**Field Judging**

An Introduction for new Officials

Welcome to officiating at Athletic competitions – from club open meetings, through League meetings to National and International competitions.

Officials judge and keep records of athletes performances in the field of play, ensure that the competition is conducted fairly, as well as being a point of contact for the athlete should a dispute arise.

This is an introduction to what will be a series of instalments guiding officials through each of the field events. The aim is to cover scoring, as well as what is considered to be the best positions for judging the numerous roles.

As a Field Official, there are eight events that you will be asked to help judge. These are:

* The Horizontal Jumps

Long Jump

Triple Jump

* The Vertical Jump

High Jump

Pole Vault

* The Throws

The Long Throws

Hammer Throw

Discus Throw

Javelin Throw

The Short Throw

Shot Put

So that events can be judged fairly, officials work together as a team so that all aspects of an athlete’s performance can be checked. At club meetings there may only be a few officials so that events can only take place when there are enough officials available – sometimes, officials will finish one event and then go straight to the next event on the timetable. At League meetings, clubs are asked to provide a number of officials to cover certain duties – for example, at Youth Development League (YDL) matches, each club should provide a timekeeper, a track official and five field officials. At Championship meetings at County, Regional, National and International levels, an official’s availability is asked for. This information is then used to ensure that there are enough officials available at a meeting and each duty is covered. These duties are assigned by, and the daily ‘duty sheet’ published by the field referee.

As an officials experience becomes more extensive, they will be asked to act as Clerks of Course, Field Referees, Technical Managers, Meeting Managers. Also, an experienced official will not always be asked to referee or lead events – it is not unheard of for very senior officials with major international experience to ‘rake the sandpit’ at a League meeting. There are many occasions where junior officials have led an event with a number of National or International officials in the team. As more experience is gained, the number of duties that you can do increases. At the end of the day, the judging team work together for the benefit of the athlete. And if you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask – all of the officials will be happy to help.

So, before looking at each event in a little more detail, what is generally required from an official?

Aim to arrive at the meeting venue an hour before the timetabled start of the first event. This will allow you to check in with the meeting management or Referee, collect your lunch (if provided), collect and read your duty sheet (at higher meetings), collect score cards from the referee if you are leading an event, and receive a stadium specific health and safety briefing from the referee. The latest you should arrive is half an hour before the first event is due to take place – this is usually the earliest time that athletes will go to their events for practice and warm up.

Wear something that will be comfortable in both hot and wet conditions. The British summer is known for being sweltering one moment and then throwing it down with rain the next. It is also normal to dress differently from the athletes. As you progress, it is normally frowned upon if you don’t wear a white polo shirt, navy blue trousers (or skirt) and black shoes. At a glance, it can be seen straight away who is an official at a competition, but beware, dressing like this does encourage athletes, coaches, parents spectators to ask questions that can become technical!

Over a period of time, you will start to amass equipment that will help you in your duties. Whilst it is not necessary to ‘break the bank’ in the first season, it is recommended to have pens (different colours), a clipboard, pencils and a rubber.

Now, armed with a few stationery items and loads of enthusiasm, let’s look at each of the field events...