

Implementation of the False Start Rules – April 2010

Guidance notes for UK Starting Officials

Introduction

The bi-annual review of the Rules for Competition undertaken by UK Athletics will next come into effect on April 1st 2010. One significant change in the rules concerns the penalty to be imposed for a false start in all track events for **senior competition**. (Graded events will not be affected).

The New Rule

Essentially, the new rule imposes an **immediate disqualification** for any athlete who commits a false start. This is in line with the IAAF rule introduced in November the previous year. For senior combined event, competition there will be one false start allowed **per race only**.

The new penalties apply at all levels of competition. The penalties for all other age groups and masters events will remain unchanged.

UKA has introduced this new rule so that we are not significantly different in the technical delivery of our sport from the rest of the world.

Guidance

There will be many starting officials and athletes who will need to consider the rules' impact on our sport. This consideration applies particularly to the lower levels of domestic competition. The new requirements do not change the rules of what constitutes a false start, or the fact that the starter is in absolute control of the start. The change does impose new penalties. The management of starts, particularly in the early stages, needs careful consideration.

There are some simple steps that can help starters and athletes alike,

- It is vital that starters (or more probably their assistants) reinforce the requirements of the new rules on the race start line so that athletes can be in no way unsure of the conditions under which they compete.
- Starters should expect athletes to develop delaying tactics and, initially, as a matter of common sense, it would be good if general warnings were given to the whole field, as any further warning would require the award of a false start and thus a disqualification.
- Starters remain in total control of the start process and your judgement of when a false start occurs remains the same. You should continue to apply the same high standard of consistent judgement that you have always used.
- Be strong and not tempted to fire the gun immediately after the 'set' command. Athletes have always needed time to settle and the amended rules do not change that circumstance in any way.
- Throughout the whole starting procedure ensure that the full range of cards are used appropriately by the starter's assistants – red for DQ, yellow for a warning (now only in non senior events or combined events under UK rules) and green to indicate no action is to be taken and all is well.
- In domestic competitions, at certain venues, we are fortunate to have access to false start detection equipment. This is a very useful aid to the starter but it should never replace his/her judgement. It should be used as a reference point to confirm and endorse judgements under UKA rules