



ATHLETICS OFFICIATING **A Practical Guide**

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**ATHLETICS SOUTH AFRICA, ATHLETICS HOUSE, No 3, 11th AVENUE, HOUGHTON ESTATE 2198
P O BOX 2712, HOUGHTON, 2146**

TEL: +27 (011) 880 5800 FAX: +27 (011) 442 3091 e-mail: asa@athleticsa.co.za

CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

The competition rules governing athletics events are basically the same for all meetings - school, club, region, national or international and the object of this book is to give advice and guidance to competition officials, e.g. track and field judges, starters, timekeepers and referees of all grades, whether operating at local school meetings or at international level. Since conditions and facilities vary tremendously within countries and from country to country, it may not always be possible to follow the advice set out in the following pages. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the procedures described will be followed as closely as possible, and not lightly dismissed by saying: "That's all very well for the Olympic Games, we can't do that here."

It should not be forgotten that from the young athletes of today, will come the top athlete of tomorrow. So it is essential that, from their first steps in athletics, they must be prepared progressively to respect the rules.

We should add here that in attempting to provide guidance and hints for officials, we have avoided repeating IAAF technical rules unnecessarily and seek only to convey what the task of correct officiating is all about. All about, in the field events section, however, some direct reference to technical rules (e.g. what constitutes a fail in the Long Jump) has proved inevitable in order to carry out our aim. It is realised, of course, that, in organising an athletics meeting, there are many duties and jobs to be carried out which find no mention in this booklet.

CHAPTER II

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ATHLETICS OFFICIAL?

Although many meetings have to be organised with less than the ideal number of officials, a properly conducted athletics meeting may require at least 50 officials working together as a co-ordinated team. Their basic responsibility is to give the athletes, who have probably prepared themselves carefully for the events, every chance of achieving their best performance in a fair competition.

At the outset, we emphasise the fact that it is the athlete who must be considered first. The IAAF Rules are made to govern competitions in which athletes are taking part, and they are designed to ensure, as far as possible, that no competitor has an unfair advantage.

IAAF/ASA Handbook

The IAAF/ASA technical rules are published in the Handbook, which appears every two years. For any judge or referee a good knowledge of the rules is most important, and anyone intending to officiate regularly must regard the IAAF/ASA Handbook as essential to them. It must also be remembered that rules do not cover every possible case, and sometimes the interpretation of a particular rule may cause differences of opinion, even among experienced judges. The guiding principle in all such cases should be: "What is the intention of the Rule?" It is hoped, however, that for those who may not yet possess a Handbook, this book will provide an introduction to the basic rules and techniques for newcomers to the sport of athletics.

The authors draw attention here to the fact that in the rules the words: "Must, and should" are frequently employed. The variation in phrase is intentional. When the word "must" is used, the rule is compulsory; where "should" is employed, while it is hoped that the rule will be complied with, strict compliance is not essential.

Judgement

Officials should not approach their job with the attitude that they are there "to catch the competitor out", instead, the aim must be to ensure a fair competition, with no competitor gaining an advantage, or suffering a disadvantage. In other words, apart from their own physical abilities, all competitors are equal, whether they are internationals or ordinary club athletes.

If the judge has to make a subjective judgement for any situation, he must ask himself; "What decision would be fair to all the competitors?" That is the true test.

Diplomacy

An official must know how to handle competitors and make himself acquainted with their needs. He must realise that many competitors are nervous during a competition and a dictatorial manner may quickly lead to an unpleasant situation, which could have been avoided by a more understanding approach.

A few competitors may be uncooperative and these must be dealt with firmly, but diplomatically. However big their reputation, if they do not respond after due warning, they should be penalised. The Referee can warn a competitor by showing him a yellow card. He can exclude him or her from further participation by showing a red card.

Delays

Delays in competition, for example, are often difficult to deal with. Competitors are entitled not to be rushed unduly, but it is the official's task to ensure the events are conducted without any waste of time, which will help ensure the programme runs to time. Indeed, it is to the advantage of competitors that events start at the time scheduled so that they can prepare their warming up accordingly. Here there must be a tactful application of 'pressure' to speed up accordingly. Here there must be a tactful application of 'pressure' to speed up the competition.

