

Guidelines for Staging NCAA Track and Field Events

Revised: DECEMBER 1, 2018

I – Indoor Running Events

The NCAA Cross Country/Track and Field Rules Book, Rule 5-10.1, provides only three methods to administer indoor running events. The rule accommodates the familiar situation of large field sizes and the principles of competition. The number in a large field may be reduced through the use of a qualifying standard, the use of a qualifying round, the use of a series of rounds mandatory for all competitors or the use of one round of timed-section finals. In each case, the details of the procedure are to be in-place before the start of competition. Slightly different options exist for oval vs. straight races.

a. Qualifying Standard: The use of a qualifying standard would set the minimum performance level for entry into the competition for an event based on the performance submitted on the entry. The qualifying standard is set by the games committee and results in control of the field size. Qualifying standards can be in a form other than performance based. Rule 5-10.1a

b. Qualifying Round: This is a round of competition, before the competition proper for an event, used to determine eligibility for the competition proper. This is not the same as a Preliminary Round for an event. The participants within a Qualifying Round for an event may or may not include the entire entry list for the event. The purpose of a Qualifying Round is to determine who meets the minimum performance standard for participation in the competition proper. The use of this option precedes the implementation of a Series of Rounds, no other method. The games committee sets the criteria for achieving qualification for the competition proper. Rule 5-10.1a

c. Series of Rounds: The familiar format of Prelims, Semis and Final fall into the category. All competitors entered in an event compete in the first round of competition and, through a defined advancement formula, advance to the next round of competition, culminating in a single final race. Rules are in place that restricts some options regarding the advancement procedures. The games committee has the authority to define the number of heats in each of the rounds leading to the final round. Rule 5 10.1c

d. Timed-Section Finals: This procedure allows for a single round of competition, where each participant competes once, and all performances are then ranked to produce a final result for the event. It is frequently used when extreme limits exist within the schedule or facility and other options are not feasible. The games committee determines the structure of the sections, such as 'slow-fast'. Rule 5 10.1b

Example/Commentary

The games committee has established a competition schedule that provides time for two rounds of the 60 Meter Dash on an eight-lane facility. The desired format is to have four heats in the first round, advancing the winner of each heat, plus the next best four on time to the final. At the close of entries, the games committee has 70 entries in the event, and there are many who have no entry performance listed. Some decision must be made regarding the administration of this event.

-- The plan to have only two rounds is still desired. The games committee explores having a first round consisting of nine heats and advancing the best eight time to the final. This option, advancing only on

time, does not exist in the Rules for the 60 Meter Dash on an eight-lane facility. Therefore, it must be dismissed as an option.

-- All entries can participate in a single round of timed-sections with the results for the event being a rank order of all performances from the nine sections combined. The seeding of the sections can be based on entry performance.

-- Three rounds can be staged with all competitors competing in the first round. That would be nine heats. A rule indicates a preference that at least two from each heat advance to the second round. It is a games committee decision to determine the number of heats in the second round, and then create an appropriate advancement formula. As an example, it is within the rules to establish a second round containing four heats comprised of the top 2 from each of the heats in the first round plus the next best 14 performances, for a total of 32 competitors in the second round. Advancement to the final would then be the winner of each heat in the second round, plus the next best four performances, for a total of eight in the final. The seeding of the first round must be the serpentine method, creating as much balance between heats as possible.

-- The games committee can examine the entries and decide to limit entry into the competition by performance, a qualifying standard. This can be in any form. Therefore, a criterion such as 'only entrants who have a confirmed entry performance' is legitimate. Many other examples exist and are totally under the control of the games committee.

-- The use of a Qualifying Round allows the games committee to have a very structured two round competition proper and assure that the most qualified are in the competition proper, especially early in the season when some individuals have no entry performance. Based on the total entries and the desire in the example, the games committee can establish an automatic qualification into the first of two rounds of the event for 24 of the entrants, based on their entry performance. It is suggested that this be a verified performance. The actual number is not fixed by rule. All remaining entrants compete in a Qualifying Round to vie for the remaining eight positions in the competition proper. The structure of the heats in the Qualifying Round, as well as the advancement method is determined by the games committee. The Qualifying Round heats could be seeded and the advancement can be by performance only.

II – Indoor/Outdoor Field Events

The staging of indoor field events is governed by Rule 6-2 in the NCAA Rules Book. This rule applies to both indoor and outdoor competition. The rule, like that for running, accommodates the familiar situation of a large field size and the principles of competition. The number in a large field may be reduced through the use of a qualifying competition or the use of separate flights providing preliminary attempts with advancement to a series of final rounds based on performances from all flights of preliminary attempts. In each case, the details of the procedure are to be in-place before the start of competition. Slightly different options exist for vertical vs. horizontal field events. There are also three special alternatives that may be used for large field sizes in horizontal field events. The use of a qualifying standard to limit initial entry is not specified in the rules. However, a games committee is within its authority to establish a minimum entry standard for an event.

a. Qualifying Competition: This is a competition separate from and preceding the event competition proper. It is used to determine who is allowed to compete in the competition proper. No marks from the Qualifying Competition in an event are valid in determining the final placing of the competitors in the event. The games committee determines the structure of the groupings in the Qualifying Competition, as well as the number of competitors who qualify to the competition proper. Who qualifies to the

competition proper is through a combination of best performance in the Qualifying Competition and achievement of an automatic standard as determined by the games committee. A Qualifying Competition may be contested for any field event. The use of this option precedes the implementation of Flights, no other method. Rule 6-2.4.

