

## **UMPIRING – GENERAL INFO & RULES**

*(Also see detailed info in the USATF Umpire Manual / Monograph)*

**Personal Equipment:** clipboard, pen/pencil, rulebook, paper or small notebook, clothing for all weather conditions

**Equipment from Meet Management:** yellow flags, incident report forms, chairs

### **Role of the Umpire**

Umpires observe track competitions to report apparent rule violations which can harm a competitor's opportunities or give unfair advantage to one runner over others. Umpires report possible violations rules through the Head Umpire to the Track Referee. The Referee determines if a rules violation has occurred and takes appropriate action consistent with the applicable rules, including disqualification. Umpires observe and report violations of running in lanes, impeding other runners, illegal assistance, hurdling, and relay exchanges.

### **Prior to the Event**

- Umpires report to a designated meeting area not less than 30 minutes prior to the first running event.
- The Head Umpire conducts a meeting to: distribute flags and reporting forms; assign umpires to cover specific positions to best observe each event and any needed re-positioning; review the schedule, the reporting procedure, review key rules to be applied and any special provisions established by Games Committee, hurdle placement and movement, and any other information needed for the umpires to perform their duties. This may include a walk of the track to review markings.
- Umpires should become thoroughly familiar with the sector of the track they are assigned to cover and determine the best points of observation for each event – if not assigned specific positions.

### **Location**

Depending on the number of umpires available, the Chief Umpire will determine positioning, with priority given to covering the four turns. The next priority is positions midway between the first four. Placement is generally on the outside of the track, but may be inside on occasions; positioning in the stands may also be appropriate. For hurdle and steeplechase races an umpire should be on each side of the track for each flight of hurdles or barrier if possible. For relays, umpires must cover the passing zones, with the priority being at the end of the zone.

### **Observation**

The umpire should be in a position to observe the competitors within her/his line of sight as the field passes, the hurdles are cleared or the baton is exchanged.

### **Reporting Observations and Forms**

- Only those specifically assigned to the umpiring task or requested by the Referee to observe all of the competitions may submit an observation form that may result in a disqualification
- A general rule of thumb is: if you think it happened, it didn't; if you're sure it happened, it did and report it.
- When a possible violation is observed, the umpire raises a yellow flag. Upon completion of the event and without consultation with any other person, the umpire completes a report form and provides it to the Head Umpire or Referee. The report should describe the what, where, when, & how of a violation, and the who - the event, heat #, lane #, bib #, and school or uniform color
- The Referee may ask clarifying questions or for collaborating observations from other umpires. If Referee judges there is not indisputable evidence of a violation, there may be a decision to take no action.

### **Follow-up**

Immediately following that day's meet or during a major break in the competition, the umpires should meet with the Head Umpire and Referee to debrief on the meet and lessons learned.

## **RULES INFORMATION FOR UMPIRES**

### **Legal Running**

**Running With Lanes** In races run in lanes, competitors shall start and finish within their assigned lanes.

**Note:** If a runner runs outside the assigned lane in the straight-away or runs outside the outer line on the curve, with *no material advantage gained, and no other runner obstructed, no disqualification will take place.*

**Legal Running Without Lanes** The following situations will constitute legal running in non-lane events:

1. A competitor may run anywhere on the track at any pace or any change of pace as long as the competitor does not impede or obstruct by any body or arm action the progress of another runner.
2. A competitor may pass another runner legally on EITHER the right or left side.
3. A competitor may cut in front of another runner, provided that the overtaking runner has one full stride. (This rule also applies to the curved line start.)
4. A competitor who is lapped in a distance race shall run a normal course.

**Note:** If a runner is required to withdraw, the runner shall exit to the inside of the track. The Games committee determines the number of lapped runners who shall remain in the competition.

### **Running Violations**

**All Races** When an athlete commits a flagrant foul in a race to aid a teammate, all persons from the offending team in that race shall be disqualified. Such an infraction would be reported by the umpire and ruled on by the Referee.

