





WHAT EXACTLY IS A MARKSMAN?

Since Marksmen do not exist in the U.S., answering this question was one of our primary goals of this exchange. Prior to our visit, all we knew was that a “marksman” is a person who is skilled at shooting a gun. Starters use guns. So... what... do marksmen help the starter shoot more accurately?

The next pages and illustrations go into more specific detail about the exact answer to that question. But the quick answer is: No. On the contrary, in the U.K. marksmen do not carry guns at all. A Marksman is a cross between a Check-In Clerk and a Recall Starter. We presume the name “Marksman” derives not from the ability to SHOOT a mark, but rather from their duty to bring an ATHLETE to his/ her mark (starting line). Since the work of the Starter is called “Starting”, the work of the marksman is called “Marking”. While most officials in the U.S. have no idea what a Marksman is, most officials in the U.K. have never heard of a Check-In Clerk (a.k.a. Start Clerk, or Line Clerk, or Clerk of the Course, etc.).

In the U.S., a Check-In Clerk is responsible for attending to the athletes' needs once escorted from the warm-up area into the stadium:

- Checking athletes in,
- Checking number bibs,
- Giving athletes their lane assignments and hip numbers, and
- Telling them when to go to their starting line.

But once that duty is done, the Check-In Clerk turns the athletes over to the Starting Team (usually the Recall Starters) who then is responsible for:

- Placing athletes at their marks,
- Giving instructions,
- Helping with blocks,
- Telling them when to remove warm-ups, and
- Informing the athletes that the race is ready to begin.

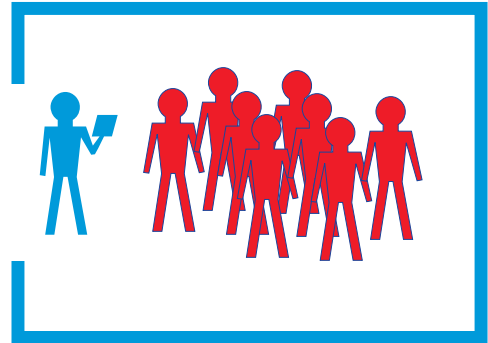
Sometimes the Check-In Clerk's duties will expand to include all the duties named above. But once the starter says “ON YOUR MARKS”, the Check-In Clerk's job is completely done and the clerk retreats out of the way. It is different with Marksmen. Marksmen perform all the duties named above, but when the Starter says “ON YOUR MARKS”, they ALSO perform some of the same duties of the U.S. Recall Starters, such as checking for fingers touching the lines, and subtly signaling that the athletes are ready for “SET”. The Marksmen stand very close to the starting line which is usually where U.S. Recall Starters stand. Marksmen can interrupt the starting procedure. But since Marksmen don't have guns, they aren't considered Recall Starters. The Marksmen are only responsible for the athletes at their “Marks”. For the 4x100m. and 4x300 m. relays, the Marksmen also positioned themselves at each exchange zone to check athletes in. In the U.S., this is the responsibility of the exchange zone umpire. The Marksmen only checked the athletes in, and did not participate in judging the exchanges.

MARKSMAN DUTIES

STEP 1: Athletes are escorted into the stadium, and kept in a holding pen.

Here the Marksman:

