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# **Officials Training & Certification Clinic Outline and Slides**

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**USA National  
Track & Field Committee**



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## **Officials Training & Certification Clinic**

**National Officials Track & Field Committee**

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### **Clinic Schedule and Content**

09:00	Welcome and Introductions
09:30	Introduction to Officiating - Philosophy & Meet Management
10:00	Officiating Track Events
12:00	Lunch - meal options
1:00	Officiating the Throwing Events
2:15	Officiating the Jumping Events
3:30	Officiating the Race Walking and Long Distance Events
5:00	Summary and Conclusion

# Officials Training & Certification Clinic

## National Officials Track & Field Committee

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## Welcome and Introductions

### Welcome to the Clinic and Packet Contents

The objectives of this clinic are to:

- Help you develop a positive, athlete centered Philosophy of Officiating.
- Develop a proactive approach to officiating practice - seeking to avoid unnecessary fouls.
- Delineate the key differences between the various rules we use.
- Describe basic meet planning, administration and implementation to form the “big picture”.
- Provide an overview of officiating roles, tasks and approaches.
- Be exposed to the variety of officiating situations and future opportunities.
- Prepare the novice official for greater officiating responsibilities.
- Impart and refresh the understanding that we are all involved in an ongoing process of striving to become an even more effective official. Training is a continuous, dynamic process and you can expect to learn from each officiating experience.
- Emphasize that each and every meet is an ‘important meet’ worthy of the best effort from all involved.
- Have Fun! Make sure that this volunteer activity remains a fun activity.

The Clinic approach:

- Your learning objectives are important and we will try to cover your areas of interest.
- The importance of discussing, sharing and developing a positive philosophy of officiating.
- The Instructor's role: to facilitate your learning by presenting knowledge, experience, tips and perspectives.
- The use of a variety of mediums: lecture, discussion groups on case situations, video and general discussions.
- This is an ambitious coverage for one day. Your ultimate competency develops from active officiating.

Clinic ‘ground rules’ - to maximize the day's value to all:

- Participate fully with an open mind.
- In making comments:
  1. Share with the whole group, no side talk.
  2. Stand up and give your name.
  3. Limit comments to one subject - no more than 30 seconds in length.

### Introductions

- State your Name and community.
- State one of your major goals for attending today's clinic.

# Introduction to Officiating – Philosophy and Meet Management

## A. Overview

This section includes an overview of USATF, of officiating and preparations for officiating.

## B. Video Unit - ‘Welcome to USA Track and Field’

## C. Developing a Positive, Athlete-Centered Philosophy of Officiating

1. Roles of the official include:
  - To understand that effective officiating is both art and science - common sense, judgment, integrity and fairness are central to applying the intent of the rules to the situation/circumstances.
  - To assure fair competitions by knowledge of the rules and the exercising of common sense and judgment in impartially applying the rules, considering the circumstances of each situation. No ‘Supercops’ are wanted.
  - Maintaining consistency throughout the competition
  - Understanding the importance of a proactive attitude toward officiating. Before, not during competition.
  - To act and look professional at all times.
2. Never take any action during the competition which may affect its outcome. Your focus should be on a clear report.
3. Officials Code of Ethics.

## D. Rules

1. Separate rules have been developed by the following governing bodies:
  - International Association of Athletics Federations.
  - USA Track & Field.
  - National Collegiate Athletic Association.
  - National Federation of State High School Associations.
2. Do not trust memory. Always check the latest appropriate rule book, and base all actions on the rules. When in doubt, look it up.

## E. USA Track & Field Training and Certification Program

1. ‘**Certification**’ is both a process and an acknowledgment of competency.
2. There are three USATF certification levels: Association, National and Master.
  - **Association:** The entry level, working local meets. The requirements are this clinic attendance and to submit a completed open book rules review.
  - **National:** These officials are qualified to work meets outside of the Association. Requirements are met by completing two (2) years of officiating at the Association level, 10 meet practicums, submitting a letter with a meet resume, passing the rules review and requesting in writing to have their advancement reviewed and approved by the Pacific Northwest Track & Field Association’s Officiating Subcommittee.

