

Umpiring Best Practices - Content Outline

(Also see detailed info in the USATF Umpire Manual / Monograph)

Role of the Umpire

To help ensure fairness for all competitors, umpires closely observe all track competitions. Though often inadvertent or a result of ignorance of the rules, violations can either harm a competitor's opportunities or give unfair advantage to one over others. Should the umpire observe a possible violation of the applicable rules governing that competition, a formal observation report is to be filed through the Chief Umpire to the Track Referee. The Track Referee will determine if a rules violation has occurred and take an appropriate action consistent with the applicable rules.

Prior to the Event

- Umpires report to a designated meeting area not less than 30 minutes prior to the first running event. Each umpire should bring a clipboard, appropriate rule book, pencil and be dressed appropriately for the meet and weather conditions.
- Chief umpire conducts an organizing meeting to distribute flags and reporting forms, assign individual umpires to cover specific sectors, review the schedule, discuss movements within sector to best observe each event, review the reporting procedure, review key rules to be applied and any special provisions established by Games Committee, and provide any other information needed for the umpires to perform their duties. This may include a walk of the track to review markings.
- Umpire should become thoroughly familiar with the sector of the track they are assigned to cover and determine the best points of observation for each event.

Location

To perform this role, there must be a minimum of four umpires and each umpire should be assigned by the Chief Umpire to a location that best permits full observation of the track by the umpiring crew. In assigning the location, priority should be given to covering the four curves and appropriate movement to be in the best position to observe every competitor in every event. This may require the umpire to position themselves in the stands.

Observation

The umpire should be in a position to observe the competitors within her/his line of sight as the field passes, the hurdles are cleared or the baton is exchanged. Therefore, generally observation should take place on the outside of the track.

Forms and Reporting Observations

- Report form should answer all the basic questions (who, what, where, when, and how) as well as providing room for the needed signatures.
- Only those specifically assigned to the umpiring task or requested by the Referee to observe all of the competitions may submit an observation form that may result in a disqualification.
- When the umpire decides to need to report a violation, she/he raises a yellow flag. Upon completion of the event and without consultation with any other, the umpire completes an observation report form and waits for the Chief Umpire or Referee. The Referee may ask clarifying questions or for collaborating observations from other umpires. If in the Referee's judgment there is not indisputable evidence of a violation, there may be a decision to take no action.
- When a potential violation occurs and immediately following the competition of the event, the umpire should stand in the lane or location of the possible infraction and seek to capture as much information as possible to describe the "who, what, where, why and how" of her/his observation.

Follow-up

Immediately following that day's meet or during a major break in the competition, the umpires should meet with the Chief Umpire and Referee to debrief on the meet and lessons learned.