



2004-2005  
HANDICAPPING INFORMATION

**Introduction**

Welcome everyone to the 2004-2005 season, particularly our new members. We are looking forward to yet another enjoyable season for all those associated with our sport.

Last season a handicapping system was introduced to begin to bring the principles of handicapping clearer to the attention of athletes and thus create greater accountability on both handicappers and athletes. Horse racing has also introduced systematic handicapping in the last twelve months. The introduction of the system into the VAL was integral in ensuring greater athlete participation and ultimately it delivered some fantastic close racing. Analysis of race results showed a massive increase in the closeness of races last season compared to recent previous seasons. Some teething problems were encountered, however ultimately proved a resounding success. The handicappers became more proficient with the workings of the system as the season went on and once they had fully grasped the finer details they began to use the powers within the system more effectively. The season culminated in the closest Stawell Gift for over many years.

Upon completion of the season a further review of the system and handicappers was undertaken. This was completed with the assistance of the handicappers, stewards and the VRTA feedback. Further refining of the system was co-ordinated which has been implemented for this season. Therefore some aspects of the system from the previous year are still the same, however others have been removed or amended. Further additions have also been included.

In summary it is clear that a Handicapping System is essential so that athletes and other interested parties clearly understood the way handicaps are derived and what they can do to positively impact them. Systems are required to strongly reinforce quality control and so that athletes and trainers can clearly understand that they had to compete in order to maximise their handicap opportunities. Only by running can the officials be sure that they have properly evaluated an athlete's abilities and give them a fair handicap. New members will be allocated what is termed Novice Marks, these are further explained, later in this newsletter.

**Objectives**

The objective is to set up a System which encourages athletes to compete regularly, consistently and to the best of their ability. This is achieved by introducing a structured lifting policy where if you compete a certain number of times (different for each event category, and outlined at the end of this document), consistently and to the Stewards' satisfaction, you will be lifted. This then aligns the health of our sport with what's in the athletes' best interests.

**How does it work?**

Each established athlete will be handicapped mathematically on the basis of their three best performances (out of a sample size of their last 20 carnivals over that distance or similar distance at the start of the season) in terms of the time taken to complete the distance travelled. An additional best performance in the last seven years has been included in the average irrespective of the number of carnivals completed. However if the performance is more than five years old and is no longer reflective of the athletes abilities then the handicapper has discretion to exclude that performance from the average. This rate per metre (RPM) calculation therefore takes into consideration the athlete's handicap when assessing a performance or a history of performances including their capacity performance.

Based on the times we're wanting all athletes to complete the race in at the start of the season (the Starting Target Time) and the end of the season (the Ceiling Target Time), the handicaps are calculated. The Starting Handicap is calculated and given to the athlete when they commence competition, and the Ceiling Point Handicap can be earned by running regularly and consistently. Athletes will commence the season from their finish mark of the previous season unless the RPM average states that their mark is less in accordance with the Starting target time. Athletes will only commence the season from their finish mark if the RPM states their nominal start point is greater than their previous finish handicap. In other words an athlete's starting handicap, however will not be greater than their last competition irrespective of the mathematical rating. Those who won Classic or Group 1 events during the previous season will also be subject to a discretionary pull equivalent to the minimum graduation for the that distance or event type. (See lift range shown in the attached table).

The mathematical rating based on the RPM will assist in identifying a Ceiling Point (CP) for athletes handicaps which is not an entitlement and is merely a mathematical capacity point which athletes must demonstrate they need via competing and passing the tests required by the handicappers and stewards. In other words every performance is an integrity test to ensure an athlete needs the handicap allocated and needs a handicap at or near their CP.

There is an allowance on top of the Ceiling Point Handicap that the Handicapper can use to take into consideration the age of a performances (but only if the athlete has earned their Ceiling Point Handicap). The allowance is applied discretionarily and acknowledges the length of time since an athlete has performed at his/her best and an athlete's eligibility for veteran status.

Sufficient number of Acceptable Performances (AP's) entitle an athlete to a lift from within the relevant ranges (see table for ranges etc). See below for a similar discretionary application of NAP's. Any lift is to be due is to be awarded for the next carnival to be declared for which the athlete is entered into.

