

THE DECATHLON ASSOCIATION

DECA Newsletter

Volume XXXXIV

Number 19

May (2), 2019

IAAF QUALIFYING



New System in Place Are You Ready for This?

Hello Again....This edition offers commentary on the new IAAF procedure to qualify for World Championships and Olympic Games. If you are unaware, there is a new qualifying procedure in place. Yet it is not easy to understand. It affects high level combined event athletes. Also, and most important, it is not well thought out, silly and unfair to some athletes and to some CE meets. Here are a few basics.

Summary: I must admit that I've had to have some of it explained to me and it's not simple. But for anyone aspiring in the future to qualify for either the world champs or Olympic Games, pay attention. The IAAF has a new qualifying procedure that includes not only the normal decathlon score, but also how one places at meets (and the meets themselves are ranked in importance). It also requires the score/placing at *two* CE meets made within the qualifying period and averages them. Whew!

First, note that the qualifying period is normally from January 1st of the previous year until a few weeks before the championship meet. *This has not changed.*

Second. CE athletes are going to be ranked by a new procedure using final decathlon score and place. This is called: Performance Score = Result Score + Place Score (bonus). Here is an example. Let's say that you achieve a score of 8294 points. A new table (Spiriev Tables) allows 1172 points for a 8294 score. But the 1172 is adjusted depending upon where it was made and your place in the meet.

			<u>Result score</u>	<u>+</u>	<u>bonus</u>	<u>=</u>	<u>performance score</u>
8294	backyard meet	any place	1172	+	0	=	1172
8294	USA nationals	1st place	1172	+	60	=	1232
8294	USA nationals	8th place	1172	+	20	=	1192
8294	NCAA D-I	1st place	1172	+	45	=	1217
8294	NCAA D-I	8th place	1172	+	15	=	1187
8294	CE Challenge meet	1st place	1172	+	110	=	1282
8294	CE Challenge meet	13th place	1172	+	0	=	1172

So, one can see that an 8294 Result Score means a much different Performance Score, depending upon the meet and the place. Now, one has to do this *twice* within the qualifying period and the performance scores are *averaged*. Confused yet? And one can use indoor heptathlon scores (separate Spiriev table) as well as long as they are made within the qualifying period. Using indoor heptathlon (not a balanced event....3 races, 3 jumps, 1 throw) scores is silly, almost absurd.

Third. Why the change? Your guess is as good as mine. I suspect that in the past some athletes achieved qualifying marks to WC or OG in, shall we say, less important meetings. This is possible in open events where the athlete has many opportunities and can compete weekly. It's not true in Combined Events.

Maybe there has been a problem in the past with individual events. I never heard complaints about combined events.

Fourth. How would you know where you stand? The IAAF (via All Athletics) claims that the lists will be frequently updated. Your standing is available at:

<https://www.iaaf.org/world-rankings/decathlon/men?regionType=world&page=1>

Fifth. How fair is this? Well, not very. It awards bonus points for places in less competitive meets. All decathlon meets are not the same. A 6th place, say at Gotzis (likely to be 8200-8300 score) is not the same as a 6th place at MutiStars or Ratingen (likely to be 7700-7800 score), yet the athlete is given the same number of bonus points. Same for national meets, regional or area. NCAA I meet is included but not D II, III or even NAIA. In my old coaching days I can tell you that NCAA II decathletes were, on occasion, of higher quality than D-I, and the NAIA was even better. Note that, from 1972 thru 2008, 11 of America's 27 Olympic decathletes (40%) were from D-II, D-III or NAIA schools.

But the biggest problem is that indoor heptathlons in the new format favoring athletes who are weak throwers.

Sixth. What could happen? First, athletes must pay attention to their IAAF "performance score" may compete more frequently and may be a bit more choosy about where. Also one will need two scores within the qualifying period. No longer will a single score do.

Seventh. For a formal explanation from the IAAF here are the sites you must get familiar with.

<https://www.iaaf.org/world-ranking-rules/basics>

<https://www.iaaf.org/world-rankings/decathlon/men?regionType=world&page=1>

Eighth. Then procedure has been tested using data from the last few competitive years and the results are conclusive....this is very unfair.....most CE experts call it absurd. And it is. It gives a big advantage to those who get their scores in non-competitive meets. For example, an athlete who scores 8007 points at Gotzis last year would have been 13th, so no bonus points. Yet if the same athlete is, say 2nd at the Commonwealth Games with the same score, that is worth 70 bonus points. This is soooooo confusing and, at a time when it is important to make our sport more understandable to the general public, is a step backward. How can anyone understand this! And there is sure to be many complaints from athletes boxed out of a qualifying spot at WC or OG by other athletes who have lower competitive scores. That'll be tough to explain.

Why the Change? I'm unsure. But it likely has to do with athletes chasing and achieving qualifying marks in meets that are relatively unimportant.

I can tell you that the CE community did not want this since it will allow undeserving athletes to qualify for major championships which will have upper limits to field size....usually 24. This was sprung by the IAAF without time for reflection or comment. It's now the law of the land. I keep thinking that I'll wake up and all of this will be 'fake news.' No such luck.

Frank Zarnowski

May 8, 2019

