

LAP SCORING

(Also see detailed info in the USATF Lap Scoring Monograph)

Accurate lap scoring is critical for conducting fair and accurate long distance races. Lap scorers keep a record of laps covered in races of 1500 meters/1 mile or more, and walking events and road races with circuits or laps; and they record lap times for races of 3 miles (outdoors) or 3,000 meters (indoors) and greater. This paper presents basic lap scoring principles.

- Provide an adequate number of lap scorers – max of 3 athletes per counter for track competitions and 6 per counter for road walking and ultra marathons (USATF Rule 131). Scorers should have a stopwatch (for when the clock stops for the leader's finish); also consider having them wear the hip numbers of the athletes they're scoring.
- Athletes should have hip numbers on both hips and on the singlet (front and back for race walks); use safety pins to keep numbers from falling off; differentiate numbers if men & women are in the same race
- A digital clock should be visible to both competitors and Lap Scorers - at the start/finish line or for road races at the location of an even thousand meters mark or at the start or finish of a lap of the course
- Lap scorers should be seated with clear visibility of competitors, preferably 10-20 meters before the finish/lap line, to facilitate communication with athletes and the display operator.
- One lap scorer operates a "laps to go" board for competitors' viewing; indicates the final lap of the race by ringing a bell for each athlete (USATF) or the event leader (NCAA); and calls out finishers to assist Judges and Timers. Even with a FAT system, someone has to tell the operator who is a finisher and who is not. The "laps to go" number is normally flipped as the leader is coming into the homestretch of a track, or about 100 meters from the lap finish line of road courses.
- If there are sufficient officials, one person reads the time aloud while others record times. This keeps the scorers' eyes on the competitors and lap sheets, and not having to also look at the clock. An additional person to act as a checker/troubleshooter/relief person can also be useful.
- The Head Lap Scorer should have:
 - Pencils and clipboards for the crew, a stopwatch, a small pencil sharpener, and a set of binoculars
 - Score sheets for the crew with the name, bib number and hip number of every competitor; an indication of laps completed, distance completed, laps to go; and spaces to record each lap completion time and to calculate the elapsed time for each lap (see Best Practices sheets)
- The Head Lap Scorer should brief the crew on their duties and techniques:
 - Identify your competitors - prior to the start of the race, identify each assigned competitor and write his/her uniform description on your score sheet
 - Record the time for *each competitor on each lap* (vs. just making a check mark). This confirms a lap is not missed. Times need not be exact – they're only to verify that a lap was completed.
 - If you miss an athlete and know the approximate time, enter it; otherwise just leave the space blank (all the times are estimates). Remain alert and get an accurate split the next time.
 - If you note a competitor has dropped out or been disqualified, make that known to all scorers; if it's one of yours, mark this on the sheet. This keeps scorers from trying to find an athlete or worrying about whether they missed the athlete on that lap.
 - During the race, check to see if each lap time is relatively consistent -- to be sure a lap was not missed (calculate the lap time by subtracting each previous time from the most recent total time) Another way to check is to add the lap time to the previous lap time to predict when your athlete will next arrive.
 - It's critical to know and communicate to athletes when they have one lap to go. Advise the finish line or special scorer, or if prearranged, walk up to the athlete, raise one finger straight up and call out their hip number and "one to go" (this also helps finish line personnel). When your athletes are finishing, call out their number or singlet color and "finisher."
 - For road walks or races starting and/or finishing in a stadium: remember competitors complete ___ laps of the track before exiting to the street; this track portion constitutes lap #1. Also, competitors complete ___ full laps on the roads before being directed back to the stadium for the finish. Be alert as to which of your athletes are on their last road lap and need to be directed into the stadium for their finish.