

# Officiating Tips for Coaches #4

This is the second event/role-specific article. The primary focus is on **SAFETY** rather than a rules review because a **SAFE** venue, along with the appropriate application of the rules, ensures a **FAIR** competition.

In general, the keys to ensuring a safe event are 1) the steps taken preparing the venue **BEFORE** the competition starts, and 2) the officiating crew being alert for safety issues arising **DURING** the competition.

## Throws (Shot Put, Discus and Javelin)

### LANDING SECTOR

While most track and field events present possible safety hazards to the athletes, the throws present the greatest safety risks to officials, coaches and spectators as well. For this reason, NFHS **Rule 6-9, Art. 2 (Note)** recommends that sectors be cordoned off with rope, fence or flagging “well outside” the sector lines. As a reference, USATF specifies the distance be “at least 3 meters outside of the sector lines for their full length”.

Officials must be alert at all times, and follow the cardinal rule:

**NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON THE RING OR RUNWAY!**

The official at the ring or runway should not call an athlete up or permit a throw until he/she has checked that the sector is clear, and the officials in the sector are ready.

There should no objects (for example, stakes or markers) in the sector that could be dislodged or cause an implement to ricochet if struck. This would pose yet another danger to officials in the sector.

A throw is fair if the implement's first point of contact is within (not touching) the sector lines even if it then falls or slides out of the sector afterward.

To set up a sector from scratch, refer to the NFHS rule book **Appendix B** to create a sector for the shot put or discus, and to **Rule 6-9, Art 11-12, fig. 9-10** to create a runway and sector for the javelin.

## RING

Though both the shot put and discus are thrown from a ring, the rings are of different diameters: 7 feet (2.134 meters) for the shot put, and 8 feet, 2.5 inches (2.5 meters) for discus. Before and during the competition, the ring needs to be cleared of debris and kept dry to lessen the risk of an athlete slipping.

In the shot put, the toe board needs to be secure and tightened if loose. In the discus, the integrity of the cage must be checked to insure that a discus cannot go through or over the cage. During the warm-up (which must be supervised by an official or coach) and competition, no one except the athlete throwing should be inside the cage. The athletes and officials at the ring should be behind the front edge of the cage, and far enough away that they will not be struck if a discus hits and stretches the cage netting or fencing. All others (coaches and spectators) should be well behind the cage or outside the sector barriers. And, no matter what,

## **EVERYONE NEEDS TO STAY ALERT**

In addition to the rules applying to the sector, a throw is fair if the athlete 1) does not touch outside the ring (shot put, discus), including

top and sides of the stopboard (shot put), or runway and foul line (javelin), 2) remains in the ring or runway until the implement lands, and 3) exits the back half of the ring or the equivalent marks adjacent to the javelin foul line. An athlete may enter the ring from any direction.

## MEASUREMENT

How a throw is measured differs depending on the implement thrown. In the shot put, measurement is made to the nearest lesser 1/4 inch (**Rule 6-4, Art. 5**). However, in the long throws (discus and javelin), the throw is measured to nearest lesser inch (**Rule 6-5, Art. 4 & Rule 6-6, Art. 8**). The zero mark of the tape is placed where the implement lands, and **remember** that the zero mark is not always at the end of the tape.

It is also important that, in acknowledgement of the work put in by the athletes, ALL legal/fair throws should be measured and recorded.