

ATOM

Association of Track Officials of Michigan



Vol. 36; Issue 1: Spring 2024

2024 Track and Field Finals Edition

From the ATOM President

Dave McPhail

Reflecting on our 2024 Track and Field season, a few things stood out. This Spring I worked more meets than ever before, which afforded me the opportunity to work with more different officials than any previous season. I had the opportunity to work the Division 3 Final meet as a Field Referee, a position that is just slightly on the fringes of my comfort zone and qualifications. Knowing that I was working with fellow Referees, Rudy Godefroit, Kathy Hutfilz, and George Babcock gave me the confidence that we could handle any issues that would arise at the D3 Finals. Overall it went well and I was able to gain valuable experience in an area that I don't have many opportunities to work.



During the Regionals and Finals, and throughout the season I tried to make more of an effort to observe both best practices and some things that could have possibly been handled better by the officials. For the most part the officials I worked with were top-notch, and it was apparent that many had a high level of experience and expertise in various areas of track and field officiating duties. It turns out that many were ATOM members but some were not. It has been suggested by some among us that all officials who work Regional and Final meets should be ATOM members. In my experiences this season, and recognizing that our top priority as a professional organization should be to provide the best possible meet experience and outcome for the athletes, it became clear that it is more important to have officials who are highly qualified in their specific areas than to have officials who are registered with ATOM.

Though it would be preferred to have all officials who are registered with MHSAA also be a part of our great organization, that is not presently a requirement. The fact is, there are many very good officials who are experts in certain areas, who also don't happen to be ATOM members. In the case of Regionals, I believe we all recognize that due to the overall shortage of officials, the meet managers are happy and willing to work with individuals who they deem to be highly qualified in their respective areas regardless of ATOM affiliation. When it comes to Finals, it would appear that there are plenty of highly qualified and willing ATOM officials to fill all of the positions among the four meets.

Upon closer consideration, although we do have an adequate number of well-qualified ATOM officials to fill every position, we are often pushed out of our comfort zones and areas of expertise at these bigger meets. Let's face it, during most of the season, we routinely officiate at a high level in the capacity of starters and clerks, but far less often do we gain experience and expertise in other areas, most notably the field events. We owe it to the athletes to have every position in the Finals filled by expert officials, not simply ATOM officials.

With that in mind, and in the absence of a membership requirement, how do we reconcile those issues and improve outcomes going forward? First of all, as ATOM officials, we need to continue to expand our comfort zones and areas

of expertise. This could involve working as assistants to head field event judges at invitational meets and continuing to look for training opportunities, such as those offered by USATF.

On that other issue, we should rethink the carrot and stick approach to expanding the reach of our organization. It might make sense to push the MHSAA to require that all registered officials become ATOM members. While that would certainly not be unreasonable, considering that officials in other sports are required to join state- approved associations, we should also be striving for more carrots to make our organization more appealing to non-ATOM officials. There needs to be something more than just the threat that if you don't join, you can't work the big meets. How do we convince the fine non-ATOM officials throughout our State to join our ranks because they *want* to? This is obviously nothing new. Our organization has grappled with this issue for many years.

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(Just a word of caution that the following section may contain more clichés than the legal limit.)

At the risk of preaching to the choir on this issue, I'd like to reach out to current ATOM members to continue to improve our recruitment efforts. Our members are the source of recruiting. We need to get the word out to other officials. Without word of mouth we won't get members. Even in my position as president, I have struggled to answer the question "Why should I join ATOM?" With some good input from fellow ATOM members, some of the best answers I can recommend include highlighting training opportunities-especially our annual clinic, opportunities to shadow and work with some of the best officials in the State, being part of an organization that promotes the sport, an organization that seeks to improve officiating and maintains a close working relationship with the MHSAA for the betterment of Track and Field and the best interscholastic experience for the athletes. For me, the best benefit has been meeting and working with individuals who care more about our sport and do more for our sport than I could have ever imagined.

There is no downside to joining ATOM and there are plenty of benefits.

Putting the chicken before the egg, or the cart before the horse if you prefer, rather than having officials register with ATOM in order to work the Finals, let's find highly qualified officials to work in their area of expertise at the Regional and Final meets and strongly encourage them to become ATOM members.

