



## PRINCIPLES OF ATHLETE SELECTION

### Introduction

USA Triathlon ("USAT") will be responsible for the nomination and selection of athletes to participate in all high performance events such as the Olympic Games, Pan American Games and Championships, International Triathlon Union ("ITU") World Triathlon Series ("WTS") and World Cup events and other international competitions. In fulfilling this obligation, USAT will generally use the principles described in this document. At all times, within the context of the event, USAT will strive to send the best and most prepared team to compete in high performance events.

### USA Triathlon Elite Athlete Selection Committee

A selection committee will be established by USAT to review and approve discretionary nominations of athletes to WTS, World Cup or other events not including the Olympics and Pan American Games. This committee will be referred to as the Elite Athlete Selection Committee ("EASC").

The EASC will be comprised of a pool of four to eight individuals who have expert knowledge of draft-legal triathlon. At least three members must be athlete representatives (as defined in USOC Bylaws Section 8.8.1 and 8.8.2) appointed by the Athlete Advisory Committee ("AAC"). All EASC members are required to sign the USAT Conflict of Interest document. Committee members are also advised to read the USAT Committee Guide which can be found on USAT's website at <http://www.usatriathlon.org/about-usat/committees.aspx> as well as the principles outlined in this document.

A panel of three members of the EASC, the Performance Leader and an AAC appointed Athlete Director who are void of conflict of interest shall be convened to review and determine whether to approve a discretionary nomination put forth by the USAT High Performance Department. The nomination will be presented by the Performance Leader. The Athlete Director may also attend the meeting but is not required to do so. The committee will be convened alphabetically by last name. The three members called, must be available, void of conflict from the athletes to be discussed, and at least one must be an athlete representative (as defined in USOC Bylaws Section 8.8.1 and 8.8.2). A new panel shall be convened for each event, but each panel may sit for multiple selections for a single event (i.e. one panel can sit for both a male and female selection so long as there are no conflicts with the panel members).

A decision will be made by majority vote of the committee and a written reasoned decision shall be recorded by USAT and confirmed by the panel.

*Conflict of Interest definition: conflict between the private interests and the official responsibilities of a person in a position of trust*

*Note: The Performance Leader (or General Manager in absentia of a Performance Leader) and Athlete Director will be ex-officio/non-voting members of the committee).*

## **Importance of Elite and International Competition**

Results in the highest level of ITU competition (i.e. World Triathlon Series “WTS”) will be the benchmark for selection. Whenever possible in the nomination of any athlete to a high performance event, performances in WTS events will take precedence over performances in lower level competitions such as World Cups or Continental Cups. This reflects the consideration that the highest level of competition is represented by elite athletes racing on the ITU WTS calendar.

## **USA Triathlon Athlete Selection Criteria**

### **WTS, Pan American Games and Olympic Games**

USAT endeavors to select to WTS, Pan American Games and Olympic Games only those athletes who, within the context of the event, are:

1. Capable of a top three (podium) result; or
2. Can positively impact team performance toward medal capability; or
3. Considered to be able medal capable in the near future.

### **World Cups, Continental (PATCO) Championships and Continental Cups**

For World Cup, PATCO Championships and Continental Cups, USAT will follow the criteria listed below to discretionarily nominate an athlete to a team.

1. Those athletes who are expected to be the top ranked Americans on the ITU Olympic Qualification or ITU Points List at the end of the year or other specific time period, such that their performance will have a positive impact on the qualification of WTS, Pan American Games and/or Olympic Games start positions;

In the context of point 1 above:

2. Athletes who can assist the team to produce a medal winning performance in an Olympic format event;
3. Athletes who demonstrate future medal capability in an Olympic format event.

### **Non-Olympic Format World Championships**

The events that are sanctioned by the ITU as World Championships, but are not in the Olympic format will also undergo the same principles of selection as Olympic format races. These events include, but are not limited to, ITU Long Course, Short and Long Course Duathlon, Winter Triathlon, Cross Triathlon, Sprint Triathlon, Aquathlon, and Mixed Team Relay. USA Triathlon will endeavor to select via automatic or discretionary criteria those athletes are:

1. Capable of a top three (podium) result; or
2. Can positively impact team performance toward medal capability; or
3. Considered to be medal capable in the near future.

## **Definitions and Criteria**

1. **Medal Capable.** A medal capable athlete is one who has demonstrated the ability to produce a medal winning result by:
  - medal finishes at World Championships or Olympic Games within 12 months; with demonstration of continued ability to perform at that level or higher based on performances in recent top level international competition; and/or

- producing medal capable times under certified conditions within the past 12 months; and/or
- consistently beating the world's best in recent (past 12 months) international competition with top quality fields; and/or
- other recent historical performances in international competition that would indicate the athlete is capable of a medal winning performance.

In all cases, the athlete in question must demonstrate that they remain capable of a medal capable performance at the time of selection and the time of the event to which the athlete has been selected.

