

Chronological History of Visible Manufacturer's Pole Weight Rating Label

1994 Rule 7-4-2 “The vaulting pole may be of any material and of any length and diameter. It may have a binding of not more than two layers of adhesive tape of uniform thickness. However, sponge rubber and/or several thicknesses of tape may be used on the lower end of the vaulting pole to protect it when placed in the planting pit. If metal is used, its basic surface must be smooth.”

1995 Rule 7-4-3
New “The vaulter’s weight shall be at or below the manufacturer’s pole rating. The manufacturer pole rating shall be visible in a one-inch contrasting color, as well as a one-inch circular band indicating the maximum top hand hold position. Pole rating markings are to be located above the hand-hold band.”

1995 NFHS T&F Clarification of Rule 7-4-3

Rule Interpretations Rule 7, Section 4, Article 3 – To decrease the potential for injury in the sport of pole vaulting, the rules required the vaulter to use a “pole rated at or above the vaulter’s body weight.” Since the inception of the fiberglass pole, manufacturer’s have indicated that vaulters should not use poles rated below their body weight. In the opinion of the rules committee, there has been an increasing tendency to use softer poles (pole rated below the vaulter’s body weight) which may increase the potential for injury. This change represents a desire by the rules committee to keep the high school vaulter on the landing pad, hopefully in the center.

Also, every pole has a safe hand holding zone, of which the top is usually located six inches from the top of the pole. Two manufacturers did manufacture poles with a safe top hand hold position of three inches from the top of the pole. One of those two manufacturers is making a change to six inches while the other is considering remaining at three inches. The new rule requires that the top of the safe hand-hold zone be clearly marked with a one-inch circular band around the pole in a contrasting color. Poles that schools have in their existing inventory can easily be marked by the coach to comply to this rule change (7-4-3). Those poles may be marked with a label or with a permanent marking pen of a color that contrasts to the pole, with one inch numerals above the top hand-hold band. The bottom of the band should be placed six inches from the top of the pole with one inch vinyl tape. It is suggested that the coach initial and date the label. **New poles with manufacturer markings will be accepted as marked by the manufacturer.**

When the vaulter holds above the safety zone, it changes how the pole bends and may have a negative affect concerning the vault. Holding above the top hand-hold marking could cause the pole to bend excessively and, therefore, not perform properly.

The intent of the rules committee is to place the responsibility on the coach to verify the vaulter is using the properly rated pole (rated **at or**

above the vaulter's weight). Since there is enough pressure on schools to obtain judges for the various events in dual meets now, the committee did not want to complicate that problem, nor to place the responsibility on the event judge as to whether the vaulter is using a properly rated pole. As a means to monitor what is happening across the country, it would be helpful if the coach or competitor would give the weight of the vaulter to the event judge when he/she checks in prior to competition. The event judge could easily record this information next to each competitor's name. However, this will not be a requirement for 1995, unless the state association decides to use a process that would require this. The state association may also go a step further by requiring the event judge to check the vaulter's pole to ensure the vaulter only uses a pole rated at or above the vaulter's weight.

Prior to competition, the referee or head field judge should inspect each pole to be used in the competition to verify that the poles are legal equipment. Items to be checked include the placement of a top hand hold band, numerical pole rating in one-inch numerals above the top hand hold band and the proper binding of not more than two layers of adhesive tape of uniform thickness (note that the binding should not be on or above the top hand-hold band). Once the poles are verified by the official as being legal equipment, it is the responsibility of the coach and vaulter to ensure that only the properly rated pole is used. At this time, there is no specific penalty for using a pole rated below the vaulter's weight or holding above the top hand-hold band.

We know that coaches understand the need to improve the safety of this event and will continue to work toward that end. The committee is also confident that coaches will instruct the vaulter as to the proper use of the pole to include not using a pole rated below the vaulter's weight or gripping the pole above the safety zone. Coaches in other sports are asked to verify that their athletes are wearing or using legal or proper equipment, so this is certainly not a new procedure.

**1996 Rule 7-4-3,
Note 1 & 2**

Added: "If a pole is not properly marked, it shall not be used in warm-up or competition."

"NOTE 1: The location of the band indicating the top safe hand-hold position shall be determined by the manufacturer.

NOTE 2: Coaches may mark poles manufactured prior to 1995 by placing the bottom of one-inch vinyl tape, indicating the top hand-hold band, six inches from the top of the pole. The weight marking shall be indicated by one-inch numerals with a label or with a permanent marking pen of a color that contrasts to the pole color."

