

What Can Go Wrong in Field Events?

(Presented as a clinic at the USATF Annual Mtg, Dec 2016)

How do you deal with the following situations?

1. A team is delayed in getting to the meet; an athlete checks in after the competition has begun and asks to begin competing
USATF - Athletes previously entered can join the competition. There are no practice trials; any missed attempts are marked as a pass; any remaining attempts can be taken – in the order listed; in vertical jumps they start at the height of the bar upon their arrival (180.10)
NCAA - Athletes who report to an event after the first competitive attempt has been made may not compete in that event. (6-2.2)
2. An athlete shows up late and you now have 16 competitors in the same flight. Do you split the flight or run one big flight; where in the order does that athlete compete; how many attempts?
The upper limit for a single flight is 15 for USATF. Before adding this person to the competition, consider how many rounds of competition have been completed, and how will adding this competitor affect the other athletes? You might just add this person to the flight if he/she arrives during round 3. If arrival is in round 1, you may be better off splitting the competition into two flights. Also consider: what is the meet time schedule? Adding another flight could add 30 or more minutes to the event, causing problems with events following. Is adding another flight fair to those athletes who have warmed up, got their marks, etc. but now have to stop, cool down, warm up again, etc.
3. Meet-supplied implements are not available; an athlete's only implement or pole breaks and the other competitors decline to allow the use of theirs
USATF - In throwing event competitions, implements should be provided by the Games Committee. Implements that comply with required specifications and belong to individuals may also be accepted, in which case they shall lose their identity as privately owned implements and a competitor may use another competitor's implement with or without permission (187.10). The exceptions are for javelins (only) in Youth and Masters events (Rules 302.5(g) and 332.3(f), respectively). If a certified implement cannot be obtained through any reasonable means, an athlete will have no other alternative but to pass his/her remaining attempts.
In the pole vault, athletes may use another competitor's pole only with the other athlete's permission (183.4).
NCAA - "A competitor may use another competitor's implement only with the other competitor's permission." (6-1.10)
4. Implements have not arrived at the venue at the time scheduled for warm-ups to begin
The event head should:
 - 1) Send an official to the implement inspection station to get the implements
 - 2) Adjust the start time for the event to give athletes their published warm-up time.
5. An athlete or coach wants an additional takeoff board created closer to the pit
USATF – Open: not addressed; Youth: in LJ and TJ more than one board may be used (302.5(d)).
NCAA - In the triple jump a maximum of two boards per gender may be used; long jump – not addressed (6-7.2).
The considerations are: 1) is it possible; 2) safety; and 3) time needed to put down a 2nd board
6. An athlete asks to have their trial & start of their time delayed because a starter is about to shoot the gun
The starter's gun is a normal noise at a track meet. We may hold a field event attempt for the runners' benefit (so as not to prompt a false start), generally not for the field event athlete. That said, if a venue is quite close to the starter, the field event official may delay the start of an attempt for the gun. The starter and the event official need to work together & help with this.