- 2. Enhancing Team Performance.** An athlete who can enhance team performance is one who, based on their international experience and current level of international performance, is expected to contribute substantially to the overall team performance or to the performance of a medal capable team member. In the case of our selection philosophy, this is deemed to be particularly important in the special case where a medal capable individual has been selected to the team and the athlete's contribution may assist the medal capable athlete in a medal winning performance. Obviously this effect is of *primary* importance when nominating athletes for draft-legal team based events where the synergy of the team members and/or the ability to play a strong support role is critical to the success of the team.

For example, even though the Olympic triathlon event is scored individually, athletes who sacrifice themselves to execute a team strategy for the designated team leaders can have a profound impact on the ability of the medal capable team leaders to achieve a medal winning performance.

- 3. Future Medal Capability.** A future medal capable athlete is one who:
- demonstrates a trend of improving performance in international competition that, when extended a reasonable distance into the future, intersects the current international performance standard for the event under consideration; and/or
  - despite being new to the sport or competing for a relatively short time, is within a reasonable percentage, of the international performance standard); and or
  - despite being young in age, is within a reasonable percentage, of the international performance standard.
- 4. ITU top ranked athletes.** The ITU maintains an individual classification for most ITU triathlon events. An athlete is considered to be top ranked if he or she is among the top three or top eight (depending upon the discipline) Americans at the end of the calendar year or at the end of a specified time period.

### USA Triathlon Principles of Discretion

Discretionary nominations will be used per the above priorities in the event that positions are available after the application of any automatic criteria. Discretion may also be used when nominating athletes for the draft-legal team based events where the ability to play a strong support role is absolutely critical to the success of the team.

1. The primary purpose of discretionary athlete nomination is to ensure that:
  - a. In the cases of WTS and Olympic Games, USAT has the ability to nominate the best physically, psychologically and technically prepared athlete in order to produce medal winning performances at a given Olympic format event. See definition of "medal capable" above.

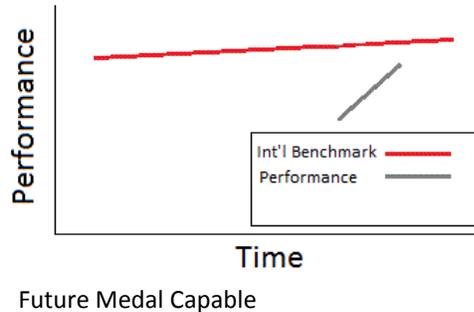
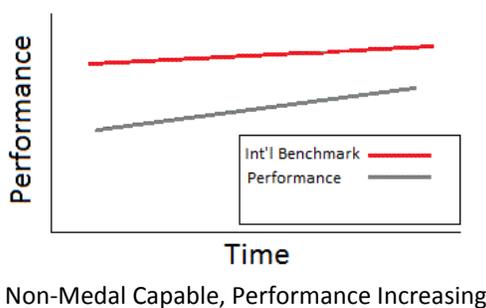
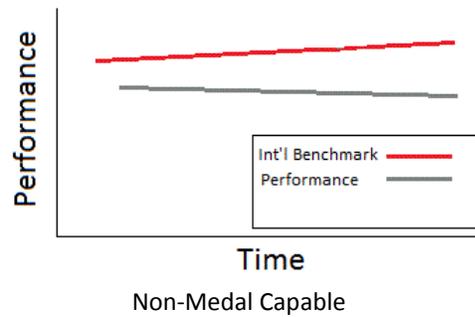
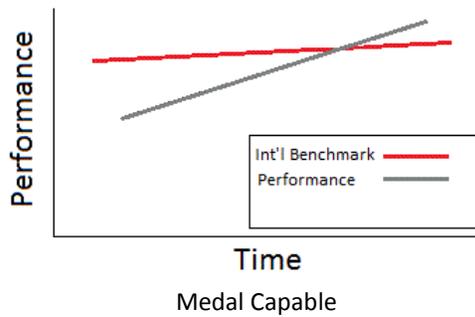
- b. In those cases where the primary importance of the event is subsequent qualification of start positions for WTS, Pan American or Olympic Games through the ITU ranking system, to ensure that USAT has the ability to nominate the athlete most likely to be among the ITU ranked athletes at the end of the calendar year or specified time period that will be used to determine our county ranking (WTS or third best athlete on the Olympic Qualification List).
2. The secondary purpose of discretionary athlete nomination is to ensure that:
  - a. USAT has the ability to nominate the best physically, psychologically and technically prepared athlete in order to assist the team to produce medal winning performances at any given event. See definition of “enhancing team performance” above.
  - b. In those cases where the primary importance of the event is subsequent qualification of start positions for WTS or Olympic Games through the ITU ranking system, to ensure that USAT has the ability to nominate the athlete most likely to be able to assist the team or the individual athlete expected to be among the ITU ranked athletes at the end of the calendar year or specified time period that will be used to determine our country ranking (WTS or third best athlete on the Olympic Qualification List).
3. The tertiary purpose of discretionary athlete nomination is to allow USAT the ability to nominate the best physically, psychologically and technically prepared athlete in order to produce a medal winning performance ***in the future*** at a given event. See definition of “future medal capability” above, and also continued discussion below.

