

Welcome to interstate athletes competing in the VAL

There are a number of athletes from interstate who will be competing in the VAL for the first time this season over the next few weeks. I would like to welcome them and provide a few comments in regards to handicaps.

An athlete's starting mark in the VAL cannot be greater than the finishing mark for the previous season. This includes interstate athletes. For each distance there is a starting time (available on the VAL website) and if your best rating off your last handicap takes you under that starting time your handicap will be reduced to line up with the start time. Again this applies to both local and interstate athletes.

If you haven't raced in the VAL before your starting handicap will be on or behind the novice mark for that distance (also available on the VAL website), depending on your past performances.

VAL marks are tighter than other leagues

It is important for interstate athletes to understand that the handicaps across all distances are significantly tighter than other leagues. As a result your handicap in the VAL will generally be less than elsewhere and winning times generally will be slower. When looking at your handicap, I'd encourage you to make the comparison to the VAL handicaps of other athletes that compete elsewhere, rather than your interstate marks.

Athletes need to run to form to be eligible for a lift

In order to be considered for a lift all athletes, including those from interstate, need to run at or close to their recent best form. Simply turning up and going through the motions will not entitle you to a lift.

Lodging of outside performances is essential.

It is essential to provide full details of your best performances on registering. We regularly check athletes outside performances and if PBs are not provided accurately, a harsh stance will be taken on handicaps and other penalties may also apply. **Once you have registered with the VAL it is a requirement to lodge all outside performances on a regular basis.** This includes performances with other leagues. It is in the athlete's interest to do so as it provides the handicapper with some confidence in regards to reviewing handicaps if we know we are being kept updated. Without that confidence we are more likely to be conservative.

As well as interstate athletes, all VAL athletes who have competed interstate during the Christmas carnivals also need to comply with this.

Congrats to the VAL athletes who competed at the Bay

Well done to all VAL athletes that took part at the Bay Sheffield carnival in Adelaide. In particular congratulations to those that enjoyed success (on the track rather than at the after parties). Winners were Josh Tiu in the Open 70, Matthew Boyes in the Vets 120, Chris Cato in the U20 120 and Mark Hipworth in the fronties 1600. Well done also to Wally Meacham, whose two wins at the Bay add to an impressive start to the season for his stable.

Happy New Year to all and see you at the track.

Mark O'Brien, Chief Handicapper