Smoking

It is the practice in many countries for athletics judges to refrain from smoking on the arena and whilst officiating. This is mainly out of consideration for the competitors, some of whom may be disturbed by cigarette or pipe smoke. It is, after all, usually possible to leave the arena at a suitable moment in the programme in order to smoke.

To sum up therefore, the qualities required of an athletic official are:

1. Common sense and tact.
2. High standard of concentration.
3. Quick reactions.
4. A decisive manner, brisk but not brusque.
5. Knowledge and understanding of the rules and of competition requirements.
6. An understanding of the needs of the athlete.

We shall now detail and define, as far as possible, the duties of track and field officials.

CHAPTER III

Management Officials

When in high level competitions there is an important hierarchy among officials. In all competitions there must be one Manager and, in some other competitions with a higher level, it is necessary to have one Competition Director.

Competition Director

The Competition Director shall plan the technical organisation of a competition in cooperation with the Technical Delegate(s), ensure that this plan is accomplished and resolve any technical problems together with the Technical Delegate(s). He shall direct the interaction between the participants in the competition and, through the communication system, shall be in contact with all the officials.

Manager

If there is a Competition Director he shall entrust the Manager with the responsibility of ensuring the smooth conduct and the success of the meeting.

If there is no Competition Director this duty will be taken up by the Meeting Manager in addition to his own responsibilities.

The Meeting Manager must check that all officials and judges are present. If an official does not comply with the rules the Meeting Manager is entitled to replace him even in the case of a starter. Apart from the officials and the judges, the Meeting Managers must work in close co-operation with the Technical Manager and the Marshall.

The Technical Manager

The person appointed as Technical Manager for a meeting is usually a qualified and experienced track and field referee. He is responsible for seeing that the course is properly marked, that the starts and finishes are clearly marked and that the finish posts are in the correct position. He must check that hurdles and steeplechase hurdles are available, if required, and are correctly placed before the event and at the right height, with counterweights in the correct position. He supervises their removal immediately the hurdle event is over.

He shall be responsible for ensuring that the track, runways, circles, arcs, sectors, landing areas for field events and all equipment are in accordance with IAAF/ASA Rules and available from the start of the competition.

We can stress here that at all times the Technical Manager acts and works in close co-operation with the Competition Director, the Meeting Manager and all Referees.

The Technical Manager provides items required by the Track Referee and judges e.g. judges' stand, bell, relay batons, lap scoring cards, wind gauge and signalling flags for the relay take overs, result and time recording cards, and this before the meeting begins.

For the field events, in conjunction with the Referee and the judges, the Technical Manager satisfies himself that field event implements, e.g. shots, discus, javelins and hammers, as well as measuring tapes, spikes for marking long jump landings, rakes, spades, brushes, watering can to dampen sand, spare cross bars for the high jump and pole vault, wind gauges for the long jump and the triple jump, marks for the athletes and wind socks for jumping events, clocks, flags, etc., are available.

The Technical Manager must check that all field events equipment is properly and safely set up; that landing mats are properly placed and that protective nets in hammer and discus cage are adequate for the standard of the competition and that they are securely and safely fastened.

At a meeting where there are many track and field events, it may be helpful to have two Technical Managers one for track events and one for field events.

The Technical Manager must arrange for all implements to be used in competition to be checked by a qualified official to ensure they comply with the specifications in the IAAF/ASA Rulebook. This applies not only to implements belonging to competitors wishing to use their own implements but also to implements supplied by the organisers of the meeting. The checked implements found acceptable should be marked in some way, e.g. spot of paint, coloured tape to make them clearly identifiable. With the exception of vaulting poles, all implements found acceptable may be used by other competitors.

The Technical Manager is vital to a well organised meeting and the Track Event and Field Event Referees rely on him considerably to keep the meeting running on time.