

Officiating the Throws

USATF National Convention

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Reno, Nevada

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Southwestern Association

Today's clinic will reflect some of my pearls of wisdom. These are definitely not the "be all and end all" of setting up the throws. I would like to get through the talk and if any of you have any questions or comments please feel free to ask at the end.

Overview

- I. Internet Resources
- II. Safety Considerations
- III. Guidelines
 - A. Prior to Meet
 - B. Day of Competition
 - C. During Competition
- IV. Positions
- V. Throws in Detail (excluding the weight)
 - A. Hammer
 - B. Discus
 - C. Javelin
 - D. Shot Put
- VII. Numbers of Officials
- VIII. Keep in mind....
- IX. Selected Equipment List
- X. Acknowledgements

Many of the things that we will cover today will be from the approach of a head official. Some of the things I will talk about are my personal approach, **but the number one rule to keep in mind is to always defer to the head official -- especially when it comes to stylistic differences.**

Now if the head official is wrong about a rule, that is another story.

Please note I will not be discussing the weight throw.

Internet Resources

- **National officials web site:** <http://www.usatfofficials.com>
**Training Page – Monographs, Weights and Measures Handbook
The Throwing Officials' Manual 2007 Edition by George Kleeman**
- **USATF web site –** www.usatf.org **Rulebooks available by 3/09**
- **NCAA web site –** <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=563>
go to Case Book – updated February '09

Throws Safety Internet Resources

<http://www.mach2k.net/ntca/safety/> - National Throw Coaches Association
safety web site

<http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/SHS/throwsafety/safetyinthethrows.htm>
Safety and Common Sense in the Throws Version 2 Updated Winter '09

1. This clinic is based on work that has been done by others: namely George Kleeman out of the Pacific Association; Mark Heckel, National Throwing Coaches Association Safety Chair from the Three Rivers Association; and Jim Showker from the Virginia Association. The Training Page on the USATF national officials web page is invaluable resource for officials.
2. The USATF web site is good for obtaining combined events point charts for youth athletics and record forms.
3. The NCAA web site is a little more difficult to get to but very important because the interpretations section are no longer in the '09 rule book. The combined events tables are also no longer in the rule book but are online also.
4. There are two very good web sites for throws safety. One is a Power Point presentation from the National Throw Coaches Association by Mark Heckel (Three Rivers Association), which includes a safety checklists for inspection of the implements and safety zone maps (for each of the throws, they show regions that are the safest, cautionary, potential danger, and danger).
5. The other is presented by Joe Showker out of the Virginia USATF. It is very good at showing pictures of potential problems regarding netting safety zones, etc., accurate measuring of implements.

Alternate Source

- Track & Field Rules Comparison & Officials Duties
by Bill Boyd – USATF Virginia Association

Cost: \$10 + postage (~\$15.00) Available: 1/15/09

Mail check to Bill Boyd
2529 Burrows Court
Williamsburg, VA 23185

- Virginia Track Notes (e-mail notices)

Discussion of various T&F scenarios – opinions
by Boyd

To subscribe free of charge, e-mail Bill Boyd at
hoppyboyd@widomaker.com

Rules comparison is a good source when you're trying to keep all three rulebooks straight. Case book scenarios covers all three rulebooks (USATF; NCAA and NFHS) and information on safety and liability issues.

Safety Considerations

- Eyes on the circle or arc at all times
- Supervise warm-ups at all times
- Athletes ≠ Retrievers
- Retrievers s p r e a d o u t !
- Side impact - not head on; Discus / Javelin skip
- Stop event w/ compromised safety

1. Number 1 rule is to keep your eyes on the circle or arc at all times especially during warm-ups because the time interval between throws is shorter. It is critical to focus if the event (i.e., weight throw and shot) is indoors and confined to the infield.
2. As officials, we should supervise the warm-up at all times. At the very least, there should be a coach monitoring what is going on.
3. Don't let athletes retrieve; keep them out of sector and adjacent areas cordon off a minimum of 10 feet off sector line and throwing cage. Athletes should look twice at impact area – once as entering the circle/runway and once before initiating a throw.
4. Your retrievers need to spread out; avoid small groups and make sure to have their cell phones turned off!
5. Better to stand to the side of impact rather than head-on. A 10 foot cushion from point of impact is suggested.

