



Referee Manual

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Part I: The Referee

Effective refereeing of the relatively new extreme sport of STRONGMAN demands experience, courage of conviction and an ability to both think on one's feet and to react sensibly to a crisis.

In the case of senior and particularly international tournaments the strength of character and attitude of the referee is of paramount importance. Referees must have a personality that commands respect. Athletes must accept sometimes controversial decisions with good grace and the referee must not countenance public disputes.

The most effective method of operating is to pre-empt possible problems by ensuring good equipment design and to listen to athlete concerns. The referee must brief the athletes extensively in two stages: first, to go over and agree the written rules for the tournament and secondly to brief each athlete group prior to individual disciplines. During such discussions the referee should listen to salient points from the athletes and if necessary adjust rules based on sensible contributions.

Another important method of pre-emption is to let the athlete take important decisions. This comes into force during disciplines such as the Hercules Hold and the Truck Pull. The referee should ask the athlete whether he is ready or not to begin the discipline. The Athlete should give his assent when he is ready and satisfied with the equipment set-up. This mutual responsibility becomes even more important where the athlete, referee and promoter must share responsibility for the safety of disciplines.

The referee should maintain a dialogue with a competing athlete. Constant warnings are necessary during hold-out disciplines to prevent the event degenerating into farce. Competitors also need guidance when carrying heavy implements. Disciplines like overhead lifting, squat and dead lift must be subject to strict disciplines and defaulting athletes must be made instantly aware of a breach either to effect rectification or to be made aware of the reason for failure. When required the referee must not shirk from stopping an event in its tracks and re-setting if the safety is compromised or if there is a breach in the intended discipline.

In an environment where the Strongman sport competes for media attention and public entertainment the role of the referee is critical. There must be a commanding influence on the athlete's attitude, presentation and audience interaction.

The referee must be aware of media disciplines and lines of communication. He must ensure that the athletes are introduced and presented in requisite style by making sure of athlete compliance with protocols. As previously emphasised the referee should also be high profile and ready to interfere or make quick decisions during the heat of an event to help prevent disqualification or dangerous situations developing. Again pre-emption is paramount and it is not uncommon to see a referee conversing with an athlete during a discipline.

Notwithstanding the need for maintaining close control the referee should minimise his appearance between TV cameras and competing athletes and try to ensure that there is a clear view of the field of action at all times.

The referee should be attired in a recognisable and distinctive outfit that is an intrinsic part of the Strongman branding. The 'man in black' with Stetson and black glasses has evolved to fill this role and should be common to all referees.



The referee is also in command of the arena and should ensure that all reasonable safety features are in place. Security from audience intrusion is very important, particularly due to the nature of the disciplines where interference could have tragic consequences. Only competing athletes should be allowed in the field of play as well as the field management team. The other athletes should be confined in a designated preparation area where they may also interact with their coaches.

The referee must also insure that environmental conditions are safe to minimise such hazards as slipping, tripping and equipment instability. Disciplines such as Tyre Flip and Fingals fingers should not take place in wet weather. Carrying disciplines should not take place over uneven surfaces. Truck Pulling and Car Turnover must be done with non-slip shoes

It is clear that the responsibilities of the chief referee are complex and for successful competition reliance on an expert field team cannot be overestimated. The reset men should be quick and efficient and the timekeepers are better described as assistant referees. One of the assistants should be ever present in the athletes' preparation area to ensure that there are no undue delays in an athletes being ready on time and that there is compliance with the rules governing strapping and other items of support clothing. While no replacement to doping tests forming part of the IFSA Health Policy, there must also be a vigilance to ensure against the illicit use of banned substances such as amphetamines.

Other assistant referees should act as timekeepers and lane marshals, including signalling the time limit of a discipline. This frees the chief referee to concentrate on technicalities and essential communications with the competitors. The assistant referees should also audibly assist towards compliance with rules during the course of the event, pre-emption once again being the main objective of event management. Experience has also demonstrated the need for back-up timers even where there is an automated system in place.

