
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=53>
- BASIC ELIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION – BYLAW 220
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=87>
- ACCOUNTABILITY – BYLAW 125/503

125.1 - COACH EJECTION
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=47>

503 – COACH EJECTION
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=101>

125.2 - FAILURE TO COMPLETE A CONTEST
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=47>
- PLAYER CONDUCT – BYLAW 503
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=101>
- SUMMERTIME RULES/SUMMER DEAD PERIOD/SUNDAY RESTRICTION – BYLAW 1223
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=140>
- PRACTICE ALLOWANCE – BYLAW 506
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=107>
- SUPERVISION OF ATHLETES – BYLAW 503
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=97>
- OUTSIDE COMPETITION – BYLAW 600
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=114>
- BYLAW 600 PENALTY – BYLAW 601
<https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/?gotopage=116>

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST -

1. **MAXIMUM CONTEST** - An individual of a cross country team will be permitted to enter and participate in no more than a total of 14 dual, triangular or invitational (sanctioned) meets during the season, not including all-league or CIF Southern Section Championships.
2. **COMPETITION IN ONE DAY** - An individual may compete in only one (1) cross country race in any one (1) day.
3. **OUTSIDE COMPETITION** - (Unattached) competition is permissible for a student in other than school contests during the season of sport. Please refer to Blue Book Rule 600 regarding unattached competition which will highlight specific regulations in reference to athletes who compete unattached
4. **PROPER UNIFORM** - All Athletes competing in cross country must be in proper team uniform and wear running shoes. **Spikes are not permitted.**
5. **DISTANCE OF RACES** - The maximum distance in all non-league, league and invitational cross country competition shall be 5,000 meters (3.1 miles) (Adopted Southern Section Council March 22, 2001). A shorter distance may be adopted by a league or by mutual agreement by schools for non-league competition.
6. **TEAM COMPOSITION** - Coaches are urged to become familiar with CIF Rule 300 (B) in reference to Boys and Girls team competition. Major emphasis would be the area of your school fielding only one team and its makeup consisting of both Boys and Girls. If a Girl is a member of this student team, she - at the conclusion of the regular season - **WOULD NOT** be permitted to compete in the girls' cross country championships, but must take part in the boys' championships, if she so qualifies.

For a Girl to compete in the CIF-SS Girls post-team cross country championships, she must have been a member of a Girls team for the regular season or have run as a freelance entry all season due to the fact that her school fielded only a Boys team or did not field any team in this sport.

7. **RULES** - Cross Country competition in the CIF Southern Section is conducted under National Federation Rules, which are contained in the most current edition of the National Federation Track and Field Rule Books.
5. No interscholastic contests or practices of any kind are to be held on Sunday.
6. **PRACTICE ALLOWANCE**- For the benefit of the physical and mental health of our student-athletes, all practices (as defined herein) under the auspices of the high school athletic program during the season of sport shall be conducted under the following conditions (See also Bylaw 504.M.):
- a. All teams will be allowed no more than eighteen (18) hours of practice time per week and no more than four (4) hours in any single day.
 - i. Multiple Practice Sessions:
 1. Double day practices shall not be held on consecutive days.
 2. Must include a minimum of three (3) hours rest between practices.
 - b. Any competition day would count as three (3) hours toward the allowable weekly and daily practice hours no matter the length of the contest(s). No practice may be held following the conclusion of any contest.

BIB TAG INSTRUCTIONS

The CIF-SS will be utilizing bib tag timing provided by Finished Results Professional Timing for our championship events. Please carefully review the “Bib Tag Instructions” information.

