



## 2026 Senior National Teams Selection Criteria

### Introduction

The United States Biathlon Association (USBA) is entrusted with building programs that grow the sport in the United States and elevate American biathletes toward success on the IBU World Cup circuit, with the ultimate goal of winning Olympic medals. USBA programs are structured to reach athletes at all stages of development, providing a clear pathway of support and fostering consistent performance improvement over time.

As the primary national governing body for the sport, USBA receives significant investment from the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC). These resources are expected to be used responsibly to help U.S. biathletes achieve international success, culminating in Olympic podiums.

### Overview

As we advance toward our 2030 Plan goals, the National Team selection criteria continually evolve to reflect the demands of international competition and the resources required for success at the highest level. Our goal is to provide athletes with a clear development pathway, ensuring support is both meaningful and aligned with our mission of Olympic success.

National Team support will focus on athletes demonstrating measurable progression toward international podiums. This includes athletes who may not yet be medal contenders but whose performance trends align with historical data predicting future medal potential. In other words, USBA will invest in athletes whose trajectories suggest they could reach the podium if they continue to develop along their current path. Supporting athletes at all stages of the performance pipeline allows USBA to tailor resources to each stage.

### Team Definitions

- **National A Team** – For top-performing athletes on track for international podiums.
- **National B Team** – For athletes meeting performance markers that show realistic progress toward A Team standards.
- **X-Team** – A two-year program supporting Nordic athletes making the transition to biathlon. Athletes selected have already shown internationally competitive ski speed; this team provides the coaching, resources, and race opportunities needed to build biathlon skills and accelerate progress toward the National Team.

- **National Development Team (U26)** – Provides support for U26 athletes who are tracking toward National Team selection. The goal of this team is to provide the resources necessary for these athletes to realistically make the jump to the National Team within a few seasons.
- **Junior National Team** – Supports our best Junior and Youth athletes who have demonstrated international competitiveness or domestically competitive ski speed with a commitment to biathlon. NOTE: The Junior National Team criteria will be published as a standalone document and is therefore not contained in this document.

### **Criteria Guidelines**

- Unless otherwise stated, all results benchmarks refer to non-team race formats.
- Nominees must accept or decline their nomination in writing within three weeks following nomination unless a different deadline is specified by USBA. Acceptance is contingent upon the athlete signing a written agreement regarding training camp and specific team activity attendance and a commitment to the National Team training plan. All nominees who accept their nomination will be required to sign the Team Member Agreement.
- Direct Athlete Support (DAS): USBA will continue to provide a DAS program in partnership with the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC). The total DAS budget and individual allocations are finalized each spring to align with the USOPC Resource Allocation timeline and process.
- Training Groups, Camps, and Coaching Assignments: National Team training groups, camp invitations, coaching assignments, and associated resources will be determined after the 2025-26 season and a review of the current Olympic quad.

## **Team Structure and Qualification Standards**

### **National A Team**

Athletes on the National A Team are those demonstrating consistent competitiveness at the highest international level and clear potential to reach World Cup, World Championship or Olympic podiums.

#### **Qualification Standards:**

- Two top-25 finishes at a World Cup (WC), World Championships (WCH), or Olympic Winter Games (OWG) **or**
- Top-50 overall WC ranking, **or**
- One top-15 at WC, WCH, or OWG, **or**
- Any athlete skiing a WC/WCH/OWG Sprint course time faster than the slowest podium finisher, **or**
- Additional athletes identified through discretionary selection per Appendix A.

## **National B Team**

The National B Team supports athletes progressing toward A Team standards.

### **Athletes born 1999 & older**

- Two top-40 finishes at WC, WCH, or OWG, **or**
- One top-30 finish at WC, WCH, or OWG, **or**
- Two top-10 IBU Cup non-team results (Two top-7 IBU cup results if field size is less than 40), **or**
- One IBU Cup podium in a non-team, discipline, **or**
- Member of a top-6 relay at WC, WCH, or OWG, **or**
- Additional athletes identified through discretionary selection per Appendix A.

*Note: An athlete may qualify by meeting 50% of markers from two different bullet points. For example, a YOB 1999 or older athlete can qualify for the B Team by achieving one top-10 on the IBU Cup and one top-40 on the WC.*

### **Athletes born 2000 & younger**

- Two top-60 finishes at WC, or
- One top-40 finish at WC, or
- Two top-15 finishes at IBU Cup, or
- One top-6 finish at IBU Cup, or
- Member of a top-6 relay at WC, WCH, or OWG.
- Additional athletes identified through discretionary selection per Appendix A.

*Note: An athlete may qualify by meeting 50% of markers from two different bullet points. For example, a YOB 2000 or younger athlete can qualify for the B Team by achieving one top-15 on the IBU Cup and one top-60 on the WC.*

## **National Development Team (U26)**

The National Development Team supports athletes under age 26 who are tracking toward B Team qualification.

### **Qualification Standards: (Athletes born 2000 & younger)**

- Top-20 finish in a non-team event at Junior World Championships (JWCH), or top-20 course time in a non-team JWCH event, **or**
- Top-third finish in IBU Cup, **or**
- Top-30 course time in IBU Cup (if field size < 60, then top-half course time), **or**
- Any U26 athlete racing WC who is not named to the National A or B Team, **or**
- Additional athletes identified through discretionary selection per Appendix A.

*Eligibility: Only athletes born 2000 and younger are eligible to meet the above criteria.*

## **National X Team**

Several athletes with extraordinary potential for success may be selected for a special training team that will quickly accelerate their development in a highly challenging and dedicated environment. High level cross-country skiers who commit to competitive excellence in biathlon are most suitable for this team. It is generally expected that members of this team will demonstrate high performance at the National B Team (or higher) level within 24 months.

The staff will propose their recommendations to the ICC for consideration and approval. Team members will have the possibility to train alongside National Team athletes on a case by case basis, as determined by National Team staff, as well as opportunities to train with the National Development Group from time to time.

Note: The National X Team roster may be filled with athletes over the course of the year, not just at the beginning of it.

## **Appendix A: USBA Principles of Discretionary Selection**

The purpose of a discretionary choice is to ensure selection of the most competitive team. Creating watertight, finite criteria for discretionary choices is impossible, since by their very nature they are meant to account for the unanticipated circumstances which inevitably elude the principles of objective criteria. Based on the context of the situation, the ICC will select the athlete(s) that has the best chance of producing the best result based on the following factors. Note: This list is not in any order of priority:

1. History of performance in a specific competition type over the current and previous two competitive seasons.
2. Recent improvements in results or performance parameters such as ski speed and shooting performance (both in training and competition), prioritizing ski speed over shooting performance.
3. Recent positive trend of competition results or performance parameters indicating medal potential in future Olympic or World Championship competition that would be materially enhanced by selection to the Team.
4. Performance or participation in the qualification process affected by illness or injury as confirmed by USBA.
5. Ability to effectively contribute to a relay.

If an athlete declines or is unable to attend the competition(s) for which they have qualified, the ICC will rely upon the above Principles of Discretionary Selection to fill the spot. The ICC also reserves the right not to fill the vacated spot.