Guidelines Prior to Meet

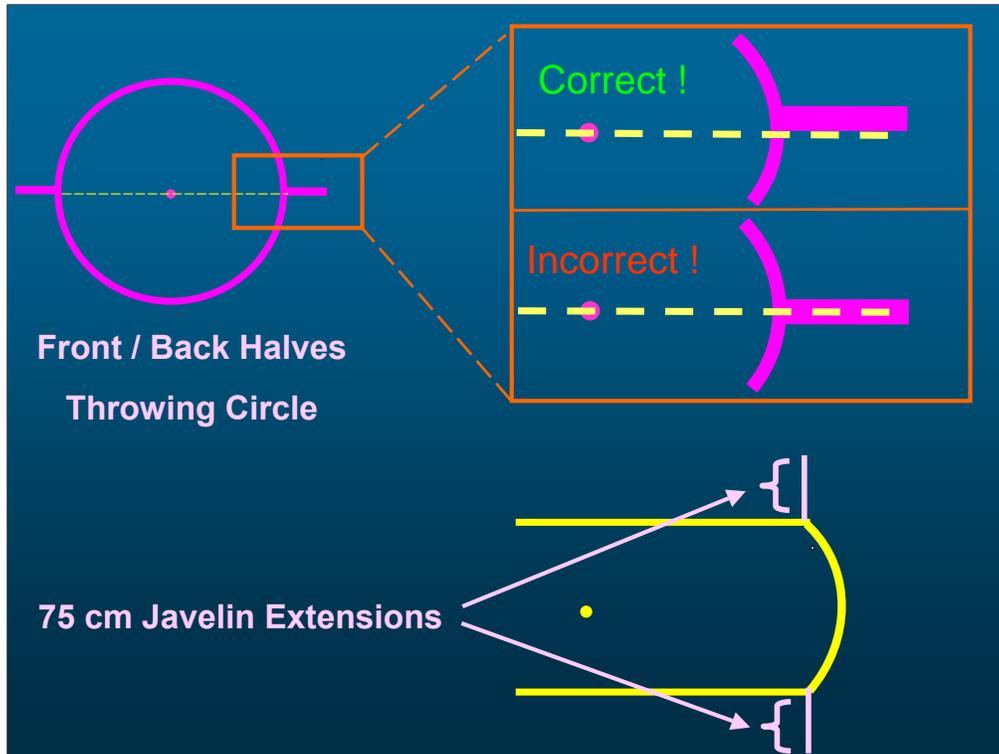
- **Conducting rules?**
- **Officials crew numbers? Volunteers?**
- **How many to the final?**
- **Qualifying mark?**

1. Which rules? Most of the time, this is obvious. But there are some governing bodies which may have their own manual; these bodies may have their own particulars. It is your job to find out their websites **or ask meet management** and get their manuals or find out someone who can get those manuals or provide you with the web site. **Go over NCAA Rules Interpretations. Read the rule book the night before.**
2. Will there be volunteers? **Talk to meet management early (ideally a week before), especially if you head of an event, and make sure the volunteers are there 45 minutes to an hour prior to an event. Find out how long they will be at the event so you won't be short-changed later on.** Instruct the volunteers: (1) Always keep your eye on the ring, (2) Turn your cell phone off, (3) If you want to take a break, take it during **the competition**, not during **warm-up** (the throws come more often during warm-up), and (4) If the event is in the infield, you need to really focus when the running events start -- don't be distracted
4. Are there minimum marks? Any attempt short of minimum mark will not be measured. This is not to be confused with a qualifying mark where all marks are measured for the case where athletes must be added to achieve the correct number of qualifiers designated.
5. Hopefully, you will have volunteers who are not directly involved in the competition (i.e., coaches or parents involved directly with competition).
6. If you are the head official for major competitions, meet with the other officials to find out if there is an assignment that an official is uncomfortable with. Make sure you are in agreement on certain rules and interpretations.

Guidelines - Day of Competition

- Arrive early!
- Center and front / back halves: **Javelin extensions**
- Inspect the cage
- Check the sector
- Distance to the first mark?
- “Zeroed” measuring tapes?

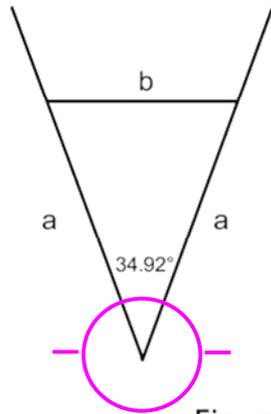
1. Get to the venue early -- a minimum of one hour prior to competition. Check with the Field Event Referee for any special rules or points of emphasis. For example, there was a tree in the hammer sector for NACAC U-25 meet at Trinity University in San Antonio. If hammer hit the tree, the distance was approximated.
2. The center of ring has to be defined for the tape puller. If no marks are in place for defining front and back halves, put one in making sure back edge of mark is even with the center of the ring. If the athlete touches the mark, it's a foul. **Note the diagram on the next slide!**
3. Check for any holes or loosely-anchored netting. Make sure that any gaps between the cage and doors are covered with netting. If there are no holes or loose netting, grab the netting with your hand and extend it towards you. Pull on the netting (with a good amount of force) to see how far it is displaced toward the outside of the cage. Add an additional 3 feet to that point and mark the ground with a red line or stripe. This is the buffer zone; place chairs or stand a minimum of three feet beyond this distance.
4. If you're maintaining the buffer zone, then athletes are **keeping their hands off the netting. This is a big problem for high school and junior high athletes. Also, make sure there is enough slack so that the netting won't cause the implement to bounce back toward the athlete.**
5. 34.92 degrees sounds complicated, but it is not. Measure the distance from the center of the ring. The distance across the sector should be 60% of the distance from the center of the ring. **Note the diagram on page 9!**
6. It is a good idea to know the distance to the first mark. Invariably, athletes will ask you.
7. Check that your measuring tape is zeroed. The last thing you want is to get midway through the competition and then find out your tape is not zeroed.



