

New York State Certified Track and Field and Cross-Country Officials' Association
N.Y.S.P.H.S.A.A. Indoor Championships
Carrier Dome - Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York
March 4, 2000

Clinic Notes on “Umpires”

Condensed from: *Inspectors - Clinic Notes*, prepared by Thomas P. McTaggart, Training Committee, Metropolitan Athletics Congress, April, 1989, *REVISED*, February 26, 2000.

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Introduction

Frequently, Track and Field officials will cringe when they are informed that they have been assigned as umpires at a meet. In a way, this can be an expected reaction. You have to go off by yourself, frequently in isolation from others, sometimes in sweltering heat in bright sunlight. The isolation can tend to make you think that you are perhaps insignificant in terms of your value as an official.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Wise meet directors want his/her crew of umpires to consist of people who are the best versed in both the spirit and the letter of the rules of track events. After all, it is unfortunately and usually only at the championship events that a great deal of attention is even paid to this most crucial of officiating positions.

Think about this: Athletes have trained hard over the course of the year to get to this level of competition. The last thing they want is to be victimized by another athlete running foul of the rules. Another last thing they want to have happen is to be fouled and then be disqualified because of the report of an inept or inattentive umpire who only saw the things that happened as a **result** of what occurred after the initial foul.

The sad truth is that this has happened in the past at our own State Championship events. Early events will get all kinds of reports that result in the Referee thinking that he/she has really gotten the assignment of “Angel of Death”, having to inform coaches of heartbreaking disqualifications within minutes of arriving at the track. During the remainder of the meet, having

“bagged the quota”, umpires have allowed evident “muggings” to occur without even the smallest report, which only serves to disillusion all in attendance. People can leave this highest level of scholastic competition feeling that the officiating has not lived up to the level of the meet's title.

When athletes come to the State Championship (or any meet for that matter), the one thing they must feel most confident in is the consistency, knowledge, and fairness of its officials. In Track events, over 88% of disqualifications that occur are those that are the result of reports by umpires.

Consequently, it must be understood that rather than being insignificant, the umpire's role is probably the most significant and responsible officiating position in the entire program!

As an umpire, you are given the ultimate trust and responsibility by the athletes, meet management, and your officiating colleagues, that you truly know and understand the rules of track events. You will be the person out there who truly makes the difference” in insuring a fair competition for all involved.

So, when the time comes when they hand you your flags and notepad, understand as you walk off to that lonely post of yours that to all involved, **you are probably one of the most important people out there on the track!** Treat the assignment with the seriousness and dignity that it deserves!

The hope is that the ideas in this clinic presentation will reinforce not only the skills of being an umpire, but a resurgence in the respect for the knowledge, skills, decisiveness, and wisdom required to fill the job well.

Umpires

Umpire - “One having authority to decide finally a controversy or question between parties.” -- *Webster's*

Qualities of an Umpire Candidate:

1. Background as a competitor is helpful.
2. Thorough knowledge of the rules of running events
3. Taking the job seriously as being very important
4. Good concentration and attention span
5. Anticipation of what **should happen** in the normal progression of a race, or of what **might happen** in an evolving situation in a race.
6. Decisiveness
7. Good recall of all facts relating to what has happened.
8. Discretion and following the “chain of command” of the meet.

REMEMBER: Umpires Do NOT disqualify athletes ... THEY “REPORT” INCIDENTS TO THEIR CHIEF and then go about their further tasks.

Qualities of the Chief Umpire

1. All as listed above.
2. Ability to question his staff about reports in such a fashion as to get indisputable information about reported Incidents.
3. Ability to work integrally with the Referee as his primary helper in obtaining facts.
4. Leadership ability.

Philosophy of the Umpire's Job:

1. To make sure that all the competitors have a fair competition.
2. To make sure no one athlete gains an advantage unfairly over another in violation of the rules of competition.
3. To report descriptions of events that may involve rules infractions to the chief umpire so that facts can be ascertained before any disqualification is made.
4. You are not there to look for infractions - you are there to look to make sure that competition takes place **fairly** and within both the spirit and the letter of the law.
5. You are there to officiate, and not to be officious.
6. To understand the **intent** of the rules that you are working with
7. To serve the athletes who have worked hard training for their competition to insure them of an equal and fair chance at success.

Duties besides those listed in the rulebook:

1. Watch the entire race through its progress so that you might:
2. Watch situations develop and anticipate what ought to happen in accordance with the rules.
3. When you watch things develop as in #1 & #2 above, you will be able to report the causes of actions and not just the effects!

Other Comments:

1. Problems and Protests are avoided when there are good, attentive umpires who see events develop, report them promptly, and accurately have no doubts as to what they have observed.
2. If you have doubts as to what you have observed, these should also be reported along with the other facts that you report.
3. When you have questions as to legality - report it to your chief - let he/she sort it out!
4. Talk to no one about what you have observed or reported except your chief, the referee (if he/she requests information, or your chief is not available), or in reply to an inquiry by the Jury of Appeals. In answering an inquiry of the Jury of Appeals, have your chief with you.

