

CHIEFING A MEETING

1. Introduction

These notes are intended to help timekeepers with little or no experience of acting as chief timekeeper and to prepare the ground for them to chief more major meetings.

2. Functions of the Chief Timekeeper

The main functions of the Chief Timekeeper are to:

- 1) Organise the timekeepers available at an athletics meeting with a view to recording as accurate times as possible for the athletes in the race programme.
- 2) Organise to cover as many of the rules and code of practice guidelines as possible given the available timekeeping resources.
- 3) Read each race and record a time for each runner in the light of the times returned by the timekeepers and the race reading.
- 4) Ensure that information to enable the ratification of records is collected.
- 5) Where possible, given available resources, ensure that runners are given pace information during each race of more than 400metres.
- 6) Ensure that timekeepers carry out their duties in a way that is safe for themselves and others involved in the meeting.

3. Meetings where no information is available beforehand

For most meetings the chief timekeeper will turn up on the day of the meeting having no advance information. Indeed he may turn up on the day not expecting to chief, only to be asked to do so upon arrival. In order to compensate for the uncertainties of chiefing in such circumstances, the following steps should be helpful.

- 1) Obtain a meeting programme from the announcer or the meeting organiser and confirm:
 - a) if it is a team event, the number of teams competing, the names of the teams, their identification letters and club colours.
 - b) the maximum number of runners for races in lanes, and the maximum number for longer races.
 - c) the order, timing, and type of events to be run.
- 2) Use the announcer to rustle up timekeepers well before the first race.
- 3) Check with the starter to see whether he/she is prepared to call times at the start for longer races e.g. 1500m, 3000m, 5000m, where the start is not also the finish line.
- 4) Check with the track referee to see whether he/she is prepared to tell you who is finishing in longer races.
- 5) When a timekeeper appears, whom you do not know, introduce yourself and ask politely their name, grade, and how many times they can take on their timer.
- 6) For ungraded timekeepers check the extent of their knowledge and experience, especially of calling, taking lap splits, and doing a lap chart.
- 7) Check with all timekeepers whether there are duties they are unable to perform, e.g. because of disability or health problems, and whether there are duties they particularly like to do.

Please be aware that a timekeeper's grade does not necessarily denote how good a timekeeper they will prove. There are huge variations within each grade and some ungraded timekeepers are vastly experienced and extremely competent.

4. Team Layout in meetings where no information is available beforehand.

As no duty sheet can have been prepared in advance, duties need to be allocated on the day. It may be helpful to use a worksheet to assist with this process and an example is as Appendix 1. This enables the details of each timekeeper to be recorded, together with the position and secondary duties allocated to each. It also serves as a reminder of the duties to be allocated for the types of race which are most frequently encountered at meetings.

5. Priorities

If timekeeping resources are limited, as will frequently be the case at meetings where no information is available in advance, it is much more important that some duties are performed than others, priorities are as follows:

1. The top priority is to ensure that each athlete is given a time and one which is as accurate as possible.
2. The second priority is to be able to ratify any records, which are set.
3. The third priority is to give information on the pace of the race to the runners by having intermediate times called.

Where photofinish is in operation it is also a priority to send the manual times to the photofinish team as quickly as possible.

6. Duties and Priorities

In order to achieve the top priority it is vital to distribute the timekeepers over the times to be taken in the most effective manner and advice on how to do this is set out in Section 7. In this section the contribution made by the secondary duties to the various priorities is considered.

1. Calling intermediate times contributes only to the lowest of the three priorities.
2. Recording lap splits contributes to the second priority.
3. Recording the time taken by every timekeeper on each position contributes to the second priority.
4. A lap chart or ticks and crosses system contributes to the top priority by helping to ensure that times are given to each runner as they complete all their laps.
5. Taking only one time in sprints contributes to the top priority as the time taken is much more likely to be accurate than where multiple timing is used.
6. Having more than one timekeeper on a position contributes to the top priority and the second priority. It may be possible to concentrate timekeepers on a particular runner where it is known that he/she is going for a record.
7. Where it is not possible to take only one time, maximising the number of places between the first and second position to be taken contributes to the top priority.

The above considerations should be taken into account in deciding which duties to perform and which, given limited resources, can be ignored with the least significant consequences.

7. Allocation of timekeepers to positions

There is no need to panic about the allocation of timekeepers to positions. It can be done just before the first race is about to be run. Indeed this is a good time to allocate timekeepers as it minimises the extent to which the team needs to be rearranged to take account of late arrivals of timekeepers.

In Appendix 2 there is a set of tables giving suggested timekeeper allocations to positions depending on:

- 1) the maximum number of runners expected in sprints.
- 2) the number of timekeepers available.

These tables assume each person has a timer capable of taking at least two times. They will need to be modified for each timekeeper with a timer that takes only one time.

