

The Evolution of Track and Field Rules During the Last Century

by

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Overview

Before there was an international rule book from the IAAF, each country had its own rules for our sport. In the USA the rules were set by the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States (AAU). The AAU was formed in 1888 and held control over a number other sports besides track and field. A century ago the president of the AAU was James E. Sullivan, the man for whom the AAU's annual Sullivan Award for the nation's top athlete is named. In 1913-14, Sullivan would play a key role in the establishment of the IAAF while attending the first organizational meetings and as the president of the new IAAF Rules Committee.

We will start this meandering retrospective on track and field rules with the AAU rule book from 1907, then look at the first three IAAF rule books from 1913, 1914 and 1921 (WWI intervened to cause that gap). We will take a look at the first National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rule book from 1922, then the IAAF rule books from 1931/32, 1935 and 1953. I have focused on the first half of the last century because by the mid 50s the rule book was getting very similar to today's rule book, and most of us are old enough to have had a good feel for how the rules have changed in the last 50 years. For each stop along the way through the last century, I will make some overall observations, then cover in turn rule changes regarding officials and administration of meets, then the running events, followed by the various field events. As we follow this evolution of track and field rules over the last 100 years, I hope you will get a sense of what it might have been like to officiate a meet during these early periods, and how far we have come in the last century.

1907 AAU

The AAU track and field rule book in 1907 was all of 14 pages long, plus three pages covering cross country. Needless to say, if you were officiating a hundred years ago, you were given little specific written guidance. Apparently a lot was passed on by word of mouth, or even left to the momentary opinion of the official, which did not bode well for consistency of officiating.

According to the rule book, the number of officials needed to put on a meet was about 17, plus maybe some assistants. If you worked a meet in those days, you were expected to do a lot, covering a large number of responsibilities. For the Referee there already was the familiar phrase "shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meeting, whose final settlement is not otherwise covered by these rules." Given the sparseness of the rules at this time, this would seem to give the Referee a lot of leeway. The Referee had specific power to change the order of events, disqualify athletes for fouls in running events, advancing those fouled or ordering the race re-run. The Referee also had the power to disqualify any athlete for conduct "in a manner unbecoming a gentleman, or offensive to officials, spectators or competitors." Keep in mind we are talking about the end of the Victorian era when gentlemanly conduct was of prime importance to those of the upper class who were in control of the sport. Protests generally only involved eligibility (read "amateur status") of a competitor.

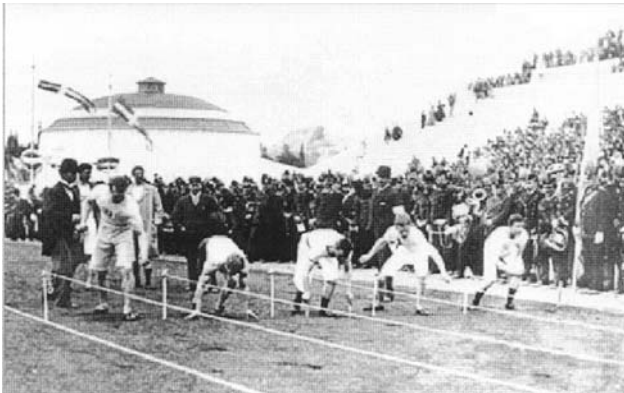
Decisions of Finish Judges and Field Judges were final and not appealable. If judges disagreed on a decision, the majority ruled. There were three timers, and they timed only first place. And there were the now familiar rules about two out of three watches agreeing, take the middle time if all three

disagreed, and the slower time if only two watches got the time. The Scorer recorded the results of all events, counted laps in distance races, and rang the bell lap. In addition to the familiar Clerk's duties of checking in athletes and organizing them for the start, while not mentioned in this rule book, in later rule books it is noted that the Clerk and Starter do the draw for lane assignments just before the start of each race (except in championship meets, where it is done ahead of time). The Clerk also observed and informed the Starter if anyone false started. (There was no provision for Recall Starters in the rules.) This eventually evolved into the Starters Assistants in the IAAF rule book, as now commonly used in Canada and Europe. In the United States, we have separated these duties to Clerks and Recall Starters.

For the Starters, there are no specific starting commands noted in the rule book; it only mentions a "warning to 'get ready'." A false start was defined as touching the ground beyond the start line before the gun is fired. At this time there are no specific rules about movement before the gun. Later rule books clarify that if there is a false start as defined here, but the Starter has fired the gun, the Starter is to fire a recall shot but cannot issue a penalty. If a runner false starts (i.e., touches the ground in front of the line before the gun) and the Starter does not fire the gun, the Starter can issue a penalty for a false start. The penalty for a false start is very interesting. For a first false start, the runner was moved back 1 yard (or 1 meter); for a second false start, the runner was moved back another yard. The runner was disqualified only after committing a third false start. The longer the race, the longer the penalty. For any race up to 125 yards, the penalty was 1 yard; up to 300 yards, 2 yards; up to 600 yards, 3 yards; up to 1000 yards, 4 yards; up to 1 mile, 5 yards; and for races over 1 mile the penalty was 10 yards. As a Starter myself, I would vote for resurrecting this rule! It might go a long way toward eliminating some of the current problems with false starts; and it certainly would make things interesting at the starting line.

For Race Walks, the rule book implied only one Race Walk Judge, but it did mention assistants. There was no definition of legal race walking. It seemed to be up to the Race Walk Judge to decide what was legal and what was not. A walker could be disqualified after the third caution from the Judge, or for a caution in the last 220 yards of the race.