- **Master:** These officials are able to take charge of an event at a national championship and the qualification is reserved for those with highly developed officiating competency. After five years of certification, a National level official may apply for Master's status. The official submits written recommendations from two current Master level officials, a resume summarizing meets and assignments demonstrating three years of progressively challenging experiences at National level, passing the rules review, providing service, demonstrating competency at leading an event, and securing the approval by the Pacific Northwest Track & Field Association's Officiating Subcommittee.
3. Your initial certification training to Association and National Levels involves this class, testing and a practicum.
    - Complete the class and submit the completed general rules review and certification data form to Association Certification Chair to become an **Association** Level USA Track & Field Official.
    - Complete all practical experience requirements over a 2-year period for a **National** Level of Certification, along with a resume and letter requesting the change.

#### **F. Meet Planning and Pre-Meet Management -Understanding the Big Picture**

1. The Games Committee is the planning body for major events (Rule 30).
2. Effective officiating requires advanced planning by the Games Committee and includes:
  - Starting well in advance of event, prepare a timeline working from the event date back to today to determine the time needed for critical tasks.
  - Delegating tasks to specialized subcommittees and accountable chairs.
  - Recruiting needed officials - 40 to 150, depending on the type of meet.
  - Securing work and hurdle crews.
  - Understanding the facilities, to make sure that it is fully equipped and the areas are laid out in accordance with the applicable rules.
  - Securing the needed officiating equipment, applicable rule books, watches, clipboards, wind gauge, cross bars, tapes, ...
  - Setting an events schedule and coordinating efforts.
  - Determining special rules and procedures applying to the competition.
  - Distributing meet information, publicity, entry forms, and preparing typed heat sheets and field event entry forms.

#### **G. Event Administration - Implementing the Plan**

1. Flow of Responsibility during the event. Communication is essential
  - Role of the **Referee** (Rule 32):
    1. Authority to interpret and enforce rules, including deciding on situations not clearly covered by the applicable rules.
    2. Supervises the event once the competition commences.
    3. Maintains and can modify event schedule.

- ‘Head’ supervisors and ‘Chiefs’ - working under the Event Referee:
  1. **Chief Clerk** - assisted by 2-4 assistant clerks.
  2. **Head Starter** - assisted by 2-4 recall starters and starter’s assistants
  3. **Head Timer** - authority over the finish line area's timers, finish judges and photo timing personnel. Sometimes a **Finish Line Coordinator** is assigned these tasks.
  4. **Chief Umpire** - coordinates and assigns umpires.
  5. **Chief Field Judge** - coordinates with **Chief Judge** of each field event.
- Other meet support personnel: scorer, wind gauge operator, ...
- The role of the **Announcer** (Rule 43): to help maintain the schedule and announce the results, not commentate on a horse race. As noted in the NCAA Rules: “The announcer’s job is to give relevant information in the fewest words possible with minimum disruption of attention from the competition itself”.

### **Break Exercise #1**

Discuss, with at least one other person who you have not met prior to today, the following:

**Situation:** You are assigned as a clerk at a high school track and field meet. While checking in the athletes to participate in the 4 x 100 meters relay you notice that one member of a relay team has a different singlet (top) than the other three members of the team.

What, if anything, would you do?

## **Officiating Track Events**

### **A. Video Unit - ‘Officiating Track Events’**

### **B. Maintaining the Track Events Schedule**

1. The importance of a close coordination of effort between the announcer, clerk, starter and finish line.
2. The **Track Referee** oversees that the schedule is maintained.

### **C. The Role of Track Referee (Rule 32):**

1. Overseeing that the schedule is maintained.
2. Supervising all competition officials directly or indirectly.
3. Rules on all matters **except** starters’ and race walk judges’ disqualifications.
4. Serves as a non-voting member of the **Jury of Appeals**, or **Games Committee** under High School Rules.

### **D. Clerks: 3-4 required - checking, holding, escorting (Rule 40):**

1. Characteristics of an effective **Chief Clerk**:
  - Well organized.

- Exudes sense of calm control.
  - Flexible and creative
  - Decisive and appropriate
2. The Roles of the **Chief Clerk** and **Assistant Clerks** are to:
- Check out the facility and locate all start line locations.
  - Assign lanes when appropriate and pre-assigned by the Games Committee.
  - Check-in athletes and verify assignments.
  - Often, check for numbers, uniform, proper location of numbers, spike lengths and other meet requirements.
  - Provide preliminary instructions. Detailed instructions are to be given in the clerk area, not at the starting line.
  - Gather, hold and then escort athletes to the starting line, at least 2 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.
  - Set athletes in the proper lanes.
  - Proactively maintain the meet schedule
3. Forming heats and determining lane assignments. See handout for explanation.

