

South Dakota Cross Country/Track & Field Officials Association (SDCCTFOA)

February 2024 Newsletter

Starting mechanics and tips

Prior to the meet:

- Arrive at least an hour before the first race
- Locate meet director and secure a copy of the time schedule/order of events
- Meet with the following personnel:
 - Clerk of the Course
 - Head Finish Line Official
 - FAT Timing Operator (determine method of communication when ready)
 - Assistant Starter
 - Meet Announcer (announcers make or break a meet, if the gun is up the announcer must be quiet)
- Check start line, staggers, track markings, exchange zones, break line and hurdle marks;
- Check the starting blocks—avoid the use of block holders if possible;

Prior to the race

- Check your pistols and shells; do a test fire with FAT before the meet
- Move non-competitors out of the start area
- Allow competitors time to set their block, and **allow one (1) practice start.**
- Make the statement, “Stand by your blocks when you are ready”;
- Clear, precise pre-race instructions—don’t repeat Clerk of the Course instructions;



It is the starter’s responsibility to ensure a fair and legal start.

- Strong but calm voice for the starting commands, crisp, normal conversational voice
- “Set” command should never be forceful or sharp, nor should it be drawn-out
- Interval between “set” and the gun should be about 2 seconds;
- If runner is moving or flinches the starter should bring the runners up;
- Firing the gun too soon doesn’t allow the athletes to get ready;

- Firing the gun too slowly creates unfairness;
- Other than movement or flinches, why a starter might bring the runners up
 - Incorrect starting line
 - Noise/distraction at the start line;
 - Starting block problems;
 - Persons or obstruction on the track;
 - Finish line/FAT timing alerts you to stop the start;
 - Athlete taking too much time for “on your marks”;
 - Misfire of the starting pistol;
 - Hands/fingers/toes on the start line;

False start (**One False Start results in disqualification**)

- Failure to comply with starter’s commands
- Any part of the body in contact with the ground beyond the start when the gun is fired
- Coming out of the blocks or over the line prior to the gun
- Repeated disconcerting acts

Assistant Starter (if you have one)

- Trust the assistant starter;
- Agree on location and method of communication prior to the race
- Determine before the start who is responsible for which runners/lanes;
- Use minimal arm signals to communicate with starter—don’t distract the runners
- If there is a false start, starter and assistant discuss **before** a disqualification decision

Starter’s Bag/Equipment

- Starter’s pistol—have a backup, with holster and pouch for shells
- Two (2) boxes of shells—more if it is a big meet
- NFHS Rule Book, Case Book and Officials Manual
- Meet information/schedule
- Whistle
- Ear protection
- Hat, cold weather and rain gear, sun block, extra pants/clothes
- Optional equipment
 - Orange sleeve
 - Brass bell for gun lap if lap counter doesn’t have one
 - Chalk
 - Cones for break line or alleys
 - Tape measure
 - Swiss pocket knife—you never know what you may need

Status of 32 Caliber Shells for the Future

Steve Charron secured a box of 32 caliber shells from First to the Finish, a sporting goods outlet in Edwardsville, IL. He tested them, and said they are good quality, with lots of smoke and a nice bang. Be prepared—the price for a box of 50 is going to be in the \$64.00 to \$70.00 range, and they may also charge for shipping. The shells can be found at:

- www.FirsttotheFinish.com

- Phone 1 800 747 9013

Bill Neal, Secretary/Treasurer of the Iowa Association of Track Officials, found 32 caliber shells at Boland Production Supply, in Winter Haven, FL. The cost on these shells is \$47.50/box of 50. However, the company has a purchase limit of five (5) boxes. The shipping cost are about \$20 for five boxes.

- [BOLANDEFX - BLANK AMMO & SPECIAL FX \(3dcartstores.com\)](http://3dcartstores.com)
- Phone 1 863 324 7784

Dakota Sports, Sioux Falls, continues to work with their buying group with a firearms shell manufacturer to secure 32 blanks for the country. No update as to how that effort is coming.

Field Event tips

Too often we forget it is both track and field. While track seems to get most of the attention, here are some worthwhile tips for field events:

- Discus cage—Must provide protection for spectators. Holes in the net or chain link may make the venue unsafe and require the Referee to rule the event cannot be held.
- Sector lines—Check them before the meet. Shot put is easy to determine whether it is accurate because of the stop board. More work may be required to determine the accuracy of the discus and javelin sectors. See rule 6-9 for specifications.



- While on the subject of sector lines, make sure there is considerable safe room outside the sector lines, fenced off to keep spectators from being too close to the landing area. If it is not sufficient, require home management to make adjustments or the event cannot be held.

- Long/triple jump pit—Make sure the pit is filled with sand and workers pull sand from the back end of the pit to fill jump holes back in. LJ/TJ should not be a downhill event. If there is not sufficient

sand, rule the event cannot be held. **This needs to be a point of emphasis this year.**

- Long/triple jump boards—High school athletes require multiple boards. The event judge needs to know which board each jumper is using and move a cone to a spot adjacent to that board to assist the athlete hitting that board.
- Pole vault/high jump—Check these venues to assure they are safe. Measure and inspect the landing pits for both events. Assure the pole vault has appropriate front buns around the vault box. Check the vault box. Assure there is ample padding around the pit for jumpers who may come off the landing pit. Specifications for landing pits, vault box and surrounding area can be found in Rule 6-9, Articles 18 to 35.
- Vaulting poles—Check all of the vaulting poles and make sure the event judge knows which pole a respective athlete is using. Poles are marked with a manufacturers weight rating near the top of the pole in a contrasting color to the pole. A coach must verify all vaulters and poles meet the requirements of Rule 6-9, Articles 14 & 15. Any altered pole or its weight

rating is an illegal implement, and should be removed. A competitor is not allowed to use an illegal implement.

- Throwing implements—Arrange for throwing implements (shot, discus and javelin) to be weighed and measured prior to the meet. Mark the implements with a marker, distinguishable by the event judge to verify its legality. Implements not meeting specifications should be impounded and picked up after the event or the meet is concluded.

New Officials

Do you know someone who may be interested in becoming a track & field and/or cross country official? The SDHSAA is always looking for new officials. Be on the lookout for someone to succeed you when you retire. Have them contact the SDHSAA and register.

Next Newsletter & Contributions

The SDCCTFOA will produce additional newsletters in the future, one prior to cross country and one prior to track season. Anyone with topics for the newsletter is encouraged to reach out to J.D. Evans, Dana Nelson or Tim Casper. We need additional input and ideas, and many of you have things you may like to share. Thank you and best of luck in track & field and cross country.