



# 2026 World Triathlon Cup Event Selection Criteria

## Introduction

This document explains how USA Triathlon ("**USAT**") will prioritize USA athletes for nomination to the World Triathlon to compete in World Triathlon Cup ("**WTC**") events. It is derived from the current World Triathlon Cup Qualification Criteria and shall be revised by USAT to comply with any material changes made by the World Triathlon promptly. Changes will be reviewed and confirmed by the Athlete Advisory Council, and USAT will update the website.

World Triathlon determines the qualification criteria for WTC events. The first start list posted by World Triathlon is provisional and reflects the number of quota positions earned by each National Federation (the "**World Triathlon Provisional Start List**"). Being named to the World Triathlon Provisional Start List does not guarantee that an athlete has been selected by USAT for the event. See the Athlete Selection Process below. All USA athletes interested in WTC nomination are advised to read the WTC Qualification Criteria posted at [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org).

WTC events are the tier of international standard distance (Sprint, Olympic and Super Sprint) draft-legal races just below the level of the World Triathlon Championship Series ("**WTCS**") and provide an important stepping stone between World Triathlon Continental Cups and WTCS events. WTC events allow athletes who have demonstrated performance potential to gain race experience and ranking points. Athletes who have not yet reached this level are expected to begin by racing in World Triathlon Continental Cups to demonstrate their readiness for WTC level competition. There is a limited ability to fast track outstanding developing athletes to WTC competition via World Triathlon invitations and National Federation ("**NF**") substitutions.

## Pre Participation Exam (PPE)

Athletes who wish to compete in Junior, U23, Elite and Elite Paratriathlon categories at World Triathlon events are required to undergo a Pre-Participation Exam ("**PPE**") by their personal health care provider. The details of this are outlined in Rule 2.4 and Appendix Q of the World Triathlon Competition Rules. The PPE includes completion of a World Triathlon-provided Medical Questionnaire reviewed by the athlete's doctor, an examination, and a 12 lead resting electrocardiogram ("**ECG**") with results reviewed by the athlete's doctor.

Once athletes have completed the screening and the questionnaire, athletes are instructed to email only the signed completed PPE certification form to [elite@usatriathlon.org](mailto:elite@usatriathlon.org). Athletes should retain their original completed, dated and signed questionnaire and PPE certification for their own records. Click [here](#) for more information on this screening and the PPE documents.

## SafeSport Training

Athletes who wish to compete in Junior, U23, Elite, and Paratriathlon categories at World Triathlon events are required to complete SafeSport training every year. More information about how to access the training can be found <https://www.usatriathlon.org/safesport>.

After the training has been completed successfully, athletes are instructed to email the completed .pdf certificate to: [elite@usatriathlon.org](mailto:elite@usatriathlon.org) and retain a copy for their own records.

## Athlete Eligibility

The eligibility requirements for an athlete to be considered for nomination to a WTC event are listed below. An athlete must meet these requirements on or before the date of his or her nomination, and remain in compliance throughout the completion of the applicable World Triathlon event:

- Athletes must be a citizen of the United States or be eligible to race for the United States under the applicable World Triathlon rules;
- Must hold a current USAT Elite License;



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- Must abide by all USAT, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee, 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;
- Must comply with World Triathlon Competition Rule 2.4(c) and have physician signed certification form (PPE) on file with USAT;
- Complete SafeSport Training every year.