### **Discussion of Future Medal Capability**

In most situations, athletes who perform consistently at the medal capable level are easily identified. On the other hand, one of the greatest challenges in the talent identification and selection process is discriminating among athletes currently performing below the level of medal capability. Ideally, one would like to identify those athletes who represent an investment in future medal performances over those that do not. In an effort to make such discrimination possible, USA Triathlon has designated performance trends as a key component in the talent identification and selection process. Performance trends are determined by plotting an historical record of a given athlete’s performances on a graph where the x-axis is time (weeks, months, years); and the y-axis is event specific performances (times, place finishes, etc). These graphs can then be used to identify trends in an athlete’s performance in order to predict future performance potential.

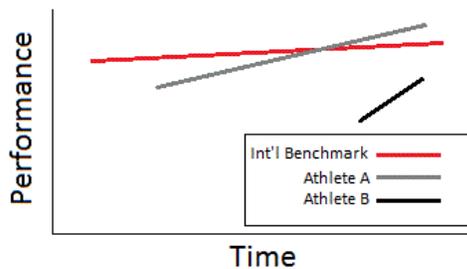
For example, an athlete whose performance is trending up (positive slope) is suggestive of the potential for future improvements in performance. On the other hand, an athlete with a decreasing performance trend (negative slope) or stable trend (zero slop) over time indicates little or no potential for future improvements.

The following graphs illustrate the differences in the performance trends of medal capable and non medal capable athletes:

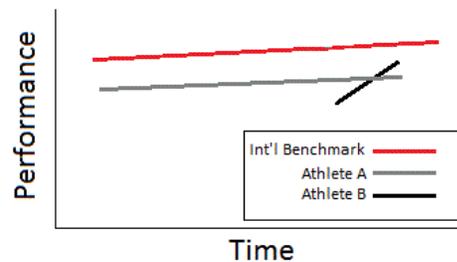


Many factors need to be considered when evaluating athletes with this technique, e.g. length of time over which the trend has been developed, number of years in the sport, slope of the trend, and so on. However, with regard to selection, as stated in the above criteria, it is desirable to preferentially select athletes who demonstrate substantial future ability (positive slope) over those athletes who demonstrate stable or decreasing potential. This is particularly true when extrapolation of the current performance trend over a reasonable period of time (2 to 4 years) indicates the potential to achieve an international medal capable standard.

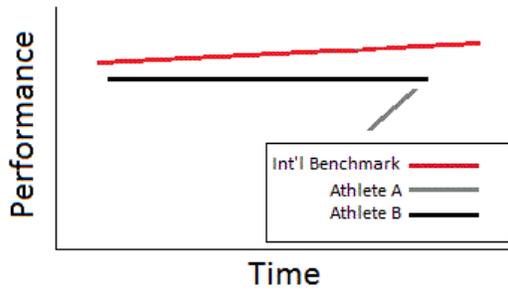
The following graphs illustrate the differences between athletes without future medal capability versus athletes that demonstrate future medal potential:



Athlete A medal capable; Athlete B future medal capable: Select Athlete A



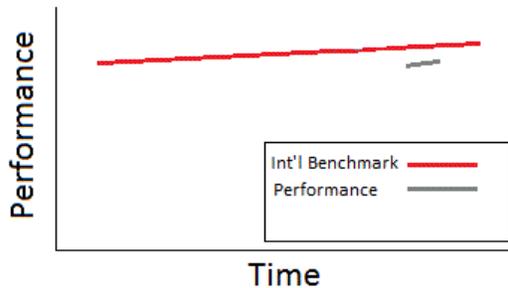
Athlete A not medal capable; Athlete B future medal capable and outperforms A: Select Athlete B



Athlete A not medal capable; Athlete B future medal capable but does not outperform A: Select Athlete B.

Another important consideration in evaluating the future performance potential of an athlete is the relationship of their “time in the sport,” i.e., how long have they been competing; their stage of biological development and adaptation; and their current performance level. In the case of an athlete who is new to the sport, there are not enough data points to plot an accurate performance trend. However, if such an athlete is within a reasonable distance of the international benchmark such that when their anticipated physical development and/or their general adaptation response is expected to put them at or over the international medal benchmark, then they may be considered to have future medal capability.

Although the magnitude of the expected improvement in performance is dependent upon many factors, e.g., biological development, body type and etc., it is generally assumed that, without evidence to the contrary, a reasonable performance deficit may be overcome in a reasonable amount of time by an athlete that new to the sport with a greater deficit for an athlete that is biologically immature.



"New" or young athlete; within 5% of international benchmark = future medal capability

*This document has been adapted from the USA Cycling Principles of Athlete Selection document that has been so successful in guiding USA Cycling coaching staff in their selection of athletes. Thank you to Jim Miller, Director of Athletics for USA Cycling, for sharing the USAC document and giving permission for this adaptation.*