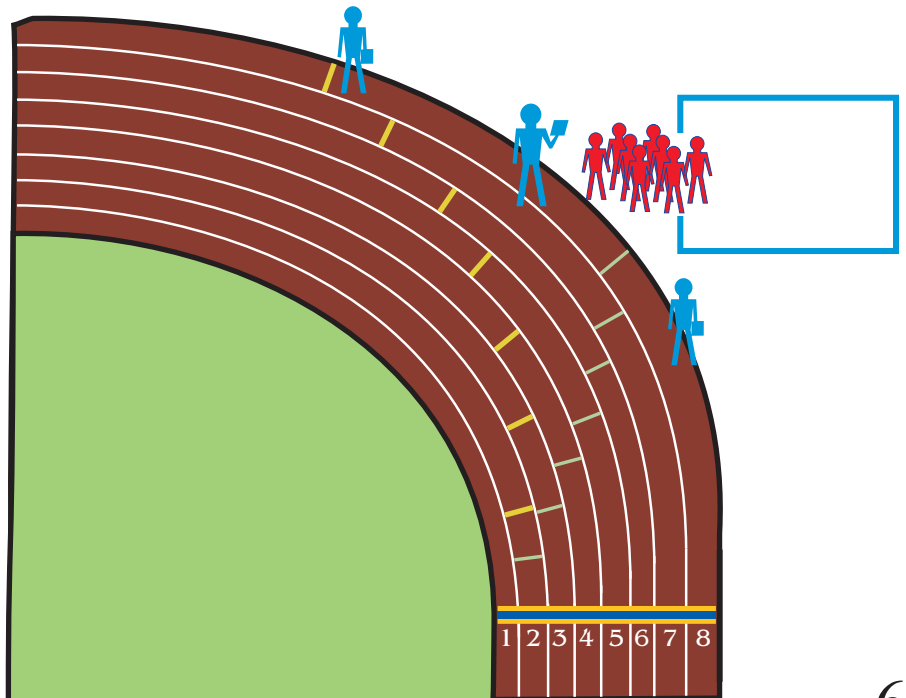
- Re-checks that all athletes are present and ready
- Informs athletes of lanes, and issues hip numbers
- Checks Number bibs on front and back (makes sure numbers aren't upside down, so "896" doesn't read "968")
- Checks that vests are tucked in.



STEP 2: Marksmen escort athletes onto the track

Here the Marksmen:

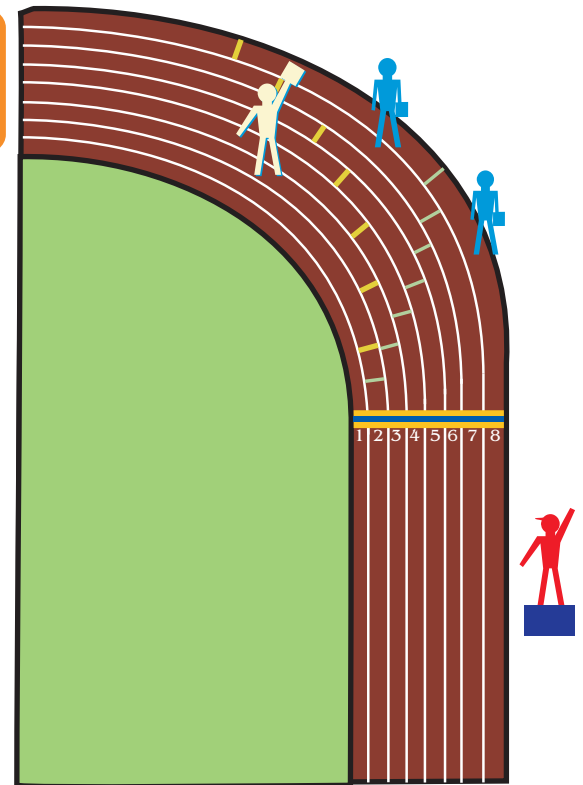
- Place the athletes in lanes
- Instruct athletes on the starting process.
- Assist athletes with blocks
- Tell athletes when to take off warm-ups
- Inform Starters of empty lanes



