



## 2026 WORLD TRIATHLON U23 CHAMPIONSHIP SELECTION CRITERIA

Updated 10.2.2025

### 1. Introduction

This 2026 World Triathlon U23 Championship Team Selection Criteria (the “Criteria”) determines the “Under 23” athletes (ages 18 to 23 as of December 31, 2026) that will represent the United States in the World Triathlon U23 Championship (the “Team”) in **Pontevedra, Spain, September 23-27, 2026** (the “World Championship”).

According to the World Triathlon U23 Championship qualification criteria (available at [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org)), USA Triathlon (“USAT”) may nominate up to three (3) men and three (3) women to compete in the World Championship. However, only the top 3 ranked federations earn three (3) spots automatically; lower ranked federations earn two (2) spots. The federation ranking is determined by the ranking of U23s within the World Triathlon Rankings.

If there is a Junior/U23 Mixed Relay event, selection will be in accordance with the most current USAT Mixed Relay Event Selection Criteria.

### 2. Minimum eligibility requirements for an athlete to be considered for nomination to the Team:

- a. Athletes must be a citizen of the United States or be eligible to race for the United States under the applicable World Triathlon rules;
- b. Must hold a current USA Triathlon Elite License;
- c. Must abide by all USA Triathlon, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (“USOPC”), SafeSport, World Triathlon, US Anti-Doping Agency and World Anti-Doping Agency anti-doping policies and procedures and be in good standing with these organizations;
- d. Must comply with World Triathlon Competition Rule 2.4(c) and have physician signed certification form (PPE) on file with USA Triathlon;
- e. Current with SafeSport Training by completing the SafeSport tutorial and updating the tutorial as required by the U.S. Center for SafeSport;
- f. Must comply with World Triathlon anti-doping education requirements; and,
- g. Athlete must be eligible to enter and compete in the country in which the event is held. This includes, but is not limited to having an acceptable visa, passport and meeting all country health evidentiary requirements.

### 3. World Triathlon Championship Series & Finals Qualification Criteria

- a. These criteria align with the nomination parameters set forth by World Triathlon for the World Triathlon U23 Championship. Per *World Triathlon Championships Series and Finals Qualification Criteria*, “Athletes will gain a start position based on the points accumulated in the World Triathlon Ranking, according to the procedures in Competition Rules Appendix E.” Furthermore, *World Triathlon General Qualification*

*Rules and Procedures*, Section 8.6, allows for one (1) substitution per gender at the U23 World Championship.

#### **4. Athlete Nomination Process**

All athletes must follow the nomination process set forth by USA Triathlon.

- a. Athletes nominate for a WTCS event by written notice to USAT via [wtentries@usatriathlon.org](mailto:wtentries@usatriathlon.org) by the USAT Nomination Deadline for that event. No other form of request will be accepted (including email with staff and in-person communication).
- b. Deadlines: Nomination deadlines for 2026 events are linked on page four (4) of this document. **“USAT Nomination Deadlines”** are defined as the date by which athletes must nominate themselves for an event (or withdraw, as discussed below), and are midnight MT the Sunday before the World Triathlon Nomination Deadline (generally 34 days before the first competition day of an event). The **“World Triathlon Nomination Deadline”** is normally 32 days prior to the applicable event, although the exact time of the World Triathlon Nomination Deadline, evidenced by the World Triathlon’s posting of the World Triathlon Provisional Start List, may vary. USAT may continue to enter athletes into the World Triathlon system after the USAT Nomination Deadline has passed, but failure to meet the USAT Nomination Deadline means that an athlete is not guaranteed entry into the World Triathlon system for that event. All nomination requests submitted after the USAT Nomination Deadline will generally be considered by World Triathlon in the order in which they were received. Please note that after the World Triathlon Nomination Deadline, the wait list is ordered by date/time of entry into the World Triathlon online system. The wait list is subject to World Triathlon’s policies and procedures.
- c. Withdrawal deadlines: The World Triathlon substitution and withdrawal deadline (**“World Triathlon Substitution Deadline”**) is 30 days prior to the first competition day in the event program. The USAT Withdrawal Deadline is the same as the World Triathlon Substitution Deadline, which is 30 days prior to the event. If an athlete fails to withdraw from an event by the USAT Withdrawal Deadline, a penalty will ordinarily apply, except in extenuating circumstances where USAT will accept a later withdrawal, including, but not limited to, verified illness or injury after the USAT Withdrawal Deadline.
- d. Placeholder: USAT reserves the right to enter an athlete who does not intend to compete in a World Triathlon event on the same weekend for the purpose of serving as a placeholder (i.e. with the intent that USAT will substitute a different athlete for the named athlete prior to the World Triathlon Substitution Deadline 30 days prior to the event).