Sections = timed final (Rule 75).

- Use either rain-proof paper, from J. Darling Paper Company in Tacoma, or 4-Part carbonless. One copy each to the announcer, finish line, clerk, and results.
- Material should be typed and show: competitors, lane assignments and method for advancing which may be subject to change.
- Method for advancing: placing is considered first and time, second.
- ‘Double Draw’ method: Top four times to lanes 4,5,3,6. Slower four times to lanes 2,7,1,8.
- Finals :
  - For USATF events: no more than 12 in 1500, 16 in 3000 and 20 in 5000.
  - For High School events: at least 1 more than the number of scoring places.

4. Checking In:

- When possible, entry forms should be typed and complete (name, number, lane, method for advancing).
- When athletes check-in, they should be informed of the procedures for gathering and escorting them to the start line.

5. Gathering and Escorting:

- Keeping the clerking area clear of the non-competitors.

- Confirm that all athletes are present.
  - Checks for numbers, spike length, etc.....
  - Confirm lane assignments, referring to last names.
  - Provide instructions about starting procedures, method for advancing to the next round, and rules applying to the event.
  - Assign athletes for next heat to an escort clerk and escort them to start line.
  - Turn over to the Starter for brief, final instructions.
6. Tips and techniques:
- Locate in a dry, sheltered and visible area.
  - Use a corral and ‘Church Pew’ system for multi-heat sprints, particularly for youth and junior high meets. The ‘Church Pew’ system involves placing lane numbers on seats or benches for easy checking of athletes who are missing.
  - 90% of the instructions to the competitors should be given in the clerk area. Instructions by the starter should be minimal, no longer than 30 seconds, and limited to the starting procedure only.

#### E. Starting Line Responsibilities (Rule 60)

1. The **Starter** provides very brief information on the key rules and procedures governing the start. Do not unnecessarily delay the start once the athletes stand ready to compete at the starting line.
  - Use of blocks for races of 400 meters or less is required under USATF rules, but not in High School.
  - False starts and other important rules:
    - For USATF events: two false starts required for athlete to be disqualified, 3 in combined events.
    - High School and NCAA events: one false start results in elimination.
  - Method for advancing.
  - Use a .32 caliber pistol only for smoke and sound.
2. Position of Starters:
  - Location.
  - Control/Visibility (to timers). Hold ‘set’ until entire field is steady. Can bring back up if too long.
  - Signals: whistle, flag or turning palm to indicate to starters assistants and finish line timers.
3. Start commands:
  - Races of 400 meters or less:
    - “**on your marks**”. Facing the runners, the starter raises the gun arm only overhead with the other arm remaining at the side.

“**set**”. Competitors rise and steady. When all the athletes are steady, the pistol (.32 caliber) is fired.

- Races over 400 meters:

“**on your marks**”. The runners advance from an imaginary line 3 meters back from the start line to the start line, steady themselves and, when steady, the pistol is fired.

- If a fully automatic timing system fails, recall of competitors should be attempted (Rule 38.3.c).
- NCAA rules prohibit practice starts in starting area.

4. Communication and close coordination with finish line officials is essential.

5. Remember: “All questions concerning the start shall be decided by the starter”. (Rule 60.6)

#### F. Finish Line Responsibilities - Timing and Picking Places (Rule 64)

1. Except in the case of the combined events, timers are **always** assigned to specific finish places, e.g. first, second, third, ..., and **never** to lanes. (Rule 37.5).

2. Separate officials should be assigned to establish the order of finishers and place times in a tiered arrangement, ideally 2-3 to each place and located, at least 16 feet back, on both sides of the track.