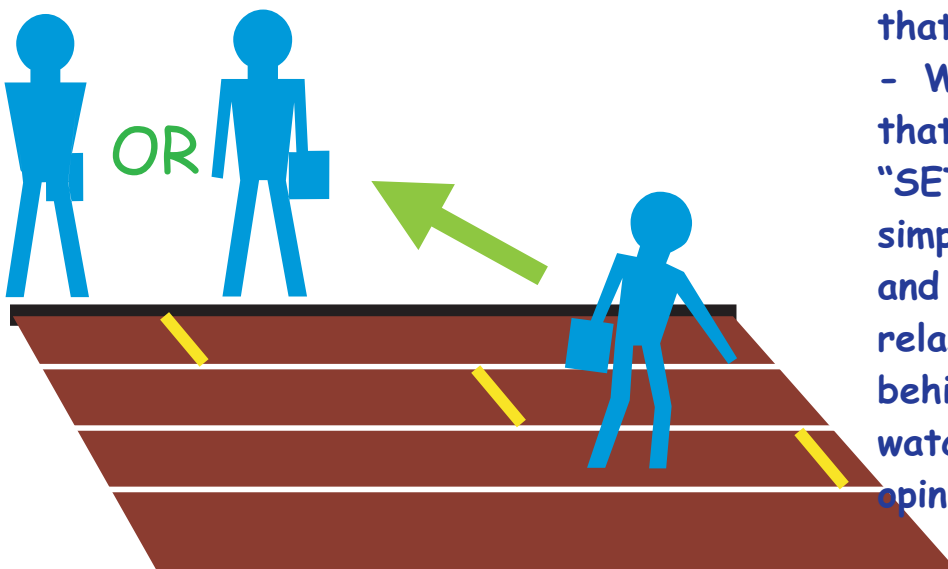
MARKSMAN DUTIES

STEP 3: Chief Marksman signals "Ready" to Starter.

- The Chief Marksman holds the clipboard overhead, and keeps it there until the Starter responds by waving the arm in the air. This of course can lead to frequent frustration, when an inattentive, distracted, or even cruel Starter forces the Marksman to leave the arm in the air for an extended time.
- After receiving the Starter's wave, the Chief Marksman lowers the clipboard, and takes the position at the top of the stagger, while the other Marksmen take their positions.



STEP 4: Starter says, "ON YOUR MARKS"



- Marksmen correct any athletes that are at their marks improperly
- When Marksmen are satisfied that athletes are ready for "SET", they make no signal. They simply retreat out of the starter's and athlete's way, and stand relaxed, or with their hands behind their backs -- still closely watching the start, in case their opinion is requested later.

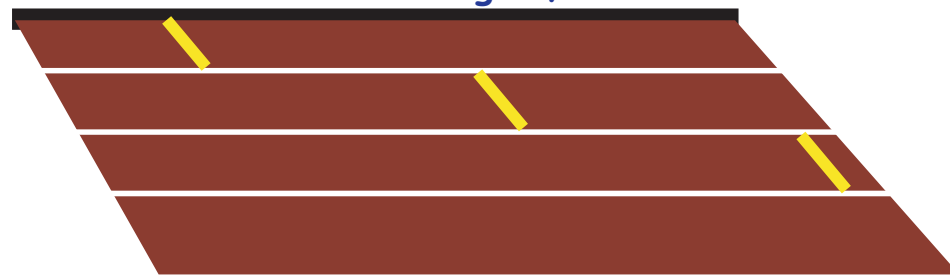
MARKSMAN DUTIES

If there is a reason to **CANCEL** the starting process, the Marksman will signal to the Starter by raising the clipboard overhead. The starter will then say, "STAND UP".

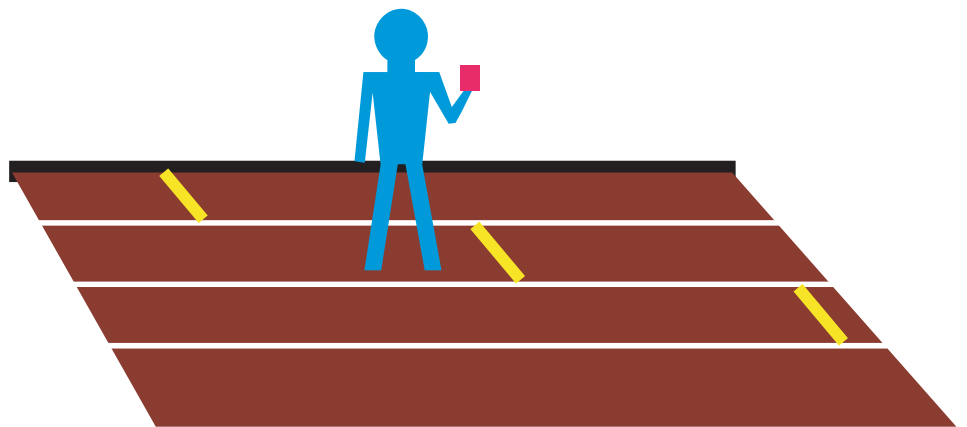


A wise Marksman will **NOT** step in front of the athletes when raising the clipboard. Reason: If the Starter doesn't see the clipboard and shoots the gun, the athletes may collide with the Marksman.

