

Officiating Guidelines for Road and Cross Country/Trail Races

Introduction

A certain level of officiating is required for any organized race, to ensure fairness of competition and the accurate recording of results. The sport of Athletics has established Competition Rules, which provide guidance on the roles of officials, as well as the rules of the sport. At the highest levels of competition (World Championships, Olympics and International competitions), it's expected that all rules will be enforced in accordance with the IAAF rule book, and a team of qualified officials are appointed to ensure that this is the case. At local and recreational races, officiating appropriate to the level of competition and with consideration for available resources will result in the relaxing of some rules.

Irrespective of the level of competition, certain officiating functions will always be performed (formally or informally), and the individuals assigned to carry out those functions should be familiar with their responsibilities, whether they are qualified officials or simply available volunteers.

This document provides some guidelines with respect to the key officiating roles for local road and cross country/trail race organizers. It also highlights the practicalities of trying to apply some of the rules in a mass participation event as opposed to a small competitive field.

Key Officiating Roles

In "official-speak" the following roles are critical to the successful staging of any competition. Race Directors should consider how these duties will be carried out at their event, and by who (qualified official or otherwise).

- Start Coordinator, Starter's Assistants, and Starter
- Finish Judges, Time Keepers, and Recorders
- Referee
- Umpires
- Jury of Appeal
- Course Measurer
- Call Room Judge

At a minimum, all races should be able to identify who is the Starter, who are the Judges and Time Keepers, and who is the Referee, and what their officiating qualifications are, if any.

Start Coordinator, Starter's Assistants, and Starter

The Start Coordinator oversees start area operations. The Start Coordinator informs the Starter when everything is in order to initiate the start procedure. This will include having all participants assembled in an area behind the start line, the time keepers being ready, and any lead vehicle or course control (e.g. police) ready.

Starter's Assistants help assemble all participants in an area behind the start line.

IAAF Rules state that a race be started by issuing the command "On your marks" followed by the firing of a gun. Also, the start should be denoted by a white line at least 5cm wide.

In practice a local dignitary or celebrity is sometimes invited to start the race. Sometimes a countdown is used from "10", "9", "8" ... "3", "2", "1", "Go", with "Go" accompanied by an air-horn or similar noise maker. And the start line may be denoted by the leading edge of a timing mat or other convenient marking on the road.

Whatever the chosen procedure, it is essential that the Start Coordinator, Starter and Time Keepers all have a common understanding of what the start procedure will be, and that there is a clearly defined start line. It is also recommended that participants are assembled 2 or 3 meters back from the actual start until the Starter initiates the start procedure. Athletes can be held in this assembly area by holding a rope in front of them, which is withdrawn at the direction of the Start Coordinator. If, for any reason, the Starter is not satisfied that all is ready for the start to proceed after the athletes are on their marks, he shall order all athletes to withdraw from their marks and the Starter's Assistants shall ask them to step back to the assembly area again.

Note, in large races it is usually impossible to recall the field in the event of someone false starting (jumping the gun). The Starter's Assistants may be assigned the responsibility of observing the start, and reporting any false start to the Race Referee. The Race Referee will judge if any such false start was deliberate, and if any advantage was gained, in which case the individual(s) responsible may be disqualified.

For small races the Start Coordinator, Starter's Assistant, and Starter roles may all be handled by the same individual.

Finish Judges, Time Keepers, and Recorders

Finish Judges decide the order in which the athletes finish. Time Keepers start their timing devices (stopwatch or equivalent) at the firing of the starting gun (or the first athlete crossing the start line in the event of the field jumping the gun), and record the finish time of each athlete. When a manual recording system is being used, Judges and Time Keepers will often be paired with a Recorder – the Judges and Time Keepers call out bib numbers and times, which the Recorders write down.

IAAF Rules state that the finish of a race shall be denoted by a white line 5cm wide. The athletes shall be placed in the order in which any part of their bodies (i.e. torso, as distinguished from the head, neck, arms, legs, hands or feet) reaches the vertical plane of the nearer edge of the finish line.

Various time keeping and recording systems exist, and the most suitable for the event will depend on a number of factors including the number of athletes, the desired accuracy of results, and the resources (human and financial) available. Backup systems are also recommended in the event of system failures.

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Transponder (Chip) Timing Systems have become common in recent years, particularly as a primary recording system for mass participation events where it would otherwise be difficult to record accurate times for every finisher. They fulfill the joint role of judge and time keeper, instantly matching positions to times.

Note, when a Chip Timing System is used, the official time (used to determine finish order and award prizes) shall be the time elapsed between the firing of the starting gun and the athlete reaching the finish line (gun time). However, the time elapsed between an athlete crossing the start line and the finish line (net or chip time) can be made known, but will not be considered an official time.

If the system records times to 1/10th of a second, all times not ending in zero should be converted and recorded to the next longer whole second, e.g. for the Marathon, 2:09:44.3 shall be recorded as 2:09:45.

