

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

## March 2024 Newsletter

### Clerk of the Course—makes a meet run

Want to know what makes a track meet run on schedule and smoothly? It's the Clerk of the Course.

This is the person to which track athletes report prior to their event at first, second or third call. The Clerk checks in the athletes, organizes the heats, checks for hip numbers for FAT timing, provides initial instructions, and sends the athletes to the starting line, or in the case of relays, to their respective exchange zones.

None of this happens on its own. The Clerk is the key official who can make or break a track meet. Meet Directors need to assign a competent, knowledgeable, organized person, who is also patient with high school athletes. The Clerk needs to be familiar with the track and the colors used for start lines and exchange zones. Walking the track prior to the meet is advisable.

The clerking area (reporting area) needs to be adjacent to the track, with sufficient room to stage multiple heats. The Clerk needs heat sheets and should mark off athletes as they check in. Athletes need to remain in the clerking area from the time they report, until they are dispatched to the start line or relay exchange zone.

The Clerk should check uniforms and spikes when the runners report. The Clerk should check to see that runners have a hip number for FAT timing, and have some extra hip numbers available for those who show up without a hip number, or when the hip numbers fall off.

The Clerk provides runners the necessary information they need at the start line, including the starting line (color), commands used by the starter, whether the race is in lanes, and where the break line is located for events not run in lanes. For relay events, the clerk needs to send runners to the appropriate exchange zone, with instructions on the exchange zone colors.

It is critical the Clerk dispatches the runners to the start line in a timely manner. A best practice would be to have a holding area near the start line for the runners. By having a holding area near the start/finish line the clerk or the starter can pull the runners to the track for the next race, thus keeping the meet on schedule, and running smoothly.

### Umpiring—an exception to have them

Unfortunately, during the regular season, we rarely have umpires. If we do, it is typically a team coach/assistant coach who is present around the exchange zones for relays, or manning the break line. At most other times, no umpires are present or available.

Historically, the SDHSAA had tasked school ADs to be umpires for the state meet. Last year, the SDHSAA took a significant step forward by hiring four registered track officials to serve as the lead umpire on each of the four curves, using ADs to help cover all eight lanes. The registered official provided guidance to the other umpires.

Hiring additional officials is a step in the right direction which should be continued and expanded in the future. In a perfect world, we would have eight umpires on each curve and at exchange zones (one per lane). If you have a limited number of umpires, place them on curves where runners are in lanes, and move them to exchange zones as needed.

Umpires observe track competitions to report possible rule violations which may give unfair advantage to one runner over others. Umpires report those violations orally and in writing to the Referee, who ultimately determines if a rule violation has occurred. Umpires require a white and yellow flag or paddles to get the attention of the Referee, Starter and meet officials.

The main duty of the umpire is to ensure fair competition. A further duty is to be helpful to athletes, and keep athletes in the competition. Be preventative! Be visible, and remind athletes of such things as exchange zones and break lines.

For races run in lanes, it is violation for a runner to step on or over the inside line of their lane with three or more consecutive steps. This is interpreted as either, or a combination of both feet. So, it could be left foot, right foot, left foot, or it could be left foot, left foot, left foot. These types of infractions most likely occur on a curve.

This rule also applies to relay runners, so in addition to determining if the baton was in the exchange zone at the time of the exchange, watching the feet is also important.

For hurdle races, umpires should be spread out and stationed along the hurdle course (100, 110 or 300), to watch for a trail leg/foot clearance below the top rail of the hurdle, to assure the runner traverses the hurdle in their lane, does not deliberately knock down **or displace a** hurdle and does not impede or interfere with another hurdler (a flying hurdle can interfere with another runner). The new wording of displacing a hurdle means not altering the original plane of the hurdle (the hurdle cannot be tipped from 90 degrees).

For relay races, the umpire would cover the exchange zone to determine the outgoing runner is entirely within the exchange zone, and the baton is passed from hand to hand within the zone. If the baton is dropped, it can only be recovered legally. Additionally, an umpire needs to assure no runner (incoming or outgoing) impedes another team's runner.

Finally, umpires, ideally stationed throughout the race-course, are responsible for observing the running of the race to assure runners are not interfered with. Any time a runner falls, an umpire should know how/why they got to the ground. Similar to basketball officiating we need to know how/why a runner fell.

If it is caused by the action of another runner, the umpire needs to write up the potential infraction immediately. Don't wait until the race is over, do it immediately, while the memory is fresh. Provide the Referee as much information as possible, and note if another official may have knowledge of the situation. Every umpire who observes the action should provide the Referee with information they observed.

If you work a meet with umpires, spend time with them so they understand the basics and what they need to be aware of, what they should watch, and how to report that to the Referee.

## **USATF Events in South Dakota This Summer**

The Dakotas Association (North & South Dakota) of the USATF officially announced the dates of the Dakotas Association and the USATF Region 8 Junior Olympics Championships.

