

From the 1st January 2010, a new false start rule will come into effect worldwide, disqualifying any runner (in individual events) whenever they false start. Athletics Australia has published an explanation paper, on how the changes will be interpreted in Australia. It should be read and understood by every track athlete. If any member has any queries about it, they could contact the club's senior registered official, Jill Wallis, on jandjwallis@netspace.net.au

ATHLETICS AUSTRALIA
OFFICIALS AND TRACK AND FIELD COMMISSIONS

EXPLANATORY PAPER AND GUIDELINES
(including advice for starters and start referees)

Implementation of IAAF "No False Start" Rule - effective 1 January 2010

The following rule dispensation has been approved by Athletics Australia for all applicable competitions after 1 January 2009. All regular competition officials, particularly those acting as a member of the start team or as track or start referees, should familiarise themselves with the new IAAF Rules, together with this dispensation and the following guidelines and practice notes which should be followed in their implementation.

AUSTRALIAN DISPENSATION:

IAAF Rule 162 will apply in full for all competitions conducted under the jurisdictions of Athletics Australia and its member associations, with the following dispensation:

In the case of:

- (1) any competition (or part thereof) conducted exclusively for athletes competing in the under 16 age group and younger; and*
- (2) at the option of the member association concerned, any club level competition for, or in, any age group,*

Rules 162.6 and 162.7 shall be applied so that the rules and procedures applicable for Combined Events, shall apply to all events in such competitions.

Note that there will be no additional dispensation applicable to Combined Events.

The application of the above dispensation will have, amongst others, the following effects:

- (a) the dispensation will be applied to all state and national championships conducted in the under 16 age group and below;
- (b) where an athlete eligible for such an age group competes in an older age group, he/she will be subject to the rules as applied to the older age group
- (c) if a member association opts not to apply the dispensation to club level competitions under its jurisdiction, the new IAAF rules will apply in full to all athletes competing therein unless such a competition has specific events for athletes in any age group under 16 or lower - in which case the dispensation would be applicable.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The new Start rules have the potential to cause confusion amongst Referees, Starters, Athletes and Coaches in the early part of the new summer season.

For the sake of consistency the following is recommended for use in domestic competition.

INDIVIDUAL RACES:

1. At the commencement of each series of races (eg – 100m) and as required during that series of races, the starter should advise the runners that :- “These events are being conducted under the new IAAF starting rules which do not allow any false starts in individual races. Any runners who are responsible for a false start will be disqualified.”
2. In the event of a false start it is recommended that the starter should say “false start lane X - you have therefore disqualified yourself from this race.”
3. At the same time that the starter applies the disqualification the relevant starter's assistant should stand in front of the athlete(s) concerned and show the athlete(s) the red card.
4. The athlete should then be escorted from the Track by a starter's assistant unless he/she makes an immediate Oral Protest to the Start Referee.

COMBINED EVENTS:

5. For Combined Events at the commencement of each heat (eg – 100m) and as required during that series of races, the starter should advise the runners that - “These events are being conducted under the new IAAF start rules which allow only one false start for the entire field in each race. After the first false start any runners who subsequently false start will be disqualified from the race regardless of whether they were responsible for the first false start or not.”
6. It is recommended that after the first false start the starter should apply a warning as follows - “False start lane X. That is the final warning for this race. Any runner who now false starts will be disqualified.”

7. At the same time that the starter applies the warning the relevant starters assistant should stand in front of the athlete(s) who has been awarded the false start, show the athlete the yellow card and then sweep the yellow card across the entire field so that it is seen by all athletes in the race.
8. In the event of a second or further false start it is recommended that the starter should say "Subsequent false start lane X you have now disqualified yourself from this race."
9. At the same time that the starter applies the disqualification the relevant starters' assistant should stand in front of the athlete(s) concerned and show the athlete(s) the red card.
10. The athlete should then be escorted from the Track by a starter's assistant unless he/she makes an immediate Oral Protest to the Start Referee.

NOTE – Under the new rules the starter is no longer "*the sole judge of any fact connected with the start of the race.*" This means in theory that athletes may protest to the Start Referee (or Track Referee if no Start Referee has been appointed) against the decision of the starter to award a false start against them and then of course have the option to appeal to the Jury.

START REFEREE:

Where possible a separate Start Referee should be appointed to handle any disputes which may arise concerning the Start. It should be noted that an appointed Start Referee is not subordinate to the Track Referee in matters concerning the Start and his decisions should not be overruled by the Track Referee nor be subject to further protest to the Track Referee.