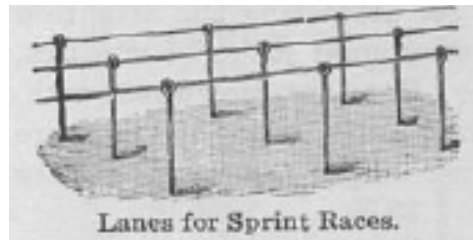
There was a specific rule that trainers and handlers were not allowed on the track or in the infield, except in races over 1 mile and for the "all around" competition, what we now call the decathlon. At this time the rule book states that the track should be measured 18" from the curb, rather than the later 30cm or 12". This makes a difference of a little over 3 feet per lap. The rule against moving out to block a passing runner on the final straightaway is in place at this time. All races of 300 yards or less are run in lanes that are staked and roped, as illustrated here.



Start of 100M at the 1896 Olympic Games - Athens



Start of the 100M at the 1906 Games in St. Louis



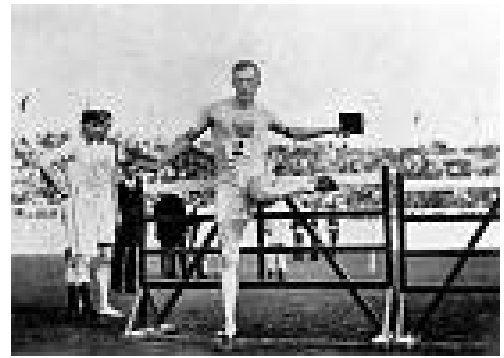
(You may have seen this in the movie “Chariots of Fire”.) The finish of a race was determined by any part of the body except hands or arms (the torso was not mentioned until 1913). Hurdle heights and spacing were basically the same as today, but there was a third hurdle race of 220 yards, with ten 30” hurdles 20 yards apart and 20 yards to the first hurdle and 20 yards from the 10th hurdle to the finish. Other distances and numbers of hurdles were allowed, as long as the hurdles were spaced evenly and there was an equal distance to the first hurdle and the 10th hurdle to the finish line.



1900 - 110H



*110H race in 1904
Note the variety of hurdles used in this era*

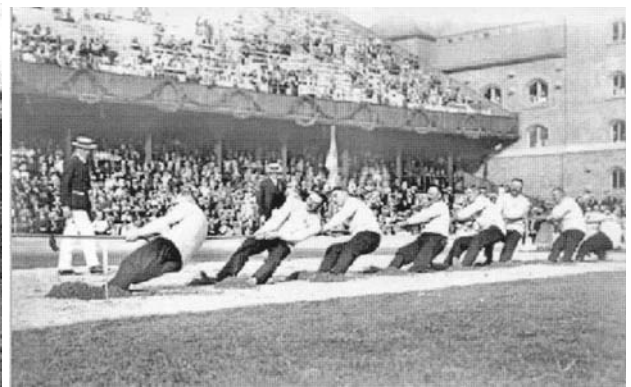


*110H race in 1908 won in 15.0 seconds
by an athlete carrying a bible*

In the field events, in addition to the events we are now familiar with, there was a 56 lb. weight throw for distance and for height, a pole vault for distance, the standing high jump, standing broad jump, and an event called the “3 standing broad jumps” (consisting of three consecutive, non-stop jumps). There is no mention of the javelin throw in the 1907 AAU rule book. The Tug-of-War, with eight men on a team, was a standard track and field event at this time.



1904 Tug-of-War with five men on a team



1912 Tug-of-War with eight men on a team

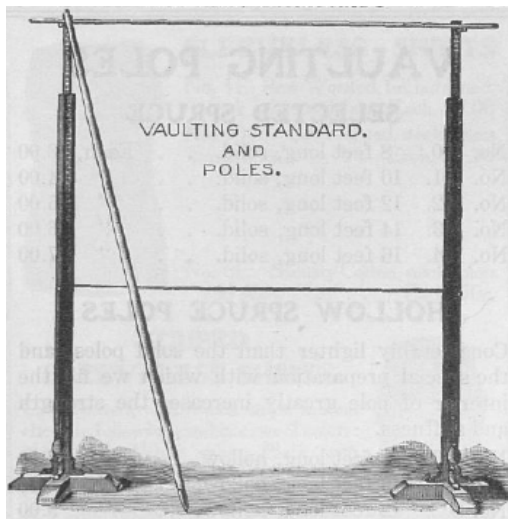
The rules state that “A fair jump shall be one that is made without the assistance of weights, diving, somersaults or handsprings of any kind.” In the Running High Jump, the crossbar rested on 3 inch pins, as was the case for the Pole Vault. Running under the bar in the High Jump was a “balk”

and three successive balks constituted a failed attempt. (Remember, for both the High Jump and the Pole Vault, they were jumping into just a layer of soft dirt or sand on the ground; there were no pads, so running through the landing pit was easy to do for both the High Jump and the Pole Vault). A jumper could pass at any height, but forfeited all remaining attempts at that height. (As we'll see, the IAAF took a different approach to passes.)



1908 Standing High Jump for women

In the Pole Vault, a line was drawn parallel to the bar 15 feet in front of it. Crossing this line without making an attempt was a “balk”, and two successive balks constituted a failed attempt. Leaving the ground without completing an attempt was a failed attempt. Competitors were allowed to dig a hole, no more than one foot in diameter, for planting the pole. This was the predecessor of the plant box. Vaulting poles at this time usually had a spike at the end, as illustrated below. It appears this set of standards could be use for both high jumping and pole vaulting.



Vaulting standards and pole available in 1907



Pole vaulting in 1920. Note the judges on ladders

All throwing circles were 7 feet in diameter, including the discus throw. A second stop-board at the back of the circle was allowed (although there is no mention of this in any of the later rule books reviewed here). There was no mention of sectors, so it is possible they just measured from wherever the implement landed. There also was no mention of the use of protective cages for the circle throws (see illustration on next page). Private throwing implements went into a common pool for use by anyone in the competition, but private vaulting poles could not be used without permission of the owner.



