

THE DECATHLON ASSOCIATION

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Windy Resolution ??? IAAF Compromise

Hello Again.....We've had some news on the IAAF dispute over CE wind readings. The IAAF recently moved closer to resolution and the following communiqué (4/6/10) from Götzis Meet Director Konrad Lerch tells us where we are right now.

our efforts were partly successful and I understand that according to the council decision the former rule 260.27 (IAAF Competitions Rules 2009) shall still apply to all combined events scores/competitions. But for the ratification of World Records the new Rule 260.27 as decided by the IAAF Congress at Berlin 2009, shall be satisfied.

My reading of this decision is that the new rule (ave +2.0mps) will only be applied to world record ratification. For everything else, the old rule (ave +2.0mps or no single +4.0mps event) applies including the questions of qualifying marks. This is a step forward but may leave some ticklish and confusing situations.

Konrad received a communiqué from the IAAF with the following explanation and some rebukes.

the matter was raised during the Council Meeting (in Doha, March, 2010) and it was decided not to change the decision which had been taken by the Congress. The Rule 260.27 is confirmed.

However, this rule 260 refers only to ratification of World Records and not qualification for the World Championships or the Olympic Games; therefore, the Council took a second decision : „For qualification to the World



Championships, the conditions of the wind specified in the previous text (IAAF Competitions Rules 2009) shall apply.

I think that this is an acceptable compromise.

The CE community was also reminded us that the proposal initially came from France; that national federations (including USATF) received the rule proposal 3 months prior to the Congress meeting in Berlin last August; that there was no discussion on the rule change, and the rule change passed unanimously. My question is, where was USATF? This all occurred without the CE communities knowledge? Why wasn't anyone notified by USATF?.....CE Development Chairs?...Athletes representatives?major referees?...coaches?...Anyone? Who's to blame? Perhaps we all are. But we can't let this mistake about world record ratification stand (especially in a nation that has athletes named Clay, Hardee, Eaton, etc). The IAAF

has not slammed the door on a chance for a decathlon world record, but they did not leave it too far ajar. ***There was no initial reaction by the CE community because no one knew about the rule change.*** Again, where was USATF in June, July, 2009 when the change was proposed?

In the future may I suggest that there be discussion before an important rule is changed. As an example, note all of the discussion about false start rules in recent years. In fact the CE false start rule was too generous (2 allowed, dq on 3rd) and it was eventually altered, *but after much discussion.* Until recently there was no discussion of a new wind rule, not even a hint that there was any dissatisfaction.

Recently I have been trying to rationalize why the IAAF decided to change the rule in the first place. Did they think that the previous rule was unfair? What thought process was used? Perhaps the thinking went this way:

First: because a single event performance is negated when the wind reading is > 2.0mps,
then

Second: it is simply fair for CEs that a score is negated if the *average* of the three events is greater than 2.0mps.

This, at first glance, seems to be reasonable, but the thinking is faulty. It is not logical. Why? An example would help. If one goes to a track meet where the wind is blowing somewhere around, say 2.0mps with occasional gusts (a very ordinary occurrence, especially at USA track meets), the chance that an individual event will be legal (not be wind aided) may be, say .25 or 25%. At the same meet, under the same wind conditions, what would be the chances that a CE score would be legal (not wind aided)? One would think that the chances would be the same, that is, 25%. But no!!!. One has to consider that

the 3 CE events (either 100m, lj, 110H for decathlon or 110H, 200m and lj for heptathlon) are *independent* events and the chances of a legal score are now:

$$.25 \times .25 \times .25 = \text{or } 1/64^{\text{th}} \text{ or } 0.0156 \text{ (less than 2\%)}$$

In other words, it is much more likely that the CE score, under the very same wind conditions, will be “wind aided.” It is simple mathematics and logic. The mistake that I believe the IAAF made is a very common one and would earn a failing grade in any math class. And, it may be why the IAAF thought that a >2.0mps single event and an *average* >2.0mps for a CE score should be treated similarly.

In fact, it is so much harder (mathematicians would say: a much lower probability) for CE scores not to be wind aided. And that is because the actual probability of a series of independent events is the *product* (not the sum or the average) of the probabilities of the individual events.

We all know that this is a very common mistake of logic and mathematics. As a matter of fact one can use the above example over and over again, changing the values, and the result is always the same....that is, for the very same wind conditions, the chances of a legal CE score for 3 independent events is very much smaller than the chances of a single event being “wind-aided.” Perhaps we should lay the blame on mathematicians and logicians for not teaching this better.

What now? I feel that we now have to start over to reverse the rule as it applies to the world record. It is way too unfair. Stay tuned.