If you want to be thought of as a professional official, we are the single professional organization for Track and Field officials in the State of Michigan

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Just as a rising tide lifts all boats, our organization benefits from having as many really good officials join our ranks as possible. The strength of the pack is the wolf and the strength of the wolf is the pack.

If you are a current ATOM member reading this, I encourage you to talk to other officials and encourage them to join. If you happen to be reading this as a non-ATOM member, we would love to have you on board to make our organization stronger, and in turn, make all of us better officials.

2025 ATOM Clinic

It's not too early to mark your calendars for the ATOM Clinic

January 30-February 1, 2025,
Doherty Hotel,
Clare, MI.
(Reservations: 989-386-3441)

We look forward to seeing you there!



Your Executive Committee can't wait to see everyone at the annual ATOM Clinic in beautiful Clare, MI!

MHSAA Finals Reports: Upper Peninsula

NOTE: The following stories are excerpted from MHSAA.com (John Vrancic). Photos are courtesy MHSAA. We are seeking an official to write the Upper Peninsula cross country and Track and Field finals reports. Please contact Dave McPhail at dmcphail83@hotmail.com. Full stories available at <https://www.mhsaa.com/sports/boys-track-field> and <https://www.mhsaa.com/sports/girls-track-field>

UP Division 1

(Girls) Sault Ste. Marie Girls End 23-Year Championship Wait with UPD1 Win

KINGSFORD — The Sault Ste. Marie girls made a statement here Saturday while earning their first Upper Peninsula Division 1 Track & Field Finals title since 2001.

Sault scored 117 points, followed by Negaunee with 94 and Gladstone at 65.

The Blue Devils placed 1-2 in discus, won by senior Katie Anderson at 115 feet, 3 inches, with junior Annabelle Fazzari uncorking a runner-up toss of 101. Freshman Ahnaka Oshelski added a first in the 300 hurdles in 48.29 seconds, followed by Negaunee freshman Sadie Rogers (48.30) and Marquette freshman Chloe Jackson (49.56).



(Boys) Marquette Boys Score in 16 Events to Extend Team Championship Streak

KINGSFORD — The Marquette boys hung on to first place for the fourth consecutive year here Saturday, scoring 163 points at the Upper Peninsula Division 1 Track & Field Finals.



They were followed by Kingsford with 101 and Houghton with 67.

“We did really well,” Sentinels’ coach Derek Marr said. “I’m really proud of the fact we were able to score points in 16 of 17 events, and it was good to see our guys win three relays. It’s great to see a full team effort. A few years ago people talked about how good we were in the distances, but we weren’t satisfied with that. We wanted to be a well-rounded team.”

UP Division II

(Girls) Bark River-Harris Lands 3-Peat, Shamion Joins Elite 4-Event Winners Club

KINGSFORD — The Bark River-Harris girls completed their season-long mission here Saturday, earning their third straight Upper Peninsula Division 2 track & field championship with 127½ points.

West Iron County brought home the runner-up trophy with 82, and third-place Ishpeming had 71.

“The girls have been working hard for this,” BR-H coach Jason Lockwood said. “Three U.P. titles under their belt is incredible. Everybody contributed, which is instrumental in putting up that many points.”

BR-H senior and Bay College basketball recruit Lauren Zawada captured the 100-meter hurdles in 17.74 seconds and 300s (50.92) and helped the Broncos win the 1,600 relay at 4 minutes, 24.4 seconds.

(Boys) Pickford Wins Matchup of Reigning Champions to Run Title Streak to 3

KINGSFORD — The Pickford boys extended their championship reign here Saturday, retaining top honors at the Upper Peninsula Division 2 Track & Field Finals with 137 points.

They were followed by Munising with 106 and Ishpeming with 79. The team championship was the Panthers' third straight, as they also won Division 3 in 2022.

Sophomore Gunner Bennin was a double-winner for Pickford, taking the 200-meter dash in 23.85 seconds and 400 at 53.36.

"It feels great to come here and win a couple events as a sophomore," he said. "We knew Iron Mountain had some good sprinters, and Munising is tough. We needed the points. I started faster than I usually do, especially in the 400.

UP Division III

(Girls) Jokela Stars Again, Lake Linden-Hubbell Reigns This Time as Outright Champ

KINGSFORD — Lake Linden-Hubbell junior Emily Jokela had quite a workout here Saturday and has three individual victories to show for it.