#### **5. Athlete Selection Process**

- a. Selection for Worlds is based off nomination deadline and provisional start list. The provisional start list is expected to be posted by World Triathlon 32 days prior to the event, however, the publication time and date may vary, and is in World Triathlon’s sole control. This list is not final and only represents initial NF quotas (i.e. the number of spots a given NF has been allotted) based on World Triathlon Qualification Criteria.

Being named to the World Triathlon Provisional Start List does not guarantee that an athlete has been selected by USAT for the event.

- b. Substitutions: Per the World Triathlon substitution procedure, after the World Triathlon Provisional Start List for a WT event has been posted, **one (1) athlete per gender may be replaced**. USA Triathlon is not obligated to exercise a substitution. Athletes on the World Triathlon Provisional Start List may have someone substituted for him/her in accordance with the procedures below. (Please note that athletes who are not on the World Triathlon start list after the World Triathlon Substitution Deadline may become eligible to compete in the event, as determined by World Triathlon under the applicable World Triathlon policies related to withdrawals and wait lists.)
- c. This substitution process will be used in the following cases in accordance with the procedures set forth below:
  - i. To replace an athlete included on the World Triathlon Provisional Start List as a placeholder.
  - ii. To replace an athlete on the start list who is unable to compete due to injury, illness or extenuating circumstance.
  - iii. To otherwise substitute an athlete in order to enhance USAT High Performance strategic performance and development initiatives at the event in alignment with published Elite Triathlon [Guiding Principles](#).
- d. Substitutions will be exercised as follows:
  - i. Discretionary Nominations will be made by the Elite Triathlon International Competition Panel, using, without limitation, the following criteria, in no particular order:
    1. Athletes who have achieved podium results in any World Cup or WTCS event in the previous 18 months before the USAT Nomination Deadline for the event and are not ranked high enough to earn a spot on the World Triathlon Provisional Start List, will be considered for discretionary nomination.
    2. The recent head-to-head results of the potential substituting athlete versus the potential “substitutee,” taking into account factors such as field strength, course profile, and conditions, within the previous 18 months.
    3. Athletes who have achieved a top 8 performance at the same venue/location in previous years will be considered for discretionary nomination.
    4. Whether a particular athlete is returning from injury, pregnancy, quickly rising through the pipeline, and/or capable of contributing to a medal performance at the event.
    5. Other performance results of athletes (in the past 18 months) may be considered as part of discretion if they reach the threshold of top 15 in WTCS and top 8 in WC competitions.
  - e. Athletes will be notified of their status as a substitution/substitutee within 48 hours after the closing of the USAT Nomination Deadline for the event. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. earthquakes, cancellation of other World Triathlon events, epidemics, riots) USA Triathlon shall have the ability to remove athletes from the start list and/or waitlist at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the event’s elite athlete briefing.

## 6. Fines and Penalties

USAT will enforce the nomination and withdrawal policies outlined in this document. If an athlete fails to adhere to these rules, they may be penalized according to the details below. To avoid penalties, athletes must communicate via email () their request to be removed from the WT Event nomination list no later than the USAT Deadline, i.e. 30 days prior to the first competition day in the event program. Additional penalties may be incurred from the World Triathlon for late withdrawal. Athletes should familiarize themselves with the criteria outlined at . Penalties under this USAT policy expire two years after the scheduled event date at which point they no longer factor in penalty aggregation.

If a withdrawal is requested within less than 30 days of the event, USAT will impose the penalty outlined below. In exceptional circumstances (e.g., a new and verified illness or injury or other verified extenuating circumstance) penalties may be waived. For this to occur, an athlete must submit a written explanation of his or her situation with relevant supporting documentation to [elite@usatriathlon.org](mailto:elite@usatriathlon.org). A ICP – International Competition Panel, will review the materials and determine if the situation warrants a waiver of the penalty.

- a. **Penalty:** \$1000 fine and ineligible for any World Triathlon event starts for 3 months from the corresponding event date

## 7. World Triathlon and USAT Nomination Deadlines

World Triathlon is expected to post the World Triathlon Provisional Start List 32 days prior to the event. The USAT Nomination Deadline for all events will be **midnight MT** the Sunday prior to the World Triathlon Nomination Deadline as noted in the second point of the Athlete Nomination Process above. All event dates can be found under the “Events” section on the World Triathlon website ([www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org)), and all deadlines will be posted on the [USAT event qualification document webpage](#).