Here is an example of how to read the table. Say there are five teams in the match and three timekeepers. The first timekeeper would take 1st and 4th position, the second timekeeper 2nd and 5th, and the third timekeeper 3rd.

This general approach is worth modifying where the chief timekeeper is not confident about reading the race and taking a second time.

Other tips include:

- 1) Putting the strongest timekeeper on a position where two times are to be taken.
- 2) Where no one other than the chief timekeeper needs to take two times, put the strongest timekeeper on third position to give a solid point of reference for other times of other finishers in the middle of the race.
- 3) Spread stronger timekeepers over the positions and do not concentrate them all on one position, except where it is known a competitor is going for a record.
- 4) Spread secondary duties as evenly as possible across the team.

In races other than sprints, i.e. all races from 400m upwards, it is safe to ask all timekeepers to take more than one time. Indeed, timekeepers may be asked to take all times as long as it does not jeopardise their ability to take the times officially allocated to them where finishers are close or the timer can only take a limited number of times. Where more than three timekeepers have taken a position, it would be normal to return the majority time, or if their are equal numbers on times, to return the longer time.

In 4 X 400m relays, give splits to as many teams as there are timekeepers, including all teams who have supplied a timekeeper. It is important to return to official times at the end of the race to ensure that all finishers have a time.

Brief each timekeeper clearly on what is required and do not be afraid to spell it out so that there are no misunderstandings. Make sure that the same duty has not been given to more than one timekeeper. It is also advisable not to send all timekeepers on a position off the stand at the same time.

A general briefing of the timekeeping team should also be given so that the overall approach to the use of the timekeepers is understood and to ensure that timekeepers are aware of the health and safety issues, especially never crossing the infield, being alert to field events in progress and avoiding athletes warming-up.

8. Liaison with other officials.

As a minimum it is necessary to speak to the following officials before the first event:

- 1) The chief starter to agree how to respond to his whistle asking whether the timekeepers and track judges are ready for the next race. A wave of your board is the usual arrangement.
- 2) The track referee to agree how to establish that the track judges are ready for the next race. Usually if the track judges are on the stand having finished writing down the result of the previous race, this is sufficient. It is important to take particular care in hurdles races as some of the track judges may still be replacing hurdles knocked over in the previous race.
- 3) The track referee to agree how the finishing order and times are to be collated together and how they are to be forwarded to the officials issuing results to the athletes. Usually a member of the track judging team will have a pad on which to record the times and there may also be a runner to take the race result to the results officials. It is good practice for the times to be read back so avoid transcription errors.
- 4) The track referee to check that the appropriate forms are available for the ratification of records. At minor meetings, athletes or their managers should have the appropriate forms for the ratification of lesser records.

9. Reading the race

The times returned to the chief by the timekeeping team will not always make sense. For example, the time returned for second place may be faster than for first place, two runners may be given the same time when they did not finish together, or two runners may be given different time when they finished together.

It is vital therefore to read the race so that the best sense possible can be made of conflicting times. To help do this, it is worth marking on your recording sheet straight after the race any runners that were very close. Most chiefs use two marks, one to indicate two runners so close that the same time needs to be returned for them, and one to indicate runners who could be given the same time or be one tenth of a second apart. An example of a recording sheet is given at Appendix 3. The first row is used to record the manual time, the second row the runner's number or letter, and the third row the photofinish time if there is one.

If it is decided to alter a returned time after consulting with the timekeepers concerned, it is courteous to explain why it is being changed.

10. Team Layouts for more major meetings

In more the more major meetings the following features will usually apply:

- 1) the number of timekeepers to be deployed will be known in advance.
- 2) the names, grades (and reputations) of timekeepers taking part will be known in advance.
- 3) timekeepers can be expected to have timers capable of taking at least ten (and probably 100) times.
- 4) the number of lanes to be used in sprints (normally eight) will be known.
- 5) the number of timekeepers will be sufficient for the rule book and code of practice to be followed more or less in full.
- 6) photofinish will probably be in use.
- 7) provision will normally have to be made for giving intermediate times to the announcer.
- 8) the chief will only be expected to take first place and then be free to concentrate on reading the race.
- 9) the programme of races will be known in advance.
- 10) a steward may have been appointed to assist the chief timekeeper.

11. Liaison with other officials in more major meetings

At more major meetings it will be necessary to liaise with the following in addition to those mentioned in Section 8 above:

- 1) Chief of photofinish to agree the method of sending manual times and receiving photofinish times.
- 2) Clerk of the Course to ensure that there are suitable markers for the taking of intermediate times, e.g. at the kilometres in 3000metre steeplechases or at the start for 1500s, 3000s, and 5000s.
- 3) Announcer to see what intermediate times are needed.

4) Meeting manager to check for any last minute changes to the timetable.
There may be a technical meeting called by the meeting manager to facilitate all the necessary liaison.