Where no Start Referee has been appointed the matters normally under the control of the Start Referee will be covered by the Track Referee. In such cases the Track Referee should position himself as follows:

- (a) for straight races – as near as possible to the start.
- (b) for 200m races – near to the start but also in a position to adjudicate on any bend infringements
- (c) for races that start at or near to the finish line – in position to watch both the start and finish of races

Under these arrangements it should no longer be necessary for the Start Area Co-ordinator to be appointed also as a Start Referee. If however this is necessary for any reason, persons performing these dual roles should not be involved in the actual start.

In the event that the Start Referee (or Track Referee if no Start Referee is appointed) disallows any protest and the athlete (or someone on his behalf) indicates that he wishes to make an appeal to the Jury, it is recommended that the athlete be allowed to compete "under protest" until the appeal can be heard. The option for the race to be rescheduled until the appeal can be heard is only to be considered in exceptional circumstances.

It is anticipated that there will be two principal common reasons why a protest may be made in relation to the start:

- (1) where an athlete disputes a decision to award a false start against him. Normally such protests will be made after a race has been recalled and a re-start ordered. To facilitate the good conduct of the event (and the overall competition) in situations where there is any possibility that the athlete might be correct, the athlete should generally be allowed to continue in the race “under protest.”
- (2) where one athlete contends that another athlete has false started and that it has not been detected. Normally such protests will be made post race.

In considering any protest under (2), Rule 146.4 (a) must be considered. This states that:

“A protest may be based on the failure of the Starter to recall a false start. The protest may be made only by, or on behalf of, an athlete who has completed the race. If the protest is upheld, any athlete who committed the false start, and who was subject to disqualification according to Rule 162.7, shall be disqualified. Where there is no disqualification of any athlete according to Rule 162.7, the Referee shall have the authority to declare the event void and that it shall be held again if in his opinion justice demands it.”

RACES LONGER THAN 400 METRES AND RELAYS LONGER THAN 4X400 METRES:

Starters and referees should avoid being over-zealous in the application of the new rule to those events not started from a crouch start, ie for events longer than 400m, or in the case of relays longer than 4x400m.

The intention of the new rules was to stamp out gamesmanship in sprint starts, to speed up competition and provide better meeting presentation. It should also be remembered that athletes starting races in a standing position (ie a two point start) are more prone to genuinely over-balance than those starting from a crouch position (ie a four point start).

Such instances are rare in total terms and they usually occur unintentionally. It is not intended that same should be unduly penalised.

Certainly it is clear that if an athlete were pushed or jostled over the line before the start, he would not be penalised. [However if the action was considered wilful/deliberate, the ‘pusher’ might be subject to a disciplinary warning or disqualification.]

If such a movement was considered to be accidental, starters and referees are encouraged to first consider calling the start “unsteady” before taking any more severe action.

Repeat practices during the same event may, of course, entitle the starter and/or referee to consider applying either the false start or disciplinary procedures, as might best be applicable in the situation.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS UNDER RULE 162.5:

The division of the start rules into disciplinary matters (under 162.5) and false starts (162.6 and 162.7) was designed to ensure that the whole field was not penalised for the actions of a single athlete.

It is critical in order to maintain the integrity of the intention of the rule changes, that starters and referees are diligent in the application of 162.5 as well as 162.6/7.

Whilst it is hoped that the mere presence of 162.5 and the significant penalties provided by it that wilful conduct will be eliminated, there may still be athletes who “try it on” and the rules will need to be responsibly applied to them.

On the other hand there will be clear instances in which an athlete is entitled to request a delay of the start for legitimate reasons. It is therefore vital that the start referee in particular pays attention to the environment and conditions surrounding the start, especially in relation to factors of which the starter may not be aware because he is focussing on preparing him/her self for the start.

In such cases the starter and referee must act reasonably and efficiently, and clearly indicate their decision, and if appropriate the reasons therefor, to the athletes involved in the race and if possible or desirable also to the announcers, television team etc through the communication network.

**Reg Brandis/Geoff Martin/Brian Roe
November 2009**

COMMENT:

The effect of the new rule changes is that it would be in the interests of any athlete who is disqualified for a false start to immediately protest to the Referee. If the protest is dismissed, the athlete should indicate that he/she wishes to appeal to the Jury. This will enable the runner to at least run in the race, (so it is not held up pending the outcome of the appeal) and the question of disqualification can be determined later.

Peter Rule