b. Preliminary Flights – Horizontal Events: A large number of entries may be divided into flights of a size specified in the rules. The games committee may organize the flights by performance or in a random manner. Advancement from the rounds in the Preliminary Flights to rounds in a single Final flight is based on performances from all Preliminary Flights and limited in number by rule. Rule 6-2.5.

c. Flights – Vertical Events: Rule 6-4.3. Large fields may be contested as flights in one of the following methods. The games committee may choose to use a rotating flight of five competitors for the entire competition. Procedure for this method is in the rules. A second option is to separate the large field into smaller flights. The games committee determines the method of separation. Each flight competes under normal conditions to its conclusion, where each competitor is eliminated as a result of three consecutive failures. The results of the separate flights are combined to obtain the overall event result. There are some special considerations for this method.

1) The starting heights may vary, but the progressions for the flights must be such that each flight will have the same heights within its progression.

2) The last person, not eliminated from a flight, is not necessarily the winner of the event and therefore cannot choose a bar height other than that preset in the progression. Care must be exercised for this provision.

3) Upon the combining of the results from each of the flights, ties are not broken for any place.

d. Special Alternatives – Horizontal Events: Rule 6-3.

1) The games committee may elect to conduct any horizontal field event as a 'four-attempt final competition'. This procedure allows for flight assignment as allowed by the rules and is analogous to the staging of a running event in the 'timed-section finals' format.

2) The preliminary rounds of a horizontal field event may be staged, not in flights, but in an 'open-facility' format where the facility is available for any entered competitor for a specific duration of time. During that period of time, any competitor may execute their attempts in any order. No preliminary round attempts are permitted after the time period has expired. Advancement to the final rounds, as with Preliminary Flights, is limited in number and is based only on those trials made during the specified duration of time allowed for the preliminary attempts. The end effect of this alternative is the same as with the Preliminary Flight method.

3) The games committee may elect to establish a minimum valid distance for any horizontal field event. This is the setting of a qualifying standard for measurement. This alternative may be used in conjunction with any of the other methods of staging a horizontal field event.

Example/Commentary

A competition exists where there are 65 entries in the Long Jump and there will be eight scoring places. The following is a discussion of the options available to the games committee. The games committee has the responsibility to -- The most frequently used form of a qualifying competition establishes enough flights to accommodate all entrants.

The flights are mandated to be between five and 16 in number and each entrant is limited to three attempts.

Therefore, for this example, the games committee would establish five or six flights. The grouping may be by verified performance or random. The games committee determines the number of qualifiers, 24 is an example.

Once set, this number, by rule, is absolute. That is, ties for advancement must be broken. The qualifying determination may be any combination of performance and stated automatic standard. Those who qualify then compete using the provisions for preliminary flights leading to a round of final attempts.

-- If the choice is to stage the event using preliminary flights, then all entrants are assigned to a flight by the games committee using a verified performance or by random. The minimum and maximum number allowed in a flight is mandated by rule. Each competitor in each flight is allowed three attempts, and after all flights have been completed the nine best overall performances plus ties advance to the final rounds of attempts. For 65 entries, there would most likely be five, six or seven flights. An original flight formation, using assignment to five flights by performance with the best flight competing last, might be best choice since the best nine would most likely be included in the last preliminary flight.

-- After assignment to a flight, as allowed by rule, the 'four-attempt final' method or the minimum measurement method may be the most appropriate choice for a games committee that has unusual restraints.

Additional Comment

Is it allowable to permit advancement of only 'collegians' to the next round?

Any entrant performing as a valid competitor has equal rights for advancement as any other entrant. An 'earned' advancement cannot be negated. When there are additional starting positions available, a ruling has made it legitimate to include entrants from another category. Therefore, if an entry is made and initially listed as having exhibition status, that entrant is not eligible for any advancement rights. If this is not done, advancement occurs on an equal basis for all entrants.

Can totally separate divisions of an event be staged, such as East Coast / West Coast, each with their own qualifying, advancement and final?

No. This is not one of the options available in Rule 6-2 or Rule 5-10.1. The only time this would be possible is when an entire meet, defined by then number of events and participants, is separated into the two separate divisions. In essence, two meets would be occurring concurrently. There could be no participation cross-over between the two divisions.

If a qualifying round is contested, are the performances within that round valid for National Qualifying?

The performances achieved in a qualifying round are legitimately earned during a valid competition and as such are not considered different than any other performance achieved during a valid competition. A performance achieved during a qualifying round is not eligible for use in determining the final place ranking in an event.

Are there any other options?

There is one additional authorized option. The Rules Committee recognizes the desire to promote an event by highlighting a special competitive section. This is most commonly referred to as an Invitational

Section. An Invitational Section may be a running event or a field event and included within any meet. It is usually non-scoring, but must adhere to the following:

- There are no heats, flights or sections within an Invitational event.
- The Invitational event is a single section final for those competing and there is only one per event.
- The number of competitors in an Invitational event is limited to the number of starting position available for the event as defined in the rules. For running events, this is the maximum number that would be allowed in a final as a result of advancement. For all field events, the maximum number is the maximum number allowed in a flight. The single flight invitational field event shall not have more than nine competitors with six attempts.
- Competitors cannot compete in more than one division/section of an event, as defined by rule.