Mechanics of the job:

1. Work from the outside of the track.
2. Observe your segment of the race with focused attention then observe the remainder of the race as well to help colleagues.
3. Report immediately via signal a clean race (white flag) or possible infraction (red/yellow flag) as your portion of the race goes by.
4. In hurdle races observe oncoming hurdlers for honest effort to clear and departing hurdlers for legal trail leg clearance.
5. On Relay Zones, be in a position to observe all exchanges within a narrow angle of vision. When alone, this is best achieved at mid-zone.
6. On 4 x 100, 4 x 200, and Medley Relays where the starter needs to know the readiness of the athletes, keep your RED/YELLOW flag raised when not ready and WHITE flag raised when ready until the race is started.
7. Make instructions to relay athletes clear, concise and visual. Be sure you have all of their attention before delivering instructions. Make sure you answer all questions before indicating readiness to the starter.

8. Warn athletes who are incoming runners to avoid interference.

REMEMBER: WHILE THE UMPIRE'S JOB IS OFTEN FAR REMOVED AND AWAY FROM THE LIMELIGHT IT IS BY NO MEANS A MENIAL OR UNIMPORTANT TASK. **IT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT JOBS AT AN ATHLETICS MEET!** Your decisions as an umpire will be frequently as crucial in the outcome of a race as a finish photo!

Being an umpire is a dignified officiating post where incredible trust is put upon your judgment and skills. It carries with it tremendous responsibilities to the athletes competing and to the Games Committee.

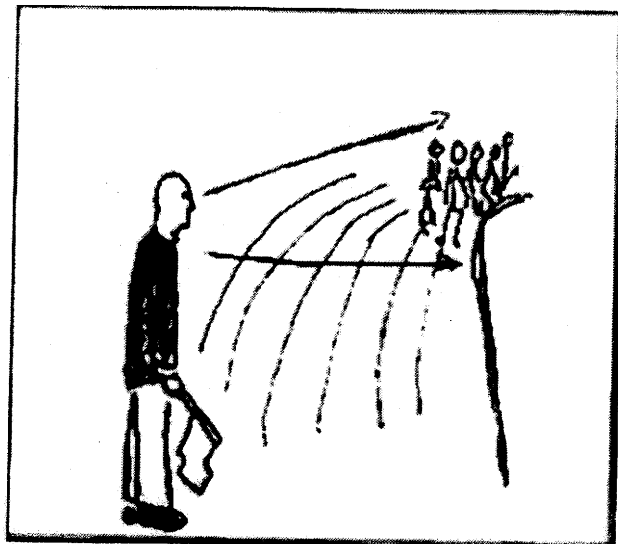
APPROACH THIS JOB WITH THE DIGNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY THAT IT DESERVES!

Works Cited

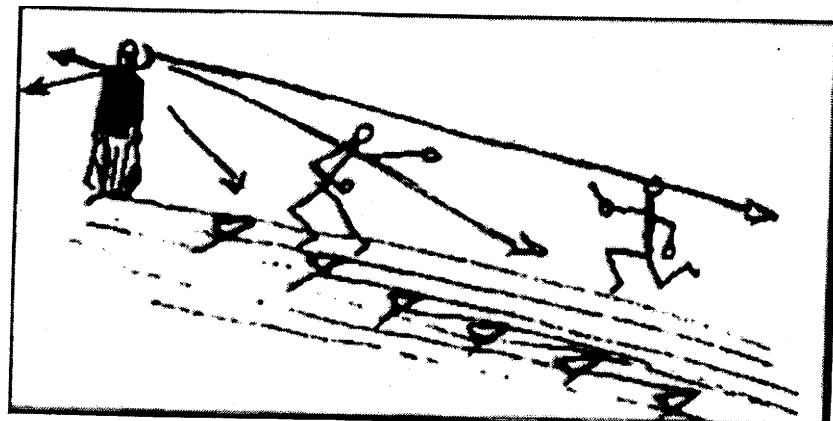
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Illustrations

1) Observe the race from outside the track, watching progress both toward you and then away from you.



2) When observing a staggered relay exchange *by yourself*, it is best to stand outside (if possible) at mid-zone and get a narrow angle of vision to all lanes and zones. When you ascertain fairness at the start of the zone, shift your attention to the other end of the zone to insure that all the passes are fair.



3) In judging the fairness of relay exchanges, **WHERE there is sole control of the baton established** is the criteria for making your judgment.

<p>A) UNFAIR! Pass not completed in zone! Possession <i>still shared!</i></p>	<p>B) FAIR! Outgoing runner as possession while baton is still in the zone!</p>	<p>C) FAIR! Sole possession of baton by outgoing runner is still <i>within the zone.</i></p>

4) When inspecting hurdle races as an umpire, you should observe 2 to 3 hurdles **before** your post and 2 to 3 hurdles **past** your post to insure a fair race. Also, inspect safety, spacing, and heights or hurdles before each race.

