



CHAPTER 15 – CONDUCTING ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIPS

15.1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP PROGRAM

Associations are required to present a championship in each of the following sport disciplines:

- Men's Track & Field
- Women's Track & Field
- Race Walking
- Youth Athletics
- Men's Long Distance Running
- Women's Long Distance Running
- Cross Country Running
- Masters Track & Field
- Masters Long Distance Running

Due to the difficulty in securing facilities and officials, and having conflicting events on the calendar, Association sport committees share resources and combine their championships. At the open level, Men's and Women's Track & Field championships are often combined and include a race walk, and most road running events include open men, open women, masters men, and masters women.

A passing grade can generally be achieved with:

- Combined Men's & Women's Open Track & Field Championships (including a race walk event)
- Junior Olympics Track & Field (including a race walk)
- Junior Olympics Cross Country Running
- Open and Masters Cross Country Running Championships
- Masters Track & Field Championships
- Partnering with one or more road races, designating them as championships, and recognizing open men, open women, and masters age divisions

15.2 – CHAMPIONSHIPS GUIDELINES

General guidelines

There are some basic parameters all championships need to abide by.

The most important are:

- Event information must be posted on the Association website and included in the national online calendar at least 60 days prior to the event.
- Events must be sanctioned by the local USATF Association.
- Only current USATF members may score or earn awards and/or prize money in the championships.
- Only current USATF member clubs may score in the championships.
- Athletes may only represent a club if the club is a USATF member organization, and are otherwise unattached (even if they list a fictional or non-member "social" club as an affiliation).



- A printed event information brochure or web page (if the event only accepts online entries) is available and distributed to all Association clubs and members who fit the demographics of the championship, as well as non-members in the same demographic who could potentially become members in order to participate. The information should be ready to send and/or notify via e-mail at least 60 days prior.
- The event brochure and/or web page should include:
 - All applicable USATF logos identifying and branding the event as a Championship;
 - The appropriate title of the event, using USATF event-naming protocols (see below); and
 - A place during the entry process (on the form or during the on-line entry) to include their current USATF member number or use of the USATF on-line entry system which requires a member number before a registrant can proceed.
- USATF awards must be presented to individuals and teams in the standard USATF age groups for which the championship is being conducted.
- Results must be posted or linked on the Association website. Even if the championship is part of a larger event, such as a road race, the separate championship results must be formulated and posted.
- Junior Olympics' results must be sent electronically in the proper format to the appropriate depository so that the Junior Olympics' stepping-stone qualification process can continue.
- Road race championships must be conducted on USATF certified courses. This assures the participants of an accurate distance and meets USATF requirements for records. Off-road long distance events should be accurately measured and the actual distance advertised.

Additional guidelines

The choice of date, time, and site, plus all of the entry parameters, should be in the hands of your sport committees at the local level. The guide they use should be the USATF Competition Rules for competition officials, events, ages, schedules, site selection, and more. If you are not going to follow a particular rule, you should have a valid reason for that choice and advertise what you are going to do. For example: "Hurdles at the following age divisions will not be contested due to lack of 27" hurdles – 80m Hurdles for M80+ and W60+, and 200m/300m Hurdles for M70+ and W60+."

Your championship calendar should be determined prior to the start of the calendar year. Each championship should have a web page or set of web pages devoted to it. If you are still successful handing out flyers about the event, the entry form should include most of this information and point potential participants to the website for complete and up-to-date information.

Included on these web pages should be information on the following subjects:

- Date(s)
- Time(s) and/or time schedule (listing the events being contested for a track & field or cross country meet)
- Site, including a description of the stadium or map of the course (or link to the certified course map)
- Entry procedures, fees, and deadlines
- Whether day of event entry is permitted
- USATF membership requirements (must be members for USATF awards at any level, but you can hold a non-championship section if you wish to promote USATF among non-members)
- Team scoring
- Uniform policy
- Travel options
- Nearby hotels for those requiring an overnight stay
- Directions to the site, including parking areas for private vehicles and public transportation routes
- Awards – individual and team scoring

- Prize money offered (you should also state eligibility for prize money, since there are several categories of athletes – non-members, youth, high school, college – not eligible to receive prize money)
- Any expenses to be paid to athletes or teams coming to the championships
- Any ceremonies involved (opening, awards, closing)
- History of the event, if any, including defending and/or past champions
- Photos of past championships
- ADA Accommodations
- Anti-doping controls
- Technical meeting
- Status of entries; and more

15.3 – RECRUITING OFFICIALS AND VOLUNTEERS

Your officials and volunteers stage the competition. You must have an adequate number of each to achieve success. The event should be analyzed carefully to determine the tasks which need to be accomplished from the time participants begin to arrive (including a warm-up day or days if applicable) to the time they depart. There should be an official's coordinator and a volunteer coordinator, each serving different purposes. An official's coordinator ensures that all contested events are adequately staffed with trained competition officials certified by USATF. A volunteer coordinator manages the staffing for non-competition tasks such as gate fees, packet pick-up, volunteer check-in, water/ fluid stations, awards, etc.

What happens outside of the competition venue is the responsibility of the Games or Organizing Committee, while the competition itself is the purview of the Referee(s) and the officials working under him, her, or them – umpires, field event lead officials, starters, clerks, and auto-timing personnel. Once the competition is underway, the Meet Director and volunteers – implement carriers, pit rakers, clothing carriers, and hurdle crew – work under that leadership to assist the competition, enabling officials to concentrate solely on athletes and performances.

Often, your local Officials Association will place the championships on its calendar, solicit volunteers, and assign them to their tasks. If the event is particularly attractive or noteworthy, you will get requests from officials and other USATF members outside of your Association to work the event. It is your choice whether to accept them.

15.4 – BENEFITS AND RISKS OF COMBINING CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISIONS

There are two common event areas where the combination practice has both benefits and risks. They are (1) two or more track & field championships, including youth (usually Junior Olympics), open, and/or Masters, and (2) merging the youth and open/masters cross country meets.

The benefits of combining include:

- One set of publicity generally aimed most of your Association's members;
- One facility rental instead of two or three;
- One official's and volunteer's recruitment effort, although the longer schedule may result in more than normal number of shifts; and
- Families with competitors at multiple age levels can all compete at one site.

The risks are:

- Really long schedules;
- Tiring long days for your officials and volunteers;
- Tiring long days for your athletes and parents;
- Complicated time schedules; and
- Not all members of a family may be able to compete where events conflict.