The Lakes also benefitted from her effort as they earned the Upper Peninsula Division 3 track & field team championship.

LL-H, which shared the title with Stephenson a year ago, scored 72 points this time. Newberry edged Stephenson 64-62 for the runner-up trophy.

"Our Regional has been tough since 2016," Lakes' coach Gary Guisfredi said. "Since that time, teams from our Regional have won the U.P. Finals eight times. Emily scored 38 points alone today. Our shot putter (sophomore Maddy Dudenas) taking third and our girl (sophomore Cleo Milkey) taking fourth in long jump were big points. We knew Newberry and Stephenson were going to be tough."

(Boys) With 2nd Place in Final Race, Newberry Clinches 1st in Final Team Standings

KINGSFORD — The race for the Upper Peninsula Division 3 boys track & field championship came right down to the wire Saturday as Newberry edged St. Ignace 96-92 for top honors.

Third-place team finisher Lake Linden-Hubbell won the day's final race, the 1,600-meter relay, in 3 minutes, 41.94 seconds, and Newberry hung on to edge St. Ignace by two steps for second place and its first title in eight years.

Newberry, which was runner-up to Munising last year, was clocked at 3:43.07 in the 1,600 relay on this sunny and mild late afternoon. The Saints finished nine hundredths of a second later.

"We knew we had to beat St. Ignace to win," Newberry senior Kennedy Depew said after finishing the anchor leg. "This was my last race ever. I knew I had to give it my all. That's also why I knew I had to scratch from the open 400. I would have been in four events. I think scratching from the 400 helped me save some energy. We weren't satisfied with runner-up last year, which makes this year's championship all the more satisfying."

MHSAA Finals Reports: Lower Peninsula

Division 1 (Doug Kelly)

The Division 1 student athletes, coaches, spectators, and officials converged on the East Kentwood campus for the 2024 Division 1 Lower Peninsula Track and Field Championships. East Kentwood has hosted the event many times in the past, so they were well prepared as usual. This year they implemented a few new things, and the overall consensus was they were well received. The most obvious change was the held the awards ceremony outside of the track proper in the southwest corner of the stands. The awards used a separate audio system that allowed for fewer interruptions to the meet and the location, reduced foot traffic on the infield. In addition, they had students conducting interviews of the champions that were looped on the video board which made for a great experience.

The day started with sun, a few clouds, and reasonable temperatures. Overall, it was a decent weather day, but rain did come in late in the afternoon for about an hour or so. Once again, the electronic starting device (ESD) was used. Portage brought additional speakers that were tied into the system which allowed not only the athletes to hear the starts, but the additional speakers were placed to allow the entire stands to hear the starts making for a fan friendly process. Portage also helped coordinate getting additional splits at the 1,500 and mile markers. A nice touch indeed.

This year, additional officials were assigned to the meet as field event officials and umpires. The crews arrived early, were well prepared and did an outstanding job coordinating the events!! We need to continue to recruit additional officials to umpire at the finals as this is a key area to ensure a fair competition for all athletes. In 2024, there were just a couple of false starts, a handful of exchange zone violations, and one disqualification for running on the inside lane line. The organizing committee spent significant additional time ensuring that the information distributed over the web was consistent and accurate amongst sites and was much appreciated.

Their track was blazing with some superb individual performances and the men's high jump led the field events in a wonderful competition with 19 jumpers attempting 6'5"!! The adaptive athlete category continued to expand at the championships and involved the 100, 200, 400, and shot put. As these athletes continue to increase, we as officials need to make sure we are better versed in officiating the events to ensure a safe and fair event. One area that was particularly noticeable this year, was last minute changes to lane assignments which is not feasible as it impacts the athlete's equipment set-up in an unfair manner.

East Kentwood is a wonderful host that tries to make the event an experience to remember that is interactive for the athletes and fans. They did a great job of addressing any concerns that were raised by officials and did whatever was asked to help resolve potential concerns (additional padding, weights, drinks, and most importantly additional workers). Their changes were successful, and I can't wait to see what additional considerations they make for 2025. Thanks to all the officials that worked so hard to provide a wonderful experience for the athletes this year.....I know it will not be forgotten by them anytime soon!!

