

DEAF ATHLETICS AUSTRALIA

FACT SHEET



Deaf Athletics

There are two distinct pathways available for Deaf athletes wishing to participate in athletics competitions and events.

School Sport

If a Deaf athlete is competing in a designated AWD or Para – athlete designated event then they must remove their hearing aids and/or cochlear processor prior to the event commencing.

If a Deaf athlete is competing in a mainstream event, against hearing athletes, then there is no requirement for them to remove their hearing devices and the athlete should compete with their hearing aids and/or cochlear processor on.

Athletes will generally progress through the following levels of competition through School Sport.

School > District > Regional > State > National competitions.

At each progression in the School Sport pathway there may be other rules, guidelines and restrictions relating to qualification to the next level of competition.

Examples of other rules, guidelines and restrictions may be:

Track events

1. Removal of hearing devices upon entering the call room.
2. Removal of hearing devices just prior to start of event.

Field events

1. Removal of hearing devices upon entering the call room.
2. Removal of hearing devices just prior to start of event for the entirety of the event.
3. Being allowed to wear hearing devices between jumps or throws.

Deaf Sports Australia Athletics Committee recommends each of option 2 in the above lists as this provides the athlete the opportunity to receive instructions up to the commencement of the event.

Athletes and parents are strongly encouraged to contact the competition organisers at each progression to ensure that the opportunities for the athlete to compete at their highest level are realised.

Club Athletics

Athletics Australia (AA) and their state associations (eg. Athletics NSW, Queensland Athletics, Athletics Victoria, etc) offer athletics competitions throughout the official athletics season which generally runs from October to April the following year.

To be eligible to compete in competitions organised by these organisations athletes are required to become members of an affiliated athletics club. Details of affiliated clubs are available from the relevant state associations websites.

Similar to School Sport competitions deaf athletes are required to remove their hearing devices when competing in events that are designated AWD or Para-athlete events. AWD events are offered generally at State Championship and National Championship events only.

When competing in a mainstream event, against hearing athletes, then there is no requirement for them to remove their hearing devices and the athlete should compete with their hearing aids and/or cochlear processor on.

The following National Championships are offered by Athletics Australia as the pinnacle of club athletics competition:

1. Junior National Championships
2. Open National Championships

Progression to these competitions is by either qualifying via State Championships offered by State associations and/or by meeting qualifying standards throughout the season as specified by Athletics Australia and available on the AA website.

Athletes and parents are strongly encouraged to contact their relevant state association and Athletics Australia to ensure that the opportunities for the athlete to compete at their highest level are realised.

Track Event Starts

One of the major challenges for any Deaf athlete in relation to track events is the start. DSA has available one Deaf Starting System that is a set of lights that connects to the Swiss Timing eGun system used by most State Athletics Associations.

Where a Deaf athlete competes in a competition and the DSS is unavailable it is recommended that a tap start be used in events up to and including the 400m particularly where the athlete is required to or chooses to use starting blocks. The tap start is more distinct and therefore provides the athlete a better reaction time.

For events greater than 400m a flag could be used as an alternative to indicate the start of the event as an athlete's reaction time is not as critical in the longer distance races.

In all track events it is recommended that Deaf athletes be positioned in lanes closest to the starter. This has two effects in reducing the cabling required where

the DSS is used and/or providing the athlete with another start input via feeling the vibration from the starting gun where the DSS is not available.

Conclusion

Parents, event officials, teachers and organisations in the event of questions or queries that need to be addressed should use the information contained in this fact sheet

For further information please contact Irena Farinacci at DSA – irena.farinacci@deafsports.org.au or Darren Howell Chairperson of the Deaf Athletics Australia Committee on darrsher@hotmail.com