1. If no marks are in place for defining front and back halves, put these marks in making sure the back edge of mark is even with the center of the ring. Touch the mark, and it's a foul! **If you notice that this item has been done incorrectly, please correct it yourself. Place tape down and use it as your demarcation line for front and back halves.**

2. Make sure the 75 cm extensions of the javelin arc are clearly demarcated.

Establishing Sector for Hammer, Weight, Shot and Discus



a (meters)	b (meters)
5	3
10	6
15	9
20	12
25	15
50	30
75	45

Figure 9—Establishing the Sector

Amended from the NCAA
2009-2010 Men's & Women's Cross Country & Track & Field Rules, p.29

Guidelines Day of Competition Continued

- **Mark of the day?**
- **Warm up**
 - Heavy and light
 - Number of attempts
- **Athletes in another events?**
- **Records?**
- **Rules**

1. Just use the implements that have the legal mark for the day for warm-up. **Can athletes take implements back immediately after the competition or do the implements need to be checked back in? If implements are pooled during competition, then the athletes who do not make the finals cannot take their implements back until the finals are over! Both shot and discus are pooled for both district and region meets. "Pooled" means ANYBODY CAN USE ANYBODY ELSE'S implement.**
2. No warm-up with implements heavier or lighter than those approved. This can be problem in high school meets. Sometimes the schedule has the varsity girls shot or discus preceding the boys, and if you don't have all the girls implements put away or picked up, invariably some boy will pick up and warm-up with a girls shot or discus.
3. Maximum of two warm-ups in the discus. In javelin, close the arc to retrieve after X number of attempts. Use a cone to designate the ring or runway is closed, or use a "bouncer" or "traffic cop" at ring or runway to watch warm-ups.

Notes continued on next page

Guidelines Day of Competition

Notes Continued

4. Early in the outdoor season, with meets outside of championships, a large number of competitors, and only 15 or 20 minute warm-up time, consider going to one warm up per entry into ring with five to six minutes left prior to competition so that the athletes toward the end of the line will get an opportunity. Ideally, you want each competitor to have 3 to 4 warm-ups and a minimum of two. Assume 20 to 30 seconds per throw. Announced the time remaining in warm-up, giving at least give a five-minute warning.
5. During competition, know the time it takes to complete a given flight. What is the average time per attempt? This is important when you're instructing an athlete who is going to be excused. You want to give them an idea of when the flight will be completed. This area is complicated also by the rules. Different rulebooks, different rules. You need to have some idea about how long each athlete takes on average per attempt so that you can estimate how long a flight will take. This estimated total time for the flight is important when you need to inform the athlete when he or she needs to be back. **Always write down the time the athlete leaves and have them check in and out with either the flight coordinator or head field judge. Explain the rules and how you will enforce them.**
6. Are the records listed on the sheet? Talk to the athlete who is close to the record. Inform him or her, if he or she breaks the record, are they comfortable competing without their implement for the next round if they don't have a backup implement. Remember, implement should be taken for inspection immediately. What if the implement is not back in time for the next round? Do they have a backup? Let them know ahead of time.
7. Go over rules for all ages at the beginning of the season. Inform athletes of any major changes in the rules. Always go over rules for youth and high school competition. In major championships, you may want to keep it to a minimum, noting only points of emphasis.

Guidelines During Competition

- Call athletes by groups of three
- Measure impact from side
- Speed = marker, tape puller and flight coordinator!
- “Turnabout is fair play”
- Flag coordination
- “Silence is golden”

1. “Up, On Deck, On Hold.” Call the athlete “Up” again, and the clock starts. Use either last name or first; it doesn’t matter.
2. Marking the implement from the side along the sector line (as opposed to within the sector) is critical for both the javelin and discus; it is not as important for the hammer and shot put.
3. The speed of the event is predominately determined by three persons in the long throws: marker, tape puller and flight coordinator! Younger, presumably more agile officials should be in these first two positions. This point is critical: there should be a rhythm to the throws. The throws in and of themselves are deliberate in nature (can be slow-paced) and maybe more deliberate for male athletes than females. The last thing you want is to slow down the event even more because the tape puller is moving slowly to the circle and the marker in the field is dragging.
4. Officials in and around the cage during competition should work in the field as retrievers during between flight warm-ups. Retrievers during the competition should take a break. Experienced officials should know this. This unspoken rule is especially important on hot, humid days.

Notes continued on next page

Guidelines During Competition: Notes Continued

5. There should only be one set of flags at the circle or arc; this avoids confusing situations. Other circle judges should use a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down.” Flag person for the circle is usually assigned to judge the back of the ring. Sector foul means white flag initially at circle then red. Foul in circle means red; no need for red in sector. **Keep the flag up – fair or foul – until sector workers acknowledge it.**
6. For large meets (collegiate or USATF Championships), you want to avoid as much verbal communication. Officials should let the flags do the talking. Calling the ring out loud probably should be reserved for youth meets and high school. Keeping distractions to a minimum for athlete is really important.