Discus Throw in the 1906 “Intercalated” Olympic Games in Athens. Note there is no cage and all the officials and spectators close to the ring, including Greece’s Prince George and Prince Nicholas seated at left. They obviously were very trusting in those days.

Ties were handled quite a bit differently than today. In general, tie-breaking rules applied to any place, not just first, and performances in tie-breakers did not count toward the final best effort credited to the athlete. In running events, tying competitors had to re-run the race, with the Referee determining the time and place of the re-run. In the throws and horizontal jumps, tying competitors got three more attempts and the best of those three additional attempts was given the higher place. If they were still tied, the process was repeated as needed. In the High Jump, the tying competitors got three additional attempts at the last height; if no one cleared the height, the bar was moved down for three more attempts, and they kept going down until one made it and one did not. If both jumpers made a height within the three attempts, the tie went to the jumper who made it in the fewest attempts. In the Pole Vault, tie-breaking was different. The bar was raised or lowered at the official’s “discretion”, and each vaulter was given one attempt at the height.

The rules for cross country note “slow chases” and “fast chases”. Cross country races evolved from a British or European event called “Hare and Hounds” (which is probably why cross country runners always used to be called “harriers” in the newspapers). Apparently, how these chases were set up must have been pretty common knowledge a hundred years ago, but from our vantage point in the 21st century, these written rules do not give much clue as to the mechanics of running one of these events. It seems it could be something similar to today’s Hash House Harrier runs, if you are familiar with those events, and the “hares” laid a trail, or “scent”, on the run using bits of different colored paper.

1913 IAAF

Following a 1912 preliminary meeting in Stockholm to discuss the need for an international organization to govern track and field, in 1913 there was a meeting in Berlin to finalize the formation of an organization to establish international rules and oversee the sport of track and field, or Athletics. This was the genesis of the IAAF. (At this time the name of the sport appeared not to be firmly established. In written documents it is referred to as “field and track” as often as it is “track and field”.) There were 34 countries that were original members of the IAAF (today there are 212). The

only world championships were the Olympic Games every four years. The IAAF did not hold separate world championships until 1983, and now hold them in odd-numbered years. It was stipulated that no one younger than 17 could compete in the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Games events were essentially the same as today, with the addition of the Pentathlon, the 56 lb. Weight Throw, the 3Km Team Race (five on a team, three to score), the Tug of War (eight men on a team), a 10Km cross country race, and the Modern Pentathlon (which later became its own distinct event with its own governing body). There also were a number of differences in terminology. The Long Jump was called the Broad Jump, and the Triple Jump was called the Hop Step and Jump. The High Jump and Broad Jump were called the Running High Jump and Running Broad Jump to distinguish them from the Standing High Jump and Standing Broad Jump, which also were standard events. The Pole Vault was called the Pole Jump. Each of the throwing events were divided into two categories: the “best hand” events, which were done as we know them today, and the “both hand” events, where the athlete was given three attempts with each hand and the best throw with each hand was combined for a total distance.

In the 1913 Berlin meeting, one of the three US representatives, James E. Sullivan of the AAU, was appointed president of the Rules Committee. At the conclusion of the Berlin meeting, Sullivan’s committee proposed a set of rules to be considered at the next meeting the following year. This set of rules was 17 pages in length, and not surprisingly bore a resemblance to the AAU rules. But there were some differences.



James E. Sullivan

The Judges, in conjunction with the Referee, could decide when a race should be re-run because of a foul. Umpires were called Umpires in the 1913 version of the rules, but Inspectors in the 1914 version. False starts had the same penalties as the 1907 AAU rules (converted to metric distances), but now there was a specific set of starter’s commands: “Gentlemen, to your course”, “Get set” and the gun. Races up to and including the 400M had to have staked and roped lanes. In races not run in lanes, you could not cut in until you were at least two meters in front of the runner being passed. No competitor was considered to have finished until the entire body was across the finish line. Placing was now decided by the “torso”, but the runner still had to completely cross the line.

In both the 110H and the 400H, no record was allowed if any hurdle was knocked down. If three or more hurdles were knocked down by a runner, he was disqualified. In relays, after the first round no change was allowed in the composition or the order of the teams. In the 3Km Steeplechase, each lap had five barriers, as today. But the 1913 rules called for a water jump, three hurdles (“not more than 3 feet high”) and a “solid stone” wall three feet high and 30 cm thick. (Fortunately for hurdle crews everywhere, this stone wall was not mentioned in the 1914 version of the rules, nor in any rule book thereafter.)

In throws from a circle, the competitor had to stay in the circle until the throw was marked. There was no mention of leaving from the back half of the circle yet. The Shot Put was called “Putting the Weight”. In the Olympic Games, six were taken to the finals in all events. The throwing circle was 7 feet in diameter and made of metal, wood or rope. The 1913 rules were ambiguous about touching the circle during an attempt; in most places it said you cannot, but the Hammer Throw rule said you can. Attempts were measured from the outside of the circle. The 90 degree sector was mentioned for the first time. The discus circle was “about” 2.5M (8.2 ft.) in diameter. Form for Putting the Weight (Shot Put) was “from the shoulder, never from behind the shoulder” (no mention of below the shoulder). The Javelin Throw was from “behind a scratch line properly marked”. No runway or sector was mentioned. Later rules defined the scratch line as a board 12 feet long and 3” (7cm) wide, sunk in the ground. That 7cm width of the board survives today, and is why the modern javelin arc is 7cm, while nearly every other line width in our sport is 5cm. Each attempt in the javelin

was measured from the landing point on a line perpendicular to the scratch line or the scratch line extended, similar to the way the Long Jump is measured.



Shot Put (“Putting the Weight”) at the 1908 Olympic Games in London. Note the grass surface and what appears to be a rope circle.