Race Bib Instructions

INSPECT your Team Packet

- Confirm you have the correct team roster, and the matching bibs
- If you notice anything missing/incorrect, please notify meet management, before you leave the pickup area

DISTRIBUTE your BIBS to your competing athletes

- All competing athletes **MUST** wear their assigned Bib as listed on your Team Roster
- Athletes that are not registered should not use someone else’s bib. Failure to follow these instructions will result in inaccurate results

PROPERLY ATTACH the bibs for each athlete (see picture)

- Race bibs should be placed up-right on the torso, between the chest and stomach
- Be sure each athlete uses 4 safety pins to securely affix their bib
- DO NOT FOLD OR DAMAGE BIBS



RACE BIBS - POST EVENT

- Please return any unused bibs and safety pins to the timer so they can be recycled or used at another event
- Athletes may keep their race bib as a souvenir or discard them in the proper recycling



2026-2027 BOYS AND GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY DIVISIONS

PLAYOFF GUIDELINES FOR DIVISION PLACEMENT

The CBED Enrollment (grades 9-12) figures from the 2025-2026 (*last year*) school year as certified by the State for public and private high schools will be used for placement in the 2026-2027 school year.

- When the computer enrollment data is received from the State Department of Education, schools will be divided into each Southern Section divisional category.
- If a school incurs a gain/loss in enrollment of a minimum of 15% in the current year (2026-2027), the current year CBED enrollment figures shall be used in place of the prior year.

Each Section will determine the divisional placement for its schools who qualify for the state cross country championships and is required to submit the placement of schools into the five divisions to the State CIF Office. CIF member schools will be required to participate in the division that has been established by their respective Section. Sections may use their own established criteria to determine placement of teams in the five divisions based on the following guidelines:

STATE CIF GROUPINGS

Division I	As determined by Section
Division II	As determined by Section
Division III	As determined by Section
Division IV	As determined by Section
Division V	As determined by Section, but enrollment may not exceed 600

CIF-SS GROUPINGS * (Tentative-subject to change)***

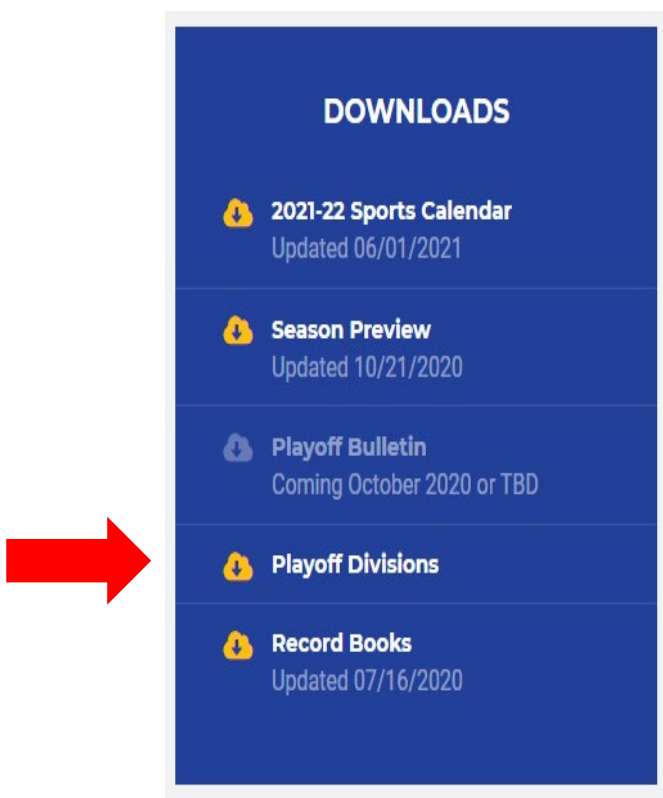
Division 1	2400 and above
Division 2	1876-2399
Division 3	1431-1875
Division 4	601-1430
Division 5	600 and below

REMINDER: By action of the CIF-SS Council at the March 23, 2000 meeting, no schools will be allowed to compete outside of their enrollment based division.

Enrollment data from 2025-2026 school year is used to determine initial Cross Country divisions for the 2025-2026 school year. If enrollment data from 2026-2027 reporting incurs a gain/loss of 15%, current enrollment will be used.