Positions

- Head Event Judge
- Tape Reader
- Recorder
- Tape Puller
- Circle Judges
- Sector Judges
- Flight Coordinator
- Marker / Stabber
- Retriever
- Timer
- Landing Judge (Jav)

1. Head Event Judge – 3rd circle judge; 2nd reader and/or recorder.
2. Tape Reader announces the measurement – positioned on the left-side of the circle so that numbers on tape are facing him or her.
3. Recorder – on right-side of impact area and repeats announced measurement.
4. Tape puller – positioned to the right-side of the sector – moves quickly as exiting the circle; avoids standing in the ring under any weather condition – wet / muddy / dry. Sweeps ring occasionally. Pulls tape through the center of the circle or runway spot in the javelin. The tape puller does not pull tape tight until marker has the mark.
5. Circle judges – one on right, left and back of circle. One judge to check foot faults. One judge to check form (shot put). One judge observing if athlete has exited circle / runway before implement makes contact
6. Sector judges – stand to the outside of sector line to call fouls.

Note: Positions highlighted in red refer to officials/volunteers that control the pace of the event!

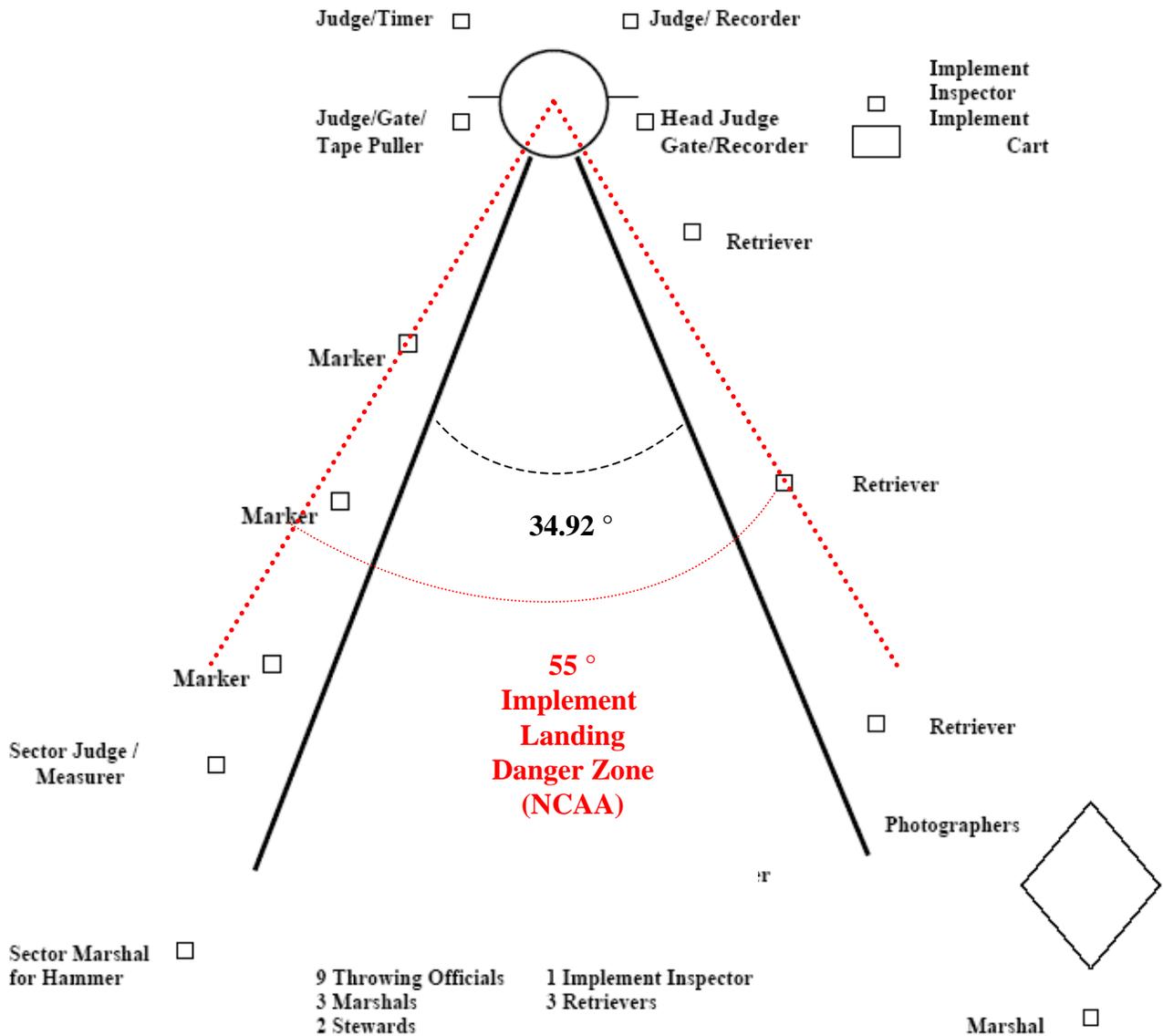
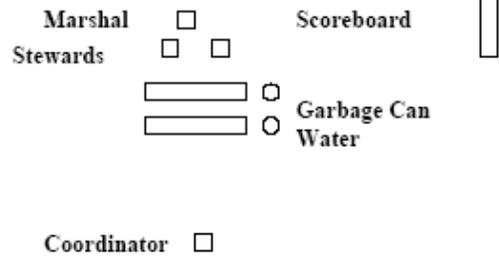
POSITIONS NOTES CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Position Notes Continued