The High Jump and Pole Vault used wooden cross bars only. No length was specified, other than they could not extend more than 6” beyond the pegs. The High Jump started at 1.60M (5’ 3”). A jumper could pass heights until he entered, but then had to jump every height thereafter. Leaving the ground (“springing”) counted as an attempt. Passing under the bar was a “balk” and three successive balks was a failed attempt. Ties were to be decided by “re-jumping”, but there was no definition of this. Diving or somersaulting was not allowed. The High Jump uprights could not be moved more than 2 feet in any direction.

The Pole Jump started at 3M, and passing was the same as in the High Jump. Leaving the ground counted as an attempt. As in the High Jump, the uprights could be moved no more than 2 feet in any direction.

In the throws and horizontal jumps, all got three attempts, and the best four got three more.

The Pentathlon consisted of the Running Broad Jump, Javelin Throw, 200M, Discus Throw, and 1500M, all in one day. Scoring was 1 point for first place, 2 points for second, etc., and the low score won. After the 200M, scores were totaled and the top 12 plus ties went on to the Discus Throw, then the top six after the discus went on to the 1500M.

The Marathon required a doctor’s physical exam before the start. Taking any drugs before or during the race resulted in disqualification. Taking any assistance or refreshments during the race also resulted in disqualification. One of the later rule books specifically mentioned the use of automobiles or horses under disallowed types of assistance.

In the 1913 meeting the German delegation proposed eliminating the Race Walk, but this proposal was not voted on. There was still no definition of legal walking, but the rules now said there should be two or more Race Walk Judges and their assistants. They had the power to disqualify on the third caution, or for a caution in the last 200M of the race.



1912 Race Walk



1912 Olympic Shot Put

At the 1913 meeting there was a report presented by a Special Committee on Amateur Statute that laid out the international policy on amateurism. Remember, at this time amateurism vs professionalism was a major issue. In the 1913 meeting there was a proposal that the IAAF also extend its governance to cover professional competition, the rationale being “the only way to prevent the growth of professionalism being to control it.” After major opposition from all quarters, this proposal was withdrawn. The rules governing amateurism adopted by the new IAAF in 1913 had as their first principle “An amateur is one who competes for the love of the sport.” The second principle was “Competing for money or any other pecuniary reward in any sport makes the competitor a professional in all sports.” And third, “In track and field athletic sports one who knowingly competes with, or against, a professional, thereby becomes a professional.” This is the infamous “contamination rule”. The IAAF also declared that anyone who taught, trained or coached any sport for money was a professional, although they did allow each country to decide on this issue for domestic competition.

Among other parts of the amateur regulations was the requirement that “an amateur may not sell, pawn or give away” any prizes earned, and “shall hold the same subject at all times to the inspection of the member of the Federation of his country.” Also, there was a stipulation that any expense money paid for an athlete’s travel, housing or meals must be paid not to the athlete but to a member of the Federation of the athlete’s country. Sixty years later this was one of the rules that Steve Prefontaine and others were fighting with the AAU about, and that eventually helped lead to the 1979 federal act stripping the AAU of its control of sports in this country, and led directly to the formation of The Athletics Congress, now the USATF. But over a century ago sports like track and field were seen as a gentlemanly pursuit of the more privileged class that must not be sullied by the pursuit of money, and those who set themselves up in control did everything they could to see that it remained that way.

1914 IAAF

At the second meeting of the IAAF in Lyon, France, in 1914, a second, more refined version of the rule book was approved. It was 24 pages, with 11 pages of implement descriptions. It noted that the Olympic Games (and thus the world championships) were competitions for men only.

The Referee now had primary decision power regarding disqualifications, no longer sharing it with any Judges (except the Starter, of course). It was now stated that protests required a deposit of one British pound or its equivalent. Most other modifications involved the field events.

The rules for the Running Broad Jump called for soft dirt or sand to be laid down for four inches beyond the scratch line and to a level slightly above the board, for the purpose of showing the imprint of a foot foul. This is the predecessor of today’s plasticine.

The High Jump and Pole Vault uprights were to be set no less than 12 feet apart. There still was no specified length of the crossbar, other than it must extend no more than six inches beyond the pegs. The three inch pegs were now specified as round and one-half inch in diameter. The crossbar was square in cross section and one inch thick. Now the High Jump uprights cannot be moved. And in the Pole Vault, it was changed to three consecutive run-ups without an attempt is a failed attempt, instead of two.

For the throws, it was now specified that measurements are made from the inside edge of the circle, and measurements must be made with a steel tape. The competitor now may touch the inside of the circle. However, "It shall be a foul throw if the competitor...touches with any part of his body or clothing the ground outside the circle." (*Emphasis mine.*) We have all heard about overzealous officials who call a foul if a shoelace or pant leg touches the ring or stopboard. Maybe this is the origin of that problem, with this obsolete rule somehow passed down from generation to generation of officials by word of mouth.

The twelve feet long, three inch wide board sunk in the ground as the scratch line in the Javelin Throw was now specified, but there was no mention of a sector. After the javelin landed the competitor could cross the scratch board. The rules for the Hammer Throw made the first mention of recommending the use of a cage. While the Discus Throw and the Hammer Throw rules were the only ones to mention the use of a 90 degree sector, the implement specification section said all throws from a circle will be into a 90 degree sector.



1912 Javelin Throw

At the 1914 meeting, the Australian delegation proposed adoption of their definition of legal race walking (although this definition did not appear in the rules section). The Australians used three rules to define legal race walking; the first two were similar to what we use today: continuous contact and a straight knee on contact. The third rule called for an upright stance during walking.