**Rule 7-4-4
New**

"Prior to competition, the referee/starter or head field judge shall inspect each pole to be used in the competition to verify that the poles are legal equipment as per Rule 7-4-3. This includes checking the placement of a top hand-hold band, numerical pole ratings in one-inch numerals above

the top hand-hold band, and the proper binding of not more than two layers of adhesive tape of uniform thickness. The binding should not be on or above the top hand-hold band. “

- Rule 7-4-5**
New “It is the responsibility of the coach to verify the vaulter will use a pole rated at or above the vaulter’s weight and that legal poles have been provided for that competitor.
NOTE: Each state association shall determine their own procedure regarding coaches verification. Suggested procedures are included in the points of emphasis.”
- Rule 7-4-6**
New “A competitor who uses a pole during warm-up or competition either improperly marked or rated below the vaulter’s weight, shall be disqualified from the event.”
- 1997 Rule 7-4-3** Added “A training pole, or pole which is not properly marked...”
- 1998 Rule 7-4-4**
New “A competitor shall not use a training pole, a pole which is improperly marked or a pole rated below his or her weight during warm-up or competition.
PENALTY: Disqualified from the event.”
- 2000 Rule 7-4-3**
and NOTE Deleted NOTE 1
“The competitor’s weight shall be at or below the manufacturer’s pole rating. *The manufacturers must include on each pole:* the pole rating that shall be a minimum of ¾-inch in a contrasting color located within or above the top hand-hold position and a 1-inch circular band indicating the maximum top hand-hold position with a position being determined by the manufacturer.
NOTE: Coaches may mark poles manufactured prior to 1995 by placing the bottom of 1-inch vinyl tape, indicating the top hand-hold band, 6 inches from the top of the pole. The weight marking shall be indicated by *at least ¾ inch* numerals with a label or with a permanent marking pen or a color that contrasts to the pole color.”
- 2001 Rule 7-4-3**
Delete NOTE Deleted NOTE allowing coaches to mark weight ratings on the pole.
- 2001 Case Book**
7-4-4 C “Prior to beginning pole vault warm-ups, A1 presents to the Inspector of Implements his/her pole for inspection. The engraved manufacturer’s weight marking on the pole indicates the pole has a weight rating of 130 pounds, and the marking on the top hand hold band indicates the pole is rated at 140 pounds. **Ruling:** The pole is declared to be illegal and is not marked as approved for competition or warm-up. **Comment:** The Inspector of Implements has no idea which rating is correct and makes the

right decision when he declares the pole as illegal equipment. In this case, the pole should be returned to the manufacturer for proper marking.”

2002 NFHS T&F Rule Interpretations “**Situation 12:** School A has purchased several poles prior to 2000. Many of the poles have had minimal use and will be issued again during the 2002 season. Since the poles were confirmed last year and have last year’s mark on them, many athletes continue to use these poles, even though the weight marking can no longer be read. The event judge allows the students to compete with the poles from the previous years without checking the weight markings. **Ruling:** Incorrect procedure. **Comment:** With the growth of vaulting (specifically female vaulters), and the possible recycling of poles, every pole should be examined very closely. Using poles one year does not automatically confirm that the same pole is appropriate for the same athlete at the same school the next year. (7-4-4)”

2006 Rule 7-5-3 New NOTE Added “Prior to competition, the coach must verify that all of the school’s pole vaulters meet these requirements.
NOTE: Each state association shall determine its own procedure regarding coaches verification.”

2009 Rule 7-5-3 New NOTE 1 “NOTE 1: Etchings, serial numbers, etc. that may appear on poles shall not replace the requirement of the manufacturer’s pole rating of the minimum ¾-inch marking in contrasting color on each pole. (7-5-3)”

Comments on the Rules (6) **WEIGHT RATING FOR POLE MUST BE IN CONTRASTING COLOR MARK** – Most poles have an etching or serial number on the pole, which is a code to the manufacturer. This information relates to the characteristics of the pole such as weight rating, length, etc., and is used by the manufacturer. However, the code may not be clearly identifiable to the coach, vaulter, event judge in regard to the weight rating for the pole. An etching is not in compliance with the requirement of the contrasting mark. The rating appearing as the mark in contrasting color is established by the manufacturer, is clearly visible and serves only this purpose to identify the pole’s weight rating. The requirement is for purposes of risk minimization and should be adhered to strictly.