## 8. Additional Requirements for Selection

- a. All athletes selected to the Team will be required to comply with all applicable rules and requirements of World Triathlon, WADA, USADA, and USAT, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - i. Sign and abide by the USAT’s Code of Conduct, team travel policies, any USAT or World Triathlon Wavier or Release, and conform to all USAT policies and protocol regarding Team preparation and participation.
  - ii. Agree not to race any event **longer** than an Olympic triathlon distance (1.5km/40km/10km) up to six (6) weeks prior to the date of the World Championship through the date of the World Championship.
  - iii. Agree to stay in lodging as a team for the World Championship. All travel and accommodation arrangements will be coordinated by the High Performance staff.
  - iv. **All athletes must comply with World Triathlon Competition Rule 2.4(c), requiring an electrocardiogram (ECG) and pre-participation evaluation (PPE) in order to participate in certain World Triathlon officiated events. Satisfaction of these requirements will be a condition of nomination to participate in this championship.**

- v. Athletes who wish to compete in Junior, U23, Elite, and Paratriathlon categories at World Triathlon events are required to complete and pass the USAT Safe Sport tutorial. [Click here](#) for more information on SafeSport. Certification needs to be updated annually. Once you have completed the tutorial, please email the completed .pdf certificate to: [elite@usatriathlon.org](mailto:elite@usatriathlon.org). Please retain a copy for your own records.
- vi. Athletes must be eligible to enter and compete in the country in which the event is held. This includes, but is not limited to having an acceptable visa, passport and meeting all country health evidentiary requirements.

## **9. Team Support**

- a. USAT will provide staff and/or experienced contractors to serve as Team Leaders for this event.
- b. USAT will look for opportunities to decrease the total cost of the trip to World Championships for those attending, by subsidizing and/or reimbursing the cost of lodging, transport, and/or competition fees if possible.
- c. USAT will inform nominated athletes of their expected costs involved with this competition trip upon selection.

## **10. International Disclaimer**

These Selection Criteria are based upon the latest information available to USAT, and on World Triathlon and USAT rules and regulations as presently known and understood. Any change in the selection procedures caused by a change in World Triathlon or USAT rules and regulations, or other unforeseen circumstances, will be distributed to the affected athletes promptly, and USAT reserves the right to revise these Selection Criteria in such event.

## **11. Relay Selection**

### **Athlete Selection Process**

1. Selection: Selection of individual athletes in the individual race at the same event for Mixed Relay teams shall be determined by a panel of three USAT High Performance Staff, who do not serve as a personal coach to any of the athletes being considered. Selection of a MR Team is a highly complex process which involves analysis of objective performance measures and as such is a highly discretionary process. The panel will consider a range of factors that may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - 1.1. Past performances in MR events and individual events including the most recent
  - 1.2. Past performances in other World Triathlon events (especially Sprint & Super Sprints) and compared to other USA athletes;
  - 1.3. Course profile and setup (e.g. technical vs. less technical courses);
  - 1.4. Athletes with a history of successful and unsuccessful performance history on similar courses;
  - 1.5. Athletes with a history of successful and unsuccessful performance history in similar environmental conditions (i.e. temperature & humidity) to be expected at the event;

1.6. Athletes who have consistently demonstrated ability to successfully manage the performance pressures associated with the highest level of triathlon competitions;

1.7. Athlete health, injury, and return from injury status;

1.8. Strategic considerations towards identifying talent for future MR event success;

1.9. Other information the panel deems relevant to an athlete's ability to contribute in delivering a podium performance at the event for which selection is being made;

1.10. Team strategy as it relates to creating the ideal MR Team. This may include choosing Athletes with specific characteristics/abilities that when combined could result in exceptional Team performance at the event. These abilities may be demonstrated by displaying the following in any evaluation event(s), including, but not limited to:

- a) A record of consistent front-pack swimming results at the highest-level events (WTCS, WC, MR);
- b) A demonstrated ability to close or establish gaps in the swim, bike, and/or run;
- c) A record of superior cycling time-trialing ability (especially in Sprint & Super Sprints);
- d) A demonstrated ability, (through skills, conditioning and tactics) to ride economically in lead and/or chase packs, especially on similar or relevant/comparable courses to those of the event;
- e) A demonstrated ability to execute transitions at the highest-level speeds and effectiveness, especially in MR and Super Sprint events. This includes bike mounting ability and ability to catch or be in relevant pack out of T1;
- f) A record of superior running performance off the bike that enhances the likelihood of podium performances, especially in the 4th leg of Mixed Relay;
- g) A demonstrated overall consistent ability to contribute to podium performances through reliable execution in highest level Super Sprint and MR events;
- h) Race result data (swim, bike, run, T1, T2) gathered from previous events;

