

RULES FOR MULTI- JURISTIDICION COMBINED EVENTS



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Part of the USATF National Officials Monograph Series on how to officiate. Each monograph covers the various techniques for each officiating assignment. These monographs are intended for more in depth understanding of each job. They are intended for both the novice and seasoned official. They cover the real details of the job and how it should be preformed. They summarize various techniques to accomplish the job. These monographs can be copied and used for officials training only.

Can NCAA, USATF, and IAAF Athletes be in the same Combined Event Competition?

Is it possible to run NCAA, USATF, and IAAF athletes in the same Combined Events competition? The events are certainly the same for all, but there are differences. Most of the rules and procedures are similar enough to be compatible, but some are absolutely incompatible. The IAAF has the least restrictive rules with the USATF being very similar while the NCAA has, by far, the most restrictive rules. One approach would be to group the various athletes separately and essentially run more than one competition at a time, simultaneous or one after the other. But for true head to head competition, let's look at other points that must be considered.

Grouping

The NCAA recommends 12 to 18 in a championship group. USATF recommends at least 6 per group, and the IAAF prefers 5 or more and never less than 3. USATF requires that the grouping remains unchanged through the first seven events of the Decathlon and all but the last event in all other Combined Event competitions. The NCAA stipulates that the 5-alive method shall be used for the vertical jumps. The NCAA has additional rules requiring that the entire group be run straight through each field event in an order drawn by lot. That is, all 18 must be given a field event attempt before starting the second round. However, the NCAA does allow the full group to be broken down into sub-groups, by ability if desired, if separate and equal facilities are available for each. The Games Committee would make this determination. To satisfy all, have at least 5 in each group, run 5-alive in verticals and run straight through the groups in the other field events or divide the competitors into equivalent event venues.

Flights: Order of Competing

The NCAA and USATF require that the order of competing is determined by lot and the IAAF allows that procedure but says only that the order may be drawn before each separate event. USATF requires drawing by lot for each event independently. Thus to satisfy all, draw order for each event by independent lot.

Heats and Lane Assignments

The NCAA and USATF require, and the IAAF suggests, that lot determine sections and lane assignments for all races. USATF further stipulates that there should never be less than 4 in a heat and the NCAA says never less than 3. The IAAF allows the Technical Delegate to determine the groups and gives the Combined Events Referee the power to rearrange the groups if it is desirable. The IAAF allows heats to be set up as and when competitors become available from the previous event except for the final race. All three recommend that the leaders going into the final event should run together in the final heat. The NCAA further suggests that all competitors run in a single final section with the Referee designating the alley groups if alleys are used. USATF requires that lane assignment in the final race be by lot. To satisfy all, Assign 4 or more to every heat, draw lanes by lot, and run everyone, or at least the leaders, together in the final event.

Event Interval

All three rulebooks recommend at least 30 minutes between events for any individual athlete, but none requires it. USATF rules require that the approximate time of each event be posted and also recommends that there be at least 10 minutes between flights of the women's hurdles. Both of these recommendations can be waived with the approval of all the competitors. USATF and IAAF both suggest that there be at least 10 hours between finishing the first competitive day and the start of the second while the NCAA does not mention this subject. To satisfy all three give at least 10 minutes between women's hurdle heats, at least 30 minutes between events, and at least 10 hours between finishing one competition day and the start of the next.

Starting Heights and Increments

The NCAA requires the high jump and the pole vault starting heights to be determined by the competitors while the USATF and IAAF are moot on the subject. The NCAA recommends, and the USATF and IAAF requires that the High Jump be raised in strict 3 centimeter increments only and the Pole Vault be raised

in strict 10 centimeter increments only and the NCAA recommends the same. It is simple to satisfy all three, let the competitors determine the starting heights of vertical jumps and then progress in 3 and 10 centimeter increments respectively in the high jump and the pole vault.

Hurdle Placement

The NCAA requires that hurdles are placed in all lanes and hurdles run only in alternate lanes. The IAAF and USATF do not require this, but do not prohibit it. In fact it is common practice. So to satisfy everyone, put hurdles in every lane but run only in every other lane. Note that this would limit you to only 4 people per heat on most tracks.

General Competition Requirements

All allow only three horizontal jumps or throws. All require that each athlete attempt each event in order to be included in the final results, although the NCAA requires that even those athletes who abandon the competition be listed as such in the final results. All three say if an athlete does not start an event, then the athlete is considered to have abandoned the competition and shall not be allowed to participate in any following event or be included in the final placing or scoring. The IAAF requires and the USATF recommends that the event and cumulative scores be announced between events while the NCAA does not require this. So everyone is satisfied if the event results and the combined scores are announced between each event.

