CCNC Olympic Distance

Athlete Ranking & Wave Allocation Q & A

Questions & Answers for Athletes, Coaches, and Administrators

Purpose. This Q & A guide is used to answer questions are regarding the current CCNC Ranking Methodology. Use the following Index to link to specific topics:

1. Eligibility: Race, Qualify, Rank
2. Eligible Races & Results
3. How the Ranking Works
4. Seeded Waves & Allocation
5. Athlete Identification & USAT Registration
6. Special Request Process
7. Preliminary Rankings, Corrections, Appeals & Deadlines
8. Quick Athlete Checklist

1. Eligibility: Race, Qualify, Rank

What is the difference between qualifying for Nationals and earning a seeded-wave position?

The stated Nationals participation requirement is at least one eligible collegiate-club race during the current season. Seeded-wave positions are assigned through the ranking process. Competing in additional eligible races—ideally 2–3 total—provides stronger evidence for a more accurate ranking. The ranking uses an athlete's two best in-season performances and may also include a previous CCNC Olympic-distance result when available.

Do I need a ranking to compete at Nationals?

Not necessarily. Although a strong ranking is especially important if you want a seeded-wave position, and the rules state competing in an eligible current-season collegiate-club race is required for participation, an athlete who wants to compete at nationals can go through the Special Request process (male and female) if they are unable to race during the current season due to extraordinary and verifiable circumstances.

Why race if I am not sure I will attend Nationals?

Your plans may change. Racing establishes a current-season result and gives the ranking process performance information. If Nationals is a possibility, the safest approach is to compete in an eligible race for your conference.

2. Eligible Races & Results

Which races can count?

Eligible events are pre-selected USAT- and conference-sanctioned collegiate-club races that meet the calendar criteria and have sufficient pace-setters or anchors. Only designated races on the eligible Collegiate Club racing calendar count.

Do conference championships and sprint races count?

Yes. Conference championships are eligible and strongly encouraged. The designated Collegiate Club racing calendar includes both sprint- and Olympic-distance events.

Do all races over the season count equally, or are higher-tier events weighted more heavily?

There is no fixed higher-tier/lower-tier weighting system. All designated races can contribute, but races can provide stronger or weaker ranking evidence depending on field size, competition depth, number of pace-setters, and consistency of results. However, racing at a conference championship that has a large more robust field helps to ensure your ranking is more accurate.

How does the ranking system account for differing race conditions, distances, or courses?

The two ranking models are designed to make comparisons across different races by using common performance references and pace-setters. They account for differences such as course conditions, field strength, and the distribution of athlete ability.

Can I race alongside age-group athletes and still have my result count?

Yes, if the event is on the Collegiate Club racing calendar and meets the criteria. Collegiate-club athletes may race in the same event or wave as age-group athletes.

Do duathlons, indoor races, out-of-season races, or non-listed races count in the rankings?

No, duathlons, indoor races and non-designated races do not contribute to the ranking. Eligible duathlons and indoor race can count as the one race criteria to participate at nationals however.

What happens if a scheduled race changes from a triathlon to a duathlon or indoor race?

It will no longer qualify for the ranking because duathlons and indoor races are excluded. The race calendar is subject to change when an event no longer meets the established criteria.

Can another race be added to the calendar?

Potentially. USAT/Chad Cunningham and Coach John Hansen at UC Davis must be notified in advance about additional conference races.

What if race results are late or never submitted?

Race results are supplied by the race director or timing company. If results are not provided, or are not provided in a timely manner, they cannot be incorporated into the ranking process if the ranking process deadline has passed. This deadline may be up to 10 days prior to CCNC so race results are very unlikely to be submitted late or not at all. However, the race calendar is subject to change based on timely results submission.

How are races selected?

Considerations include weather, event timing and availability, race-director support for collegiate-club participation and identifiable results, travel distance, spacing between events, costs, fundraising opportunities, and overlap with other races.

3. How the Ranking Works

How are the rankings determined?

The ranking uses the athlete's two best performances from in-season races, which can include the current Conference Championship, and can also include a previous CCNC result when available. Those performances are evaluated through the two independent models and integrated into a unified ranking

How are performances converted into a ranking?

