Elite Track and Field (ET&F) Study Topic

Topic 3: Competition Schedule for a Single, Large ET&F Event

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Any successful ET&F event will be the result of a competition schedule that combines athlete-friendly attributes with a compelling, day-by-day offering to the local and remote customers that pay for it. The customer base necessarily will include live attendees and those consuming digital content of many forms. There is a certain balance that must be sought between overall event length, daily schedules, time windows per day, facility utilization details, and competition quality.

This task provides an opportunity to define much of this. As has been the case with successful past events, some correlation between the competition schedule and various metrics of meeting success (paid gate, financial success, media response [including TV uptake], etc.) will exist. Such data can be investigated and applied to this task. Having said that, competition schedules must contain, at their core, a practical understanding of the on-field sport, and what will work within the group of elite athletes that define the meet, and in the fixed facility (the stadium) that hosts it. There are an endless number of logistical considerations that will drive a good schedule. And, there is latitude here to explore small variations to traditional competition rules. These include number of rounds and advancement criteria, and some steps to compel greater athlete exposure to the fans. The latter idea is related to potentially improving the "one-effort-and-advance" rule that prevails in field event qualification rounds.

There are likely a number of resources available to help to guide and critique this work. Staff at Tracktown USA and UK Athletics (IAAF World Championship hosting organizations) are obvious options. In addition, organizers of the largest events now (say, Penn Relays), may also have useful criticisms.

Initial Conditions (all debatable)

--The schedule will support 40 distinct events:

for both men and women:

100m	Long Jump
200m	Triple Jump
400m	High Jump
800m	Pole Vault
1500m	Shot Put
5000m	Discus Throw
10000m	Javelin Throw
3000m SC	Hammer Throw
110/100m HH	
400m IH	
4 x 100m Relay	
4 x 400m Relay	

--64 athletes per event at start; relays would have 32 teams to start

--4 Rounds per event, with exception of 10000m and relays, which would have 3 rounds

--8 Athletes per Round

--Simple head-to-head advancement: Top-4 per heat/group, independent of time/mark

--Field event round "completeness" by scoring modification
(say, blending of a minimum number of marks)

--Each day should feature a sampling of each type of event: sprints/middle distance/distance/horizontal jump/vertical jump/throw. Over the full-length of most of the sessions, there will be simultaneous and continuous competition being held on four venues, (mostly) all inside the stadium. This seeks to emulate professional Golf (with their successful majors) by having lots of action in a number of places on the course. In some regards, it is better then Tennis, where only a single match is going on in a specific venue, at one time

--Much like tennis Majors, all finals will be contested in the last two days (nights). This is an arguable attribute that is intended to provide a build-up in quality over the entire event. The meet evolves from large quantity, to high quality, as it proceeds.

A (very) DRAFT schedule is provided via a spreadsheet (link to spreadsheet). A critical parameter, borrowed from the field of process control, is "takt time" (or cycle time). This drives the overall schedule. It also places an imperative on trying to reduce it. This is beneficial for a number of reasons. It leads to a "fuller" experience (more races, jumps, and throws per unit time), and shorter session lengths (mooted by some as having importance). There is a takt time listed on each event's page. It is meant to cover the entry, introduction, competition, and exit of each group of athletes (8 per group).

Feel free to shift and modify the schedule, in pursuit of a proposed structure that makes more sense!