NOTE: Final divisional placement will be posted at www.CIFSS.org after October 14, 2026 once CBED information has been analyzed and adjusted.

The Boys and Girls division placements can be found on the Cross Country sports page at www.cifss.org > Cross Country >Download button labeled “Playoff Divisions”.



PLAYOFF INFORMATION

PLAYOFF DATES:

PRELIMS: Friday, November 13, 2026 – Div 5, Div 1
Saturday, November 14, 2026 – Div 3, Div 2, Div 4

Mt. San Antonio College
1100 N Grand Avenue
Walnut, CA 91789

FINALS : Saturday, November 21, 2026 - Mt. San Antonio College

STATE CROSS COUNTRY FINALS: Saturday, November 28, 2026
Woodward Park in Fresno

CIF SOUTHERN SECTION CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFYING INFO

LEAGUE FINALS INTO DIVISIONAL PRELIMS (Bylaw # 3514 - <https://cifss.org/resources/blue-book/215>)

In all sports other than football, the team entry formula for each league into the playoffs is as follows:

4 team leagues = 2 entries
5 or 6 team leagues = 3 entries
7 or 8 team leagues = 4 entries
9 or more leagues = 5 entries

If an individual runner finishes in the top **ten (10)** in their league meet and is not on a qualifying team, they may be entered to participate in preliminaries. After entries from each league have been received by the CIF Southern Section Office on Friday, November 6, 2026 each team and individual entry will be assigned to their appropriate enrollment category (Divisions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Leagues must have their League finals results entered into MileSplit no later than 9:00 PM on Friday, November 6, 2026. Instructions for entering results from the league meet finals in MileSplit will be forwarded to the league coordinator and further clarified in the cross country bulletin.

AT-LARGE CRITERIA INTO DIVISIONAL PRELIMS - Any team not qualifying automatically from their league, who has been ranked in the top **13** in their division in **2** of the last **4** CIF-SS polls, **will be** invited to CIF-SS Prelims as an at-large team.

DIVISIONAL PRELIMS TO DIVISIONAL FINALS

There will be **sixteen (16)** teams in each final race.

In divisions with four (4) qualifying heats, the top **four (4)** teams in each heat will qualify. Individuals who finish in the first **6 (six)** actual places and are not members of qualifying teams will also advance to the finals.

In divisions with three (3) qualifying heats, the top **five (5)** teams in each heat will qualify. The fastest remaining team time of the three heats will also advance as the 16th team in the finals. Individuals who finish in the first eight (8) actual places and are not members of qualifying teams will also advance to the finals.

In divisions with two (2) qualifying heats, the top **eight (8)** teams in each heat will qualify. Individuals who finish in the first twelve (12) places and are not members of qualifying teams will also advance.

DIVISIONAL FINALS TO STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS - Team entries into the state championship cross country meet shall be based on a formula that is comprised of two factors: 1) An established baseline providing a minimum number of entries for each section; 2) Additional entries based upon the most recent four (4) year history of the section team performance in each divisional race. No section shall have more than seven (7) entries in any divisional race, plus the top five (5) individuals on non-qualifying teams who finished in the top twenty (20).

A comprehensive bulletin detailing the Southern Section Prelims and Finals will be posted on our website in mid October. ***The playoff bulletin will only be available on our website. Please refer to www.cifss.org for all playoff information (including forms to be returned to our office) and heat sheets.***

State Championship information can be found at https://www.cifstate.org/sports/cross_country/index

HEALTH & SAFETY

It is the expectation of the CIF Southern Section that your Athletic Coaches and Administration will take every measure to ensure the health and safety of your student athletes.

Resource information and additional information regarding heat safety, hydration and other health and safety related articles can be found on the CIF-SS website @ www.cifss.org. Click link to "Sports Medicine" tab on the blue toolbar.

EXTREME HEAT AND AIR QUALITY POLICY

As per CA State Law AB 1653 and CIF Bylaw 503 K. Heat Illness and 503 L. Air Quality Index Protocols, all CIF member schools must adhere to the CIF Heat Illness Prevention and Heat Acclimatization Policies as outlined below.