*Jim Thorpe throwing discus in 1912 Olympic decathlon
Note lack of cage*



*1912 Hammer Throw
Note 2M wire fence as cage at right of picture*

1921 IAAF

The third meeting of the IAAF took place in Geneva in 1921. The years since the second meeting had been interrupted by WWI, and were “eliminated from the history of the Federation.” As a result of the aftermath of the war, the German delegation did not take part in the 1921 meeting, and German was dropped as an official language of the IAAF, leaving only English and French, as it remains today. The IOC requested the elimination of Race Walking and the Tug of War from the schedule of track and field events. The IAAF eliminated the Tug of War, the 56 lb. Weight Throw and the 3Km Race Walk, retaining the 10Km Race Walk. The Marathon distance was now specified as 26 miles 385 yards; before this time it had usually been about 25 miles. Refreshments now were not allowed in races of less than 10 miles, implying they were allowed in longer races. “Electric timing” was now allowed, but only as a supplement to hand timing, and not for record purposes.

The Starter’s commands were now “On your marks”, “Ready” and then the gun after a pause of at least 2 seconds. There finally was a definition of legal race walking, but it consisted only of the continuous contact rule. And now it only took two cautions from the Judge for disqualification, or one in the last 400M of the race, rather than three cautions or one in the last 200M as previously. For the 3Km Steeplechase there was the first definition of the depth of the water jump: 2.5 feet or 76cm, compared to the more recent 70cm (which is now lessened to 50cm for newly constructed pits).



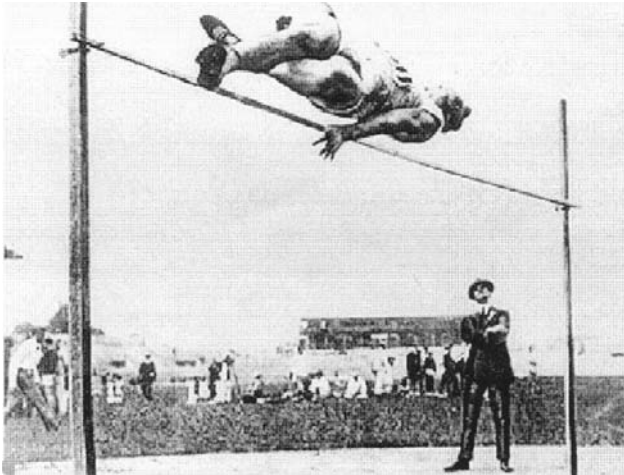
1924 Olympic Cross Country Race



1928 Olympic 3Km Steeplechase

The crossbars for the vertical jumps were now triangular, $1 \frac{3}{16}$ inches on a side. The Running High Jump now had a new form requirement, beyond no diving or somersaulting. “A fair jump is one where the head of the contestant does not go over the bar before the feet and is not below the buttocks in clearing the bar.” None of today’s jumpers using the Fosbury Flop would meet this requirement. It is a good thing for them this rule was gone by 1935. There was a new “balk line” one meter in front of the cross bar. Stepping over the line without making an attempt was a “balk”, and two balks in succession equaled a failed attempt. Individual marks for the take-off were allowed, as was a handkerchief on the bar “for sighting purposes”.

The Pole Vault now used a “balk line” five meters in front of the bar, and two successive balks resulted in being charged with a failed attempt. For the first time a “wooden box or stopboard” sunk in the ground is mentioned as allowable, as well as the one foot diameter hole dug in the ground. There also was the first mention that it is a failed attempt if the pole knocks the bar down.



High Jump form in 1924



1924 Broad Jump

In the Running Broad Jump, the “balk line” was also used, at two meters in front of the scratch line, and two balks equaled a failed attempt. They were finally starting to get some consistency across the events with regard to balks. For all throws and the horizontal jumps, they now took the top six to a final three attempts after the first three rounds. In the Shot Put rules there was the first mention of not allowing a leather hand harness or any other support device.

Ties for all places were still broken, but in the vertical jumps the tying jumpers now took one additional attempt at the tied height (instead of three), “and if no result, the bar shall be lowered to the previous height cleared and one more trial allowed. The bar shall then be raised or lowered until the tie is decided.” For the throws and horizontal jumps, one additional attempt was given. Any performances accomplished during tie-breaking were not counted toward the best result credited. In running events, ties were still settled by a run-off.

The 1921 IAAF rule book also contained the first set of scoring tables for the combined events, based on the 1912 Olympic records as 1,000 points.

1922 NCAA

At this point let’s come back to the USA, where in 1922 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) published its first track and field rule book. The rules covered 16 pages, and in most respects were similar to the IAAF rules. Under the new NCAA rules, the Referee’s decisions were final; there was no provision for a Jury of Appeals.

The false start rule was the same, with a false start defined as touching the ground in front of the starting line before the gun is fired, and the penalty for the first two false starts was being moved back, and disqualification on the third. In the 1932 NCAA rule book there was a clarification that if there was a false start but the Starter fired the gun, the Starter recalled the race but could not impose a penalty. The false start could be penalized if the Starter had not fired the gun. This rule was still in effect in 1934 when the NCAA changed the false start rule to a simple disqualification after a second false start, dropping the idea of moving the runners back. In 1934 the Starter’s commands were “Get on your marks”, “Get set” and the gun after a minimum two second hold (the book actually suggests the starter mentally count “1,001; 1,002; 1,003”). If the runners were not steady within four seconds, the runners were to be called up. For a “rolling start”, where the runner was in motion before the gun, but had not yet touched the ground in front of the starting line, the Starter was to recall the race but could not impose a penalty. The NCAA adopted the current No False Start rule in 1975, and the high school federation quickly followed suit. Thirty-three years later we are still waiting for the IAAF (and USATF) to catch up.