Referees are best sourced from the retiring pool of senior athletes, some of whom have the respect of their peers as well as knowledge of competition foibles over several years. The latter include the use of a belt buckle to support a weight and the positioning prior to being "measured up" for a discipline like the squat.

The current list of official Strongman referees can be found in Appendix A.



Part II: The Disciplines

The theme of the Strongman sport is its multi-disciplined array of tests of strength ("disciplines") designed to encapsulate a combination of static strength, athletic power and aspects of the warrior. The chief referee should influence the choice of disciplines for a tournament to achieve a fair balance and also the sequence of disciplines to allow for recovery between the various disciplines. For example it would not be good practice to follow the Hercules Hold with the Farmer's Walk.

Broadly speaking the disciplines can be put into three categories: Static Lifts, Power Movement and Gladitorial. Within each category, a balance should be struck regarding the area of physique to be tested.

1. **Static Disciplines:**

- Log Lift, Appolon Axle, Overhead Rock Lift, Viking press and overhead Safe Lift – *shoulders and triceps*.
- Squat, Leg Press, Platform Lift and Dragging disciplines – *legs*.
- Dead Lift, Barvarian Lift, Giant Fishing Rod and the Louis Cyr Lift – *back*.
- Hercules hold and Vehicle Hold – *grip*.

2. **Power Disciplines** (these tend to be more of a general test):

- Truck Pull (harness and rope), McGlashen Stones, Arm over Arm Pull and Loading – *back, legs and biceps*.
- Yoke, Car Walk – *legs*.
- Basque Circle, Husafelt Stone, Shield Carry – *biceps and legs*.
- Fingal's Fingers – *shoulders and upper arms*.
- Samson's Barrow and Farmer's walk - *grip and legs*.
- Car Flip and Tyre Flip – *biceps and back*.
- Throwing disciplines such as Throwing the 56 lb weight, concrete block, beer keg or tyre for height – *overall explosive power*.

3. **Gladitorial Disciplines** (these encompass power, stamina and strategy):

- Pole Push, Strongman Wrestling, Murder Ball, Arm Wrestling and Conan's Wheel.

There are many more disciplines and variations of themes. In what follows, we have chosen six classical disciplines to illustrate rules for individual disciplines:

1. Log Lift
2. Farmer's Walk
3. Dead Lift
4. Shield Carry
5. Yoke
6. McGlashen Stones.



Part III: The Rules

Experience has shown that meetings to discuss rules should be open only to the athletes and event managers. The presence of coaches and spouses have proven detrimental due to subjective interests.

The draw or order of participation in the first event should also be made at this meeting. Thereafter the participation order should be in the reverse of the placing achieved in the previous discipline except in the final discipline when the order is in the reverse of overall points. The protocols may be changed at the discretion of a television director to provide for interesting head to head confrontations etc.

The Rules are divided into two sections:

1. Discipline Rules, and
2. General Rules.

3.1 Discipline Rules

LOG LIFT

There are two log lift disciplines. One is the achievement of a maximum number of repetitions using a fixed weight and the other to lift a maximum weight.

The implement is placed on plinths to prevent rolling and stretching the athlete's hamstrings.

On the referee's command the weight will be lifted from the ground then raised overhead to arms extended position, knees locked, feet in line and held momentarily for the referee's "down" signal. Deliberate resting on the head is not allowed. Following completion of the overhead phase the athlete must return the weight to the ground in a controlled manner to complete the lift. In the case of a repetition discipline at least one hand must remain in contact at all times.

Timing will begin from the referee's initial command to "take your grip". For single lifting towards maximum weight the time limit is 30 seconds. For repetitions the limit is 75 seconds.

In the case of repetitions the weight should be such that maximum reps can be achieved within the time limit. At least 120 kilos should be used for international competitions.

