

These notes are appropriate for experienced Level 2 and higher. When you first Chief, you certainly DO NOT have to have memorised what is expected of you below. These are good guidelines however, and very good in explaining the role of Chief Timekeeper. ALWAYS ASK FOR HELP. When you feel confident to take on the role, make sure you have an experienced timekeeper with you for support.

Notes for acting as the Chief Timekeeper at a league meeting

These are ideas only and they are intended to aid level 1 – 3 timekeepers deal with the tricky job of being a Chief Timekeeper at any league meeting.

Rules

Firstly the rules :- The first rule we break is UKA Technical rule 19 (8) which says that 3 timekeepers plus one or two additional timekeepers shall time the winner of each race. We haven't enough timekeepers as you should only have one more than the teams in the league.

Lap times should be recorded (if possible) for all competitions (leader number and time), as a level two or three timekeeper may be asked to do this at County or Regional Championships.

What to do prior to the meeting starting

Each team should bring one timekeeper. The host club provide the Chief Timekeeper plus one other. For example, with a six teams there should be seven timekeepers. Check on the sheet that they are present and note their levels. See the announcer to ask for missing timekeepers. If they do not turn up report missing officials to the League Secretary for that division (who should be the Meeting Manager). Probably the most difficult part is to allocate finishing positions to the timekeepers you have got. This is where experience comes into it, but there are some guiding principles we can use.

Most problems that you are going to have are in the sprint races, particularly the 100m. Assuming each club has brought a timekeeper it means we can assign one timekeeper with you on one and one to each of the other positions. Let's say that there are six teams and you are reasonably confident in your timekeeping then this is what you do.

Rank the other six timekeepers by level from the signing-in sheet. Put the least experienced on six where you have a fair chance of checking their time particularly if they do not have a level. Also, if there are not six in the race then they can come up to second position, working with a more experienced timekeeper.

You need your best two timekeepers on three and four, so allocate accordingly.

Second place is easier to take than 3 or 4, so your third highest ranked timekeeper is on this position.

Position 5 is always a problem. It depends how close the sprints are. In National or International meetings position 5 is a real test, but here we hope that there is a diversity in the ability of the athletes competing.

Guidance would be to put the 4th ranked timekeeper on fifth and the 5th ranked with you on one.

What you should do when timing the races

Hopefully there are a number of races before the 100m races for you to gauge how your team is going. Try and take as many 'good' times as you can as a back-up should anybody miss a time and also to gauge how the lower-levelled timekeepers are doing. Normally, they will be short in races whilst they begin to understand their anticipation of the finish.

When you take multiple times put a dot on your sheet to remind you which times you have taken. It may sound a tad arrogant but there is an unwritten 2 tenths rule in that if you feel comfortable about taking the time, you are never 2 tenths out, so you will only use these extra times if someone has missed a time or is miles out (or possibly if two timekeepers are on the same time and they differ)

It is important that if you do not take a timekeeper's time that you explain why you have not done so. 'Anticipation at the finish line' is the main cause of error but not always. Sight problems of seeing smoke (or a flash) at the 100 or 200m starts can cause times to be short. Equally, a quicker reaction at a 400m start can cause longer times, as can a slow finisher or walker.

If you are confident of your team, only take first in the 100 and 200m races and try to read the race, putting lines on your sheet to indicate close finishes or ones you feel are only 0.1 apart. (Rule is that if in a close finish you can tell who won then there will be a tenth of a second between the athletes).

Allocating duties

As mentioned earlier the only duty that we should do at league meetings is the duty of calling intermediate times. Although no longer in the UKA rules, it helps athletes gauge their progress throughout the race so as to meet times set by their coaches

The following races require lap and bell times to be called. Some are called at the Start (S), some at the Finish (F) and the Bell time (B). Note that it said in the original UKA rules 'because of the varying position of the water-jump, steeplechase races are always called at the finish'.