Once the Marksman is ready to resume, the clipboard is raised in the air once again, the Starter acknowledges, and the start resumes.



If there is a need to show a penalty card to an athlete, the Starter will instruct the nearest Marksman to present the card.



STEP 5: Post-Race Duties

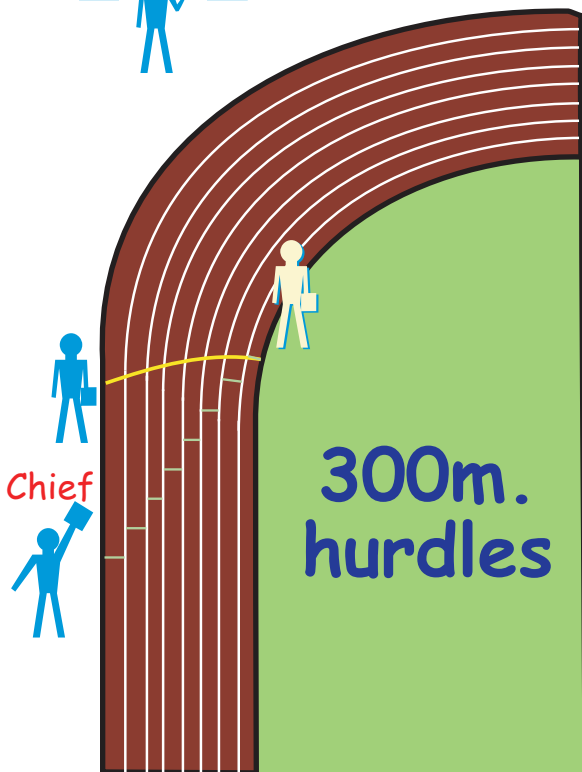
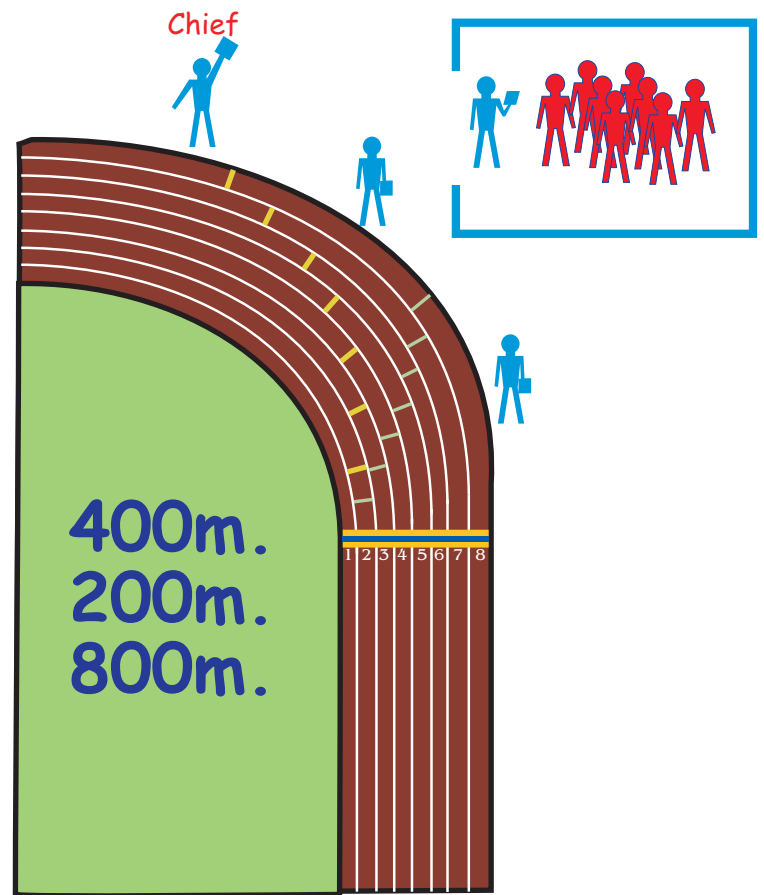
After each race has left the starting line, the Marksman also will:

- Record all warnings on the check-in sheet
- Record what time the race started
- Always be one step ahead of the meet schedule. So once it's time to move on to the next event, the Marksmen are already there, and the athletes are already prepared.