7. Flight Coordinator (FC) - informs athlete of throwing order, calls athletes up, announces "Pass," and signals time remaining for warm-up. FC is also the traffic cop (especially with no marshals!). He or she controls the rhythm of the event. It's important that he or she makes sure for each attempt that the sector people are ready and that there's no one running across the sector. To keep the event going, FC needs to inform the athletes to let him or her know that they will be passing before they are called up! Sometimes athletes are waiting on an implement to be retrieved. If that is the case, don't call him or her up right away.
8. Marker / Stabber - marks the implement's first point of impact and/or holds tape for the initial measurement. It is important to be to the side of sector for javelin and discus. Assumes all attempts are fair until told otherwise! **And even if the throw is foul, know where the mark was made. This is important in case there is a protest. If protested, you need to measure the throw anyway in case the foul decision is overturned (i.e., the protest is upheld).**
9. Retriever - carries implements out of impact area.
10. Timer - positions the clock in clear view for athletes and signals to Head Judge if athlete fails to initiate attempt within the allotted time. Instruct the timer not to give a verbal warning if the athlete has started their attempt. Raise the flag, though, no matter what, just in case the athlete aborts. Just because the athlete has started his attempt does not mean you abort the timing. If athlete aborts, then it is a foul on time. Attempt starts with the motion.
11. Landing Judge - stands to the side of sector and determines if javelin lands metal head (point) first. He or she does not act as marker!
12. The positions in red are "time-sensitive" positions; these people can make the event go at a decent pace or they can slow the event down.
13. **For university conference championships, state high school meets, and ideally for district and regional high school meets, you want to have at least two readers and three recorders. Redundancy is important!**

Hammer

January, 2006



USATF National Officials Committee Training Monograph Series

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Hammer Notes Page 1

1. Have a ladder ready in case Hammer gets caught in cage. If you feel that the safety of anyone is compromised by the position of the hammer caught in the cage, take the hammer down immediately. Let the athletes and coaches know upfront. Safety first.
2. Know the settings of the gates for left- and right-handed throwers.
3. When checking in the throwers, find out who is left-handed because the panels will need to be altered for them. If you can arrange it put the lefties consecutively in a preliminaries. For college finals, though, you must keep the order. Doing this means less work for the crew.
4. In the NCAA rulebook, it states that “any area of flagging shall identify an implement landing danger zone of at least 55 degrees from the center of the throwing circle.”
5. Tape puller is on the right sector; athletes enter from the left.
6. Markers in the hammer don't necessarily have to be to the side; can be in sector – not as critical as in discus.

