

Scottishathletics Start Team

Rule of the Month – September 2022: TR16.3

UKA/World Athletics Rule - TR16.3

In races up to and including 400m (including the first leg of 4 × 200m, the Medley Relay and 4 × 400m), a crouch start and the use of starting blocks are compulsory. After the “On your marks” command, an athlete shall approach the start line, assume a position completely within their allocated lane and behind the start line. An athlete shall not touch either the start line or the ground in front of it with their hands or their feet when on their mark. Both hands and at least one knee shall be in contact with the ground and both feet in contact with the foot plates of the starting blocks. At the “Set” command, an athlete shall immediately rise to their final starting position retaining the contact of the hands with the ground and of the feet with the foot plates of the blocks. Once the Starter is satisfied that all athletes are steady in the “Set” position, the gun shall be fired.

In Practice

The athlete/s in practice must keep their hands behind the white start line within their lane.

If the athlete/s are using blocks (which are compulsory when the Start Information System (SIS) is in use, they must keep their feet in constant contact with both foot plates at all times during the start process.

Athletes are entitled to have part of their feet touching the track as it is not required for them to have their whole foot on the foot plate, only touching.

Confusion often arises as to the correct foot placement when athletes are using starting blocks, something which a Starters Assistant is required to check.

Here are some extracts from the current rule book along with clarification text and images showing the acceptable foot placement. Hopefully after reading, you will gain a better understanding of exactly where athletes’ feet are required to be placed.

World Athletics Guidance for Implementation

In all races using a crouch start, as soon as they are steady in their blocks, the Starter shall raise their arm in which they hold the gun, then they shall say “Set”. They shall wait then for all the athletes to be steady and shall then fire the gun. The Starter must not raise their arm too early, especially when manual Timekeepers are being used. They are advised to raise their arm only when they feel they are about to give the command “Set”. There is no rule that enables to determine the time that elapses between the commands “On your marks” and “Set” on one hand, and on the other hand, between the command “Set” and the gun shot. The Starter shall let the athletes go once they are all motionless in the correct starting position. Which means that they may have, for certain starts, to fire the gun quite quickly, but on the other hand, they may also have to wait longer in order to make sure that they are all steady in their starting position.

On Track – ‘On your Marks’



*Image – Getty Images

On Track – ‘Set’



*Image – Focusedcollection.com