In 1922 the NCAA changed the cut-in rule to “two strides” rather than two meters. For any fouls involving jostling, cutting off or interference, the Referee had the option of disqualifying all members of the team of the perpetrator who also were in the race. Knocking down three or more hurdles meant disqualification, and knocking down even one would invalidate a record. The entire body had to cross the finish line to be considered a finish, although the rules interpretation notes said that the torso must be used for placement. Ties in any event were not broken in the NCAA at this time; the points were divided equally, and any prizes were drawn by lot. In the relays, both runners had to be inside the zone during the exchange.

In the field events, the NCAA in 1922 first noted the dimensions of the landing pits for the High Jump and the Pole Vault. They were 12 feet x 12 feet, with the standards no more than 12 feet apart. (Remember, we’re still talking about sand or soft dirt landing pits.) The High Jump, Pole Vault, Broad Jump and Javelin Throw all used the “balk line”, as the IAAF did, and two balks was a failed attempt, as was leaving the ground in the vertical jumps. For the Shot Put form rule, the NCAA in 1922 said one hand only could be used, and it could not be put from behind or below the shoulder. Even in 1953, the IAAF still said only behind the shoulder. The NCAA used the touch of the body or apparel rule for a foul in throws from a circle. There was no mention of leaving from the back half of the circle. The Hammer Throw and Discus Throw rules were the only ones that mention a 90 degree sector. The Javelin Throw used the standard 12 foot board as a scratch line, and no sector.

Prior to 1935, NCAA High Jump rules stated a fair jump was taking off from one foot and one or both feet preceding the body and head over the bar. In 1935 the NCAA modified this to require only taking off from one foot, to conform to the new IAAF rule. In 1934 they added a rule that said it was a foul if the athlete broke the plane of the crossbar without completing an attempt in the Pole Vault and the High Jump. Until 1936, preliminary rounds in the Broad Jump and the throws in the NCAA were done in pairs: A,B,A,B,C,D,C,D,E,F, etc. In 1937 the NCAA rule for breaking ties in the vertical jumps became essentially the same as today’s, except there was a third tie-breaker before going to a jump-off, and that was counting up the total number of jumps taken in the competition, with the jumper given the higher place being the one with the fewest jumps. In 1938 there was the first mention of a hairline for the start and finish lines. That year the NCAA also stated for the first time that if the pole breaks the plane of the crossbar, it was an attempt. In 1940 the NCAA was still using the 12 foot scratch board for the Javelin Throw, and was still using wood or rope for the throwing circles, although they eliminated the rope circle in 1941.

The NCAA rule book was also used for high school competitions, with a few notes stating modifications for a few events like the hurdle races, until 1942, when the high school federation published its first rule book.

1931/32 IAAF

Back to the IAAF. The 1931 rule book was 33 pages, plus 10 pages of implement descriptions, and for the first time there were an additional seven pages of rules for women’s competitions. The women’s rules were essentially the same, but they ran the 80M hurdles, and no race over 1,000M. In



Start of women’s 800M at the 1928 Olympics

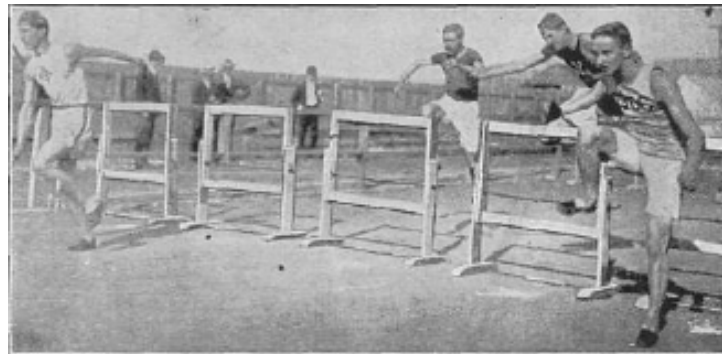
the field events they competed in Javelin Throw, Discus Throw and Shot Put (all best hand and both hands), as well as the Running and Standing Broad Jumps and the Running and Standing High Jumps. It was noted that an IAAF Commission would act as a Jury for the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games, but would overrule the Referee only if it was clear that an error had been made. Otherwise, this Commission served primarily an administrative function before and during the Games.

Other than this Olympic Games exception, the Referee's decisions were still final; there still normally was no Jury of Appeal. A new position of Manager was described, who had the right to "take action" (without specifying what that action was) against any competitor with improper clothing. At this time there was the first mention of uniform requirements (other than "clean"): the shorts must reach within four inches of the knee. There was still no final decision on what to call the Umpires. They were referred to as "Umpires (Inspectors)". There was the first mention of Lap Scorers (lap counting was previously the responsibility of the Scorer). There also was the first mention of a prohibition against doping, "the use of any stimulant not normally employed". This doping rule was two sentences long. Today the IAAF doping rules cover 36 pages, not including the list of banned substances.

The false start rule now was disqualification on the second false start. There was the first mention that "rocking starts are forbidden"; in other words the runners now had to be "quite steady and motionless" at the gun. While the distance penalty for false starts was now gone for the open athletes, for the Pentathlon and Decathlon, after the second false start the runner was moved back 1/100th the distance of the race, and disqualified on the fourth false start. In the 1932 rule book, the use of starting blocks was explicitly forbidden. In 1931 it was first stated that both runners had to be inside the zone during the exchange for relays. In 1932 they loosened the rule on relay teams, saying the order could be changed between rounds, but the composition of the teams still could not change. In 1932 they finally nailed down the height of the steeplechase barriers, making it exactly 36 inches (before it had been "not more than 3 feet"). Ropes and stakes are no longer required in lane races; now it's a 5cm chalk line. For hurdle races, it was now specified that "swinging and broken hurdles" are considered as knocked down for the purpose of the "3 hurdle" rule. As can be seen from this illustration, the construction of hurdles was quite different at that time. With this inverted T-shaped base, it would have taken a bit more effort to knock the hurdles



1932 Omega stopwatch



over than it does today. The hurdles were constructed so the cross-piece could be flipped up or down for high or low hurdle races. A "swinging hurdle" apparently refers to the situation where the cross piece has been hit and it has flopped over, although the hurdle base has not been knocked over. This was possible because the cross-pieces pivoted on a metal rod, visible if you look carefully at the above picture, and were held in place with wing-nuts that could come loose.