Hammer Notes Page 2

NCAA Positions of the gates for right-handed thrower

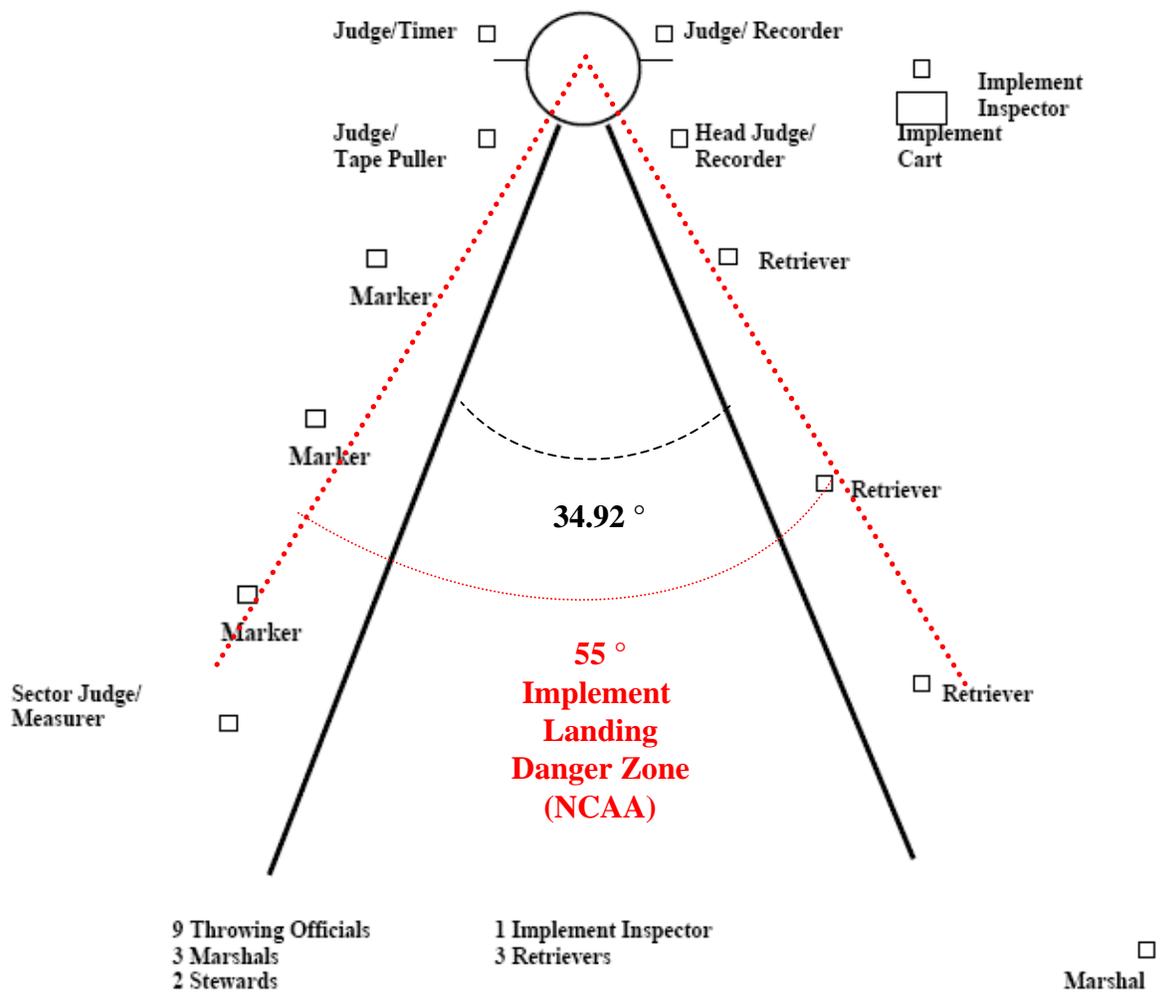
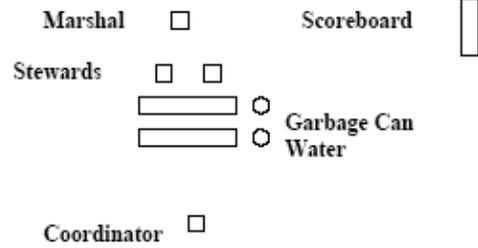
1. Right movable panel (gate) is open so that it is parallel to the right sector line; it should be a minimum of 2.85 meters from the sector line but **“may be positioned closer to the sector line in cases in which the facility has the throwing area in close proximity to other event venues”**
2. Left movable panel (gate): the non-pivot end is as perpendicular to the sector line as possible and is not greater than 1.5 meters into the sector and not less than 6 meters away from the center of the circle.

Discus

January, 2006



N



USATF National Officials Committee Training Monograph Series

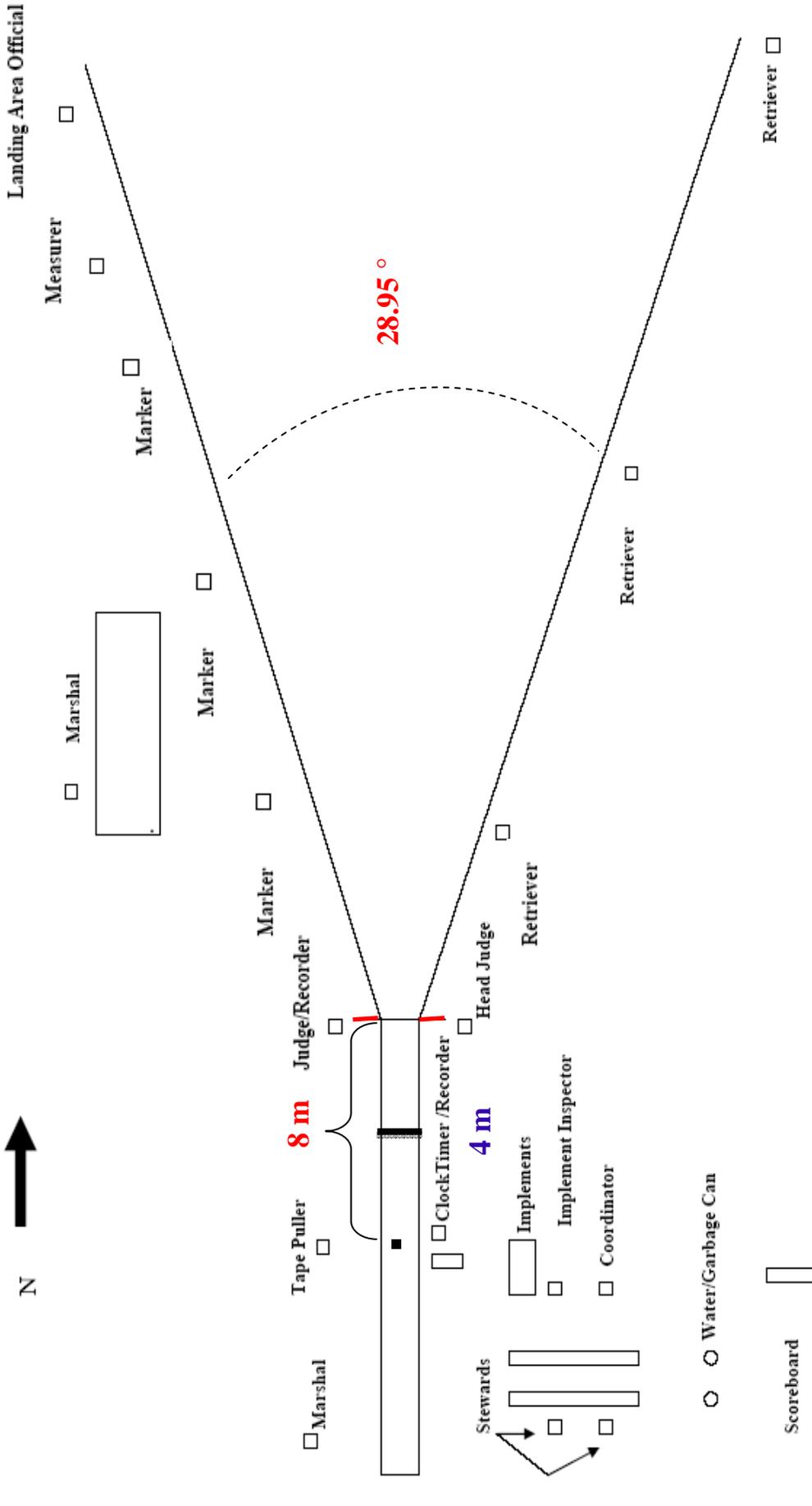
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Discus Notes