7. An athlete who has left to compete in another event has not returned, and all others are finished in the current flight/at the current height
See the various scenarios and appropriate actions in the Best Practices document titled "Absence from Competition"
8. An athlete suffers an injury during the competition; they are due up next but say they need more time to recover or to be treated
*First, consider checking or adjusting things at the venue in order to slightly slow down the competition – without appearing obvious about it.
 But, treat this as you would for an athlete who has been excused to compete in another event.
 USATF - For throws and horizontal jumps, the Referee or head judge may allow an athlete to compete out of order one round at a time. For vertical jumps, they can jump out of order one trial at a time. If this does not allow the athlete the time they need, they will be deemed to have passed that attempt.
 NCAA - For throws and horizontal jumps, the head judge may allow an athlete to take preliminary attempts, but not final attempts, out of the official order within the competitor's designated flight, which may or may not be in succession. For vertical jumps, the head judge may allow the athlete to take attempts out of official order, which may or may not be in succession (6-1.6). If this does not allow the athlete the time they need, they will be deemed to have passed that attempt (4-2.3.b(4)).*
9. An athlete has been called up and the clock has started; then they indicate they will pass that attempt
Once an athlete has been called "Up" and the clock has been started, they may not then pass that attempt; they must be charged with a trial (a make or miss in verticals; or a distance or an "X" for a time foul in horizontals & throws) USATF 180.11 (f); NCAA 6-4.3.
10. The official has called athletes "Up", "On Deck", and "On Hold"; none have previously passed the height. Before starting the clock, the 1st two athletes pass; how much time is given to the next athlete?
The flight coordinator should run off the time which would have normally been given to the two previous athletes before calling the third athlete "Up" (USATF 180.11(e); NCAA - not specified). If the third athlete is ready and wishes to go, he or she may be immediately called "Up" for their attempt.
11. An athlete begins an attempt prior to his or her name being called as "Up"
If it's possible without endangering the athlete or official, the athlete should be told to stop and wait for the "Up" call acknowledging his/her time on the clock. If the officials are ready, the flight coordinator should proceed to call the athlete "Up" as quickly as is practicable. If the athlete has made the throw or jump, then answer the following: were the pit or sector and the officials ready? If so, then allow the attempt; if not, then rule "no jump or no throw" and make the athlete retake the attempt. Discuss means to prevent such instances.
12. During an attempt an athlete runs on or outside the runway edge lines
Long Jump, Triple Jump, and Pole Vault – no violation; Javelin – foul (USATF 193.1(d); NCAA 10-3.
13. The timer does not function properly and apparently more than the allowable time has elapsed before the initiation of an attempt
If not able to tell how much time has elapsed, you have to let the attempt stand. If the athlete can't see a clock or see the yellow flag raised, they have no way of knowing the time was approaching the limit, so we must err on the side of the athlete.
14. An athlete claims there was interference or a distraction which caused them to have a poor attempt or to fail to initiate an attempt within the time limit
The officials should be watching the venue and if they see interference, they can notify the athlete and restart the clock. The athlete can also raise a hand and alert the official if there's interference. However, if the athlete does not alert the official and the officials do not see interference, then results of the attempt must stand. We can only make the calls we see, and if we don't see any interference or none is brought to our attention in a timely manner, then we can't call interference/obstruction for the athlete.

15. Working with two judges, one judge rules a foul/miss and the other judge signals a legal attempt/make
*This must be addressed before the competition - one official will make the calls; if another is available, the second judge **can help** on close calls. The second official's call should be subtle, and any discussion should be private. The lead official gives weight to how sure each official is in their call. A useful rule of thumb is if the call is so close you have to discuss it or think twice, then the benefit of the doubt goes to the athlete.*
16. A judge is distracted or inattentive and does not observe whether an athlete's attempt is fair or foul/a make or a miss, or can't accurately establish a mark
This is tough; you've got to solicit input from other nearby officials and make a decision. Contact the event head official or meet referee for a final ruling; and if necessary, give the athlete another attempt (always a last resort).
17. During the event the wind direction changes or rain falls, and athletes or coaches ask to have the runway direction reversed or to suspend the competition for safety reasons
*Once the competition has begun, the direction of the runway is not changed for any reason (USATF 180.1; NCAA 6-1.16).
 If the weather condition is severe, the event head official may temporarily halt the competition to assess the venue and effect any mitigating actions. The Referee may suspend the competition for safety reasons if it cannot be continued in a safe manner. Vertical jumps may be conducted indoors if absolutely necessary; all results are valid, but marks are not valid for records.*
18. The recorder is unfamiliar with how to record athletes who: are no-shows; say they're done before taking all possible attempts; are disqualified; have a sector foul; pass an attempt
No-shows: "DNS"; Quit competition: "DNF"; Disqualified: "DQ"; Fouls of any type & misses: "X"; Passes: "-" (USATF 180.6; NCAA 6-1.14)
19. Venue issues: The landing pit is one meter short in length or width vs. the size specified in the rulebook; the cage netting/fencing is damaged leaving a breach or hole; the sand is overly dry or too rough or is not deep enough; the throws sector is not properly marked; there are no pennants/barriers marking a landing area safety zone or they are too close to the sector
See if the venue can be modified/changed/repared in a reasonable amount of time; if not then as a last resort, officials should decline to conduct the competition for safety (and liability) reasons.
20. An athlete has cleared the crossbar but grazed it, causing it to bounce/move slightly; how long do you wait to raise the white flag?
*There is no time limit. If necessary, the official should approach the pit to get a good view to see if the bar is steady or still moving/bouncing, and should raise the flag **when they are certain** the bar will remain on the supports or pegs. (The decision may be quicker in windy conditions). The key is that once a flag is raised, you don't change it – which is what a premature flag might prompt.*
21. In measuring the height of the PV crossbar, do you place the base of the measuring device on the metal frame of the vaulting box, or on the surrounding surface which is slightly higher?
Measurements are taken from a point on the same level as the takeoff, so it would be from the surrounding surface. (USATF 181.2; NCAA 6-1.13)
22. Midway through attempts at a new height, it is noticed that the crossbar is not level – one side is higher than the other. What are some possible ways to resolve this issue? Do you start the height over? Do some or all attempts count?
If you cannot be certain when the bar was last level or not level, pause the competition, properly adjust the standards to get the bar level (ensure the standards adjustment knobs are tight); and resume the competition.

