



VCCL Handicapping Guidelines

- **Guidelines**
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- **Background**
- The major attraction behind running within a handicapping system is that athletes of varied ability, age and sex may compete on a level playing field in a competitive environment. An effective handicapping system should facilitate that competition.
- **Aim**
- This document sets out to provide simple handicapping guidelines for races operated by the Victorian Cross Country League. Guidelines will provide a consistent approach for developing, reviewing and amending handicaps, rewarding in form consistent runners as well as settling handicapping appeals.
- From time to time, the Handicapper may vary from this approach for select races, but will advise in advance when this will occur.
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- **Definitions and Interpretations**
- **"Athlete Categories"** There are three (3) age categories of athlete
 - **"Open Athlete"**: Athletes up to the Age of 39
 - **"Veteran Athlete"**: Athletes between 40 and 55
 - **"Masters Athletes"**: Athletes 56 and over
 - **"Athlete Classes"** There are three (3) classes of athlete:

- *"Established Athletes"* Athletes who have run more than ten (10) times with the VCCL in the most recent two (2) season period are considered established.
- *"Novice Athletes"* Athletes new to the VCCL who have had less than ten (10) runs in the most recent two (2) season period or under the age of 20, or returning from injury are considered novice athletes.
- *"Recent Winner"* Athletes who have won a race in the last or current season or 36 races, whichever is the lesser.
 - **"Handicap or Mark"** is the calculated time difference for an athlete from the net time.
- **"Net Time"** is the reference point for handicaps. The handicapper will handicap to a net time and those performing below net time may be subject to Review.
- **"Converted Time"** In order to compare performances over a variety of distances, the Handicapper will convert times for measurement versus Net Time.
- **"Season"** a season is a calendar year.
- **"Spot"** athletes within a time band will be allocated a spot which has a start time.
- **"Sample"** refers to the group of performances used to determine a Personal Best.
- **"Sample Size"** will vary depending on the age of the Athlete on the following basis:
 - *Open Athlete:* All performances or 4 seasons whichever is the lesser
 - *Veteran Athlete:* 24 VCCL runs or 3 seasons
 - *Masters Athletes:* 12 VCCL runs or 2 seasons
- **"Novice Mark"** means the starting mark for Novice Athletes first run. Novice Marks are currently set at:
 - Open Athlete: Men spot 15, Women spot 30
 - Veteran Athlete: Men spot 20, Women spot 35
 - Masters Athletes: Men spot 30, Women spot 45
- **"Better than the Novice Mark"** In the event that an Athlete has submitted personal best times lower than the Novice Mark or in the opinion of the handicapper has the ability to run better than the Novice Mark based on other athletic results then the allotted handicap may be less than the Novice Mark with marks to be reviewed in accordance with the Novice athlete review system.
- **"Ceiling Mark"** An athletes personal best (PB) will determine a Ceiling Mark. The Ceiling Mark should be the best mark an athlete can receive until the personal best time drops out of the sample and a new ceiling time is calculated. A *Recent Winners* winning mark will become the ceiling mark for 18 runs or two (2) seasons whichever is less.
- **"Review"** means checking an athlete's handicap. *Established* athletes will have marks assessed when they are eligible for a review.
- **"Eligible for review"** *Established Athletes* and *Recent Winners* will have fulfilled the criteria to have their handicap reviewed if they have had:
 - 6 runs; or

- 4 runs outside the top 10; or
- 2 runs outside the top 20.
- When there are less than 30 runners in the field, the top 10 reverts to the top third of the field and top 20 reverts to the top two thirds of the field.
 - *Novice athletes* will be assessed on a regular basis until the handicapper is confident that the assessed mark is appropriate and that the Novice athlete has overcome injury (if applicable). While a runner is a Novice marks can move out or back until the handicapper deems that the runner has become Established.
 - **“Handicapping Review Panel”** The VCCL committee will appoint a two (2) person review panel to assist the handicapper. The review panel will look for circumstances where the guidelines may not have been applied and seek clarification from the handicapper.
 - **“Review Request”** Should an athlete consider that their mark is not appropriate and providing that they have a reasonable basis for the request the handicapper will conduct a review upon request to be checked by the handicapping review panel. Review Requests should be submitted to vcclhandicapper@gmail.com.au and will be answered within 7 days during the Cross Country season.
- **“Handicap Penalty”** means the penalty applied for winning. Firstly the athlete will be adjusted back to net time (if net time was broken). Then a penalty will be applied within the range of 1 to 7 spots depending on the winning margin, the prestige and prize money in the race, strength of the field.
- As a general rule the penalty for first place prizemoney will be:
 - 1 Spot for each \$50 of Prizemoney; and then
 - 4 Spots for Prizemoney of \$200 to \$400
 - 5 Spots for Prizemoney \$401 to \$600
 - 6 Spots for Prizemoney \$601 to \$800
 - 7 Spots for Prizemoney over \$801
- **“Handicap Appeal”** All athletes have the right to appeal handicaps should they have an unsatisfactory handicap review request and the VCCL Committee will convene an appeals committee to hear the appeal.
- **“Lift”** refers to the process of increasing marks. Lifts should be considered in the following circumstances:
 - *established athletes* who are below ceiling time and who are eligible for review
 - *novice, veteran and masters athletes* who are uncompetitive
 - *recent winners* who are below their winning mark and who are eligible for review.
 - **“Classic Races”** Certain prestigious races in the season may be classified by the VCCL committee as ‘Classic’. In classic races the handicapper may use

their discretion to provide lifts for the classic event only for established athletes and recent winners. Handicaps should not exceed Ceiling marks.

- **“New Season Adjustments”** At the commencement of a new season the Handicapper will review all athletes. Marks may be adjusted for all athlete classes but must be checked by the Handicapping Review Panel before the first race. Normal Review Request guidelines apply.
- **“Related parties”** means that person or any relative of that person. Training partners or groups of athletes are not related parties.
- **“Conflicts of Interest”** It is accepted that there will be conflicts of interests within the VCCL the following steps will be taken to address identified conflicts:
 - The Handicapper will not handicap related parties.
 - The Handicapping review panel will not review related parties handicaps.
 - The Appeals Committee will not preside over cases involving related parties.
 - If the Handicapper is also an Athlete they will be handicapped by the Handicapping review panel and will be eligible to compete and receive prize money.
 - Any issues with conflicts of interest can be dealt with in the same manner as the Handicap appeal.