Your race performances are evaluated using two independent ranking models: the Percentile Performance Curve Model and the USAT PaceSetter Model. The Percentile model converts performances across designated races onto a common collegiate-club performance scale. The USAT PaceSetter model compares an athlete's race time with a race-specific reference or par time established using pace-setters/anchors. The outputs are integrated to create a unified seasonal ranking value. The system is therefore not simply a place-based points system.

What does the Percentile Performance Curve Model do?

It converts performances from designated races onto a common collegiate-club performance scale or results curve.

What does the USAT PaceSetter Model do?

It uses pace-setters or anchors to establish a race-specific reference, or par time, and compares an athlete’s time with that reference.

Why use two models?

The models compare performances in different ways: one uses a common performance curve, while the other uses race-specific pace-setter references. Combining them is intended to improve ranking accuracy.

How are different courses and conditions accounted for?

The models use common performance references and race-specific pace-setter references. They are designed to account for course conditions, field strength, and the distribution of athlete ability. Men and women are ranked independently.

4. Seeded Waves & Allocation

How many athletes are in the seeded waves?

There are 75 athletes in Wave 1 and 75 in Wave 2, for 150 seeded athletes per gender.

Why are there two seeded waves?

The goals are to create more comparable top-tier groupings, promote healthy competition, mitigate drafting, improve safety, and keep allocation practical.

Is there a fixed score cutoff for Wave 1 or Wave 2?

There is no single numerical ranking-score cutoff. The seeded positions are allocated by the ranking process with the highest value attained via the process being ranked #1, second highest ranked #2, etc: Wave 1 contains rank positions 1–70 and Wave 2 contain positions 76–145, with returning previous-CCNC top-90 athletes receiving automatic Wave 1 qualification if they are returning to the Olympic-distance race. The remaining 10 positions, 5 in each wave, are filled through the Special Request process.

How does a previous CCNC top-90 finish affect Wave 1?

An athlete from the previous CCNC overall top 90 who returns to the Olympic-distance race receives the automatic Wave 1 provision. Approximately 45–55 returning athletes filling Wave 1 positions this way; remaining positions are filled through the ranking and/or Special Request process.

What if a returning top-90 athlete does not race the Olympic distance?

The automatic Wave 1 provision applies to athletes returning to the Olympic-distance race. Positions not filled by a returning athlete are filled through the ranking and/or Special Request process.

What if an athlete ranked for a seeded wave cannot attend?

The ranked list is checked against the attendee list. If an athlete cannot compete, the next ranked athlete moves into the available position, and the process continues until the seeded positions are filled.

Can an athlete move from Wave 2 to Wave 1 or move into Wave 2 from an unseeded ranking?

Yes, if a Wave 1 position opens and the ranking cascade moves the next athlete across the boundary. For example, if position 75 opens before final assignments, the athlete in position 76 may move into Wave 1 or if position 150 opens before final assignments, the athlete in position 151 may move into Wave 2.

When are final wave assignments announced? Can they change afterward?

Final rankings are expected 4–6 days before Nationals, with the specific date communicated within 30 days of Nationals. Once submitted, the final ranking cannot be changed. If an athlete withdraws afterward, no replacement is assigned.

5. Athlete Identification & USAT Registration

Why complete the Athlete Identifier Form?

It connects you with your collegiate club/school and helps match you to race results. Many events do not separately identify collegiate-club athletes in results submitted to USAT. The form also supports cross-checking against the Nationals attendee list.

What if I do not complete the form?

You may still compete at Nationals, but you will not be ranked or considered for a seeded wave. You also cannot participate in the Special Request process without the form.

Why register with USAT as a collegiate-club athlete?

Registration helps connect athletes to race results when collegiate-club status is not clearly identified, supporting more complete and accurate rankings.

6. Special Request Process

What is a Special Request, and who should use it?

It is a discretionary pathway for athletes whose ability may not be fully reflected in available results, including those with limited or no racing opportunities due to exceptional, verifiable circumstances. It is not intended to replace or override the normal ranking process.