What Can Go Wrong in Field Events? (Cont'd)

Throws

Should an attempt be ruled valid; foul; or no throw in the following circumstances?

1. The athlete leaves circle prior to taking throwing position, then returns to throw
This is not a foul -- as long as they return to the ring and begin the attempt from a stationary position (USATF 187.2; NCAA 6-8.2, 6-9.2, 6-11.2)
2. The athlete falls out, or exits out of the circle not under control
This is not a foul -- as long as they exit after the implement has landed, leave from the back half of the circle and have not otherwise fouled. (USATF 187.5; NCAA 6-8.2, 6-9.2, 6-11.2)
3. The implement hits a low ceiling or support beam that is above the legal sector
Rule this "no throw"; allow the athlete to retake the attempt.
4. The implement hits a part of the cage and lands within the sector; no other foul has occurred
This is a valid attempt. (USATF 187.6 Note; NCAA 6-9.2 Note 2, 6-11.2)

Vertical Jumps

Should an attempt be ruled successful; failed; or no jump in the following circumstances?

1. An athlete has a miss but claims they slipped on takeoff due to debris or water on the apron or runway
This is an official's judgment call for a no jump. Err on the side of the athlete & their safety; be consistent.
2. An athlete clears the bar but upon exiting the pit, knocks into the standard, dislodging the crossbar
This is "accidental displacement"; the attempt is a make (USATF – 181.8(a); NCAA 6-5.4, 6-6.4)
3. An athlete makes contact with the crossbar, causing it to bounce and land back on the supports/pegs, with the crossbar facing 90° from its original position
The attempt is successful. The bar must simply remain on the crossbar supports (HJ) or on the pegs on which it originally rested (PV); it may spin 90 or 180 or 270 ° (can't bounce & land on other pegs or top of standard).
4. The wind blows the crossbar down before or during the athlete's attempt; the wind blows the vaulting pole into the crossbar and knocks it off during an athlete's attempt
*If the bar is displaced after the athlete has cleared the bar, it's successful.
If the bar is displaced before or as the athlete clears the bar, it's no jump – award a new attempt.
If the bar is displaced due to the wind blowing the pole into the bar, it's successful
These are officials' judgment calls. Err on the side of the athlete -- if you have to think twice about it, call it no jump or call it successful. (USATF 181.8; NCAA 6-5.4, 6-6.4)*
5. A vaulter fails an attempt but claims that the standards were not set (depth) as he or she had requested
If the officials have improperly set the standards, call it no jump (the same applies when the standards are improperly fastened and slip downward when an athlete hits the crossbar). (USATF not addressed; NCAA 6-6.7)
6. A vaulter makes a run-up, plants the pole, but aborts and returns down the runway for another run-up
USATF & NCAA – it is not a failure, as long as they do not penetrate the zero line and they initiate their attempt within the time limit (USATF 183.6; NCAA – not addressed)