1. I would strongly suggest that those marking in the field be to the side and not in the sector, especially in the discus. If you're limited to two officials in the sector as markers, I would still keep them outside of the sector and have them go to the mark. You must guard the sector lines especially if the discus hits close to the line. Nine times out of ten, you probably have nothing to worry about but you want to be in position that one time out of ten. Now this positioning means you have to go farther to make the mark, but it's worth it to be in position for the one that is close to the sector line.
2. These positions are my recommendations when I am the head official. Defer to the head official when it comes to positioning.
3. **Decathletes are always going for points and, though it is a rare occurrence, a discus can hit the cage and fall in the sector. This is a legal throw and sometimes that is all these athletes can get (i.e., if they have fouled on their previous attempts, this may be their only legal mark). Make the sure decathletes know this rule and exit from the back half of the circle.**

Javelin

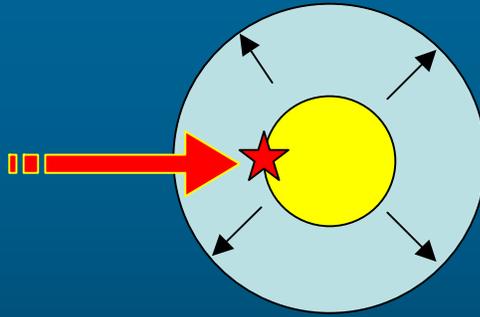
January, 2006



Javelin Notes

1. Markers for javelin should be kept to one side for accurate marking of point of impact and **assume all throws are good unless told by the landing judge. He or she should have an idea where to mark, NOT whether the javelin landed flat or not!**
2. **When you mark you look for the closest point where the mark changes from grass to sod.**
3. **EXTENSIONS shown in red; 4 meter line– athlete has “exited runway” when behind this line (USATF rule; proposed for NCAA)**
4. Markers can be on the same side as measuring tape.
5. Keep measuring tape on the opposite side as athletes to avoid athletes tripping over tape. **Arc judge picks up tape after measurement and brings behind his or her feet; this is to avoid having the tape in the middle of the runway.**
6. Landing Judge has to make an effort to be as perpendicular to the point of impact as possible. That means being in the right place at the right time. **In the warm-ups watch the athletes – how long are they throwing the javelin and to which side of the sector are they favoring? One of the most difficult judgment calls in track and field is determining whether or not a heptathlete’s throw is flat or not. The javelin is often, but not always, the weakest of the seven events for heptathletes. With the first of the three throws there is often no question that the throw is fair (i.e., not flat) because the heptathletes are trying to get points for themselves and, if it’s a conference meet, points for their teams. IT IS OFTEN THOSE SECOND AND THIRD THROWS WHERE YOU’RE HAVING THE CLOSE CALLS!!**
7. If you have enough retrievers (i.e., three to four) have them relay the implements back.
8. Javelin thrower will want to “stick,” or pick, or loft the javelin before throwing full tilt. Consider sticking or lofting in a U-shaped pattern with official at the corners or if you have enough room have them go as one big wave. **But make sure sticking or lofting is no more than 10 to 15 feet. Otherwise, tell them to wait until the runway is open for bona fide throws.**
9. With regard to “calling the flats,” from most difficult to least difficult, the order is the following: heptathletes, open women, decathletes and open men.
10. One of the worst situations that can happen to a landing judge is for a javelin to go over your head and land flat. If you are out of position, you have no choice but to give the athlete the benefit of the doubt and call it a fair throw.
11. If at all possible, ask meet management to do any mowing around the runway at least 2 days in advance of the competition, and to clear any grass clippings from the runway.
12. For safety reasons, one suggestion is that the flight coordinator instructs the athletes that during the competition, the only persons with a javelin is the person up, or the persons up and on deck.