Sufficient acceptable performances (the numbers vary from distance to distance and are shown at the end of this document) entitle an athlete to a lift where the actual amount is discretionary within a range (also shown in this document).document). This is then added before the **next Carnival where handicaps have not been declared. Carnival declaration dates will also be advertised to ensure athletes and handicappers know when acceptable performances equalling lifts are included in handicap or when they are due for inclusion in that handicap.**

**Categories of Performance**

Each run is assessed and placed in one of three categories:

**Acceptable Performance (AP):** the athlete ran within the acceptable range of times and the Stewards were happy with his/her effort. The acceptable range of times is determined from the set deviation from the fastest adjusted heat time of the event. Any athlete achieving a time faster than that deviation parameter and satisfying the stewards test shall be deemed an AP. (Conditions apply). Please also note that heat winners shall be regarded as having a heat AP irrespective of their time provided their semi final or final is inside the deviation parameter (ie : Unchallenged heats or walkovers). Also note that if the fastest heat time breaks the target time the next fastest heat time (not breaking target time) shall be used to apply the deviation for acceptable parameters. See the table for the deviations.

**Non-acceptable Performance (NAP):** the athlete didn't run within the acceptable range of times as per the average for the event despite the Stewards being satisfied with the athlete effort.

**Unsatisfactory Performance (UP):** the athlete was deemed to have not given full effort throughout the race irrespective of times recorded inside the event average or outside the event average. (An athlete does not need to be officially charged for a UP to be allocated to the performance, they can be merely spoken to about their effort or substandard performance).

**Progression and Winners**

To be assessed as having an acceptable performance, each of the runs in a Carnival over similar distances must be acceptable. Hence, one NAP, or UP over that distance at the carnival over-rides the AP.

For an athlete to be eligible for a lift requires a series of Acceptable Performances (AP) (varying by event). A NAP does not count toward an Acceptable Performance but does not cancel any out. If an athlete records NAP's of the same amount required as if they were AP's then the handicapper can discretionarily lift within the same lift range. A UP cancels any Acceptable Performances or NAP's being counted over that distance or a similar distance.

A notable difference this season is the introduction of certain athletes that may meet the above criteria but their placing in the event alters whether they are entitled to a mandatory lift or discretionary lift. Any event winner will not be lifted for that performance, and 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> placegetter will only be lifted discretionarily for that performance and a Classic or Group 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> placegetter will not be accredited with any lift credit for that performance.

- New Athletes** It's obviously more difficult to determine how to treat new athletes as we don't have many past performances to assess. New athletes or athletes that have not yet recorded a large sample of performances in a particular event or similar event are classified as under ongoing assessment (OGA) for that event or similar event. This can be designated for an event or for all events. These athletes will start on the novice mark or behind and will be subject to a discretionary lift as outlined in the attached table. The only time they will start on a higher mark than novice is if they have earned that mark via competition and it is their finish mark and the mathematical rating does not state a lesser position. OGA athletes are never guaranteed a lift in that distance and can be re-assessed at any time if warranted (although a lift requires them to have completed a number of acceptable performances). They become treated as regular competitors once they are no longer within the definition of OGA or have competed over the distance or similar distance in at least at least 20 VAL carnivals or until the Handicappers are satisfied. At this stage they then fall into the standard system.
- Novice Marks** There will be novice marks by distance for every even type and distance (for example, novice marks for Veterans, Women and "Open" competition). These will be published at the commencement of the season.
- Interstate Athletes** As with new athletes, interstate athletes must be treated differently to local athletes since it's much harder for them to come over and compete in VAL competition. They have their own treatment as outlined in the attached table.
- All Interstate athletes this season will be treated as OGA and can only be lifted by meeting the same criteria as Victorians. They will be handicapped at the STT, the same as Victorians for all events pre Christmas, however after Christmas they will be handicapped to the mid range position. They can not be lifted from this position without competing in VAL competition. If they have not competed in the VAL before they will receive the novice mark or less.
- Performances that improve your RPM** Athletes will periodically create personal bests or run to a level that changes their calculated RPM. For this reason, the RPMs are continually assessed throughout the season and the Ceiling Point adjusted accordingly. If, however, the athlete's performance means that their existing handicap is greater than their Ceiling Point they may be subject to a handicap re-adjustment at the discretion of the handicapper.
- Athletes Under 21** Athletes under 21 years of age can very easily improve dramatically from season to season. Therefore all athletes aged under 21 years at the commencement of the season are under constant improvement assessment. They therefore can be re-adjusted from any previous mark at any time if the handicapper feels that the improvement is such that the current or previous handicap is now inappropriate when compared to the field. Any re-adjustment will be aimed to ensure the athlete still remains competitive despite the handicap adjustment. This same clause applies to all OGA athletes over the relevant distance or event.