Up to this point, you can see that the NCAA and USATF and IAAF rules are compatible enough for all to be easily together in a single competition. But then we come to some sticky points that dictate that a choice must be made of what rules are to be followed.

Time Limits

Normally, all three allow only one minute for attempts in field events. Note that, for consecutive attempts, all three allow 2 minutes to each high jumper and 3 minutes to each pole vaulter. There are no provisions for additional time when there are three or less competitors (or one) remaining in the competition in NCAA but that was changed in both USATF and IAAF as of 2002. In the high jump the time goes to 1.5 minutes and the in the pole vault to 2 minutes with 2 or 3 remaining. When only one remains in the competition the limits are 3 minutes and 5 minutes, respectively. Thus imposing the NCAA rule would change those to 1 minute with three or two remaining and to 2 and 3 minutes with one remaining (i.e. consecutive jump rule would be appropriately used).

Referee Requirements

The NCAA has a specific list of sixteen officials that are required for the combined events. However, the only positions that are Combined Events specific are a Combined Events Referee, a Combined Events Director and a Combined Events Jury. It is assumed that the Combined Events Referee has responsibility over the overall competition and each individual event. However, the USATF rules say a Combined Events Referee may be assigned however, the Running and Field Referees retain their responsibilities over the individual events. IAAF rules state that a Combined Events Referee shall be appointed and that Referee shall have responsibility for the overall competition and for the individual events within the competition. Are the three compatible? No, because the NCAA prohibits any Referee from serving on a Jury or serving as any other official. To make all compatible with the least number of people, appoint a Combined Events Referee, Combined Events Director (Coordinator), and at least 2 others to a Combined Events Jury.

Fouls

The USATF and NCAA both specify a competitor who fouls another competitor in any event shall loss all points gained in that event but shall be permitted to compete in the remaining event(s), unless the referee shall rule that the loss of points is not a sufficient penalty.

False Starts

This is one of the glaring differences for 2002. The USATF and IAAF allow two false starts in any race with disqualification on the third. The NCAA only allows one false start with disqualification on the second. However, starting in 2003 the three rules will become the same as the NCAA. In fact USATF

has allowed the use of the rule starting in 2002 on an experimental basis. With any luck, this would not come up in a competition, but it certainly could and could greatly affect the outcome of the competition. So if the three are run together, the USATF and IAAF athletes must be restricted more than their rules allow. However, there is an out since NCAA athletes may qualify for the National Championships in meets conducted under IAAF rules (Item 7 Qualifying, page 208 of 2001 Rulebook).

Long Throw Measurement

Here is a smaller, but possibly important point. The IAAF requires the long throws to be measured to the lesser centimeter, while the NCCA requires that they be measured to the lesser, even, centimeter (unless an IAAF certified scientific device is being used). There are scoring differences, even in a centimeter, so it would not be fair for some athletes to be in the same head to head competition under one rule and others under other rules. So, to run together, we must score everyone to the shorter even centimeter to satisfy the NCAA even though it slightly restricts the rights of the USATF and IAAF athletes. However, I would recommend that the long throws be measured and recorded to the lesser centimeter so the data is available if ever needed but scored from the lesser even centimeter to satisfy the NCAA rules. Note alternate scores might be appropriate if it would allow an athlete to qualify for a USATF or IAAF meet. These would not be used in the competition scoring but just in determining possible qualifying marks for future competitions.

Scoring if Timing System Fails

All three allow only one system of timing to be used in each event for scoring. However, in USATF and IAAF competitions, if the automatic timing system should fail in a heat not involving the athlete who set a record, it may be used for the record score but not the competition score which would use the manual times. Likewise failures of the automatic timing system in the NCAA during the 800 or 1500 m races does not require hand times to be converted since they are considered comparable.

Tie Breaking

And finally, although it doesn't often happen, the IAAF and USATF have two levels of tie breaking, should that occur in the overall scores in a combined event. The first tie breaker gives the higher place to the athlete that has more points in more events than the tying athlete does. Should that not resolve the tie, then the person that scored the highest point total in any single event shall win the place. If that is a tie, then the second highest scoring event is compared, and so on. The applicable rules are used to break all ties in USATF and IAAF competitions. In contrast, the NCAA does not break any ties in Combined Events. Tied scores are simply reported as ties.

Conclusion

Can NCAA, USATF, and IAAF athletes compete together in a fair, head to head competition? Yes, in two ways as you can see above. By requiring that the USATF and IAAF athletes to follow the more restrictive NCAA rules or by going the opposite route and conducting the meet under the liberal rules of the IAAF. The latter would seem to be the most advantageous to all of the athletes, especially the NCAA athletes as they could take advantage of the more liberal IAAF rules and yet still qualify for national NCAA championships.

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