

Special Olympics Europe Eurasia (EE) Short Track Speed Skating Seminar Summary (March 2016)

In March 2016 Special Olympics EE held a Short Track Speed Skating seminar in the Netherlands and Margarita Sweeney-Baird (National Figure Skating Coaching & Competition Advisor for Special Olympics GB) attended.

The seminar was held in conjunction with the Special Olympics Netherlands National Short Track Speed Skating Competition and so all seminar delegates were able to observe the entire speed skating event and meet with all the officials who were mainly from the Royal Dutch Speed Skating Federation (KNSB). Advice from the competition officials was also provided concerning how to layout a Short Track Speed Skating track.

The main objectives of the seminar were to:

- Develop Special Olympics short track speed skating and best practice for speed skating for Special Olympics athletes
- Reiterate the mission, philosophy and rules of Special Olympics as well as discussing divisioning, unified sport and event management
- Discuss future development in the context of the current low participation in speed skating

Seminar Introduction

The formal seminar started with Mirek Krogulec (Sports & Organizational Development Director for Special Olympics EE) delivering a series of presentations on the following:

- Special Olympics Mission Highlights, Philosophy, History of Athlete Participation, Worldwide Structure of the Movement, Sample Accredited Special Olympics Program Structure, Special Olympics Volunteers, Definition of Intellectual Disability, Eligibility for Special Olympics and the Uniqueness of Special Olympics
- Unified Sport, History of Unified Sports, Evolution, Experiences, Key Facts, Model Choices, Participation Census, Outlook
- Various videos from Special Olympics events were also shown

Speed Skating was noted as one of the development focus sports for Special Olympics EE between 2015 and 2017.

Rules and Event Management

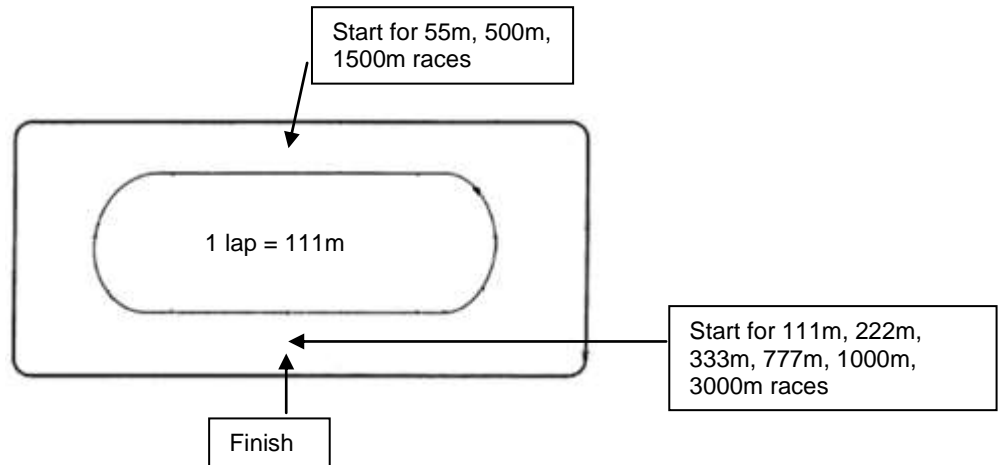
Henk Krijgsheld (Short Track Speed Skating Sports Director for Special Olympics EE), gave a presentation on Special Olympics Short Track Speed Skating rules and key things to consider from an event management point of view.

Possible events for competition

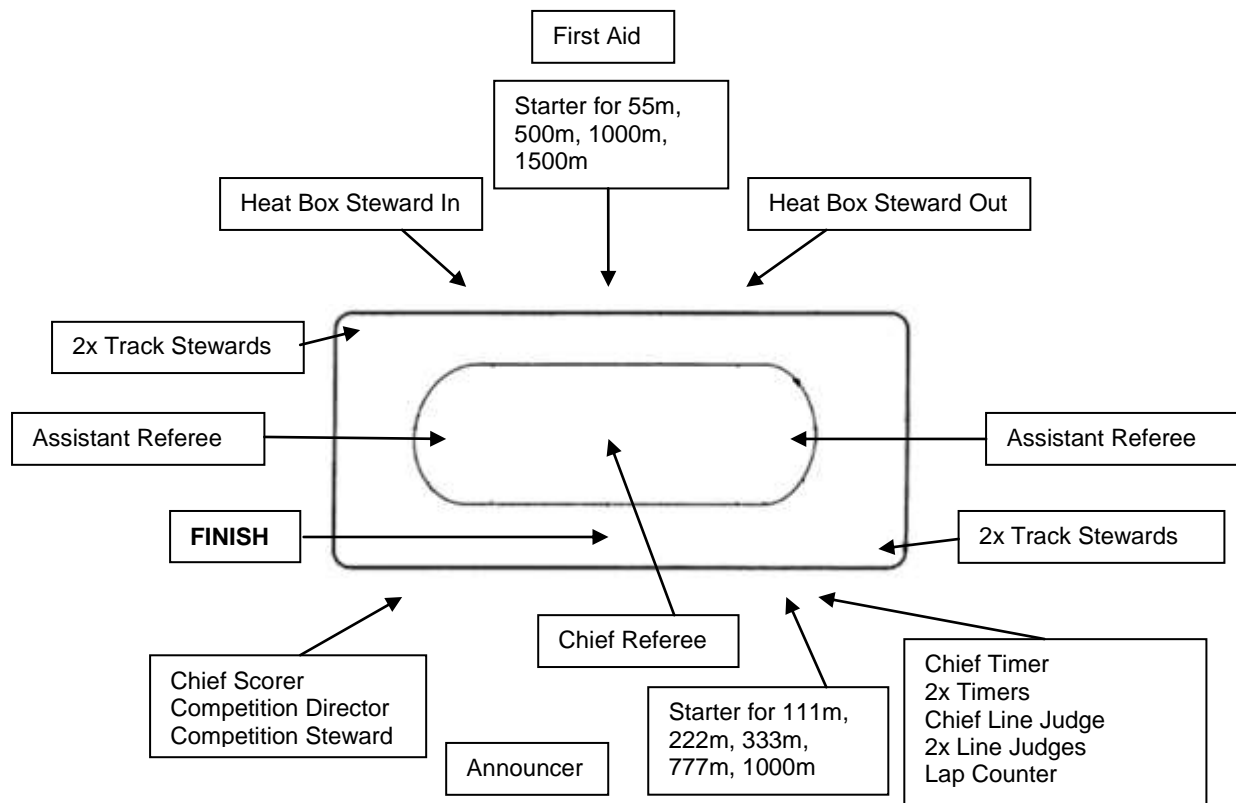
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| ○ 25 Meter Straightaway | ○ 1000 Meter Race (9 laps) |
| ○ 55 Meter Half Lap Race | ○ 1500 Meter Race (13.5 laps) |
| ○ 111 Meter Race (1 lap) | ○ 1500 Meter Race (Relay) |
| ○ 222 Meter Race (2 laps) | ○ 3000 Meter Race (Relay) |
| ○ 333 Meter Race (3 laps) | ○ 1500 Meter Race (Unified Sports Relay) |
| ○ 500 Meter Race (4.5 laps) | ○ 3000 Meter Race (Unified Sports Relay) |
| ○ 777 Meter Race (7 laps) | |