In the vertical jumps, passing of heights was now allowed. In the Pole Vault, the plant box was now required, and the first diagram of the plant box appeared in the rule book. There also was the first mention that it is a failed attempt if the jumper breaks the vertical plane; which vertical plane is not stated, but I assume they meant the plane of the crossbar or uprights, rather than the back of the stopboard we use now. In 1932 it was also added that it is a failed attempt if the pole touches the ground beyond the plane. In the High Jump, pegs no longer were used, replaced by 40cm x 60cm platforms, similar to today's setup. Pole Vault and High Jump crossbars were now specified as being between 12 feet (3.66M) and 13 feet 1 1/2 inches (4M) in length. Maximum weight was 2 Kg (4 lb. 6.4

oz.). The dimensions of the Running Broad Jump pit were now specified as being 9 feet (2.75M) wide and 9M from the board to the back of the pit.

In throws from the circle, it was still body or clothing touching outside equaling a foul. Now there was the requirement that the thrower must leave from a standing position out the rear half of the circle (marked by chalk lines extended outside the circle). And now they could leave after the implement had landed, instead of after it was marked. For the Hammer Throw, there was the first mention that it was not a foul if the head of the hammer touched the ground during preliminary turns.

The Tug of War still survived in the rule book, and there was a new event added, which was first proposed in the first IAAF meetings but turned down by the Council. This was the Discus Throw Hellenic Style. It was thrown from a stand, called a Balbis, which was 80cm x 70cm, sloped toward the landing area from 15cm high to 5cm. During the throw, other than pivoting on the toes, feet could not move. The athlete could jump from the Balbis after the discus was released. Throws were measured from the middle of the front edge of the Balbis.



Discus Throw Greek Style with athlete standing on a Balbis

In Race Walking, it was still cautions from two judges to disqualify a walker, or one in the last 400M of the race. First mention was made of recommended use of a white flag for a caution and a red flag for a disqualification, and there was first mention that a Judge may warn a competitor (or issue a “caution”) when he was in danger of not complying with the rules of legal race walking.

There also was in the 1931 IAAF rule book a seven page description of the method for testing the accuracy of stopwatches, which was required before championship events.

1935 IAAF

The 1935 IAAF rule book was the one used for the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. It stipulated that the IAAF Council would serve as the Jury for the Olympic Games (as they do today for the Games and for the world championships). This Jury at that time served a major administrative function prior to the Games, while today the Council members take an active role as a true Jury of Appeal. Avery Brundage of the USA appears on the list of IAAF Council members to serve on the 1936 Olympic Games Jury. The rules covered 28 pages, with 11 additional pages of implement descriptions and seven pages of women’s rules.

The decisions of the Referee, Finish Judges and Field Judges were still generally not appealable. The Starter’s commands were now the familiar “On your marks” and “Set”. The gun was to be fired approximately two seconds after the set command was given. At this point there were no

changes in the false start rules. Starting blocks were still forbidden. (Starting blocks were initially seen as an unfair aid to those using them, but eventually they were accepted based on the rationale that,



Athletes using trowels to dig foot holes before the start of a 100M race



Start of 100M at 1936 Olympic Games; starting blocks were not allowed (Jesse Owens closest to camera)

rather than an aid, they protected the track surface, presumably from all those foot holes sprinters had to dig.) Umpires were now just Umpires, not “Umpires (Inspectors)”. There was a new stipulation that Race Walk records could only be set on a track.

In the High Jump, there was now only the requirement that the take-off must be from one foot. The rules no longer stated that a “spring” counts as a jump, and it was no longer required that the head not go over the bar before the feet and not be below the buttocks.

In the throws, there was no longer mention that clothing touching outside the ring was a foul. The sectors were still 90 degrees. The Javelin throw still used the 12 foot scratch board, and still had no sector. The Discus Throw had a new rule: “Letting go of the discus in making an attempt shall be counted as a trial.”

For track construction, rules now stated there must be an inner border of wood, rope, cement or any other material. The border shall be 5cm high (previously it was “not more than 5cm”). The process is starting now of standardizing all the widths to 5cm (except the 7cm width for the Javelin Throw scratch line). The torso defined the finish of a runner, but the whole body must still cross the line to be considered a finish. For the hurdles, there was a note regarding the use of a “new type of hurdle”: old \perp vs new \lfloor . This is the new L-shaped base that we are familiar with today, rather than the old inverted T-shaped base in use at the time. When these new hurdles were used, the “3 hurdle rule” was not in effect (and knocking down any would not invalidate a record). The new hurdles would be used in the 1936 Olympic Games, and must be used in other competitions after 1936.

A section of rules specifically for the 1936 Olympic Games first instituted the use of Qualifying Trials to reduce large fields to 12 for the Finals (except for the Hammer Throw and the Women’s High Jump and Women’s Javelin Throw).

1953 IAAF

This is the last rule book I will cover, since at this point the rules have become much more similar to the current rules. The 1953 rules covered 49 pages; 37 pages of rules, plus 12 pages of implement specifications. The 2008 IAAF rules cover a total of 130 pages, so there was still a lot of detail to be added, but the fundamentals are quite similar to today’s rules.

