

Rule Notification FY2526-1 Starting Heats and Races

At its meeting on 3 November 2025 the AFA committee resolved to change the rules to allow judges to start a race when a team has not reported for racing by the end of the warm up period instead of waiting for three minutes from the start of the warm up period.

The change will be effective from 1 January 2026 and will be included in the next published version of the rules.

Background

A question had been raised with the rules sub-committee concerning the procedure for starting heats set out in the judges' manual and whether this was inconsistent with anything in the rules. The sub-committee noted that the rules do not specify a process for judges to start a heat but rule 5.7 authorises a judge to start a race if a team has not reported for racing within three minutes after the start of the warm up period.

The sub-committee queried the rationale for the three minute period and agreed that a judge should not have to wait for a further time after the end of the warm up period before starting a race. A concern was raised that a team should not be treated unfairly if there were extenuating circumstances for its delay in reporting. The sub-committee noted that the judge had discretion whether or not to start the race and so could take any relevant circumstances into account.

The sub-committee recommended to the AFA committee that the rules be changed to authorise a judge to start a race if a team has not reported for racing by the end of the warm up period.

Rule change

Amend rule 5.7 by replacing "within three minutes after the start" with "by the end".