Division 2 (Richard Lee)

What a great day for the Division 2 State Track meet. We started at 10:00 a.m. and finished at 6:55 p.m. There were 2 meet records broken- the boys 4x 100 relay team from Berrien Springs ran 42.13 and Layla Jordan from Goodrich ran 2:09.92 in the 8:00 meters for new meet records. In the girls division Dearborn Divine Child won with 46 points with Yale taking second with 39 points. The boys meet was won by Berrien Springs with 40 points and runner up Corunna having 38 points.

The stands were almost completely full with fans who saw some tremendous races. When the rain started to come down around 2:00 p.m. the umbrellas went up but everyone still enjoyed the great track atmosphere. Besides a few technical problems it was a fun state track meet.

We had enough ATOM officials to run the meet effectively. We had one appeal which was denied by the game's committee. I would like to commend Hamilton High School for all the volunteers who helped make the meet run smoothly. As an official it was fun to watch exciting races at a well run track meet.



Division 3 (Rudy Godefroidt and Kathy Hutfilz)

Kent City has an excellent track and field facility. They have a nine lane track along with excellent field event venues. It is an ideal site for the Division III state finals competition. There are numerous individuals to thank and give appreciation to for this meet. Athletic director Jason Vogle, our meet manager, along with their current track coaches ensured that everything was in order to host a successful meet.

As always, MHSAA Assistant Director, Cody Inglis was present at all sites to offer advice, encouragement and help out as needed. Cody has always been a very active and involved director during his tenure with the MHSAA and ATOM appreciates him a great deal. This year we had concerns for weather threats and the meet was completed without any delays but we did have plenty of rain.

ATOM registered officials were on the site and identified in a different section of this newsletter. The key is making sure that the athletes get the meet that they certainly deserve. There were numerous concerns during the meet over posted times and places on the "live results" posted on line. Our technicians from Michiana Timing worked diligently to rectify the issues and in the final analysis the meet was run as efficiently as possible and the athletes were given the best chance to succeed in their events. Kent City provided numerous volunteers that were positioned at field events and were a real blessing to have. One area that we must continue to work on is umpires. We need them to cover exchange zones, hurdle races and watch lane races for possible infractions. The meet started on time, 9:00 a.m., and the afternoon final session promptly started at 1:02 p.m.

All four division sites started the day, with field events and the 3200 Meter relays followed by the first round of heats that were held in the 100 Meter dash, 110/100 Meter hurdles and the 200 Meter dash. Qualifying this year again for the finals were the heat winners and the rest of the final heats of nine competitors were filled on a time basis. For example, if there were three heats, the three heat winners advanced along with the next six fastest times. With fully automatic timing in place it creates a fair situation for all athletes in the competition. There was an hour break before starting the finals at 1:02 p.m. The champions were announced and awarded their trophies at various times due to the boys pole vault needing an additional two hours to complete that event. There were a large amount of entries in the pole vault and it kept the meet going in the rain for an extra hour or so.

Overall there were some excellent performances on display, make sure and look at complete results to appreciate them, look at www.MHSAA.com, go to sports, then track and field and follow the appropriate links.

Unfortunately, the referees did have to deal with several possible disqualifications and took care of those tasks diligently and as efficiently as possible. Examples dealt with included running in a different lane than originally assigned, throwing the baton in a negative manner, hurdle infractions and exchange zone infraction.

One last point to list is that the officials were very thankful that Kent City had members of their local National Guard on the field in uniform to help control coaches and athletes in making sure they were in areas where they were allowed to be. Track and field is a sport where it is difficult to control crowd movement and allowed areas. With seventeen events and venues in various areas, it is understandable but once again, the key is making an event as fair and possible for all athletes to perform to the best of their abilities. We certainly hope Kent City will remain a welcoming site for future state final track and field meets.

Division 4 (Jonathan Flott)

On June 1, Hudsonville hosted 810 athletes from 114 schools for this year's D4 state meet, at Baldwin Middle School. As usual, the administration had planned well to provide the necessary support for equipment, volunteer support, physical accommodation, and food to ensure a successful meet. In particular, the volunteer hurdle and blocks crew, and the field event support volunteers, did excellent work to keep the meet moving. The officiating crew was a good mix of veterans of the D4 meet and some new faces. We had good discussions to coordinate our tasks and ensure we were operating efficiently and could provide an excellent meet for the athletes. Having several dedicated umpires from the beginning of the meet was a good addition to the crew. Our team of timers from Michiana timing did great work through the day, with no issues.