In the case of lifting for maximum weight the athletes will compete in a rota and drop out when failing to make a successful lift. The referee has the option to set the weight on a rising bar format.

No elbow wraps are allowed.

FARMERS WALK

At the referee's command the athletes will lift and carry two specially made weights over a marked course and keep within the designated lanes. When carried for the quickest time over a set distance the implements can be dropped and picked up within the set time limit which is normally 90 seconds. During the more traditional discipline for distance without time limit dropping the weights will terminate the attempt.

No straps or sticky substances allowed.

DEAD LIFT

As with the Log Lift the Discipline may be for the achievement of maximum repetitions within 75secs or to lift a maximum weight



On the referee's command the athlete will be commanded to "take your grip" followed by "lift" then timing will begin. To complete a successful lift the athlete must lift the weight from the ground, stand erect with straight legs, shoulders back and hips forward. When the referee is satisfied he will give the "down" signal upon which the athlete must lower the weight in a controlled manner to be awarded a "good lift".

When an athlete is doing repetitions the referee will then give the command to initiate the next lift, bouncing is not allowed. Unlike the log lift an athlete can release the bar between lifts.

In the case of lifting for maximum weight a rota system is used on a rising bar basis.

IPF rules on apparel apply.

SHIELD WALK

The Shield is presented to the athlete on a plinth whereas the more traditional Husafelt stone is presented lying on the ground.

On the referee's command the athlete will lift the shield in front of his chest in the specified manner and wait for the referee's "all clear" signal (the plinth is removed).

The athlete proceeds down a designated path with the sole object of carrying the weight as far as possible. Dropping will terminate the discipline.

A minder will walk behind the athlete to help prevent the athlete falling backwards and to direct the athlete down the course.

The use of duck tape or any other artificial aid is not allowed.

YOKE

On a given command athletes will lift the Yokes on their shoulders behind the head. When the referee is satisfied with regard to safety, the starting signal will be given

The Yoke is carried over a measured distance as quickly as possible and placed beyond the finish line in a controlled manner and left in an upright position. The Yoke can be dropped and picked up again within the time limit.

The Yoke height should be adjustable to suit the stature of different athletes and on no account should "swinging" or unsecured weights be used.

Any reasonable body support may be used.

The time limit is 75 seconds.

McGLASHEN STONES

The stones are to be lifted in ascending order of weight on to designated plinths in the shortest possible time.

The referee will ask the athlete if he is ready and on being satisfied will blow a whistle to initiate the discipline.

If a stone falls from a plinth the athlete must immediately return to complete the lift.

Times will be taken when each stone is placed on the plinths on which they must remain to score. The stones must be lifted cleanly and not rolled towards any of the plinths.

The competitor lifting the most stones in the shortest time wins the discipline.



Traditionally at the referee's discretion athlete's may use "Tacky" and compete without shirts.

WORLD RECORDS

The prevailing World Records of the above six Classical Disciplines are listed in Appendix B.

3.2 General Rules

General rules are set to cover method of scoring, athlete demeanour and to define the scope of support equipment. It should be noted that safety aids can often veer towards providing an inappropriate advantage over an opponent.

1. Scoring is in the traditional manner. In a field of ten athletes a first place will achieve ten points and the last one point but in the case of a complete failure nil points will be given. Ties in individual disciplines will share the appropriate points and placing except in the overall competition where placing will be decided by one of the following:

Most 1st places

Most 2nd places

Most 3rd places etc

2. The referee decision is final in all matters concerning interpretation of rules.
3. At the discretion of the referee an athlete may also be withdrawn from the competition if deemed a danger to himself due to lack of ability or is seen not to be making a serious attempt to perform at a satisfactory level.

The referee may disqualify the athlete from a discipline for a serious infringement of the rules and from the entire event for unacceptable conduct.

The referee may use his discretion to order a reset of the discipline equipment.

