

# New track rule proposal would expel runners for false starts

Nesha Starcevic, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS *Mar 21, 4:49 pm EDT*

BERLIN - False starters in sprints face immediate exclusion from the race under a new proposal by the world governing body of track and field.

Currently, one false start is allowed per race; another false start meant the automatic exclusion of the guilty sprinter regardless of who caused the first false start. The new rule would mean an immediate expulsion for any offender.

"Many athletes were playing mind games with the others, but under the new rule that would not be possible," Jorge Salcedo, head of the technical commission of the International Association of Athletics Federations, said Saturday.

The IAAF Council, meeting this weekend, gave its support to the proposal. It will be considered by the IAAF congress before the World Championship in Berlin in August. If ratified, the new rule would become effective at the start of 2010.

"The rule is supported by the council," its general secretary Pierre Weiss said. "The final decision has to be made by the congress."

The rule allowing one false start has been in force since 2003. Before, a sprinter would be disqualified only after two false starts, which sometimes led to long delays that were unappealing to live television coverage.

Under other proposals, the decathlon and heptathlon would end with a pursuit race in the men's 1,500 and the women's 800.

The council also decided not to take any action against British sprinter Dwain Chambers following the publication of his autobiography.

"We did not see any attack in the book on the IAAF, so we saw no reason to take any action," Weiss said.

The IAAF's legal experts have been studying Chambers' book, "Race against Me: My Story," to see whether the sprinter can be excluded for "bringing the sport into disrepute."

The 30-year-old Chambers, who served a two-year ban for doping, won the European 60-metre indoor title this month.

He will be interviewed Monday by British athletics officials about the book, in which he mentions some other British runners. The IAAF could still decide to take action against Chambers if it receives a complaint "but as of today, we do nothing," Weiss said.

In the book, Chambers details his years of performance-enhancing drug use. Under IAAF rules, an athlete can face penalties, including a competition ban, if found to have brought the sport into disrepute. A suspension could stop Chambers from competing at the worlds.

Chambers tested positive for THG in 2003, becoming the first athlete connected to BALCO founder Victor Conte to test positive for the previously undetectable steroid.

He won the 60-metre title at the European indoors in Turin, Italy, his first major individual trophy since returning from his ban.