For smaller events, manual systems are still common. The bib number of each finisher is recorded in the order they are judged to have crossed the finish line. Often this entails keeping athletes in order after they cross the finish line, and recording the bib number further along the finish chute (sometimes by removing a tear-off tag). Independently the Time Keepers record the time of every athlete that crosses the finish line, including bib numbers when practical to provide a cross-reference. Later, the lists of bib numbers and times are merged to produce the results. Manual systems can be used for larger races by utilizing multiple finish chutes, but this can be labour intensive.

Some events, particularly those with an elite race component, may utilize both manual and chip timing systems. In these circumstances Judges are used to confirm top placings. Due to the limitations of chip timing systems where the transponder is often worn on one shoe, the system may incorrectly judge which athlete's torso crossed the finish line first in a close finish.

Video-recording and digital photography are common backup systems for large events.

Referee

The Referee ensures that a race is conducted in accordance with the rules, and confirms that the results accurately reflect the outcome of the competition.

The IAAF Competition Rules assign the following responsibilities to the Referee:

- Referees shall ensure that the Rules (and applicable Technical Regulations) are observed and shall decide upon any matters which arise during the competition and for which provision has not been made in these Rules (or any applicable Technical Regulations).
- The Referee shall not act as a Judge or Umpire.
- Referees shall have jurisdiction to decide placings in a race only when the Judges of the disputed place(s) are unable to arrive at a decision.
- The Referee shall rule on any protest or objection regarding the conduct of the competition.
- The Referee shall have authority to warn or exclude from competition, any athlete guilty of acting in an unsporting or improper manner.
- The Referee shall check all final results.
- If, in the opinion of the Referee, circumstances arise at any competition such that justice demands that any event or any part of an event should be contested again, he shall have authority to declare the event void.

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In races held outside a stadium, it is impossible for a Referee to observe the conduct of all athletes throughout the entire race. Therefore, when practical, it is recommended that the Referee travel in the lead vehicle, in order to observe the lead athletes. From this position the Referee can observe that the correct course is run, and that no illegal assistance is given. Otherwise the Referee should be present at the start and the finish of the race.

The Referee approves the publishing of “Unofficial” results. After a period of time, if no protests are raised, these results become Official.

Every race needs a Referee – a designated person with the authority to make decisions about the outcome of the race. For smaller events this role often defaults to the event organiser, but this is not recommended because that person is often too busy with other aspects of the event.

Umpires

Umpires are assistants to the Referee, without authority to make final decisions. One function Umpires might have is to record the order in which athletes pass an intermediate check-point, to ensure all athletes complete the entire course. Umpires may also report any unsporting conduct or infractions of rules they observe.

With chip timing systems, the role of the Umpire is often accomplished through the use of intermediate timing mats. The absence of an intermediate time, or an intermediate time that implies a pace between check-points that is significantly different from their overall race pace, may be reason to suggest that the athlete did not complete the entire course.

Many races rely on the honour system. For this to be successful, all participants should be made aware of race etiquette that encompasses many of the IAAF Rules of Competition. See Appendix.

Note, Course Marshalls are not Umpires. Course Marshalls prime responsibility is for the safety of participants by preventing non-race traffic from entering the course, warning of hazards, etc. However, they should also be instructed to report unsporting conduct or course cutting.

Jury of Appeal

The primary functions of the Jury shall be to deal with all appeals under IAAF Rule 146, and with any matters arising during the course of the competition which are referred to it for decision.

Except in the highest levels of competition, it should not be necessary to appoint a Jury of Appeal. The designated Referee should be able to rule on any protest, and if an appeal is subsequently made a Jury can be convened as required.

A Jury of Appeal should normally consist of three, five or seven persons, and no member should have a conflict of interest in any matter referred to them. One of its members should be the Chairman and another should be the Secretary.

Course Measurer

This role only applies to road races. A Course Measurer measures a course in accordance with international standards. The measurement data is submitted for review by an approved certifier. And in this manner a course is certified.

For any road-running performance to be accepted as a record, or be included in national or provincial rankings, it must be run on a certified course. For slower runners, certification is no less important. When participants enter a race advertised to be of a certain distance, they have a reasonable expectation that the distance be accurate. Comparison of performances on different courses is meaningless if the distances are not reliable. No one can claim a personal best if the course is not accurate.

On race day, it is crucial that the course be laid out in accordance with the certificate and map. The Course Measurer can assist with this. It is also recommended that the Course Measurer travel in the lead vehicle to see that the athletes run the certified course.

Race directors should include the course certification ID on their entry form or race website.

For further information see the BC Athletics Course Certification FAQs:

<http://www.bcatletics.org/main/coursemeasfaq.htm>

Call Room Judge

Call Room Judges oversee the assembly of athletes prior to their admittance to the competition area. This includes checking that each athlete is wearing the correct bib.