- **Timers:** Separate timers are assigned by the **Head Timer** to time each place, from the smoke of the gun to the breaking of the vertical finish line plane by the placer's torso which does not include the arms, legs or head. The watch should be cleared only at the whistle, raising of a white flag or at the command of the Head Timer. (Rule 37)
- **Finish Judges:** Separate finish judges are assigned to pick a specific place by the **Chief Finish Judge** to determine the order of finish, giving full attention to the finish line as the finishing athletes draw near. (Rule 34)
  1. Identify the last name and number of the assigned placer.
  2. Report information, by place, to the Chief Finish Judge.
- Timers and Judges are to pay attention during the entire race.

3. Organization: One person should be responsible for gathering the times and another assigned to gather the place information. Timers and judges should return to their respective positions once their report is made.

4. Disputes: A higher place has priority. The head timer and finish judges are final determinants of the result when no Fully Automatic Timing (FAT) is used, or if the FAT system failed. As a finish line official you should remain alert, to be prepared for failure.

- If 3 timers assigned to a place do not agree the **middle** time, not the average time, is recorded.
- If 2 of 3 timers assigned to a place agree the time of the 2 timers is the time recorded.
- If only 2 timers are available for the place and both disagree the **slower** time is recorded.

5. Fully Automatic Timing or Photo-timing: special techniques and requirements govern the determination of places. (Rule 38)

6. Tips and techniques:

- Inform the head timer immediately if your watch started late or did not start. Do not bluff.
- Stay away from light beam
- If crouched, do not stand up as you might block another timer or judge
- Courtesy: do not leave the area without informing the person in charge of your event.
- Move promptly and work as a team

### G. The Umpire - formerly known as the “Inspector” (Rule 33)

1. Role of the Umpire: to report observations of possible violations and signal status of the event using yellow or white flags. A red flag may be used when a yellow flag is not available.
2. Process: when a possible violation is observed, write it down and report to the **Head Umpire**. Record it in your mind’s eye. Think it through, but never second guess first instincts. Work in teams with one recording and one raising the yellow flag, when required, to seek the attention of the Head Umpire and Referee.
3. The Head Umpire reviews the report with the Referee, and the Referee renders the decision.
4. Locations of umpires: give priority to covering both turns, requiring a minimum number of 4 umpires.
5. Possible types of violations: (Rule 65)
  - Lane violation: 1 or more steps (IAAF / USATF Rule 65.6), 2 left steps (NCAA), and 3 or more (High School).
  - Relays: the baton must be exchanged within the exchange zone. The baton position is the key, not the outgoing athlete’s position. Athletes may use one piece of tape within the zone, measuring up to 5 cm x 40 cm. (Rule 121.17)
  - Impedance: athletes may not jostle or impede an athlete’s progress. (Rule 65.4)
  - Illegal assistance and pacing: within the competition area, includes conveying advice, information or direct help by any means including a technical device or running along side an athlete, or by lapped competitors. Officially designated ‘pacesetters’ are permitted. (Rule 66)
  - Hurdles and Steeplechase: athletes must clear the extended, horizontal plane of the hurdle with the entire body and maintain a straight course. There should be no athletes’ check marks on the track, and the athletes must not impede or obstruct others.
  - Steeplechase: athletes must move over the barriers in a single continuous motion and remain within the competition area.
  - Race walks: rules of conduct are the same as for other track events but separate judges assess technique.
6. Use yellow flags when possible to designate possible fouls. (Rule 33.2)

## Break Exercise #2

(15 minutes)

Divide up into small groups to discuss the situation following two situations:

**Situation A:** In the semifinals of the 300 meter hurdles, the athlete in lane 7 crosses into lane 6 and runs the remainder of the race in the wrong lane. The runner in lane 6 protests claiming she was not permitted the opportunity to compete fairly.

What action should the referee take and why?

**Situation B:** In the 100 meter hurdles, the runner in lane 5 suddenly staggers and knocks over the hurdle in lane 6 which causes the runner in lane 6 to fall. The runner in lane 5 claims that the runner in lane 4 bumped her into the path of the hurdle in lane 6 and that her coach has conclusive proof on video to support her claim. The inspector indicates that all she saw was the competitor in lane 5 knock over the hurdle in lane 6.

What action should the referee take and why? Should the referee view the video?