**In Lanes** Disqualification shall be ruled by the Referee when a competitor:

1. Flagrantly impedes another runner.
2. In a race run on a curve, steps on or over the lane line to the left with two consecutive steps with either both feet or a single foot. (NCAA)
3. In a race run on a curve, steps on or over the lane line to the left (USATF and IAAF)
4. In a race run on a curve, steps on or over the lane line to the left with three or more consecutive steps with either or both feet (NFSHSA)
5. In a race starting but not finishing in lanes, the athlete does not cross the break line with the assigned lane; or
6. Does not start and finish within the assigned lane.

**Note:** The Referee, after consulting with the appropriate officials, *shall not* D.Q. competitors who: 1. Are pushed or forced by another runner to step on or over the lane line to the left with no material advantage gained, or 2. Step out of their lanes on the straightaway.

**Not in Lanes** Disqualification shall be ruled by the Referee when a competitor:

1. Flagrantly jostles, cuts across or obstructs another competitor so as to impede the other runner's progress. Direct contact is not necessary; any action that causes another runner to break stride or lose momentum can lead to D.Q
2. Flagrantly veers to the right or to the left so as to impede a challenging runner and causes the challenging runner to run a greater distance.
3. Voluntarily leaves the track and presumably the race, then returns later to continue the race.
4. Tries to force a way between two leading runners, and makes direct contact so as to impede the progress of either, or
5. Steps on or over the curb with two consecutive steps of the left foot.

**Note:** The Referee, after consulting with the appropriate officials, shall not D.Q. competitors who: 1. Are pushed or forced by another runner to step on or over the curb with no material advantage gained. 2. Step on or over the curb on the straightaway unless an advantage is gained by improving position.

**Illegal Assistance** On the report of an official, D.Q. shall be ruled by the Referee when a competitor has been aided by a coach, a teammate not in the race, or a non-competitor connected with the competitor's team, directly or indirectly, who is on the track or within the infield track area.

**Hurdling Violations** D.Q. shall be ruled by the Referee when a hurdler:

1. Advances or trails a leg or foot outside the hurdle width and below the top horizontal plane at the instant of hurdle clearance.
2. Does not hurdle each hurdle within the competitor's lane.
3. Runs over a hurdle not in the hurdler's lane.
4. Impedes another hurdler, or
5. Deliberately knocks down any hurdle

**The Steeplechase** D.Q. shall be ruled by the Referee when a competitor:

1. Does not attempt every hurdle.
2. Advances or trails a leg or foot outside the hurdle width and below the top horizontal plane at the instant of hurdle clearance.
3. Does not traverse over each hurdle, or
4. Does not go over or through the water.

## The Relays

### **Passing the Baton**

The baton must be passed, not thrown, by each runner to the succeeding runner. If, in a genuine attempt to pass the baton, it is dropped within the passing zone, either runner may retrieve it in high school or NCAA competitions but only the runner who dropped it in USATF and IAAF competitions. A baton dropped outside the passing zone must be recovered by the person who dropped it in all competitions. A member of the relay team may not run outside the passing zone for the purpose of taking the baton from a faltering or fallen teammate. After passing the baton, competitors must remain in their lanes or established path until the course is clear in order to avoid contact with the other competitors.

**Relay Racing Violations** The Referee shall disqualify a relay team when:

1. During a relay race, any member of that team is D.Q.'d.
2. The baton is passed outside the 20 meter passing zone.
3. The baton is recovered illegally after being dropped.
4. While running, a team member transports the baton in some manner other than in hand.
5. The last runner of the team finished the race without the baton.
6. After passing the baton, a runner veers out of the passing lane or from a straight course, and flagrantly impedes an opposing runner.
7. Assuming a preparatory position in any race run in lanes, any part of the outgoing runner breaks the plane of the adjacent lane lines so as to interfere with another runner.
8. The outgoing runner in 4 x 400 Relay waiting for the baton does not take a position entirely within the 20-meter passing zone.

**Check Marks** Except in the case of relay races run in lanes, competitors may NOT make check marks or place objects on or alongside the running track for their assistance.

**Note:** Some materials may be supplied by the organizers and may be used at the discretion of the judge. If a runner elects to use the international zone, the runner must be positioned entirely inside that zone within the runner's lane. Outgoing runners *may mark* a takeoff point on the track with a material flush with, but not harmful to the surface, preferably tape. Depending on the rulebook there are some limitations on the size and number of marks.