The track was now specified as composed of cinder or similar material; grass was not allowed. All women’s entries in international competition must be accompanied by a doctor’s certification as to sex. Uniforms no longer had the “four inch rule”, but steeplechasers were required to wear non-

transparent shorts. Marshals were responsible for arranging an enclosure for officials not on duty. There was still no mention of Umpires using flags. Some Clerks were now called Starters Assistants, pretty much completing the evolution of this position as it is used everywhere but in the USA. After assembling and placing the runners, the Starters Assistants check for fingers and toes on the line, and proper foot placement in the blocks, and notify the Starter if there is a problem, or when all is ready for the “Set” command. There were still three official timekeepers (plus alternates) and they still were concerned only with first place times. An “approved” electrical time keeping device could be used, but this was distinct from a photo-finish device. A photo-finish apparatus could be used only as an aid to the Referee and Finish Judges. Only the Announcer could give intermediate times during a race.



1949 Omega autotiming device

There was no definition of the number of steps on or inside the line for disqualification in lane races; it was left to the discretion of the Referee, who had to decide whether or not a “material advantage” was gained. (This left a lot of room for “manipulation”.) There was still a rather sketchy description of heat set-up. Normally lane draws were still done at the line by the Starter and Clerk. Protests to the Referee were now allowed for matters other than eligibility.

The Starter was to fire the gun only after the runners were “quite still on their marks”. A false start was now defined as leaving the mark with hand or foot before the gun is fired; i.e., any movement before the gun now finally constituted a chargeable false start. Two such false starts resulted in disqualification. Runners may use their own blocks. Both feet must be in contact with the ground while in the blocks (now they only have to be in contact with the block pedals). It was no longer a requirement that the entire body be across the line for a finish; now only the torso defined the finish. There was now the trail leg rule for the hurdles. There still was no mention of the fly zone or acceleration zone in the 4x100M relay. A medical certificate still was required for running a marathon, as well as an on-site physical by a doctor prior to the start. Women’s cross country races were limited to 3Km. Team races on the track were still in the rule book (but the Tug of War was not).

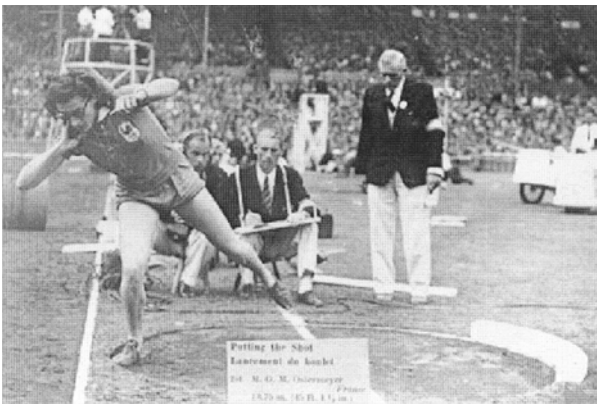
In the field events, the Broad Jump was now the Long Jump, but it was still the Hop Step and Jump in 1953. All jump runways were unlimited in length, with a minimum of 40M for the Long Jump, Hop Step and Jump, and Pole Vault. A handkerchief was still allowed on the crossbar for “sighting purposes”. Uprights for the vertical jumps were a minimum of 3.66M (12 feet) and a maximum of 4M (13 feet 1 ½ inch) apart. All crossbars were a maximum of 4M in length, made of wood or metal, and triangular or circular in cross-section, with each side or diameter measuring 30mm, and with 30mm x 150mm flat end pieces. In the vertical jumps, after a successful record attempt the bar had to be re-measured (this was in effect until the early 90s). Pole Vault uprights could be moved between 0 and 60cm. If moved, the Judges had to re-measure the bar. It was still a foul if the vaulter left the ground without completing the attempt.

In the Long Jump (still called the Running Long Jump), use of plasticine was now mentioned; if no plasticine is available, soft earth or sand was to be used. The Standing High Jump and Standing Long Jump were still in the rules, although I think by now they were rarely, if ever, contested. In the Hop Step and Jump the “sleeping leg” touching the ground was a foul.



*Decathlon Discus Throw at the 1960 Olympic Games
Note the low metal “cage” with the official standing inside*

Circle throws were still into a 90 degree sector. The circle rim now was made of iron only; wood was no longer an option. The circles were still constructed of packed earth or clay. The Javelin Throw scratch board was now replaced by the runway, curved scratch line, and sector we are familiar with. Javelin specifications included only measurements of weight, length, center of gravity, and grip length. Steel tapes were still required for measurement, although an “approved” scientific measuring apparatus may be used (a “datum line measurer”). Legal Shot Put form still only mentioned behind the plane of the shoulders in the IAAF rules.



Women’s Shot Put at the 1948 Olympic Games



1948 Olympic Games – Women’s 80H

Ties were broken pretty much as they are today, but the vertical jumps still had that third tie-breaker before going to a jump-off (the total number of attempts throughout the competition), jump-offs were now used only for breaking first place ties, and performances during tie-breaking still did not count toward the final best performance.

Race Walking records still could only be made on the track, but now it had to be on an unbanked track. The definition of legal race walking still only mentioned the continuous contact rule, but additional notes for Race Walk Judges now mention that the lead leg must be straight for at least one “moment”. Disqualifications were now done by accumulating cautions from the Chief Judge and one other Judge, or from three Judges other than the Chief Judge. There was no longer the ability for a Judge to disqualify a walker in the last 200 or 400M of a race. (But this ability was more recently given back to the Chief Judge in the last 100M of the race.)

Finally, the doping rule in 1953 was still three sentences long.

We have come a long way in the last century with regard to the rules of our sport. The ten-fold increase in the size of the rule book, while resulting in increased complexity for the official, also has enabled much more consistent officiating across the country and around the world (although there is still much progress to be made). It will be very interesting to see what new technologies and new training techniques for athletes bring to the continuing evolution of the rules of Athletics in the twenty-first century.

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