## Officiating the Field Events

The following general definitions and rules apply to all field events:

### A. Definitions:

- **Trial:** an attempt in a field event.
- **Flight:** a round of trials for a group of competitors.
- **Qualify:** to earn the right by performance to participate in the final.
- **Qualifying Competition:** qualifying attempts preceding the competition proper, to determine which of the athletes entered into the event shall compete in the competition proper. Marks achieved do not carry forward into the competition proper.
- **Foul:** an attempt which is counted as a 'trial' but which is not measured because of a rule violation.

### B. General Rules Applying to All Field Events (Rule 90)

#### Officials should keep in mind always the critical importance of Safety

- **Reporting:** clerking is done at the event area, athletes should report at least 15 minutes prior to the start of their event.
- **Preliminary Trials:** the number to advance is equal to the number of lanes on the track.
- **Calling the athletes:** the head judge is to 'call' the athletes using the following terms:
  - “Up” For the athlete due to compete.
  - “On deck” For the second in line athlete due to compete.

**“On hold”** For the third in line athlete due to compete. Please note this call is not:  
“In the hole”!

The officials then start the clock and remove any cone.

- Time limits: 60 seconds for all events, except in high school where the pole vault and the throws have 1 1/2 minutes. Longer periods are permitted when the competition drops to one or two competitors remaining for vertical jumps or consecutive attempts in any event.
- Leaving the event area: an athlete must formally check-out, and a time limit can be established. Assurance of all attempts can not be guaranteed. In the vertical jumps the bar may not be lowered.
- Inspecting throwing implements for legality should take place well before the competition and the implements should then remain under the control of the officials throughout the competition.
- No assistance or coaching is permitted in competition area. An exception is in NCAA events of five teams or less. However, coaching from the stands or designated areas is allowed.
- Taping aids and shoe restrictions: tape or gloves must not link fingers together. Tape is only permitted on the hand to cover a wound.
- Taking and recording measurements: the nearest whole centimeter (1/4 inch) is used for all jumps and throws except in high school. There the lower inch is used for the discus, javelin and hammer.
- Actions of the official: when the athlete has completed the trial this is indicated by the use of flags except in high school where the term "**mark**" is also used.
- Control of area: use a cone to open and close the competition area to attempts. Make sure that all warm-ups are taken under supervision and that the cone is used to ensure that attempts are only made under safe conditions.

## Officiating the Throwing Events

### A. Video Unit Three - ‘Officiating Throwing Events’

### B. Throwing Events - The Shot Put, Discus, Javelin and Hammer

**Officials should keep in mind always the critical importance of Safety**

1. Implements check-in, impoundment and return.
2. Rules applying to events thrown from a circle.
3. Special rules by event:
  - Shot put and discus - measurement, fouls, technique. (Rules 97 & 98)
  - Javelin - measurement, fouls, technique. (Rules 99)
  - Hammer/Weight - leaving the circle, fouls. (Rules 100 & 101)

### E. Tips for Effective Throws Officiating

- **Safety First:** always be alert. Use a proactive, preventive approach to your officiating. Carry in all implements following a throw and clear the throwing area during supervised warm-up periods.
- **Professional Bearing:** be firm, fair and in control remembering that the competition is for the athletes. Do not draw attention to yourself.
- **Review Appropriate Rules:** prior to the competition, review the appropriate rules which apply to that competition, whether it is USA Track & Field, NCAA or High School Federation, and the specific rules relating to your event. If in charge, review the rules with your crew.
- **Instructions:** do not assume that the athletes know the rules. When in doubt look it up. Give clear, concise instructions and indicate the specific amount of time allowed for warm-up, how the flights are organized, the number and arrangement of throws for each competitor, and the number of competitors to advance to the final.
- **Assure Fairness:** provide a fair competition, without showing favoritism. Remember that each athlete should be provided an equal opportunity to do her/his best.
- **Inspect Throwers and Implements:** before each throw, check the thrower's hands for illegal taping or substances and check the implement to ensure that it is an approved implement. In several types of competitions, there is a requirement that approved implements be shared amongst competitor and are provided by the Games Committee.
- **Calling the athletes:** the head judge is to 'call' the throwers using the following terms:
  - “Up” For the thrower due to compete.
  - “On deck” For the second in line thrower due to compete.
  - “On hold” For the third in line thrower due to compete. Please note this call is not: “In the hole”!

The officials then start the clock and remove any cone.