The day's racing began with a meet record in the Boys 4x800 meter relay, set by Kalamazoo Hackett. On the girls' side, Whitmore Lake started a strong day on the distance side with a win in the 4x800. Overall, Fowler took the boys title, with Detroit Frederick Douglass second and Kalamazoo Hackett third. Fowler also won the girls' title, with Portland St. Patrick in second and Saugutuck in 3rd.

Several individuals had great days – Brady Feldpausch of Fowler won the 110M hurdles, was second in the 300M hurdles, and was part of the winning 4x200 and 4x400 meter relays teams. For Frederick Douglass, Anthony Buford won the Long Jump in a new meet record of 23' 2", then won the 400M and was second in the 200M to teammate Adrian Smith.

On the girls side, Aiden Harrand from Buckley won the 1600 and 400, and was second in the 800. Addison's Molly Bran defended her title in the 100M hurdles and won the 300m hurdles. Whitmore Lake's freshman Kaylie Livingston won the 3200.

In the field, Oliver Long won the Boys shot put while Dominic Scharer won the discus. For the girls, Lyla Mullins from Austin Catholic swept the throws. Adam Townsend won the pole vault with a jump of 12'6", while Payton Haynes won the girls PV at 10'3".

For the first time at D4, adaptive athlete Aleyah Deller of Athens won state titles in the 100m, 200m and shot put, drawing some of the loudest cheers from the crowd during competition and the awards ceremony.

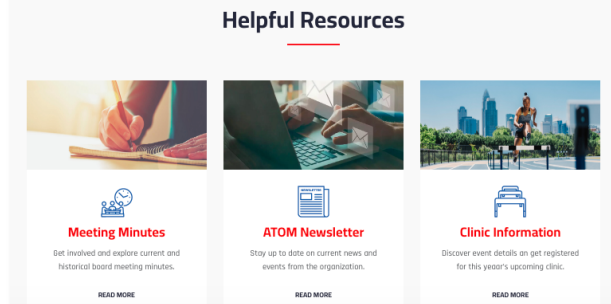
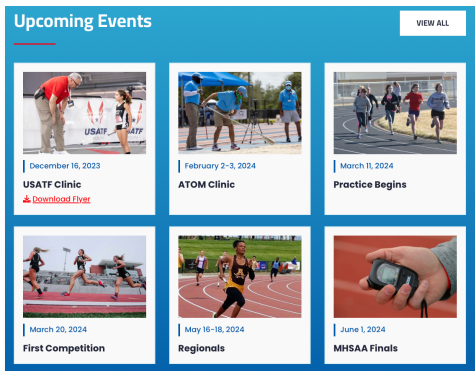
Overall we had a relatively clean meet, with just a single false start, and only a few exchange zone and other violations elsewhere on the track. The final challenge of the day was the weather, with rain starting around the 400M and continuing to the end, occasionally heavy. The jury is out if that is better or worse than last year's heat, but at least the athletes appeared to be under less stress.

ATOM Website: Your Source for News

Be sure to bookmark the newly revamped and updated ATOM Website and make it your first stop for all ATOM news: <https://atomofficials.com/>.

Thanks to the hard work of past-president Mark Haney, the ATOM website is your go-to for key information, including

- Officiating best practices
- Equipment swaps
- ATOM minutes and announcements
- MHSAA updates
- ATOM Clinic Information



Officials and coaches worked together to beat the heat and help athletes at the Charlevoix, Pellston, and East Jordan Regional. (Thanks to Gordie Richardson for the photos)

Grayson Albers: An Athlete's Journey

I finished my senior cross country season with a trip to the Michigan D1 high school state meet. When I started this journey 18 months ago, I was the last person to think it would be possible, but there I was, 45 pounds lighter and a lot more confident. My motivation to pick up sports began when I decided to pursue a career in military aviation. I recognized how out of shape I was, and that needed to change. Getting back into running seemed like the way to go, as I had done a small amount of cross country in middle school

The start of preconditioning that first summer was difficult, and I ended up quitting a few weeks in because at the time I didn't like the coach very much. However, I joined back up after getting a second chance that I am very grateful to have received. The practices never got any easier, but progress doesn't come from taking it easy. It comes from hard work. My first race wasn't very impressive at 23:54, but I didn't let the slow start discourage me. I saw very fast progression throughout the season, thanks to a coach that demands hard work, paired with my strong desire to make it on the record board for my school. I remember some days joking with my teammates that I would be on it one day. I never thought I would actually make it on the board, but determination to give it a shot made me keep pushing my limits at every practice and race. This resulted in getting a personal record in nearly every race and cutting off over a minute at some races. I ended up just barely making it to regionals and finished the season with an 18:58. I knew I could go faster if I kept at it.