Can an athlete be moved into a seeded wave through a discretionary selection?

Yes, for athletes who did not earn a wave 1 or 2 slot through Criteria #1 and #3 of the Ranking process. All Special Request submissions will be made via a Google form document (male and female) starting inside a 60 day window of the current CCNC.

How many Special Request positions are available?

Five positions are reserved in each seeded wave for each gender. If requests do not fill all reserved positions, the established rankings fill the remaining positions.

What information can support a Special Request?

The process begins with the Athlete Identifier Form. Supporting information may include performance time trials, previous CCNC draft-legal results, and current-season conference-championship results. All criteria must be verifiable.

What are the performance tests and when must they be completed?

Swim: 500 yards or 400 meters. Bike: FTP. Run: 5K. For normal consideration, tests must be completed from August 1 through the last conference championship race in March.

Do I have to complete all three tests?

Completing all three is strongly encouraged because time-trial results take precedence over other criteria but not completing them does not automatically disqualify an athlete. Draft-legal and conference-championship information is also highly encouraged when available.

Can FTP be estimated without a power meter or smart trainer?

Yes. The methodology provides two alternative 20-minute maximal-effort methods intended to estimate FTP without a power device or smart trainer.

Can previous CCNC draft-legal results support a request?

Yes. A previous draft-legal result in the top 25 can support Wave 1 consideration; a result in the top 40 can support Wave 2 consideration. A previous CCNC Olympic-distance result may also be included in the current-season ranking.

Can conference-championship results support a request?

Yes. An athlete may be considered by finishing ahead of at least two athletes in that championship who placed in the previous CCNC top 75 for Wave 1 consideration or top 150 for Wave 2 consideration. The athlete must provide results links and identify the athletes.

When do Special Requests open and close?

The Special Request form (male and female) opens within the 60-day window before CCNC. The submission deadline is at least 10 days before the Olympic-distance CCNC race. Check official communications for exact dates.

7. Preliminary Rankings, Corrections, Appeals & Deadlines

Will preliminary rankings be posted during the season?

Yes, preliminary rankings are planned. Timing depends on sufficient USAT collegiate-club registrations, timely race-result submissions, and enough races—including substantial fields—across all conferences to support meaningful comparisons.

When does the ranking season begin and end?

Rankings start is the day after the previous year's CCNC. The end is the last race of the current season, usually around the second or third week of March; the exact date changes annually.

How soon after a race will results appear in the rankings?

It depends on when the race director or timing company submits results. No standard posting interval is specified.

What should I do if my ranking appears incorrect?

Contact USAT/Chad Cunningham and provide verifiable supporting information, such as official online race results.

What is the deadline to raise a concern, and who decides?

Concerns should be raised by day 8 of the CCNC timeline (8 days before Nationals). Final rankings are submitted to the race director 6 days before Nationals. USAT and the coordinator for the Nationals Slot Allocation process make the final decision; appeals must be resolved before the final-ranking deadline.

How are ties handled?

Ties use normalized scores.

8. Quick Athlete Checklist

What should I do if I want to compete and be considered for a seeded wave?

1. Register with USAT as a collegiate-club athlete. 2. Complete the Athlete Identifier Form. 3. Race at least once in an eligible current-season event to meet the stated participation requirement. 4. If seeking a seeded wave, aim for 2–3 eligible races and consider the conference championship. 5. If your ranking may not reflect your ability or you have limited eligible results, review the Special Request process and deadlines.

What is the simplest way to remember the process?

RACE → QUALIFY → RANK. Race in an eligible current-season event, establish the result required for Nationals participation, and use additional eligible performances to strengthen your ranking if a seeded-wave position is your goal.

Quick Summary: Race at least once in an eligible current-season collegiate-club event to meet the stated Nationals participation requirement. If you want a seeded wave, aim for 2–3 eligible races and complete the Athlete Identifier Form.

Source & Important Note: This guide consolidates the current source materials: *2027 CCNC Wave 1 and 2 Olympic Distance Ranking Methodology & Process* and *CCNC Athlete Education Campaign – Race–Qualify–Rank*.