4. Should the equipment become faulty during the course of a discipline the referee may give the athlete another attempt. This does not include an athlete's personal wrappings or support equipment.
5. All artificial aids are generally banned except where there are safety issues. However to isolate the grip from a particular trial of strength hand straps may be specifically allowed. However the use of straps for disciplines like Dead Lift Hold or Dead Lift is not encouraged.
6. Heavy yoke carrying is one of the few disciplines where the athlete is allowed to wear multi-body supports such as a power suit, a neoprene girdle and weightlifting belt.
7. During power lifting disciplines i.e. Squat and Dead Lift, IPF (International Power lifting Federation) rules apply. Standard knee wraps, a single ply suit and a regulation belt of 12 mm by 100 mm may be used.
8. Looping of belts and loose buckling to provide a support platform for disciplines like Log Lift and the Basque Circle is not allowed.
9. Obvious aids like strapping, sticky substances and high-heeled shoes (limit is set at 3cm) are also prohibited. An exception to the rule is the permitted use of "tacky" during stone lifting.



10. The use of performance enhancing substances is expressly prohibited and Athletes are subject to testing according to the rules of the IFSA Health Policy.



Part IV: Safety

Prior to competition both referee and athlete must share responsibility for the safety of the equipment. This is done through a series of protocols. In the first instance construction of the equipment must be assured by the manufacturer who should issue updated certificates for wear parts such as bolts and welds. Event design must also be such that the athlete is not asked to perform a task that is intrinsically dangerous. If practical, features such as stabilisers and limitation bars should be incorporated into the design. The time limit must also be within healthy limits for example 75 seconds. A discipline should not normally last beyond 90 seconds.

Prior to competition both the referee and the athlete must examine the integrity of the equipment. Any desired alterations in the interest of safety should be made good. Both parties should be in agreement before the discipline is signed off by all relevant parties for use.

Pre-emptive measures in the form of an athlete's waiver are also necessary to protect the referee and promoter see given example. Athletes must sign a comprehensive waiver to ensure he accepts responsibility for his own actions and physical condition. A sample waiver form is shown in Appendix C. Despite waivers, referees and event managers must also be responsible for a duty of care towards the athletes. The preventive measures already referred to are part of this.

The event management team must also investigate unforeseen circumstances and environmental features that may compromise safety and take all reasonable steps to minimise their possible impact. This takes the form of a Safety Audit which takes due diligence into consideration of environmental issues and unforeseen circumstances along with applied remedies. A sample Risk Assessment Form used in a Safety Audit is shown in Appendix D.

The time periods set for disciplines are also important and time limits must be imposed. Medical advice has indicated that the sharp spiking of cardio vascular activity during the short term effort in such as the log lift is not of great concern. However a sustained stress of more than 90 seconds could have a dramatic effect on any inherent weakness. Generally the time given for pulling and racing disciplines is limited to 75 seconds. Only medleys are set for 90 seconds or more.

Consistent efforts must also be directed to prevent drug abuse in the sport. To this end, IFSA has developed a Health Policy. Athletes are now liable to be drug tested as part of the duty of care. In addition all senior athletes are subject to an annual health check which is monitored by a senior medical consultant. Cardiovascular and renal functions are checked to ensure that an athlete is fit for competition. This may result in an athlete being withdrawn from competition even if he does not fail a drug test but is deemed intrinsically unfit for competition.

In addition to urine sampling for laboratory analysis specialised kits for Amphetamine abuse are used during championship events to give immediate results providing an extra layer of due diligence as abuse in this area is considered potentially more dangerous than Anabolic abuse.

For the latest version of the IFSA Health Policy, please refer to the appropriate section at www.ifsastrongman.com.



