Marathon Exploration Work Group  
September 2018

Overview

The Marathon Exploration Work Group was charged with evaluating the overall health and safety impact on student-athletes competing in the event and developing approaches to address the health and safety concerns that currently surround the marathon event.

With over a hundred student-athletes competing in the marathon event the last two years, the work group has identified the following concerns:
- Heat and Humidity/Time of Year
- Complex Medical Needs
- Qualification Methods
- Marathon Course Management
- Number of DNFs & Medical Emergencies

The group’s initial work focused on surveying the NAIA Track & Field Coaches Association to gauge the coaching body’s level of support for keeping the marathon event and the level of support on different approaches to improve student-athlete health and safety during the marathon event.

Recommendation

After reviewing different data points on the past ten marathon events and surveying the NAIA Track & Field Coaches Association, the following proposal has been recommended by the Marathon Exploration Work Group for the following:

For implementation in 2019:

Item #1
To charge the NAIA Track & Field Coaches Association Executive Committee and the NAIA Athletic Trainer Association to provide education marathon training material to track & field coaches within the association.

By providing coaches with additional resources and educational material, coaches can make better informed training and coaching decisions to protect a student-athlete’s health and understand the physiology of an young adult competing in an event such as the marathon.

Item #2
Institute two predetermined timed check points at the 13 mile and 20-mile mark allowing coaches and medical staff to remove a student-athlete off the marathon course if the student-athlete does not meet that predetermined time check point. These predetermined timed check points will be set by the NAIA Track & Field Standards Committee each year when standards are released.
Establishing predetermined timed check-point for the student-athletes will help ensure a student-athlete is not pushing beyond their physical means in an already strenuous event and challenging climate.

Item #3
Limit participation for student-athletes to the marathon or the 5,000m/10,000m events.

With the challenging climate of where the championship is located and the physical demands of long distance running events in such climate, a student-athlete competing in the marathon and either the 5,000m or 10,000m puts too great of a physical demand on an young adult’s body with little recovery time in between each event.

Item #4
Revise the course to have a loop style course.

Requiring that the marathon course must be a loop style course will increase student-athlete safety by giving race management and medical more access and supervision of the student-athletes.

Item #5
Increase the requirement of the number of aid stations and access to athletic trainers.

Along with revising the course to have a loop style, this will allow more opportunity for aid stations and athletic trainers to be accessible to the student-athletes. Increasing the number of stations which in turn increase the number of accessible athletic trainers will ensure better care with hydration and aiding student-athletes in medical need.

For implementation in 2020

Item #6
To have the marathon qualification deadline set to April 1st.

Currently, track & field qualification deadline is two weeks prior to the championships. By setting an earlier qualification deadline for the marathon event will ensure student-athletes have adequate time to recover from hitting a qualified time and train for the event.