



Starting is not a problem for this judge

Judge Reg Harris loved running. He competed in trail races, marathons and triathlons from a young age and might still be running today if not for an injury he suffered in his 20s. When his children began competing in track and field events, it seemed natural to support them by volunteering with their track club. One thing led to another and today Judge Harris is an accomplished starter in both track and cross-country ski races.

In track, a starter's main goal is to ensure a safe and fair competition for the athletes. Judge Harris typically works with a team of starters to manage everything related to starting a race. He deals with athletes from seven to ninety years old who compete at all levels. He also works with other track officials including the timing crew, track referee, and jury, and interacts with coaches and parents.

Certification as a track and field official is a multi-stage process, requiring a combination of experience and training at several levels. After 14 years volunteering with the BC Athletic Association as a track official, participating in workshops, writing exams and being evaluated, he is fully qualified. He has also had the privilege of working with Para-athletes and this involved learning and applying adapted National and International Rules.

Volunteer work as a track starter has taken him around BC and to other provinces.

But that's not all. Starting races has become a year-round activity for Judge Harris. A cross country ski race organizer saw him doing starts at a track meet four years ago and invited him to use his skills in another type of racing. Judge Harris welcomed the challenge. He registered with Nordiq Canada and has taken the courses and exams required to officiate in this sport as well.

He's recently been working as a Chief Starter for cross-country ski races, overseeing a team of volunteers and working with them to manage race starts. As in track and field, there are many types of races with different formats and different starting procedures. But unlike his role in track, his Nordic skiing role includes setting up the starting area at 6:30 am with magnetic fields, start wands, and timing zones.

Starting races at the 2023 Nordic World Junior Championships at Whistler was a highlight of Judge Harris' winter volunteer work last year. The event was held over several days and athletes, including some Olympic champions, came from around the world to compete.

Speaking about the rewards of volunteering, Judge Harris says, "My work as a

volunteer is demanding. It requires me to make instant decisions based on observations as applied to the rules. At times, athletes and coaches can be challenging. But my work in athletics has provided me with unique skills and given me the opportunity to interact with amazing people from all walks of life. I've particularly enjoyed watching athletes grow from elementary school competitors to members of university teams, developing as athletes and as people."

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