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Track & Field News  
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SOMETIMES YOU CAN MOVE FORWARD by moving backwards. I think track & field would be well-served if it took a retro step and went back to the previous false-start rule. I don't mean all the way back to the ghastly days where everybody had a freebie if they wanted it. I mean back to that brief shining period (2003–09) when the IAAF assigned the first false start to the whole field and then on the next jump DQed the culprit.

It would be nice to have avoided ugly messes like Usain Bolt at the Daegu Worlds, but even worse is the farce that in too many places the current application of the rule has become so tenuous that sometimes it seems officials will accept just about any possible scenario for not tossing somebody from the race.

**It's time for another look at the false-start rules**

By doing the wrong thing they're probably doing what I'd consider the right thing. So rather than continue the charade, let's just ease the rule.

And if I were king, there's another way I'd change false-start rules. I'd apply that stricture only to the events started out of blocks (and I'm not so sure the 400 should be included). Errors at races longer than the 200 are few, and when they do happen, it's not because somebody was trying to steal the race.

If modern starting rules are intended to speed up the meet, simply putting the runners back on the line, methinks, takes less time than a formal DQ process.

And while I'm at it, I'd also get rid of 100th-second timing for any event longer than the 400. I don't mean get rid of automatic timing, per se; I mean get rid of the display of long times to such a fine tolerance. To represent 10,000 times to 2 decimal places is the same as fine-tuning a 100 time to 4 places. You can still use the 100ths (or even 1000ths) in your photofinish work; just don't confuse the public with more needless numbers.

In common parlance, athletes and fans alike tend to knock a digit off the end anyway. Only a geek would refer to somebody as a 10.23 sprinter instead of a 10.2 sprinter. Yes, we're all geeks here at *T&FN*, but being geeky doesn't help sell the sport to the general public.

There was much to-do about the IAAF's tweaking of the wind rules for the multi-events. How about an even better way: ignore wind altogether when talking about the decathlon and heptathlon. As decathlon guru Frank Zarnowski likes to point out, if there's a wind strong enough to aid the sprints, it's a wind that's going to take away a like amount of points in the high jump and pole vault, and may well also influence the discus and javelin one way or the other.

While we're getting rid of wind gauges for the multis, let's also stop worrying about "legality" in the straightaway hurdles. There is almost no correlation between stronger tailwinds and faster times, particularly on the men's side, because the extra "aid" can actually have a deleterious effect, pushing the athlete into the hurdle. Moreover, not all athletes in the race are affected equally, based on their body type, stride length and clearance technique.

You may find this one nitpicky, but I think USATF needs to break with the IAAF when it comes to measuring the high jump and pole vault, going back to Imperial measure so that the bar can progress in logical even inches. The manual indicator boards that so many meets use can't show fractions anyway, so a high jump of 7-2 and-a-fraction will show up as 7-2 or 7-3, depending on the whim of the operator.

How about the NCAA men's high jump last year: think John Q. Public wasn't befuddled when the bar went thusly: 6-10¾, 7-½, 7-2½, 7-3¾, 7-5, 7-6, 7-7¼? Wouldn't you prefer to see 6-11, 7-1, 7-3, 7-4, 7-5, 7-6, 7-7? With the option always open, of course, to go to a fraction and/or metric height when there's a record/qualifier of some sort involved.

Back to the future!