Appendix A: Official Strongman Referees

- **International professional referees:** Dr Douglas Edmunds (Scotland), Jaimie Reeves (England), Marcel Mostert (Holland), Ilkka Kinnunen (Finland), Magnus Ver Magnusson (Iceland). *Proposed and accredited by IFSA.*
 - Can referee all international and national competitions in all positions.
- **International referees:** Mark Lauzon (Canada), Jouko Ahola (Finland), Jock Reeves (England), Willie Wessels (United States). *Proposed by National Federations and IFSA, accredited by IFSA.*
 - Can co-referee international title events, and referee all other international and national competitions in all positions.
- **National referees:** Eddie Ellwood (England), Dr David Bayne (Scotland), Forbes Cowan (Scotland), Andres Gudmundsen (Iceland), Frank Lazar (Hungary), Fokko de Jong, (Holland), Wout de Jong (Holland), Kenneth Larsson (Sweden), Markku Suonenvirta (Finland). Jamie Barr (Scotland). *Proposed and accredited by National Federations.*
 - Can co-referee national title events, and referee all other national competitions in all positions.



Appendix B: Current World Records

- **LOG LIFT:**
 - 190 kilos – Zydrunas Zavickas.
- **FARMER'S WALK:**
 - 175kilos, 39 meters distance – Wout Zijls
 - 160 kilos, 15.52 seconds for 35 meters – Vasyl Virastjuk.
- **DEADLIFT:**
 - 315Kg [without straps] 10 reps – 73.74 secs – Mariusz Pudzianowski.
 - Maximum weight from below knees [with straps] – 472Kg - Ken Brown
- **YOKE CARRY:**
 - 400kilos, 13.6 seconds for 25 metres - Svend Karlsen.



Appendix C: Sample Athlete Waiver

I accept the responsibility to ensure that I am medically and physically fit before entering into competition. I also undertake to inspect equipment thoroughly to satisfy myself that the equipment is safe and that the manner of my participation does not involve personal risk.

VOLENTI NON FIT INJURIA. [Latin: no wrong is done to one who consents]

I understand and accept that the disciplines involve unusual trials of strength and unusual demands on the human physique which make participation in the disciplines especially hazardous and accordingly I agree that I am aware of the risks and accept them and will personally bear all consequences of any injury which I may sustain as a result of my participation in the disciplines including all losses, costs and expenses which may be sustained by me as a result of any such injury.

I also fully understand and agree with IFSA's Health Policy and accept any consequence to myself of non-compliance.

I hereby expressly release IFSA, your servants, agents, employees, contracts or other persons and entities involved with the disciplines from any actions, claims liabilities, losses, costs or expenses which might arise from such injury or breach of doping controls. I further understand that IFSA are not undertaking to provide the cost of any care or treatment that may be required in the event of injury and that, as between myself and IFSA, any insurance against the result of any such injury or disciplinary action is solely my responsibility.

Name: _____

Signed.....

Date:



Appendix D: Risk Assessment

RISK ASSESSMENT

(Competition) (Date) (Venue)

EVENT: LOG LIFT

HAZARD	ACTION TAKEN	SECONDARY ACTION
Handles breaking and log falling onto athlete	Old wooden log discarded and replaced by engineered steel tube with smooth surface and securely welded handles.	Proximity of experienced catchers. Use of coded welders to manufacture equipment.
Athlete pulling hamstrings	Resting the implement on plinths to prevent hamstring stretch.	
Athlete striking head during the course of lift.	Rules do not allow athlete to rest weight on their head.	Cycling skull caps available but not mandatory wear.
Athlete slipping and falling	Purpose built board used and referee to ensure the use of proper footwear.	Event suspended if environmental circumstances such as rain affects the integrity of the surface.
Athlete exhaustion	Event time limited to 75 secs as recommended by medical advisors.	First Aid personnell and oxygen equipment on hand.
Implement falling on referee	Referee to be at least 4 metres away from action.	
Athlete straying into audience	Audience to be at least 10m away from the action and secured behind barriers.	

Signed by Equipment Manager.....

Signed by Promoter.....

Signed by Referee.....