## Athlete Nomination Process

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

1. An athlete must nominate for a WTC event by written notice to USAT via email ([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, in-person communication, or phone calls).
2. **Nomination Deadlines:** “**USAT Nomination Deadlines**” are defined as the date by which athletes must nominate or withdraw themselves from an event. The USAT Nomination Deadline is 11:59 p.m. 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 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. Entry deadlines for 2026 events are listed on the [USAT event qualification document webpage](#).
3. **Withdrawal deadlines:** The World Triathlon substitution and withdrawal deadline (“**World Triathlon Substitution Deadline**”) is the Friday after the World Triathlon Provisional Start List is produced. The USAT Withdrawal Deadline is the Thursday after the start list is produced at 12:00p.m. MT. 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.
4. **Placeholder.** USAT reserves the right to enter additional athletes as placeholders to maximize the number of US quota places available. *Placeholder is defined as an athlete who has not requested a start to an event by the published USAT deadline.*

## Athlete Selection Process

1. 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 WTC 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.
2. **Substitutions:** Per World Triathlon substitution procedure, after the World Triathlon Provisional Start List for a WTC event has been posted, **two athletes per gender may be replaced**. USAT is not obligated to exercise a substitution. The purpose of this protocol is, among other things, to ensure athletes returning from injury, quickly rising up the pipeline, or capable of contributing to a medal performance can be placed on the team to enhance medal opportunities. Should USAT use a substitution, they will notify the placeholder and the substitute prior to the substitution via email. This substitution process may be used in the following cases: (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.)



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- To replace an athlete included on the World Triathlon Provisional Start List as a placeholder.
- To replace an athlete on the start list who is unable to compete due to injury, illness, or extenuating circumstance.
- To otherwise substitute an athlete in order to enhance USAT High Performance strategic performance and development initiatives at the event..

Any discretionary nominations will be confirmed by the Elite Triathlon International Competition Panel (“**IPC**”) using, without limitation, the following criteria, in no particular order:

- Athletes who have achieved podium results in any 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.
- The recent head-to-head results of the potential substituting athlete versus the potential “substitute”, taking into account factors such as field strength, course profile, and conditions, within the previous 18 months.
- Athletes who have achieved a top 8 performance at the same venue/location in previous years.
- 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.
- 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.

This priority of substitutions will be exercised in the following order:

- Discretionary nominations as stated above.
- Remaining USA athletes based on World Triathlon Ranking.

Athletes will be notified of their status as a substitution/substitute no later than 72 hours after the closing of the USAT Nomination Deadline for the event.

3. In exceptional circumstances 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.
4. **Priority of Nominations.** Nomination priority to World Triathlon will be in accordance with international Triathlon rankings managed by World Triathlon.
5. **World Triathlon Invitations.** All athletes remaining on the waitlist are eligible for a World Triathlon invitation. The US quota will not be considered by World Triathlon in their awarding of invitations. The World Triathlon invitation panel will decide based on its own discretion. For more about the World Triathlon invitations refer to the World Triathlon website posted at [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org).
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 fine schedule below. To avoid penalties, athletes must communicate via email ([wtentries@usatriathlon.org](mailto:wtentries@usatriathlon.org)) their request to be removed from the WC Event nomination list no later than the USAT Withdrawal Deadline (i.e. 12:00 p.m. MT the Thursday after the start list is produced). Additional penalties may be incurred from the World Triathlon for late withdrawal. Athletes should familiarize themselves with the criteria outlined at [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org). Offenses 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 after 12:00 p.m. MT the Thursday after the start list is produced, USAT will impose the penalties 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). The ICP will review the materials and determine if the situation warrants a waiver of the penalty.

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| <b>1<sup>st</sup> offense:</b> | \$250 fine |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> offense:</b> | \$500 fine |



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**3<sup>rd</sup> offense:** \$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 the first Tuesday 30 days before the event, unless indicated differently in the specific qualification criteria. The USAT Nomination Deadline for all events will be 11:59 p.m. 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](#).

## Relay Selection

### Athlete Selection Process

1. **Selection:** Selection of individual athletes in the individual race at the same event for Mixed Relay (“**MR**”) 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, return from pregnancy;
  - 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 4<sup>th</sup> leg of MR;
    - 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.



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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 (Scott Schnitzspahn, [scott.s@usatriathlon.org](mailto:scott.s@usatriathlon.org)). In addition, athletes are encouraged to contact the Athlete*



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*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 General 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)

Website: [usathlete.org](http://usathlete.org)