Track layout for competition

The track shall be set on an ice rink with a minimum length of 56.38m and a minimum width of 25.90m and further details of the exact specifics can be found in the Special Olympics Short Track Speed Skating Rules: <http://www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx>.



Competition Officials required and their positioning around the track



Athlete equipment requirements

- Long-sleeved and long-legged uniforms
- Knee pads
- Shin guards
- Cut resistant neck protector
- Cut resistant gloves or mittens of a protective nature
- An ISU approved speed skating safety helmet
- Speed skates (hockey skates may be used but Klap style speed skate blades may not be worn)
- Helmet Bib

An athletes route from the dressing room through to competition

- Dressing room
- Pre heat box
- Heat box
- Start
- Finish
- Dressing room

Rules of Competition

Full details can be found in the Special Olympics Short Track Speed Skating Rules:
<http://www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx>

Start procedure

- "Go to the start" (skaters step to start line and place skaters behind the start line)
- "Ready" (skaters get down into start position)
- Signal the start of the race with the firing of a start pistol
- If a skater is interfered with and falls before the first apex block after the starting line, the skaters may be called back to make a new start. This will be signalled by the starter firing a double shot of the starter's pistol

Finish

A speed skater shall finish the race when the blade of one of his/her skates first crosses the finish line after completing the appropriate number of laps in the race.

Disqualifications

Athletes can be disqualified for impeding, kicking out, off track, assistance, a false start:

- When overtaking, the responsibility for any obstruction or collision shall be upon the skater overtaking, provided that the skater being overtaken does not act improperly
- A skater on the outside of the track shall be deemed to be the skater overtaking if the skaters are side-by-side entering the first curve
- A skater shall not deliberately impede or push another skater with any part of his/her body, thereby gaining an advantage
- Any skater, who unnecessarily slows down, thereby causing another skater to slow up or collide, shall be disqualified
- Any skater who willfully impedes, improperly crosses the course or, in any way interferes with another skater, or conspires with others to cause a race to result otherwise than on its merit, shall be disqualified
- A skater who permits himself / herself to receive physical assistance during a race that is not a relay shall be disqualified

- A skater who uses the wall to maintain balance or to assist in propelling oneself forward is considered assistance and shall be disqualified
- A skater shall be disqualified for intentionally moving the corner track markers or failing to skate at all times outside the corner track markers
- The Referee may disqualify a skater from a race if the skater deliberately kicks out a skate or throws his/her body across the finish line thereby endangering another skater at the finish line
- A disqualification must be announced at the end of each heat to the skater, team leader, or coach and over the public address system for the benefit of the spectators

Relays

During relays (which are all 1500m or 3000m in distance), each team shall consist of four skaters. No more than two relay teams shall be allowed on the ice at any time. Each team member must skate a minimum of three laps. The last two laps must be skated by a single skater. A competitor may be relayed at any time except during the last two laps. These laps must be skated by one skater.

Each team shall be clearly identified by wearing the same uniform or by wearing the same color pinnie vest or same color helmet bib.

Divisioning

Paul Hertogh (GMS Advisor Special Olympics Netherlands, Special Olympics EE and Special Olympics International) gave a presentation on GMS (Games Management System) and how it can be used for divisioning, scheduling, results and reporting.

On Ice Training

Participants also took part in a training session on the long track oval ice with Special Olympics skaters during their preparation for the competition and later the athletes were able to describe their experiences and how they had benefited from participating in Special Olympics World Winter Games.

For any further information about the seminar please do not hesitate to contact Margarita Sweeney-Baird (Special Olympics GB National Figure Skating Coaching and Competition Advisor) on 07813 993237 or margarita.msb@gmail.com.