In local races this function is typically performed at packet pickup, and with the aid of pre-race announcements. At packet pickup it can be verified that the information relating to each athlete is correct (e.g. gender, age category, etc.). Instructions can also be given about where to pin the bib or attachment of a timing chip, or other information essential to the operation of the event.

Protests and Appeals

Note, athletes may be disqualified for two reasons:

- Infringement of a technical rule.
- Acting in an unsporting or improper manner.

IAAF rules state that protests concerning the result or conduct of an event must be made within 30 minutes of the unofficial announcement of the result of that event. If no protest is made, the results become official.

30 minutes is not a reasonable timeframe for most road races where despite the latest technology, the Referee cannot check all results of a large race until some significant time after the competition is complete. Consequently, athletes may have gone home before the results can be announced. Commonly results are posted on the web, and athletes subsequently file protests by email or other means.

Nevertheless, events like to hold an awards ceremony as soon as possible after the race is complete, and participants expect it. It may be relatively easy to validate the results for the overall race winners who are

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closely monitored. But particularly in larger events, age group awards are prone to mistakes because less apparent errors can occur – data entry errors can lead to mistakes in age and gender; athletes wearing the wrong bib can lead to similar mistakes; accidental or intentional short cutting may only be revealed by scrutinizing intermediate times; etc. Participants themselves are often best at highlighting such problems. Therefore, if at all possible, available results should be posted on-site prior to the awards, once the Referee has given consent.

Still, the presentation of awards should be made with caution. The results used to make these awards are likely to still be unofficial, in which case, be prepared to rectify mistakes later.

For reasons outlined above, large races will not declare the results to be official until several days following a race, allowing for protests, their investigation, correction, and the re-posting of results. Some events withhold the actual awards during this time, presenting only a letter of congratulations at the awards ceremony.

Most mistakes in the results can usually be satisfactorily resolved by referring to the data recorded at the finish. But occasionally disputes do arise. When prize money or other significant rewards are at stake, it is important that an event have defined procedures for dealing with such occurrences.

Protests concerning the result or conduct of an event should be made to the Referee. Official protest forms can be made available at the event site, or on the event website (see below for samples). The person making the protest must have a bona fide interest in the event in question. To arrive at a fair decision, the Referee should consider any available evidence which he thinks necessary. The Referee may decide on the protest, or may refer the matter to a Jury. If the Referee makes a decision, there shall be a right of appeal to a Jury.

An appeal to the Jury of Appeal must be made within a short time of a decision made by the Referee (again IAAF rules restrict this to 30 minutes). To discourage frivolous appeals, it may sometimes be required that a deposit accompany an appeal, which will be forfeited if the appeal is not allowed. Athletics Canada sets this deposit at \$50.

The Jury of Appeal should consult all relevant persons and other available evidence such as video, photographs, and timing data. If such evidence is not conclusive, the decision of the Referee shall be upheld.

The decision of the Jury of Appeal (or of the Referee in the absence of a Jury of Appeal or if no appeal to the Jury is made) is final.

References

IAAF Competition Rules, 2010-2011

http://www.iaaf.org/mm/Document/AboutIAAF/Publications/05/47/80/20091027085725_httppostedfile_Comp_Rules-BAT_17164.pdf

Race Etiquette Guidelines

http://www.bcathletics.org/main/pdf/rr_etiquette.pdf

Course Measurement FAQs

<http://www.bcathletics.org/main/coursemeasfaq.htm>

Sample Protest and Appeal Forms

The following pages provide sample Protest and Appeal forms.

Protests must be filed with the race referee. The referee's decision shall be written on the protest form. A copy shall be made and returned to the protester. The original shall be placed in the race director's files.

If not satisfied with the decision, the protester may petition the matter to the Jury of Appeal by filing a written request after the referee's decision has been made. The Jury's decision will be written on the appeal form and returned to the protester who made the appeal. No further action is allowed.

Sample Protest Form

Instructions:

Complete all of the information requested below. Provide a specific description of the circumstances, time, location, involved parties, possible infraction and any other relevant supporting information.

Submit this form and any supporting documentation to the Race Referee as soon as possible. You may attach additional pages and/or documentation you believe to be essential to support or further explain the basis for this protest. If applicable, cite the rule and page numbers from the Athletics Canada or IAAF Competition Rule(s) which provide the basis for submitting this protest.

Name of person submitting this protest	
Race Number	
Event	

Description of incident

Time of Protest		Date	
Signature			

Referee's Decision

Referee's Signature	
Date	

Sample Appeal Form

Regarding Protest Ruling by Race Referee

The protesting athlete/coach may petition the matter to the Jury of Appeal by filing a written request after the referee's decision has been made. The Jury's decision will be written on the appeal form and returned to the athlete/coach who made the appeal. No further action is allowed.

Name of person submitting this appeal	
Race Number	
Event	

Rationale for Appeal

Time of Appeal		Date	
Signature			

Jury of Appeal's Decision

Committee Chair Signature	
Date	