800m (B), 1500m (S & B) 1200m (F & B) 3k (S & B) 5k (S & B) 10k (F & B)

All steeplechase (1500m, 2000m, 3000m) (F & B)

Normally you start at position two and give the duties in rotation. You will need to check who knows how to 'call' and give instructions (or show them) if necessary.

Remember that in the original UKA rules it said that in a 1500m race only the first two laps need to be called at the start and in a 3000m only the first 6 laps need to be called. (For 5000 first 11 laps). For completeness, any calling for a 10k should be divided into two duties, (the first 12 laps and then the rest).

There is a little trick that reminds you when calling say a 3k how many times you have called. Each time the leader passes you, click your split button so you know when he/she/they has done 6 laps and you don't call a time on the 7th lap as they are only 200m from the finish. Lapped runners can be a challenge.

You must remember that it is your responsibility to delegate someone to take the times of those out calling in the 1500m, 3000m and 5000m as they may not get back in time. Of course, you could volunteer to take the missing times.

Taking more than one time in longer races

In races such as the 800m and above, there may be more than six runners. You will need to allocate 'second times' which would be done in rotation, 1 and 7, 2 and 8 etc. With non-scoring races or combined A and B races it may be necessary to do it in sprints as well. This would have been where the 'not to take two times in a sprint' rule would have been broken.

The Starting Protocol

1. The starter blows his or her whistle
2. Check that the Track Judges are ready
3. If so, wave back (You can have a white flag which can be seen even from the 200m start, a board is just as good so long it is not the colour of the seat you are sitting on!). Luminous yellow is a favourite of others.
4. At this point you might say something like 'under 15 Girls 100m' to let the timekeepers know that you have signalled back. Only say 'gun-up' if there has been a false start because the starter won't usually whistle again. I don't! It's their responsibility to zeroise their watch but you might mention it.
5. Make a note of how many are in the race by putting a dot on your sheet in the appropriate column. (This is very important)
6. Race finishes, so having taken your times, mark with dots which times you have taken and use a line for close finishes
7. Go down the team and record on your sheet the times they have (make a decision re close finishers). Note you cannot have third having a faster time than first. (Times have to be chronological!).
8. If you have a steward (if appointed) pass the board for them to fill in the track slip. If not, write the times on track slip. Make sure the track slip has the right heading and the correct number of athlete numbers.
9. Pass the slip to the announcer or those doing the recording of the results

The end of the meeting

At the end of the meeting, thank the timekeepers and wish them a safe journey home! Check with the league secretary or the Meeting Manager about the missing timekeepers as they are worth points to clubs and some teams are notorious for not bringing officials and relying on other clubs to cover for them. This is for point deduction purposes.

Check that all results have made it through to the recorders.

Keep the results until the end of the season just in case there are any enquiries.

British, European and World records

Although it rarely happens, there have been occasions when an athlete approaches the Chief Timekeeper and announcers that they are attempting some sort of record, usually a British one. It is most likely that the athlete in question is after an age group record, say Women over 60 Steeplechase and they are not necessarily going to win the race.

WA Rule CR32 Page 31 and 32. Only records for the following distances can be ratified by hand timing only :- 1000m, 1500m, Mile, 2k, 3k, 5k, 10k, 20k, 1 hour, 25k, 30k, 3k Steeplechase, 4 x 800m relay, Distance medley relay, 4 x 1500m relay
Race Walking (Track) 20k, 30k, 50k

The UKA supplement CR35 S1 (Pages 73-80), says the following:-

When a record claim is made when hand timing only is in operation the performance must have been timed by three timekeepers each of whom should be at least level 4. Immediately after the race they shall exhibit their watches to the Chief Timekeeper who will decide which time shall be recorded in accordance with Rule 165(9) and complete the Record Application Form appropriately.

So you must put three level 4 timekeepers on the time of the athlete in question!

The only other reference of note is UKA Rule 264 (x) which says that 'The time at the end of each lap and the name of the leader for all events over 400m in length'.

Note also that all Track Judges/Timekeepers signing the form have to be level 4.