

## Award Ceremonies

### Introduction

The main difference between Special Olympics and competition from most other sports organisations is that Special Olympics competition is 'banded' (by a process called divisioning<sup>1</sup>). This means that individuals are put into a group to compete against other individuals of a similar ability for their own set of awards (1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> place). Consequently there are usually a lot of award ceremonies at Special Olympics events which means that running award ceremonies requires a high degree of organisation and can be stressful!

### The Basics

Awards ceremonies should highlight the achievement of each competitor from each division. Consequently, it's a fundamental principle of Special Olympics awards ceremonies that they are dignified and that no competitor is given more recognition than another (i.e. as much significance is placed on the individual receiving an 8<sup>th</sup> place ribbon as on the gold medalist).

Where possible award ceremonies should follow a specific protocol and take place within 30minutes of the conclusion of an event when they are occurring in tandem with the competition. For some competitions, all award ceremonies will however be left to the end of the day.

### Awards

- The Special Olympics regulations concerning the use of awards can be found [Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sports Rules \(Section K\)](#)
- Each division can have up to eight competitors/teams in it and awards must be presented to each competitor; medals must be given for 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> places, but another type of award e.g. ribbons, should be given for 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> places
- Competitors who are disqualified (DQ) for reasons other than unsportsmanlike conduct or who do not finish (DNF) an event should be presented with a participation award on the last position on the podium. This includes individuals disqualified for the Maximum Effort Rule as detailed in [Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sports Rules \(Section J\)](#)
- In the case of a tie, each competitor that achieved the same result must receive the award for the highest place (for example, two athletes who tie for first place must each be presented with a gold medal). Athletes that follow shall receive the appropriate award for their place of finish (for example, the athlete who crossed the finish line following the two athletes who tied for gold, shall receive a third place medal).

### Awards Area Equipment

All awards areas should:

- Be appropriately decorated with relevant Special Olympics banners or flags as well as other suitable decoration such as plants or flowers (no sponsors banners, logos etc. can be situated in or by an awards area)
- Have a podium (this is desirable but not essential for team events)
- Ensure the correct number and type of awards are available
- Have tables available for laying out the awards on

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<sup>1</sup> The procedures for divisioning can be found in [Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sports Rules \(Section I\)](#) but there is also an explanatory [video](#) available to watch as well.

- Have a PA system, microphone and fanfare music available
- Ensure cushions/trays for the awards to be carried on are available (in some sports where there may be a number of awards ceremonies taking place one after the other, it may be advisable to have two or three sets of cushions/trays)
- Ensure that if wheelchair users are participating, ramps conforming to current guidelines should be provided to allow wheelchair users to get on the podium
- Have sufficient chairs/seating for the awards staging area
- Have available copies of the programme/schedule of events throughout the competition
- (If required) Have access to radios for communicating with other event volunteers such as the Event Manager.

## **Results**

No awards ceremonies are to take place until the results have been checked for any infractions of the Maximum Effort Rule or while there is a protest or appeal pending for the event.

A minimum of four copies of the results are required for each awards ceremony (one each for the Awards Coordinator, Awards Staging Marshal, Awards Preparation Marshal and the Announcer).

## **Awards Team**

The following volunteer roles will normally be required during an award ceremony but the number of people doing each role may vary depending on the size of the competition:

### ***Awards Coordinator***

- Has overall responsibility for the award ceremonies
- Briefs any dignitaries/guests who are presenting the awards
- Checks that the results are correct
- Liaises with the appropriate event volunteers/official as to when the ceremony can start (i.e. so an event and an awards ceremony are not trying to begin at the same time)
- Ensures that the Announcer knows which event is being presented and that they have a copy of the results to make the announcements from
- Signals the volunteer in charge of the music to start/stop the fanfare
- Ensures everyone on the awards team is in the right place at the right time
- Ensures that the correct award is given to the correct competitor during the presentation
- Keeps track of which divisions have/have not received their awards
- Signals when each ceremony is over so the Awards Presentation Marshals can escort the competitors to the Athlete Retrieval Area.

### ***Awards Staging Marshal***

- Checks that all the competitors for a particular award ceremony are present
- Places the competitors in the correct presentation order (see details in the 'Awards Staging' section below)
- Keeps the competitors in the correct presentation order
- Let's the Awards Coordinator know when each division is ready for their presentation
- Double-checks that the competitors are still in the correct order just before they go to receive their awards.

### **Awards Preparation Marshal**

- Ensures that sufficient awards are available for each division (working from the results rather than the programme as there may have been athletes that withdrew, were disqualified or did not finish the event)
- Puts the necessary awards on the cushions/trays for each division (if there are a lot of awards ceremonies, it is advisable to have the awards for the next two or three ceremonies ready)
- Passes the relevant cushion/tray to the Awards Bearers for the next presentation.

### **Announcer**

- Makes all announcements with appropriate ceremony and enthusiasm
- In Special Olympics awards are always presented in reverse order starting with Participation Awards (if any), then place awards and finally the medals
- They may or may not also be responsible for playing the relevant fanfare music at the correct time.