12. Duty Sheets

In the more major meetings the chief will be expected to prepare a duty sheet. An example is attached as Appendix 4. This is a fairly straightforward duty sheet and the following points should be noted:

- 1) the reference letter refer to the seating plan i.e. Ian Murdoch is sitting in the seat labelled J.
- 2) The asterisks alongside the names of some timekeepers indicate that they are team leaders responsible for collecting the times from all the timekeepers on their position ready to return to the chief.
- 3) At this meeting there was no need to have a column for races finishing in lanes and another for races from 800m upwards as there were only 8 teams competing, each with a single athlete. It is often necessary to have the two columns.
- 4) The numbers in brackets are alternative times to take when there is no runner for the main position to be taken. For example, Geoff Canton takes second place when there is not an eighth runner. He is also seated alongside the people normally taken second place.
- 5) For the 3000m and 1500m races there are notes making clear that the caller is expected to return to the stand in time to take their time.
- 6) A further column that is sometimes used is 'Call at the finish line' This is useful when there are several steeplechases in the programme.
- 7) A type of lap split not included on the duty sheet is for 4 x 400m relays. It is important to make clear in such races that each timekeeper should take their main position at the end of the race, irrespective of the team for which he/she is taking splits. This ensures that a time is taken for all finishers.
- 8) On this duty sheet 'times to the announcer' is included in the column for 'Other duties'. It could have a column of its own where there are large numbers of distance races in the programme.
- 9) There is a note to remind timekeepers to return recording sheets to the chief (or the steward if there is one) as they may be needed for the analysis of timekeepers' performance, or for the ratification of any records.
- 10) In a meeting with several events of the same distance, it is worth putting the event number alongside each duty so that there is no confusion about which timekeeper is to perform which duty.

13. Conclusion

This is only a brief introduction to chiefing but it is hoped it will help those embarking on the task for the first time and those who are about to chief a more major meeting.

APPENDIX 1

WORKSHEET

NAME OF TIMEKEEPER	GRADE	CLUB

SECONDARY DUTIES PER EVENT

EVENT	CALL AT START	CALL AT BELL	CALL AT FINISH LINE	LAP SPLITS	LAP CHART	TIMES TO ANNOUNCER
4X400				YES		
800		YES		YES		YES
1500	YES	YES		YES		YES
1500SC			YES	YES		YES
2000SC			YES	YES		YES
3000	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES
3000SC			YES	YES	YES	YES
5000	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES

ALLOCATION OF DUTIES

POSITION (SPRINTS)	POSITION (OTHER)	NAME OF TIMEKEEPER	SECONDARY DUTIES

NOTES:

APPENDIX 2

ALLOCATION OF TIMEKEEPERS TO POSITIONS

NUMBER OF TEAMS	NUMBER OF TIMEKEEPERS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
FOUR	1+	1,3 2,4	1,4 2 3	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 1	1 2 3 4 1 2	1 2 3 4 1 2 3	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4		
	FIVE	1+	1,3,5 2,4	1,4 2,5 3	1,5 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 1	1 2 3 4 5 1 2	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3	
		SIX	1+	1,3,5 2,4,6	1,4 2,5 3,6	1,5 2,6 3 4	1,6 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6 1	1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

APPENDIX 4

BAL CUPAND PLATE FINALS – BEDFORD - 6TH SEPTEMBER 2008

Ref	Timekeeper	All Races	Call at start	Call bell	Lap Splits	Other Duties
A	Paul Langston	1				Chief Timekeeper
B	Dilip Basu*	1		3000 Men		
C	Ted Whitehead	1			800 Men	
D	Mike Barrett*	2			800 Women	Times to Announcer 1500 Women
E	AN Other	2				
F	Arthur Fairhurst*	3			1500 Women	3000 Men Lap Chart/ Running Watch with O
G	Dave Wilson	3				
H	Stan Burton*	4			3000 Men	Multitime 3000 Men
I		4				
J	Ian Murdoch*	5	3000 Men			Times to Announcer 800 Men
K		5				
L	Fred Barwick*	6(4)		1500 Women		Times to Announcer 800 Women
M		6(5)				
N	John Hughes*	7(2)		800 Women		Times to Announcer 3000 Men
O	Geoff Canton*	8(2)	1500 Women	800 Men		3000 Men Lap Chart/Running Watch with F

Seating Plan

A	B	C	* Please record and return agreed times to the Chief
D	E	O	Take time in () if no runner for your main position and return to the appropriate team leader
F	G	N	1500: please call at the start for two laps and return to the stand
H	I	L	3000: please call at the start for 6 laps and return to the stand
J	K	M	Please return all recording sheets to the Chief at the end of the meeting
			Health and Safety: never cross the infield and please be aware of field events in progress and athletes warming up
			Have a great day Paul