

PROPER USE OF WIND GAUGES DURING QUALIFYING EVENTS

In an attempt to provide multiple opportunities for athletes to qualify for the state championship, Colorado first adopted a system of pre-qualifying meets then adopted a ranking system that advanced the top 18 athletes in each event to the state meet. When athletes are competing all over the state to secure a ranking that qualifies them, equity can become an issue. It becomes especially important to follow proper procedures when recording performances to ensure that only legitimate marks are certified and ranked.

The best way to achieve equity is to require that all these contests be held in accordance with the rules set forth by the National Federation and the Colorado High School Activities Association. The following outline will enable meet directors, track referees, and field referees to be consistent when applying the rules of the wind gauge to ensure that times and distances are properly certified and that deserving athletes are granted access to our state's track and field championships.

A wind gauge or anemometer is required for races up to and including the 200 meters and the horizontal jumps. There are three steps that meet directors and referees must take to ensure the legal running of these events: 1) verify that there are three wind gauges for the meet; 2) locate and set up the gauges properly and verify that they are operational; and 3) communicate with the persons operating the gauges to make sure they understand the correct procedures.

1. There should be three anemometers for each pre-qualifying meet. One gauge will record wind speed for the track events (100 meters, 200 meters, 100-meter hurdles, and 110-meter hurdles). Many FAT systems currently have the capability of recording the wind speed during a track event. The second and third gauges are used for the triple jump and long jump. If a meet director can only secure two wind gauges, the meet can still be contested with some logistical planning and cooperation from the horizontal jumps. Since the track gauge is only needed for four events, one of the gauges at either the triple jump or the long jump can be set up for the track events and then returned once the track event is completed. However, this does suspend one of the horizontal jumps for a period of time.

2. The track anemometer shall be positioned 4 feet above the ground and within 2 meters of the track, midway between the start and the finish. During the 200-meter dash, it shall be placed midway between the start of the straightaway and the finish line. For the long and triple jumps, it will be placed 4 feet above the ground and within 2 meters of the runway, 20 meters from the takeoff board. Once in the correct position, the wind gauge should be set up so that it faces the start, in order to measure any favoring wind. A good way to test for this is to blow into the directional tube and start the anemometer. The result should be a positive or plus reading which indicates the gauge has been set up properly.

3. Communication with the wind gauge operators is essential to recording accurate wind readings. Although simple to operate, the mode must be changed depending on the event being contested. For the horizontal jumps, the mode must be set for 5 seconds. Some gauges might specify “long/triple jump” in the display window, but most will just say “5 seconds”. The device should be started when the jumper begins his/her approach. It will count backwards from 5 to 0 and then print the average wind speed during the 5 seconds the athlete made their attempt. A reading will then appear in the display and should be passed on to the event judge. The wind speed will be recorded for every legal jump that occurs. Every legal mark for every jumper must be accompanied by the wind gauge reading taken at the time of his/her attempt. Any positive reading indicates a favorable wind for the athlete. A reading that exceeds +2.0 meters per second will disallow that mark as a ranking for the state meet, although it has no effect on event results for the current competition. A negative reading indicates the athlete was running and jumping into the wind.

The same procedure holds true for the track events. Set the mode according to the event being contested. A 10-second mode is used for the 100-meter dash and 200-meter dash. A 13-second mode is used for the short hurdle events. The wind gauge should be started at the beginning of the straightaway portion of the race. Therefore, start the gauge with the gun for the 100-meter dash, 100-meter hurdles and 110-meter hurdles. For the 200-meter dash, the gauge must be started when the lead runner hits the straightaway. The wind reading taken during each heat of the specified races should be recorded on the result sheet. Again, positive readings indicate favorable winds. Positive readings in excess of +2.0 meters per second will negate any state ranking marks in that heat. Of course, any marks recorded (regardless of wind readings) are used to determine results for the current competition.

At the conclusion of the meet, the meet director will then upload the results into the state’s ranking system. Only times and jumps with legal wind readings will be accepted into the rankings. While some may see wind gauges and extra recording forms as a burden in administering their meet, the goal is to provide an equal qualifying opportunity for every athlete at any given meet site across the state.