**Amateur Performances**

Amateur performances also count in the calculation of a person's handicap, however only discretionarily. A Personal Best performance by an athlete in amateur competition or a performance that may improve their current rating has no bearing on the athlete's handicap unless it improves the RPM within the rating sample. If it does change that RPM, the CP is re-adjusted and possibly the current handicap.

However, performances in amateur competition on synthetic/rubber/mondo shall be assessed with discretion with regard to its comparison if performed on a good/fast grass track. This is a discretionary assessment by the handicapper for imposition or non-imposition on the RPM rating or CP.

**Stawell Handicaps**

Stawell has to be evaluated slightly differently as it attracts by far the greatest number of genuinely elite athletes. Therefore, all athletes that are ranked in the top 15 in Australia over the distance they will be competing in at Stawell (or a similar distance) as at completion of February 2004 will be automatically handicapped to the Ceiling Target Time in accordance with their RPM calculation. International athletes that would be ranked within the same ranges shall also be handicapped the same.

Also, all previous Stawell Gift Finalists are permitted to be handicapped to 12.35 in accordance with their RPM irrespective of where their handicap was at the completion of Stawell declaration date. If the handicap was fully maximised via the lifting policy to achieve 12.25 they will remain in that position.

Finally, the handicapper may grant additional handicap portions to the handicap achieved by Stawell Declaration date (Normally by Bendigo but that may not be the case this season, to all athletes based on the criteria in the attached table). These amounts are "up to and including".

**Standard Penalties**

There will be a set penalties table released at the start of the e season. So, for every event the handicapper has a range of penalties he can impose (taking into consideration the winning margins and times). The table will also mention any other events which may be affected and this penalty is applied discretionarily. Note that any break of target time ensures that at the very least the athlete must be taken back to target time position irrespective of penalty table. However the penalty issued is usually given from the winning handicap position and should generally be inclusive of any target time breaking.

Interstate wins by Victorians or Interstate athletes will be assessed by the handicapper and a discretionary penalty may be applied.

**Key Points**

As a sport we need to ensure that athletes who enter and run are given every chance to succeed. The system is designed to clearly reinforce this requirement – therefore run often, consistently and to the best of your ability and you will be rewarded. The system will ensure you are competitive.

#### Discretionary Allowances for Stawell Handicaps

<b>Distance</b>	<b>All Athletes</b>	<b>With an Outstanding Acceptable Performance</b>
70 metres	0.50 metres	0.75 metres
100 metres	0.50 metres	0.75 metres
120 metres	0.50 metres	0.75 metres
200 metres	1 metre	2 metres
400 metres	2 metres	4 metres
550 metres	3 metres	5 metres
800 metres	4 metres	6 metres
1,500 metres	10 metres	20 metres
1,600 metres	10 metres	20 metres
3,200 metres	20 metres	40 metres

#### **Anomalous Handicaps :**

All athletes that competed in the VAL last season shall be handicapped in every relevant distance or event category at the commencement of the season in accordance with the above criteria. By handicapping all potential entries at the beginning of the year, the rush to allocate handicaps at the end of the season is minimised thus reducing potential error. The athletes handicap for an event will become publicly available once that athlete enters that distance or event category. Upon completion of the marks the handicapper shall sort them in an ascending order and review them with common sense to ensure they look appropriate and proportionate to each other. If any handicap appears anomalous by being too generous or too tight, despite meeting the above criteria the handicapper can apply to the board for further review to manually search history and allocate a more appropriate handicap for that event. Upon approval by the board, the handicapper may apply this discretionary power to overcome any anomaly. Similarly the board can direct the handicapper to alter a handicap if it has not been correctly applied via the criteria to avoid any anomalous handicap that is too generous or too tight. Any such approvals must be recorded and the reasons for same recorded and filed at the VAL office for release on any appeal etc.

#### **Amending Declared Handicaps :**

No handicap will be altered after declaration unless there is obvious error by the handicapper in accordance with handicap allocation criteria or administration error. The only other circumstances that there would be an amendment would be for recent winning penalties to be applied or steward penalties to be applied. The allocation of withheld marks shall be kept to a minimum or will be virtually non-existent via the allocation of handicaps for all potential entrants at the commencement of the season.