- **Accurate Measurement:** after the mark in the field has been established, lift the tape 3-4 feet above the ground, placing the zero line at the point of impact nearest the throwing area. Pull gently to remove any kinks in the tape, and then lay the tape along the ground and on the measurement point, without 'stretching' the tape. Read the mark aloud using the metric distance, clearly enough that the athletes and near-by spectators can hear. If the tape is two sided then, as a courtesy, read the imperial equivalent.

## **G. Rules Contrast/Comparison Across Governing Bodies**

### **Break Exercise #3**

Discussed by the full group:

**Situation:** After the competition in the shot put has ended, the third place competitor protests that the second place competitor used a shot put that was brought to the competition area, but not approved by the inspector of implements for competition, as indicated by a red dot of paint. The head official admits not having checked the implements used by the competitors and the second place competitor claims not to have known that the unapproved implement was not impounded.

How should the referee rule in this situation?

## **Officiating the Jumping Events**

### **A. Video Unit - 'Officiating Jumping Events'**

### **B. Horizontal Jumping Events - the Long Jump and Triple Jump**

1. Check-in, recording and setting up finals.
2. Wind Gauge: operation, importance and recording.
3. Measuring jumps:
  - Measured at a 90 degree angle to the take-off board, or the 'extended board', if necessary.
  - Measure from the mark closest to the board.
  - Foul jump: requirements and signaling.
  - Right of competitor to have foul jump measured.
  - Maintenance of the pit.
4. Types of Violations:
  - Stepping beyond the board.
  - Jumping outside the pit.
  - Stepping out of the pit at a point closer than the initial impact point.
5. Making calls and starting the time clock.

### **C. Vertical Jumping Events - the Pole Vault and High Jump (Rule 93)**

- Set up, check-in, recording and setting up finals.
- Marks.
- Measuring.
- Breaking Ties.
- Special rules affecting the high jump.

- Special rules affecting the pole vault.

## **Officiating Race Walking and Long Distance Events**

### **A. Officiating the Race Walk (Rules 39 & 150)**

1. Roles: the umpire's role versus the role of the race walk judge.
2. The two (2) principal rules governing race walking are:
  - the leg must be straight from the instant of first contact of the foot until the foot passes under the body in the support phase, and
  - the walker must maintain continuous unbroken contact with the ground.
3. Organizing to officiate the race walk: importance of preparation, with clear roles and assignments, organizing recording and disqualification systems, and communication between the recorder and the head judge.
4. Proper judging position: at least 16 feet from the competitors. The judge should observe only when walkers are within a 45 degree range in front of them, and these observations should only be of the legs, knees and feet.
5. Responsibilities in making and recording cautions and disqualification calls: unaffected by the actions of any other judge. Cautions are issued only when the walker is on the edge of walking illegally, but is still walking legally, and disqualifications are issued at any point in the event when the walker ceases to be walking legally. A caution prior to a warning is a courtesy but not a requirement, especially when the walker's movement is not legal and is providing an unfair advantage.

### **B. Officiating Long Distance Running Events (Rules 131-137)**

1. Pre-Event planning: you should only work sanctioned events, where liability and injury insurance is provided to all officials. Ensure that runners are not unfairly paced or aided.
2. Considerations by Area:
  - Start: must be a safe area with at least 600 feet of straight course ahead.
  - Course umpiring and course support: water and refreshments, medical aid, intermediate timing.
  - Finish area: process of timing at the finish line and ordering the athletes down a chute to have the placement tags removed, away from the finish line.
  - Results.
3. Special requirements of cross country:
  - Start considerations.
  - Finish area.
  - Scoring methods.

## **Review, Questions and Answers, Evaluation and Next Steps**

- Review of the Clinic and the achievement of Objectives stated at the beginning.
  - Distribution of the Clinic Evaluation Forms.
  - General Questions and Answers
  - Taking the Next Steps: Completing your Rules Review and Practicum.
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*Welcome to the World of Certified Officiating.*

*We hope you enjoy your experiences,  
contributing to this wonderful sport of  
Track & Field Athletics  
at which ever level you choose.*

*Have fun!*

*“Thank you” for taking the time to join the certified officials of the*

**USATF National Officials  
Track & Field Committee**

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