

Sept 21, 2010

Dear Athletes & Coaches

On behalf of the handicapping panel I'd like to welcome you all to the exciting forthcoming Victorian Athletic League season, which commences in less than 4 weeks. With entries closing next Monday for the opening meeting at Epping, I'd encourage you to get your registration and entry in this week. The entry booklet is up on the website at it details new meetings, more prizemoney and a fantastic season ahead.

The handicapping panel for season 2010/2011 will consist of myself as Chief Handicapper, Terry O'Donnell, Graeme Goldsworthy and Graeme Watkins as Assistant Handicappers. The two Graeme's bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the panel as former successful athletes and coaches and will be a tremendous addition. Terry and Graeme Goldsworthy will be focusing on the 70 through to 300 and Graeme Watkins will be assisting with the distance events.

There have been some changes to the Handicapping guidelines which I'd like to make you aware of. They are:

- 3 satisfactory performances required for established athletes to receive a handicap lift in the 70, 120 and 800 (already in existence for the 400 and 1600).
- Starting and ceiling handicaps for established athletes will be based on best rpm from last 5 years and next best rpm from last 2 years.
- All participants in events that are conducted 7 times or less during a season are classified as OGA.
- The 200 is a standalone event and no longer directly linked to the 120. As such penalties for a win over 200 won't automatically apply to the 120 and athletes competing over the 200 won't receive a credit towards the 120

It is worth pointing out that an established athlete is someone who has competed in at least 5 meetings the previous season and at least 20 meetings over the last 5 years, over that distance only. All other athletes are regarded as under ongoing assessment (OGA) and as such can have their mark reviewed after each start. Once an established athlete has achieved the required number of satisfactory performances they can be lifted either one or 2 times the minimum graduation (0.25-0.50 of a metre in the case of the 70 & 120). For a performance to be regarded as satisfactory it will need to be consistent with the athlete's recent form, subject to track and weather conditions. If in the opinion of the handicapping panel an athlete requires and has earned more than the minimum graduation, they will receive it. We are looking to encourage regular participation and consistent form.

The other important cornerstone of our handicapping will be communication with athletes and coaches. I'll be providing regular updates on the website and at the meetings and will be making it a priority to meet with all athletes during the season. If at any time you have a genuine and reasonable enquiry you can forward an email to the VAL office marked attention to myself and I'll respond accordingly. Alternatively you can phone the office with your enquiry or to make an appointment. All enquiries are to go through myself rather than any of the assistant handicappers.

Finally our best wishes for your training over the last few weeks of pre-season and we look forward to some exciting racing.

Mark O'Brien, on behalf of the VAL Handicapping Panel