



IAAF STARTING GUIDELINES

1 Introduction

The need to improve the quality and consistency of the starters' performances during major IAAF competitions prompted the IAAF Council to take initiatives; establishing a Panel from which International Starters for major international competitions would be appointed and these Guidelines which have the purpose of explaining a standardised starting procedure and thereby developing worldwide consistency in the way the start process is managed.

It is recommended that Member Federations adopt these Guidelines for the organisation of their own athletics competitions.

2 International Starters' Panel

2.1 The IAAF Council approved the introduction of an International Starters' Panel, and of a consequent Rule change, at the 2005 Helsinki Congress.

The proposals are now written into the Technical Rules and Regulations. Rule 118 includes reference to the position and responsibilities of an International Starter.

2.2 A Panel of International Starters has been formed and appointments are made by the IAAF to designated IAAF competitions from this Panel. All of the nominated International Starters have attended a workshop conducted by the IAAF in Valencia in March 2008.

2.3 The deployment of the International Starter is intended to:

- Add a consistent approach to the start process at all major competitions.
- Ensure the Technical Rules concerned with starts are correctly interpreted and implemented at all major competitions.
- Influence the organisation and practice at starts around the world.
- Enhance the existing positive televisual image of the sport.

3 Structure and Organisation of the Team of Starters

3.1 Rules 129.1 and 129.7 give responsibility for the organisation and management of the starting team to a **Start Coordinator**. His role is crucial to the smooth running of the units that make up the starting team and the accurate, consistent implementation of the Technical Rules.

The duties of a Start Coordinator are to:

- Allocate duties to team members (the duties of the International Starter will be allocated under the direction, and in consultation with, the Technical Delegates).
- Control and manage the start process.
- Be the link between the Competition Management and the Photo Finish Judges, Timekeepers, Finish Judges, Wind Gauge Operator and, where appropriate, the television staff.
- Keep the competition to time by working efficiently with the team and all other parties.
- Be the link to the providers of the automatic false start equipment and other technology being used in and around the start.
- Keep all relevant paperwork.
- Ensure Rules 130.5 and 162.7 are observed and fulfilled.

There are two distinct ways that the role can be operated:

- The Coordinator is a supervisory official who manages all aspects of the start process. He is often a very senior starter with significant experience but he never starts a race when in the Start Coordinator's role.
- The Start Coordinator continues to implement his managerial role but also acts as the senior starter, thus giving an added dimension of expertise to the team's contributions.

If the first method is operated, three Starters per race will be required. If the second method is in operation then only two other Starters need to be appointed per race.

In this case, the duties of the Start Coordinator will be taken by another team member for the events the coordinator is starting.

Within a round, all heats should be started by the same Starter.

- 3.2 The **Starter** remains the key person in the starting process. His judgement, supported by any available technology and the start team, is crucial.

The Starter must ensure that:

- All athletes have a fair start within the rules of the competition specifically Rules 129.2/3/6.
- He is the sole decision maker regarding false starts including occasions when an offence has been committed and the race is recalled by another member of the team. Consultation between team members on such decisions is vital.
- He is positioned so that he can see all athletes in a similar, narrow angle of vision.
- The false start equipment control module is positioned close to him.
- His commands are heard simultaneously by all athletes (in all major competitions this should be assured by the use of a high quality sound system).
- He must personally consult the information produced by the false start equipment and use that to confirm a false start.

- 3.3 The **Recaller(s)** are deployed to specific positions to give an alternative and enhanced view of a race start. Their role is to support the starter and identify any offence or technical fault at a start that the Starter may not have observed.

If there is any doubt about the legality or fairness of the start the Recaller must recall the race. Discussions within the team will determine the subsequent action (if any).

- 3.4 **Starters' Assistants** play an important role in the management of the athletes, particularly in the preparation for the race. They must ensure that Rules 130 and 162.7 are fully implemented and check that:

- Bib identification is correct and corresponds with the start list.
- Athletes are in the correct heat or race.
- Lane assignments are correct.
- The use of starting blocks is legal as defined in Rule 161.
- Batons are ready for relay races.

Furthermore, they must ensure that:

- Rules 162.3 and 162.4 are observed.
- Athletes assemble correctly before the Starter takes control of the start.
- Correct warnings are given and that all athletes understand the condition under which subsequent starts will occur, i.e., the next false start will result in a disqualification (yellow card shown), the recall did not warrant a warning (green card shown) or a disqualification has been made (red card shown).
- Any disqualified athlete immediately leaves the area of competition.

- 3.5 The **Start Referee** plays an important role at all starts. Rule 125.2 requires the appointment of a 'Track Referee' to oversee the start area. It is appropriate and good practice, that the appointed person is a specialist and experienced starter. If that is the case, his observations will be based on a technically sound background.

