

Qualities of an Effective Certified Official

The effective certified official takes an *athlete-centered* approach and is characterized as a reliable individual, knowledgeable of the rules of the sport, able to objectively and impartially officiate each competitive situation, proactive and proficient in his/her duties, and ethical in his/her approach to officiating.

Effective officials are:

- **Athlete Centered.** Always use a proactive *athlete centered* approach to officiating. The interests of the athletes must be considered as primary. The competitors are the central reason for having a meet, not the officials or spectators.
- **Proactive.** Ensure a fair competition – take proactive steps to avoid having to make a call – the goal is not "to catch the competitors" but rather to seek a fair competitive opportunity for all.
- **Consistent.** Treat all competitors and events equally – no one should get special treatment, but consideration should be given to ensuring to each the fair opportunity to compete. Sometimes fairness requires a referee's decision to disqualify, do not shy from this duty when required.
- **Positive Attitude.** Take a positive approach to interactions. A dictatorial manner is usually upsetting and distracting to nervous competitors. Never take an action which interrupts the competition – all actions are taken once the running event or field event trial has been competed.
- **Professional.** In field events, consider the needs of the competitors, spectators and coaches. Announce all marks clearly. In running events, stay off the track and avoid unnecessary movement.
- **Teamwork/Communication Focused.** Work as part of a *team of officials*, ensure clear communications with fellow officials and with competitors. Take the initiative to clarify to avoid possible problems.
- **On Time.** Every official has a role to ensure that the meet runs on time. Each competitor who reports by the designated time needs an adequate and predictable warming up period. A poorly administered schedule may result in poor performances, lost confidence or injuries.

These qualities are reflected in officiating practice that:

- Exercises teamwork, common sense, judgment, tact and a proactive approach to assigned tasks.
- Views officiating as both an art and a science – consider the circumstances in applying the rules.
- Sees every meet and every event as important – to maintain fairness, objectivity, consistency and impartiality in every situation and in every event.
- Works as a team to exhibit and exercise a high level of professionalism, integrity and consistency.
- Maintains a high standard of concentration and communication—remain prepared to react quickly.
- Focuses on safety and act decisively, brisk but not brusque. Be solutions oriented.
- Is knowledgeable of the appropriate application of the rules to the situation – always verify any non-routine ruling by looking it up in the current rule book. Do not be afraid to ask or check.
- Understands the athletes' needs and circumstances – be present, but not highly visible.
- Is patient and positive despite the conditions, statements of others or personal feelings.

USA Track & Field has developed an Official's Code of Ethics (see Appendix II) which outlines the appropriate conduct of a USA Track & Field certified Official. Every USA Track & Field official should:

- Be punctual in commitment and in honoring assignments
- Dress appropriately -- There are two national uniforms. The first is used indoor and depending on local choice during the spring and fall. It consists of black shoes and socks, mouse gray slacks or dress, navy blue tie or scarf with thin red and white stripes, and navy blue blazer with nametag attached. The tie can be purchased from a US Postal Service uniform store. The other uniform is used during the summer and in some associations as the outdoor uniform. It consists of white shoes and socks, khaki slacks, shorts or dress, and white shirt.
- Refrain from smoking in the vicinity of the event
- Refrain from consuming alcoholic beverages on the day of the event
- Be positive, and not rude; friendly, not companionable
- Never hamper, embarrass or berate fellow officials
- Know the rules of competition and their appropriate interpretation
- Ignore spectator comments
- Expect no compensation other than personal satisfaction, and
- Approach each meet as a "Prestigious Meet"