Extreme Heat Procedures:

The WetBulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) is a measure of the heat stress in direct sunlight, which takes into account: temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover (solar radiation). This differs from the Heat Index, which takes into consideration temperature and humidity and is calculated for shady areas. The WBGT is especially valuable in environments where people are physically active, such as sports, as it provides a better assessment of the risk of heat-related conditions during physical exertion. The CIF requires that schools use the WBGT for the most accurate measurement.

Depending on your Category Region (see map below), it is mandated for the benefit of the health and safety of our student-athletes that practice/games be canceled, or delayed until cooler when WBGT exceeds these levels:

- Region Category 1 >86.2°F
- Region Category 2 >89.9°F
- Region Category 3 >92.0°F

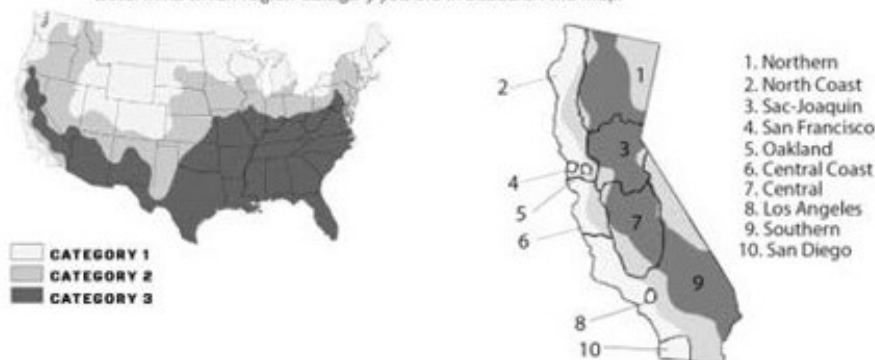
STEP 1

Find your Region Category

Based on the following map, schools should select the heat category for their region to follow the required guide lines shown below. Click here to find your school's heat category: https://www.cifstate.org/sports-medicine/WBGT_Category.pdf

The majority of states fall under just one category or two at the most. However, due to its diverse climate across the state, California encompasses all three categories: light gray - Category 1 / medium gray - Category 2 / dark gray - Category 3. (See image below).

Determine which region category you are in based on the map.



STEP 2

WBGT Readings (Note: Temperatures listed in the chart below are calculated using a WB GT and are not basic air temperatures) Please see Step 3 below for samples of WB GT readings.

Cat 3	Cat 2	Cat 1	Outdoor Activity Guidelines
<82.0°F	<79.7°F	<76.1°F	Normal Activities – Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 min each during the workout.
<27.8°C	<26.5°C	<24.5°C	
82.2 - 86.9°F	79.9 - 84.6°F	76.3 - 81.0°F	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
27.9 - 30.5°C	26.6 - 29.2°C	24.6 - 27.2°C	
87.1 - 90.0°F	84.7 - 87.6°F	81.1 - 84.0°F	Maximum outdoor practice time is 2 h. Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each. For Football/Field Hockey: players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing full pads without changing to shorts.
30.6 - 32.2°C	29.3 - 30.9°C	27.3 - 28.9°C	
90.1 - 91.9°F	87.8 - 89.6°F	84.2 - 86.0°F	Contests are permitted with additional hydration breaks. Maximum outdoor practice time is 1 h. No protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. There must be 20 min of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
32.2 - 33.3°C	31.0 - 32.0°C	29.0 - 30.0°C	
≥92.1°F	≥89.8°F	≥86.2°F	No outdoor workouts/contests. Delay practice/competitions until a cooler WBGT is reached.
≥33.4°C	≥32.1°C	≥30.1°C	

STEP 3

Schools without a WBGT should use the link below from the NOAA for a WBGT reading