- **June 7-8, 2024**, Aberdeen, SD  
[USATF Dakotas Jr Olympics Championship, Open, Masters Track & Field & Racewalk](#)
- **July 4-7, 2024**, Aberdeen, SD  
[USATF Region 8 Junior Olympics Championship](#)

If you would like to be an official or help with either or both events, please contact the association by email: [communications@dakotas.usatf.org](mailto:communications@dakotas.usatf.org).

Considering building your track & field/cross country officiating resume, by joining USATF. USATF sponsors and sanctions cross country, track & field, road racing and extreme racing competitions at the youth, adult and master's levels. Check it out at <https://www.usatf.org>.

## **Report: Officials Starter's Clinic in Spirit Lake, Iowa**

Six South Dakota officials joined several Iowa officials for the Iowa Association of Track Officials (IATO) sponsored starter's clinic in Spirit Lake, IA on Sunday, January 7. In addition to a starter's clinic, the IATO clinicians covered hurdle rules, exchange zone violations and basic track umpiring. 2024 rule changes regarding starts and displacement of a hurdle were discussed at length. Drake Relays and Iowa State Meet officials Bill Neal, Mike Stanley, Jim Nichols and Terry Thompson served as clinicians. Jan Cain, Eric Foss, Keith Kusler, Dana Nelson, Brian Ryken and Tony Waterman were the South Dakota officials in attendance. All agreed the clinic was well worth their time.

## **T&F Things for Sale or Things Wanted**

Kevin Nelson has a size large, South Dakota T&F/XC Officials Pullover for sale. Kevin is asking \$20 for the pullover. [Kevin.Nelson@k12.sd.us](mailto:Kevin.Nelson@k12.sd.us)

Dana Nelson has a 22-caliber starter pistol for sale. The pistol was acquired from Dean Mann, and works well. Dana is asking \$125 for the pistol. [Dana.Nelson0007@hotmail.com](mailto:Dana.Nelson0007@hotmail.com).

## **Mentorships: Who wants a mentor—who is willing to mentor**

New officials can benefit from going out with a more experienced official, and we can pay a new official a modest fee for their time learning at a meet. This section of the newsletter will be devoted to listing officials who have inquired about being mentored.

- Laura Armstrong of Elkton is interested in being mentored for Cross Country. [laurak.heesch@gmail.com](mailto:laurak.heesch@gmail.com).

## **Various South Dakota Track & Field Web Sites and Links**

The SDCCTFOA Constitution and by-laws may be found at the following website:

- <https://www.sdhsaa.com/Officials/XCTF-Constitution.pdf>

The following links take you to Cross Country Officials and Track/Field Officials pages.

- <https://www.sdhsaa.com/ativity/cross-country-officials/>
- <https://www.sdhsaa.com/ativity/track-field-officials/>
- State Track Meet Schedule: [ATH-TrackField.pdf \(sdhsaa.com\)](#)
- Minutes from the T&F Advisory Committee [XCTF-Minutes.pdf \(sdhsaa.com\)](#)

## **President Tim Casper's report on Advisory Committee topics**

SDCCTFOA President Tim Casper, who also serves as the track and field representative on the SDHSAA Track & Field Advisory Committee, offered several agenda items. As a supplement to the committee minutes, Tim elaborated on the committee discussion.

1. Discussed the newly formed SDCCTFOA:  
Members were appreciative of efforts establish an association
2. FAT – what is the plan if we have issues and FAT is not working:  
Go to hand held time – however times do not count for top 24. Field events still count.
3. 2024 Track and Field Rule Changes: 11 new rules for 2024 were discussed, see:  
<https://www.nfhs.org/sports-resource-content/track-and-field-rules-changes-2024/>

4. South Dakota Deviation from the NFHS rules –Removing the Girls 100m hurdle distance and reversing the 200m dash deviations:
  - \* 200 m dash reversal. Numerous schools are getting their venues updated, however if we do not reverse it at the State Meet, why are we reversing it during regular season.
  - \* Hurdle deviation (distance to 1st hurdle, distance between, last hurdle to finish line, for girls 100m hurdles) Should this event be the same for all girls and all states? However, it will take some time to implement this change due to existing track markings.
  - \* If SD continues these deviations the state will not have representation and will continue to have no vote or say with the NFHS
5. Recommendation on Track-Field/XC official's compensation
  - \* The fee is all over the place; a published guide would be a beneficial reference tool. Sports Officials Advisory Council has this topic on their agenda to work on and survey for reference. It is not only a problem for track and field, but also for softball.
6. Recommend two certified officials (Starter and Meet Referee/Assistant Starter) for SDHSAA sanctioned XC meets. Currently only one is mandatory.
  - \* Better coverage for the entire meet and a certified official at 100-meter mark for falls.Question: Are all XC meets in SD sanctioned by the SDHSAA (during season)
7. Waterfall Starts vs One-Turn Stagger Starts.
  - \* Committee did not make a motion on waterfowl starts as the state meet is run with a one-turn stagger.

## **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.

## **Very Important as we move into our 2024 T/F Season**

Officials, Coaches, and Athletic Directors...Please take some time to familiarize yourself with all the links within the following.... SDHSAA Track and Field Page.... SDCCTFOA Page

[Track & Field – SDHSAA](#)

[Track & Field Officials – SDHSAA](#)