

## **NOC National Meet Training 2 – Athlete Forum with Kara & George October 29, 2025**

### **/ Status Update Summary**

#### **Meeting Overview**

- The session focused on improving coordination between officials and athletes to streamline meet operations, clarify rules, and enhance athlete experience across track, field, and para events.
- Acknowledged ongoing training series, upcoming clinics, and gratitude to organizers and panelists.
- Emphasis on communication, consistency with World Athletics rules, and addressing TV-driven timing constraints.

#### **Scheduling, Call Room, and Warm-up Logistics**

##### **Call Room Structure and Scheduling:**

- Officials prefer minimal, essential instructions delivered in Call Room 1; athletes focus on warm-up once on field.
- World Athletics-influenced call room windows: typical guidance cited was 90 minutes for high jump/pole vault, ~45 minutes for throws/horizontals, with 5 minutes for introductions.
- Athletes requested clarity and advance publication of warm-up timelines; suggestion to provide timely digital access (e.g., QR codes) to meet manuals/schedules.
- Pole Vault Warm-up Preferences:
  - ❖ Athletes prefer being brought to the field 90 minutes prior, enabling continuous warm-up (jog, dynamic stretch) and full 60-minute runway warm-up without interruption.

##### **Action pathway:**

- Women's Track & Field Chair acknowledged and will work with Meet Management and Athlete Commission to incorporate athlete preferences into schedules.
- Officials affirmed they will enforce the agreed schedule once set.

**For Logistics:**

- Additional time and space needed in call room for wheelchair safety checks (frames, wheels, helmets) and amputee standing height (MASH) checks.
- Dual Call Room 1 setup used effectively; accessibility to Call Room 2 at venues like Hayward was workable.
- Noted added complexity moving field chairs/frames to event sites; schedule generally accommodated needs.

**Starters, Starters Assistants, and Start-Line Clarity**

- Starters Assistants Role:
  - Responsibility for lane/position placement and minimal instructions; typical arrival at line 5–6 minutes pre-race for block setup; brief lane/waterfall guidance for distance events.
- Athlete Feedback (800m):
  - Occasional confusion over start-line colors (e.g., 800 lines differing by track); request for explicit confirmation for all athletes before the gun, especially under TV time pressure.

**Field Event Instructions and Warm-up Management**

- **Instruction Delivery:**
  - Preferred in Call Room; limit to essentials (safety hazards, lead official, access to foul images via lead).
- **Warm-up End Control:**
  - Athletes asked for proactive designation of the last warm-up attempt to avoid unfair cutoffs when the clock hits zero.
  - Officials' practice:
    - Provide time checkpoints (20/10/5 minutes).
    - Place an official near end of line to mark last warm-up attempt.
    - Keep circles/runways open until TV mandates shutdown; communicate changes promptly.

- **Throws/Hammer Warm-up Structure:**

- Athletes suggested fixed warm-up counts (world model: guaranteed two) to reduce overly long warm-ups (e.g., 45 minutes deemed excessive for hammer).
- USATF often provides a warm-up window; some officials open additional warm-ups in order until time expires.

**Protests: Process, Timing, and Communication**

- **Horizontal Jumps (Long/Triple):**

- Sequence: Athlete exits pit before marker enters; foul indicated by indicator; EDM measures; mark covered after measurement.
- “Dark mark” practice:
- Officials measure and record all attempts, including fouls, on a separate sheet to preserve marks for potential successful protests.
- Athletes were unfamiliar with “dark mark”; request to announce this practice during Call Room instructions for transparency.

- **Prism/Runway Control:**

- Maintain prism in place and physically block runway/circle until measurement is complete to prevent unsafe premature entry.

- **Timing and Access:**

- General protest window: 30 minutes after event; appeals add another 30 minutes, often extending beyond awards.
- Crossing the track to confer with coaches can be constrained; emphasize communication with the lead official if a hold is needed during measurement phase.

- **Women’s 800m Concerns:**

- Repeated incidents of impeding/falls with limited DQs; perception of insufficient enforcement of Rule 163 (impeding).
- Meet management committed to reviewing protocol, timing, video availability, and jury/referee expertise to improve fairness and consistency.
- Head umpire noted decisions depend on video substantiation; fewer cameras at nationals versus worlds can limit evidence.

- For Video Gaps:
  - No contracted video recording for Para races at championships led to adjudication errors; underscores the need for video coverage parity.

### **Communication, Professionalism, and Athlete Address**

- Addressing Athletes:
  - **Preference for last names** for professionalism, clarity, and respect; **avoid gendered prefixes (Mr./Ms./Mrs.)**, acknowledging non-binary athletes.
  - **Officials should ask and remember correct pronunciation**; seen as respectful and appreciated.
  - **International practice favors minimal verbal communication with nonverbal cues and eye contact on field.**
- Conduct and De-escalation:
  - Officials should maintain composure under athlete stress; lower voice, avoid matching intensity, and remember athletes' investment.
  - Continuous rule study and observing best practices at diverse meets improve officiating quality.

### **Rule Clarifications and Alignment with World Athletics**

- **Rulebook Unification:**
  - Strong support for adopting World Athletics rules domestically; field event rules are largely aligned already.
  - Plan to fully align track rules, with exceptions only for youth/masters; para already follows WPA with youth/masters exceptions.
  - Consistency reduces confusion for elite athletes accustomed to world meets.
- **Specific Rule Topics:**
  - **Triple Jump:** Touching the ground with the trailing ("sleeping") leg during any phase is not a failure; lingering miscalls persist—reinforce rule awareness.
  - **Pole Vault:** Once standards are confirmed and clock starts, no further change; officials should confirm potential changes before starting clock, especially for consecutive attempts; safety concerns due to wind considered rare but noted.

- **Implements and Body Fluids:** Spitting/any application of body fluids on implements prohibited; perspiration is permitted. Observed lack of enforcement internationally; call for consistent enforcement due to health concerns.
- **Starts and False Starts:**
  - If an athlete raises a hand to abort a start, they must have a legitimate reason or risk a yellow card for conduct; repeated issues can lead to DQ.
  - False start protests at elite meets:
  - Athletes may run under protest; start referee reviews waveforms/video post-race to determine flinch vs. continuous movement.
  - Clear false starts won't be overturned; close cases should be protested promptly.

## Resources and Best Practices

- **Best Practices Library:**
  - Officials encouraged to use the Best Practices website (~200 documents) for procedures/techniques not covered in the rulebook and provide feedback to improve content.
- **Safety Emphasis:**
  - ***Officials should remain seated in field events unless required*** (flight coordinator, field markers) to minimize interference and maintain athlete focus.
  - Clear safety notes at venues (e.g., hazards near specific runways/cages) are essential in call room briefings.

## Noted Events and Training Announcements

- **Upcoming clinics highlighted** (Referee Scenarios, World Athletics Officiating, Implement Inspection: Javelin complexities).
- Training series and annual meeting logistics mentioned; costs and dates shared during the call.

## Action Items

- Women's Track & Field Chair to coordinate with meet management and Athlete Commission on publishing and honoring athlete-preferred warm-up schedules for pole vault and other events.

- Meet management to review and improve protest/appeal timelines, video coverage (including para), and consistency of DQ enforcement, particularly in women's 800m.
- Officials to add a brief protest primer in Call Room instructions, including explanation of "dark mark" and measurement/hold protocol.
- Clerking team to explore real-time digital access (e.g., QR codes) to meet manuals and schedules for athletes and officials.
- Officiating leadership to advance adoption of World Athletics rules across USATF track events, retaining exceptions only for youth/masters.