<https://digital.mdl.nws.noaa.gov/?zoom=7&lat=35.28787&lon=-79.36779&layers=F000BTTTFTT®ion=0&element=8&mxmz=true&barbs=false&subl=TTTTFF&units=english&wunits=nautical&coords=latlon&tunits=localt>

EXAMPLE @2:30 PM

AUGUST 31, 2023

AUGUST 31, 2023

AUGUST 31, 2023

CATEGORY 1 SCHOOLCATEGORY 2 SCHOOLCATEGORY 3 SCHOOL

Outside Air Temp 87° F

Outside Air Temp 97° F

Outside Air Temp 92° F

WBGT Reading =80

WBGT Reading =82

WBGT Reading =81



CIF Fall Outdoor Sports Acclimatization Policy

Given the extreme heat issues typically experienced at the start of the Fall sports season, heat acclimatization is crucial for high school athletes to help them adapt to hot weather conditions and reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses. The following is a four-step plan for heat acclimatization in outdoor high school sports:

1. **Gradual Increase in Activity:**
 - Start with light workouts in cooler conditions to prepare athletes for increased heat exposure.
 - Gradually increase the intensity and duration of practice sessions over 10-14 days.
2. **Hydration Education:**
 - Teach athletes the importance of staying hydrated and recognizing signs of dehydration.
 - Encourage regular water breaks during practice and games and always provide access to water.
3. **Modify Practice Schedules:**
 - Schedule outdoor practices during cooler times, like early morning or late evening.
 - Allow frequent breaks and shade to help athletes cool down and recover.
4. **Monitor Athlete Health:**
 - Educate coaches, trainers, and athletes on the signs of heat-related illnesses (heat exhaustion and heat stroke).
 - The school will have available a method to institute whole-body cooling to treat a student-athlete with exertional heat illness, especially heat stroke (e.g., ice tub, "taco tarp", ice towels) which is easily accessible at all practice and contest venues.

Safety should always be the top priority when acclimating high school athletes to hot weather conditions. This plan helps athletes adapt while minimizing the risk of heat-related issues.

For All Outdoor Fall Sports

Five-Day Acclimatization Period. Preseason practice shall begin with a five-day acclimatization period for all Fall student-athletes. All student-athletes, including those who arrive at preseason practice after the first day of practice, are required to undergo a five-day acclimatization period. The five-day acclimatization period shall be conducted as follows:

- (a) Participants shall not engage in more than one on-field practice per day during the five-day acclimatization period. On-field practices shall last no longer than two hours.

For Football Only

- (b) During the first three days of practice or testing activity, helmets shall be the only protective equipment student-athletes may wear. During the next two days of practice or testing activity, helmets, and shoulder pads shall be the only protective equipment student-athletes may wear. Student-athletes may practice in full pads on the sixth day of practice or testing activity.

For Aquatic Sports Only

- (c) For practice only, schools may use the NFHS rule regarding water temperature (Section 6 Article 3) in place of the CIF Outdoor Activity Guidelines.



	US AQI Level	PM2.5 ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	Health Recommendation (for 24 hour exposure)
	Good 0-50	0-12.0	Air quality is satisfactory and poses little or no risk.
	Moderate 51-100	12.1-35.4	Sensitive individuals should avoid outdoor activity as they may experience respiratory symptoms.
	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups 101-150	35.5-55.4	General public and sensitive individuals in particular are at risk to experience irritation and respiratory problems.
	Unhealthy 151-200	55.5-150.4	Increased likelihood of adverse effects and aggravation to the heart and lungs among general public.
	Very Unhealthy 201-300	150.5-250.4	General public will be noticeably affected. Sensitive groups should restrict outdoor activities.
	Hazardous 301+	250.5+	General public at high risk of experiencing strong irritations and adverse health effects. Should avoid outdoor activities.

Pictured: Air quality index chart with corresponding PM2.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Air Quality and Sport Participation: CIF Position Statement Sports Medicine Advisory Committee

Recent catastrophic and historical fires in California continue to raise numerous questions regarding safe participation in sport and practice for young athletes. This position statement serves as a resource to coaches, administrators, parents and students who have questions about participation in outdoor activity during periods of diminished air quality for California high school sport.