**Declaration Dates :**

All credits for performance from AP's and matured descretionary NAP's that have been performed should be accredited to a handicap at the time of these

<b>CARNIVAL</b>	<b>DECLARATION DATE</b>	<b>MEETING DATE</b>
Barham-Koondrook	07/10/04	16/10/04
Bacchus Marsh	20/10/04	02/11/04
Cranbourne	28/10/04	07/11/04
Dandenong Show	03/11/04	13/11/04
VRTA / Whittlesea	03/11/04	14/11/04
Essendon	15/11/04	28/11/04
Zatopek	20/11/04	04/12/04
Box Hill	30/11/04	11/12/04
Mitchell Shire	30/11/04	12/12/04
Northcote	07/12/04	19/12/04
MCG	TBA	TBA
Maryborough	21/12/04	01/01/05
Rye	21/12/04	08/01/05
Ringwood	05/01/05	16/01/05
Wangaratta	11/01/05	22/01/05
St.Bernards	18/01/05	30/01/05
Sandringham	25/01/05	06/12/05
Ballarat	01/02/05	12/02/05
Ararat	01/02/05	13/02/05
Keilor	07/02/05	19/02/05
Heidelberg	16/02/05	25/02/05
Noble Park	17/02/05	27/02/05
Geelong	22/02/05	05/03/05
Bendigo	28/02/05	12 - 13/03/05
Burramine	07/03/05	19/03/05
Stawell	28/02/05	26 - 28/03/05

**Ongoing Assessment Athletes (OGA) :**

These are athletes whom are either Novice status, Under 21 years, New athletes, do not satisfy established athlete criteria, or any athlete that has not competed in more than 8 races (5 races for events not offered regularly) over the distance or similar distance in the previous twelve months in VAL competition.

**NOTE :**

(Heats count as one race, semi's count as one race and final count as one race).

These athletes have the fortunate position of having the capacity to be lifted larger portions (refer table) upon completion of the required number of acceptable performances.

However they also have the disadvantage of not being guaranteed of any lift at all upon completion of the required number of acceptable performances if the handicapper deems no lift appropriate. Additionally they can be re-adjusted to a lesser mark at any time irrespective of their performances provided that the re-adjustment will continue to ensure they are competitive.

Athletes initially treated in this section shall remain in this category until such time as the season is completed when the status will be reviewed.

**Ceiling Point Target Time :**

Anyone running within the minimum graduation of this time throughout the year can no longer be lifted despite meeting the lifting requirements.

Anyone not achieving the ceiling point target time up to then can be lifted.

Anyone breaking the ceiling point target time before the end of the season can be re-adjusted.

Additionally anyone who bettered the **ceiling point target time** or came extremely close from a **lesser mark** or the **same mark** last year than their **current mark** does not have to be lifted.

**Initial Handicap Allocation ;**

If the handicapper is satisfied that an athletes re-rating is significantly different to previous ratings and their handicap is likely to be moved to a lesser position of significant amount (Particularly in lactic events) the handicapper may place the athlete (with sensible discretion) between the rating parameters provided it does not exceed the athletes rating CP or finish handicap and is appropriate given the handicap position of other athletes. Such an allocation should be brought to the VAL Boards attention.

If an athletes rating suggests that they would require a significant lift from their previous handicap to commence the season, the athlete can not start the season any further out than their finish handicap.

**First start for the Season :**

After any athletes first start for the season the handicapper has a discretionary lift of the "Ongoing Assessment" graduation range to the athlete for their next declared handicap of that distance. This is only applicable after the first start and for their next pending declared start.

**Allowances for Veterans :**

If an athlete is a Veteran at the commencement of the season there are eligible for these concessions. If they become eligible for veteran throughout the season they may also be eligible at the discretion of the handicapper.

5 x minimum graduation for sprint events, above any ceiling rating applied at discretion of handicapper.

8 x minimum graduation for 400m - 800m events, above any ceiling rating applied at discretion of handicapper.

10 x minimum graduation for 1500m - 3200m events, above any ceiling rating applied at discretion of handicapper.

**Allowances for all athletes :**

Minimum graduation for every year old the best performance is. This is capped at 4 x the minimum graduation and shall be applied with discretion.

**Note :**

An acceptable performance in the 200m at Whittlesea/Epping VRTA Carnival will be considered as a credit performance toward the 100m and 120m events. A performance over the 200m here will also assist OGA athletes for a discretionary performance credit in the 100m and 120m events. Also note that the 200m at Maryborough will not have the same effect because there are 100m/120m events offered at that carnival where credits can be earned.