

Starting

The purpose of a Starter is to ensure all contestants are afforded a FAIR START.

Before the meet:

*Review the rules and interpretations about the mechanics involved in starting.

NFHS Rule 4, Section 6 delimits the responsibilities of starters.

OTAFACC Officials Manual Part 2.3 through 2.6 outlines in detail the preparation, positions, and placement of starters and assistant starters.

OHSAA T&F and CC Officials Manual, beginning on page 46, further reiterates and expands upon the National Federation's publication. OHSAA dictates which visual and auditory signals must be used in OHSAA meets. This manual presents pictorially the visual signals to be used.

***Gather and assemble your equipment:**

Be sure that your uniform is clean and in good repair, as well as your weather-appropriate jacket.

The weather in our area changes rapidly, so be aware that foul weather gear will be in your kit or readily available. A hat is useful to shield your head from the sunlight. Rain gear does not necessarily have to have the OHSAA insignia emblazoned on it.

A towel, or two, extra socks, and plastic bags frequently come in handy. A large plastic trash bag will be useful to keep your belongings dry when the monsoons come.

Starting and recall devices are a concern. Although most meets utilize Fully Electronic Timing, there are still many that do not; therefore, plan to have a starter pistol with appropriate shells and a small boat horn with you for race recall purposes.

Legible lap cards in good repair are necessary as the starter is responsible for counting laps during the longer races. Some tracks are equipped with commercially available lap counting devices. A bell is to be used to signal the last lap. Because some

meets last many hours, be sure to take along healthy snacks and a water bottle.

At the venue:

Meet with the host, referee, clerk, FAT person, and the starting team if there are assistants.

With the starting team and the clerk, walk the track, noting starting marks, hurdle marks, cut lines, and exchange zone markings. Be sure all members of the start team are aware of the starting signals and correct stations for the various races. Communication with the clerk should address the placement of contestants on the track and releasing the runners to the starter. It is often helpful to know how runners are placed in the lanes and alleys.

The starter and FAT operator must be clear as to how the starter will be advised that the FAT is ready for the next race, be it by a Marshall's flag or by a red/green light system. The starter must be aware of and test the specific starting system.

Coordinate with the Public Address Announcer as to which events will require the announcer's assistance and what the starter's signals will be.

At the starting line:

- If using a starting pistol, be sure your gun is loaded.
- Know whether the event will require a 2-command start (races that are 800m or longer) or a 3-command start (races that are 400m or less).
- Be sure the assistant starters are in position.
- After the clerk has released the runners and all starting blocks are in place, issue the starting commands:
- 'Runners, stand in your lanes' ... runners must go to the starting line
- 'On your marks' ... runners will assume the starting position with all body parts behind the starting line,

- Assistant starter(s) acknowledge the command,
- 'Set' ... when all runners come to the set position, and remaining motionless, the assistant starter(s) will indicate that fact.

- After a suitable delay (2 to 3 seconds), the starter will fire the starting device. All starters must look for false starts. If there is, or appears to be, a false start, fire a recall gun or horn to bring the runners back to their start line. The start team must confer to determine if there had, indeed, been a false start and which runner(s) are to be disqualified.

- A false start is the only thing not under the authority of the Referee. A false start is not appealable and cannot be overturned by the Referee.

- If there was a false start, restart the procedure.

- After the start, prepare for the next heat, section, or event.

- Distance races: the additional duties of a starter include counting laps, indicating the number of laps to go, and ringing a bell to indicate the last lap as the lead runner passes by.

After the meet: acknowledge your colleagues, collect your equipment, and leave the venue

Resources

NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Book,

NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Officials

Manual,

OHSAA Track and Field and Cross Country Officials

Manual,

NFHS Track and Field Pre-Meet Notes

USATF Best Practices publications and monographs