2. MR Order: The panel may also determine the order in which the athletes will race at the event, provided that the panel may change the order of the athletes and composition of the team any time prior to the final roster deadline communicated by World Triathlon for the event (typically two (2) hours before the event), based on a range of factors that may include, but are not limited to:

2.1. Changes in team composition for any reason;

2.2. Fitness of athletes;

2.3. Expected fatigue and impact of any racing in the previous 48 hours of the MR start;

2.4. Recent results in events preceding the MR event;

2.5. Expected weather at the event;

2.6. Illness or injury of athletes;

2.7. Any other consideration that the panel believes relevant to selecting the order & combination of athletes that is most likely to succeed.

3. Athlete Pool: MR event teams are made up of 2 female and 2 male athletes. USAT will initially select a minimum of three (3) athletes per gender to make up the athlete pool (those who will be considered for final team selection), which includes a minimum of one athlete per gender

to serve as alternate should there be any injuries, illnesses, change of Team strategy, or other extenuating circumstances. USAT may utilize varying strategies in how it selects MR teams in advance, including; selecting specific expected starters of 2 female + 2 male athletes with 1 or more alternate per gender; or selecting an athlete pool with a minimum of 3 female + 3 male athletes from which the final starters will be selected within the final submission/change deadline (typically two (2) hours before the event).

4. Timeline of Notification: USAT will notify athletes if they are to be included in the athlete pool for a particular MR event. USAT will make every effort to communicate at least 14 days in advance, the intent to include particular athletes in the athlete pool, or in the expected starters & alternates pool, or strategy but will do so sooner when possible. Additionally, athletes will be notified when they have been officially submitted on the World Triathlon Mixed Relay Declaration Form, which is typically submitted after the MR Briefing, between 72-18 hours before the MR event.
5. Notification of Availability & Health Status: Those selected in the athlete pool (including alternates) must notify USAT as soon as possible if, after selection but before the event, they sustain any injury or illness that could impact their fitness or ability to perform their best at the event. Failure to promptly notify USA Triathlon of such injury or illness may result in a penalty. Upon notification of an illness or injury by an athlete, or for other extenuating circumstances, the panel may substitute a different athlete if it concludes that substitution will improve the potential success of the team.
6. Changes: USAT will make every effort to select the MR athlete pool or strategy fourteen (14) days in advance with good intent based on the information it has available at that time, but retains the authority to make changes (additions & subtractions) to the athlete pool for a variety of factors including, availability and health status of those initially selected, and for other reasons listed above in the Selection section 1.1-1.10, and MR Order sections 2.1-2.7 listed above. Changes to the athlete pool are permitted right up until the submission of the MR declaration form (typically 72-18 hours before the MR event).
7. Confidentiality: It is the expectation that all USAT athletes (selected or not) will keep the MR selection process confidential, to avoid sharing with other nations potential strategy in advance of the final submission/change deadline (2 hours before the event). Additionally, athletes are asked to avoid any social media posts related to MR composition until 2 hours prior to the event to maintain confidentiality until no changes can be made by any nation.

*Concerns or questions related to discretionary decisions should be communicated to the USA Triathlon High Performance General Manager ([hpqm@usatriathlon.org](mailto:hpqm@usatriathlon.org)). In addition, athletes are encouraged to contact the Athlete Ombuds Office as a resource for confidential, independent advice and assistance with resolving disputes (contact information below). After the previous steps have occurred, athletes may contact USA Triathlon Senior Counsel ([legal@usatriathlon.org](mailto:legal@usatriathlon.org)) to administer an executive review to ensure published criteria and process was followed.*

*Athletes have the right to file a grievance and have a hearing per the [USAT Grievance and Disciplinary Policy](#). Athletes also have the right to report any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest and will not be retaliated against for raising concerns or asking questions of USA Triathlon or the Athlete Ombuds Office. For more information, please see [USA Triathlon's Whistleblower Policy](#).*

***Athlete Ombuds*** - The Office of the Athlete Ombuds offers independent, confidential advice to elite athletes regarding their rights and responsibilities in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement, and assists athletes with a broad range of questions, disputes, complaints and concerns.

Phone: 719-866-5000

Email: [ombudsman@usathlete.org](mailto:ombudsman@usathlete.org)

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