Putting
Direction



Outer ring is the splash mark
Inner ring is the actual measured mark

Amended from [Safety and Common Sense in the Throws Version 2](#)
Winter 2009 Edition by Joe Showker

Shot Put Notes

1. The most obvious note from a safety standpoint in the shot is that there is no cage. You must keep athletes who are not putting at least five feet away from the throwing area. All officials should face the circle at all times.
2. The younger the shot putters, the more you have to watch form. **Remember it's the shot put, not shot throw!**
3. CHECK THE SHOTS JUST TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO DIMPLES OR DEPRESSIONS WHERE ATHLETE COULD GET A GRIP. This should be the inspector of implements' responsibility, not yours.
4. **AS SHOWN IN THE ABOVE FIGURE:** When marking the shot with many surfaces including clay or large, loose gravel you will get the double ring phenomenon. Make sure to avoid marking the outermost ring; this ring is caused by the displaced clay or gravel from the initial impact. Always mark the innermost ring; that's where the true mark is located.

Minimum Number of Officials

Hammer

	MINIMUM	NORMAL	MAJOR EVENT
HEAD	1/2	1/2	1
DOORS	1/3	1/2	1/2
RECORDER /COORDINATOR	1/3	1/2	1/2
TAPE PULLER	1/2	1/2	1
CIRCLE/TAPE READER	1/3	1/2	1
FIELD TAPE	1/2	1/2	1
MARKER	1	1 1/2	2
RETRIEVER/SECTOR	1/2	1	2
FIELDLYNX		1/2	2
TOTAL	4	6	11

The fractions indicate shared duties (i.e. in the javelin head event judge may serve as head judge and flight coordinator).

Numbers circled in red indicate the minimum of officials needed to run the event safely. As a head official, this number is important to keep in mind because more than not you are faced with this problem.

Discus

	MINIMUM	NORMAL	MAJOR EVENT
HEAD	-	1/2	1
RECORDER /COORDINATOR	1/2	1/2	1
TAPE PULLER	1/2	1/2	1
CIRCLE/TAPE READER	1	1	1
FIELD TAPE	1/2	1	1
MARKER	1	1 1/2	2
RETRIEVER/SECTOR	1/2	1/2	2
FIELDLYNX		1/2	2
TOTAL	4	6	11

Javelin

	MINIMUM	NORMAL	MAJOR EVENT
HEAD	1/2	1	1
RECORDER /COORDINATOR	1/2	1/2	1
TAPE PULLER	1/2	1/2	1
ARC/TAPE READER	1/2	1/2	1
FIELD TAPE	1/2	1/2	1
MARKER	1 1/2	1 1/2	2
POINT/FLAT	1/2	1	1
RETRIEVER/SECTOR	1/2	1	2
FIELDLYNX/BOARD		1/2	2
TOTAL	5	7	12

shared duties

Shot Put

	MINIMUM	NORMAL	MAJOR EVENT
HEAD	1/4	1/2	1
RECORDER /COORDINATOR	1/4	1/2	1/2
TAPE PULLER	1/4	1/2	1
CIRCLE/TAPE READER	1/4	1/2	1/2
FIELD TAPE	1/3	1/2	1
MARKER	1/3	1/2	2
RETRIEVER/SECTOR	1/3	1	2
FIELDLYNX		-	2
TOTAL	2	4	10

Keep In Mind...

- Eliminate problems before they occur by being practical, hands-on, and **POSITIVE**. By thinking ahead, you can anticipate problems.
- Your approach should be to ensure fair and safe competition not to disqualify athletes.
- Make your calls quickly and decisively so there's no confusion. Don't explain your call unless athlete asks you directly. Keep the event moving.
- Know the rules and if you have *any* doubts, look it up in the rulebook.
- If you're the head official, monitor the volunteers. Often they are young, tend to group together and easily lose their focus.
- Officials have never been and will never be the show; the athletes are! The best crews know that silence is golden and tend to be **Invisible**.

My Selected Equipment List

Box Cutters

Broom

Clipboard

Cones (pylons)

Freezer Bags

Garbage Bags

Gloves (tape puller; retrieving)

Highlighters

Hip Numbers

Key Rings (to repair measuring tapes)

Markers

Official's Helpers

Pencils (sharpened, of course)

Rule Books

Record Forms (www.usatf.org)

Stopwatch

Sunscreen

Tapes

Adhesive
Masking

Thumbtacks

Towels

Measuring Tapes

330 ft / 100 m Fiberglass and
Steel
100 ft / 30 m

1. Some of these items should be provided by meet management (and that is really their duty and obligation). But I, personally, don't trust management to always have these items.
2. Hip numbers are for javelin throwers to use for marking the runway in rainy conditions. Hold down the hip numbers with thumbtacks.
3. Thumbtacks to hold down measuring tape parallel to runway in rainy conditions.

Acknowledgements

- **USATF Officials Training Subcommittee**
Shirley Connors, Chair of the
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Chester Bradley