MARKING POSITIONS

Here is where all Marksmen are positioned for every race. Because the Start Team is positioned so far from the athletes, the Marksmen are positioned such that they can easily interact with the athletes.

The Marksmen are positioned almost exactly where Recall Starters are positioned in the U.S.

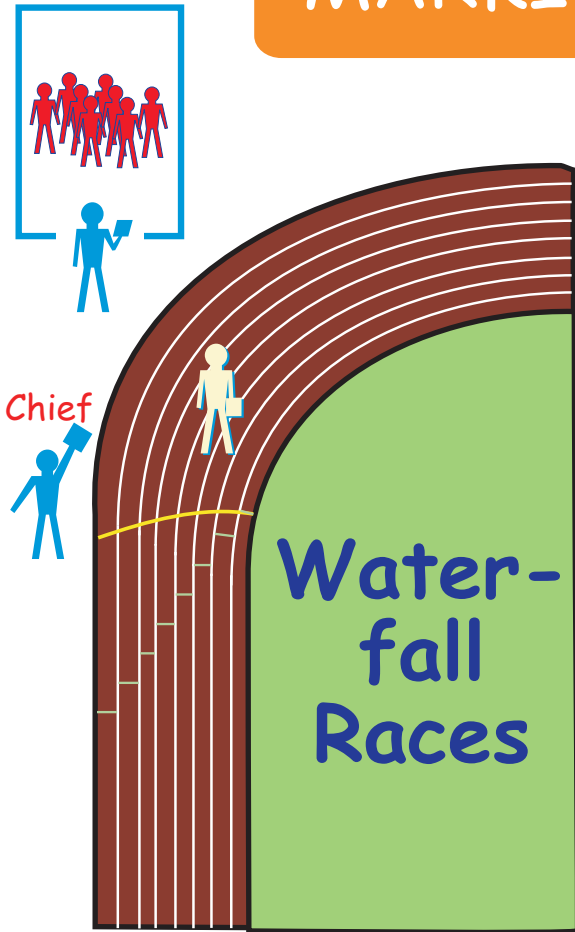


THE MOST CONFUSING PART OF ALL IS...

Marksmen do not exist in the U.S. In the U.K., Marksmen carry out all the duties of the U.S. "Check-In Clerk" AND some of the duties of the U.S. Recall Starters. Yet technically, a Marksmen IS a Recall Starter! Marksmen don't carry out all the duties of the Recall Starter as specified in the USATF Rulebook. But, they DO carry out the duties of the Recall Starter according to the IAAF Rulebook.

Marksmen are not considered Recall Starters, though. They do not carry guns, nor do they decide on a fair or false start. But occasionally, the Start Team will request the Marksmen's input on a particular start, since the Marksmen is so close to the athlete.

MARKING POSITIONS



For the 4 x 100m. Relay, at least 2 Marksmen were positioned at each exchange zone to prepare the athletes for the upcoming race.

Marksmen only checked athletes in and did not judge hand offs.

There were plenty of Marksmen at this meet, thus making the job easy. Obviously, with a smaller, less prestigious meet, there will be fewer Marksmen.

In the UK as opposed to the US, the Starters and Recall Starters are much "lonlier". They are separated from the athletes by considerable distance, thus having much less personal contact with them.

Marking is an excellent opportunity for the start line official to truly INTERACT with the athlete. The qualities that make a good Marksman are the same qualities that make a good official overall: excellent interpersonal skills, a pleasant demeanor, patience, a desire to stay on schedule, and a knowledge of the Starters' needs. Harshness, sarcasm, and impatience are the qualities of a poor Marksman.