I returned to cross country in 2023 with a lot of confidence after steady speed gains during indoor club and outdoor track seasons. I had a goal of making it on the school's top ten recordboard, and maybe even making it to states. At the first race, I shattered my previous season record thanks to the summer conditioning, coming in at 17:49. It was a great starter for the season and it really jump started my motivation to get on the record board, and I thought it might actually happen. We had a lot of emphasis on regionals that year with the intent on trying to get to states, so we ran at the course multiple times over the course of the season to better prepare for the race that would determine if I would get to states or not, and it definitely paid off. I was nervous heading into it, but my coach reminded me why I was there: to finish what I started. It was a difficult race, but at the end, I had qualified for states and set the second fastest time ever run for my school, 16:23.7.

I could not have done it without the support from everyone who showed up to watch me race, and the excellent coaching I've gotten this past year and a half. The experience at states was amazing, with tons of teams from across Michigan showing up. I wasn't able to take the #1 time at my school, but I'm still very grateful I was able to go, and it taught me some very valuable lessons.

The time I had at cross country taught me lots of things, but the most important lesson is that no matter how hard it is, no matter how slow you start, anyone can achieve the success they want if they are willing to put themselves on the line with hard work and discipline. One of the many things our coach would tell us is that to get better its going to hurt, and you have to push yourself to be able to improve. He has been one of the most influential people in my life and I am very happy to have had him as my coach during cross country and track. Thanks Coach Eccleston!

I would also like to thank my team. Easily the best part of the sport was my teammates. The long practice runs became much more bearable with them along for the journey. Supporting each other was a huge part of the season for me, and I think some of my races would not have gone as smoothly as they did (especially regionals) without their support. I wish them the best of luck these next few years as this was my last season in high school. I am pulling for them to keep improving, and just maybe take that #1 spot on the Lincoln High School record board that was just out of reach for me.



Association of Track Officials of Michigan (ATOM)

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Do you have photos or a story you'd like to submit to the *ATOM Newsletter*?
 Let us know at atomichigannews@gmail.com.



2024 ATOM CLINIC REGISTRATION
January 31, - February 1, 2025 Doherty Hotel
 For rooms call (877)236-4378 or (989)386-3441
 <Register before December 15th for discounted fees>

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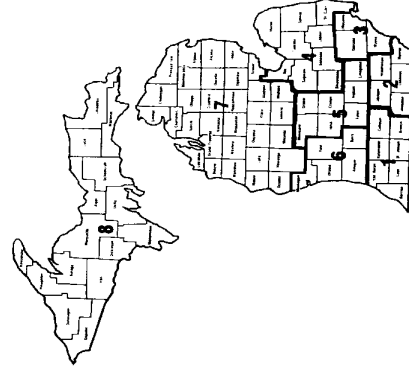
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Name _____ ATOM Zone # _____
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Description	FEE: Before December 14 th	Post Marked After December 15 th	Amount Submitted
2024 Clinic	\$ 60.00	\$ 70.00	\$ _____

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PLEASE include a self-address envelope. Thank-you!

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2024-2025 MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

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The Association of Track Officials of Michigan offers an annual clinic, a newsletter, online resources, and an opportunity to get involved in a professional organization whose goal is to improve the quality of officiating in the sports of cross country and track & field and improve communication between the track officials in our state and the MHSAA. **PLEASE NOTE:** Membership year will coincide with the school year. (September 1st- August 31st)

Description	FEE: June 1 st - October 31 st	After November 1 st - May 31	Amount Submitted
24-25 Membership	\$25.00	\$30.00	\$ _____
ATOM Patch	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$ _____

Update personal information on this form and return with payment to:
 Christine Lee, Atom Treasurer
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