The Start Referee fulfils several obligations, specifically he:

- Is not a member of the starting team.
- Works alongside the start team.
- Does not interfere or comment on starts, except when issues need addressing.
- Is required to keep an accurate record of all starts.
- Ensures the Start Coordinator carries out an initial check of the false start equipment and a zero gun test.
- Monitors the operation of false start equipment by any commercial provider.
- Communicates with athletes only as a result of an official protest about a start or a warning/disqualification. In this context, the Start Referee can allow an athlete, who immediately protests, to run the race, subject to the protest being considered afterwards.
- Imposes and notifies the imposition to the athletes of a 'disciplinary' warning.

If the false start equipment correctly indicates a false start, the Start Referee cannot allow a 'run under protest'. If, however, the false start equipment indicates an illegal start and there is good reason to suggest the information is inaccurate, or there is an equipment malfunction, a run under protest may be allowed. Other irregularities at the start can merit an 'allowable protest' i.e. blocks slipping or crowd disturbance.

Above all, the Start Referee should only intervene when start procedures are not conducted within the rules of competition.

- 3.6 The success of a good start procedure depends on how the team works together and ensures that the process is efficient, fair and within the relevant rules for competition. The team should know the role they are all playing. They should understand the signals they are to use and what they indicate and, above all, they should relay all information they have to each other to ensure the start is conducted fairly.

4 Team Positioning

- 4.1 How the members of the team work together is crucial. The **Start Coordinator** must ensure that all team members know their role and assume positions that allow them to implement the Rules.
- 4.2 Ideally, there should be three Starters per race. One will take up a position in which he has a clear view of all athletes. He is the **Starter**. The other two will act as **Recallers** and position themselves as allocated to oversee assigned lanes (usually from different angles of vision from the race starter). The team of three will rotate through those duties throughout a competition.
- 4.3 The **Starter's Assistants** will position themselves to ensure a clear view of the position athletes take before and during the start procedure. In practice, this will require at least three people – one to observe front line positions and two to watch for rear infringements concerned with foot contacts on starting blocks (Rule 162.4).

5 The Start

- 5.1 In events up to and including 400m, on receipt of the agreed signals that all parties (athletes, Photo Finish Judges, Competition Management, the timing company, track officials and television if applicable) are ready, the Start Coordinator will inform the Starter to issue the first command - 'On your marks'. When all athletes are clearly settled, legally positioned (as indicated by the Starter's Assistant(s)) and still, the Starter will issue the second command –

'Set'. When the athletes have all assumed their final set position, and are steady, the gun will be fired.

- 5.2 There is no perfect holding time in the set position. In reality, there must be a discernible hold to ensure all athletes are steady and in the correct starting position.

The Starter must stop a race if:

- An athlete, after assuming a full and final set position, commences his starting motion before receiving the report of the gun (Rule 162.6).
- He receives a signal from the false start equipment.
- Any Recaller observes any irregularity with a start.

- 5.3 In theory, a Starter can award a false start to several athletes if it is indicated that their movement was more or less simultaneous. Otherwise, the warning must go to the athlete indicated as making the first movement. (See note to Rule 162.7)

In all cases, the team must:

- Consider all evidence that they have to hand including the false start equipment analysis.
- Show the correct coloured cards to demonstrate the decision – yellow card for the athlete who committed the false start and to the rest of the field or red card for any disqualified athlete or green card if no false start has been given.

Similarly, the Starter can award a false start warning to any athlete who, in his opinion, fails to respond to the commands or disturbs other athletes in the 'on your marks' position (Rule 162.6 (a),(b)). For example:

- Deliberately delaying in response to the commands.
- Moving or making noise after the athletes have settled into the 'on your marks' position thus disturbing the concentration of fellow athletes.

- 5.4 If an athlete causes a start to be aborted, without good reason, for example, by holding up his hand or standing / sitting up, the Start Referee can award a personal warning to that athlete and he will be shown a yellow card. (The Start Referee must be satisfied that the athlete's action was not justified. Justification may be by crowd noise, block movement or external interruption). In this case, all athletes will be shown a green card by a Starter's Assistant.

In all cases, the showing of any card must be seen by all athletes so that no-one is in doubt about the consequences of further Rule violations.

- 5.5 When considering protests, the Start Referee's position is crucial.

The Referee must:

- Allow athletes to 'run under protest' (Rule 146.4(a)) if an irregularity is suspected in the award of a false start. No protest will be allowed if the false start equipment is working correctly and a false start has been indicated.
- Retrospectively disqualify an athlete (Rule 162.7) when a race is completed, a protest is lodged about the start and an offence has been committed. The false start equipment (where available) must be considered.
- In the need for justice, declare a race void and order a re-run when the false start detection system is faulty.
- When no false start equipment is in place, take a position to accurately see the start of all the athletes in a race and make his own judgement on the legality of a start. This adds greater importance to the recommendation that the Start Referee is an experienced starter.