### **Awards Presentation Marshals**

(Two marshals should be assigned to each awards ceremony and for team sports, there should be two marshals per team.)

- Marches on to the awards presentation area with the competitors (one at the front of the line and one at the back) to ensure the competitors stay in the correct order and that they stop at the correct place behind the podium
- Assists competitors on to the podium (if necessary)
- Escorts the competitors back to the awards staging area to collect any of their personal items and then to the athlete retrieval area ensuring they don't cross a competition area while an event is taking place.

### **Awards Bearers**

(For events with up to four competitors, one award bearer only is necessary but an additional one or two may be required for events with more competitors or team sports.)

- Carry the cushion/tray with the awards on to the awards presentation area whilst accompanying the dignitary/guest who is presenting the awards
- Offers (when announced) the relevant award to the dignitary/guest who then presents the award to the competitor.

### **Dignitaries/guests**

(Should be briefed by the Awards Coordinator.)

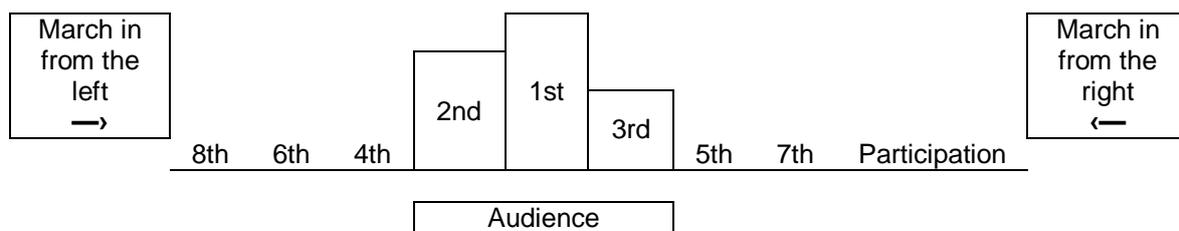
- Congratulates each competitor individually as they give them their award
  - Place awards should be handed to or placed around the neck of the competitor as appropriate (if the place awards are ribbons with safety pins, they should not be pinned to clothing as this takes too long)
  - Medals should be placed around the necks of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place competitor(s).

### **Award Ceremony Flow**

When competitors have finished their event (or at the end of the day of competition), they are brought over to the awards area and are placed in the correct order to receive their awards (Awards Staging) whilst the awards are also prepared (Awards Preparation). They are then marched out for the presentations (Awards Presentation). Once they have received their awards they are returned to their team (Athlete Retrieval).

### **Awards Staging**

- Delegation coaches must ensure that all competitors are dressed appropriately when they arrive at the awards staging area in either their competition or delegation uniform
- Awards staging is where athletes/unified partners are held in an area to prepare them for their awards ceremony and to aid the flow of the event
- The area should preferably have enough seating for several divisions. Seating is necessary if the competitors might have to wait some time before their presentation and helps to keep them in the correct order
- Drinking water should be readily available and if the event is outdoors, the awards staging area must provide shade/shelter (e.g. marquee)
- Once volunteers have received a copy of the results, they should prepare the competitors in the correct order for their awards ceremony. Please note that if the competitors march in from the **right** hand side of the podium (as you face the awards area), then they should be lined up in the following order: **8<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, Participation**. If they march in from the **left** hand side of the podium (as you face the awards area), then the order is reversed: **Participation, 7<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>**.



### **Awards Preparation**

- Prepare awards on cushions/trays for each division according to the official results.

### **Awards Presentation**

- When the competitors are in the correct order, the Awards Coordinator should inform the Announcer so the awards ceremony for that division can start
- If a PA and music system is available, then each award ceremony should be accompanied by an appropriate fanfare as the competitors march on
- Once the competitors are in position the fanfare should be faded out
- The announcer should give the name of the event to be awarded (e.g. Junior male 50m, Division 1) and introduce who is making the presentations
- The awards are made in reverse order (i.e. participation awards if any, then place awards and finishing with the gold medalist). Each competitor should be announced with their place, their name and the delegation that they represent
- After all the awards have been presented the competitors should be allowed time to acknowledge the applause of the spectators and for photographs to be taken (if appropriate).

### **Athlete Retrieval**

- Following the Awards Presentation, the competitors should be escorted to collect any belongings from the awards staging area and then to the athlete retrieval area for one of their delegation coaches to meet them.

### **Incorrect awards presented to a competitor**

If it is deemed that an in-correct award was presented to a competitor, the results for the event will be altered accordingly but the initial awards will stand for all others in that event.

An additional presentation can then be made for the individual in question to receive the correct award.

**Competitors leaving awards areas for another event**

During some competitions, athletes may not be able to receive their award along with the rest of their division due to a clash with another event that they are participating in. This is quite often the case in sports such as athletics and aquatics where competitors normally participate in a number of events. The event will always take precedence over the presentation of an award. Award ceremonies should not be kept on hold for these competitors and instead, arrangements should be made for the competitor in question to receive their award at a scheduled time following completion of their additional event.