Healthy athletes are at increased risk for inhaling pollutants in the air. Physical activity increases ventilation and the number of pollutants that are inhaled are increased compared to periods of rest. During physical activity, air is often inhaled directly into the mouth, bypassing the built-in nasal filtration system. Deep inhalation diffuses pollutants into the bloodstream more quickly during exercise. These risks are increased if an athlete has a pre-existing medical condition such as asthma or a cardiac condition.

A valid and reliable standardized national air quality resource is the National Weather Service (NWS) Air Quality Forecast System. This system provides constant monitoring of ozone, particulate matter and pollutants with accurate and advanced notice to prevent the adverse effects of decreased air quality.

The key component of the standardized air quality resource is the NWS Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI provides real time monitoring and alerts in response to changing air quality levels. Five different pollutants are tracked in this system including the following: 1) ground level ozone 2) particle pollution 3) carbon monoxide 4) sulfur dioxide 5) nitrogen dioxide. Ground level ozone and particulate matter are the most concerning pollutants for outdoor physical activity. The AQI is reported as a single number based on a scale of 0 to 500 with 0 being completely safe and 500 indicating the most hazardous levels of air pollution.

Consistent with this national reporting system and consistent with the National Collegiate Athletic Association Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspect of Sport, the CIF Sports Medicine Advisory Committee offers the following general guidance to institutions seeking to make decisions about the appropriateness of practice or competition in questionable air quality situations. With recent severe fires within the state of California, both regional and statewide authorities have often established alerts to canceling sport events or practices because of local risk. CIF recommends following these guidelines. If specific guidelines have not yet been provided, the following are useful guidelines consistent with NCAA and NFHS position statements on air quality.

- 1) Monitoring of local AQI and associated air quality alerts, especially during times of extreme environmental conditions is recommended. Advice and monitoring is best done by the primary athletics health care providers (athletic trainers, school nursing staff, team physicians) who have training in such monitoring. Schools may choose to delegate this responsibility to a staff member with knowledge of AQI.
- 2) Member schools should consider shortening or cancelling outdoor athletic events (practices or competition) in accordance with AQI recommendations. Exposure to air should be managed more carefully for students with pre-existing lung or heart conditions. When the AQI rises above 100 schools should consider removing such athletes at risk from practice or competition.
- 3) At AQI values above 150 serious consideration should be given to rescheduling the activity or moving it indoors if possible. Prolonged exposure and heavy exertion should be avoided.
- 4) School Emergency Action Plans may guide the emergency care response in these circumstances and the staff should be made aware of this plan.
- 5) The Preparticipation Physical Examination for Sport will be used as a tool to identify students at risk for smoke inhalation exposure such as asthma, cardiac disease and respiratory disease.
- 6) Emphasize to student athletes that the wearing of masks, such as for protection against COVID-19 does not protect against exposure to hazardous air quality. Consequently, wearing masks will not allow competition or practices when AQI is at hazardous levels.

There are now validated online applications to smart phones which can track not only AQI in a town or city, but also AQI regionally near each neighborhood within each town or city. Consistent with NFHS, California Air Quality Board and California Environmental Protection Agency, the CIF recommends using the www.airnow.gov application for this purpose. The AQI may even be checked periodically during a day of competition or practice in case of changing conditions. The application was created with the collaboration of the Environmental Protection Agency and contains not only air quality data but also current fire conditions, webcams and email notifications consistent with local and regional up to date conditions.

References

- 1) Air Quality Position Statement. NCAA Sports Science Institute, Sept 2018
- 2) NFHS Position Statement on Physical Activity, Air Quality and Wildfires, April 2019
- 3) CIF North Coast Section. Air Quality Index Rules, Bylaw 1003H.
- 4) US Environmental Protection Agency. Air Now website www.airnow.gov

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