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Tina Davis-Fernandes

Chair

NCAA Division II Men's and Women's Track and Field Committee

Head Coach, Track and Field and Cross Country

California State University, Los Angeles

5151 State University Drive

Los Angeles, CA 90032



Re: Altitude Conversions for Championship Selection

Tina:

On behalf of the Division II Track & Field Coaches of the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association, we recommend the elimination of altitude conversions for National Championships qualification. The actual performance mark accomplished by a student-athlete, regardless of the geographic location of the meet the mark was achieved at, should be the actual performance mark that is used for championships selection.

This recommendation was approved by both the Division II Track & Field Executive Committee and the Division II Track & Field Coaches membership at the 2024 USTFCCCA Convention.

The data behind altitude conversions are rife with inaccuracies, and were not developed based on scientific evidence. The impact that altitude has on athlete performance shows substantial individual variability across the population (Chapman, 2013). Also notably, athletes who are used to living or training at altitude are less affected by competing at altitude (Chapman, 2013). Yet, in contrast to the body of research, the altitude conversions apply the same conversion, regardless of the specific training and living situations of each athlete (e.g., living and training at altitude, or living and training at sea level), and the different impact on each gender. This uniformity results in inaccurate conversion times, with the conversion failing to accurately depict the impact that altitude has on each individual athlete the conversion is applied to, leading to an end result of the random assignment of a converted performance mark to an athlete.

Further contributing to the question of whether these conversions accurately reflect the differences of competition at altitude versus sea level is the fact that conversions do not apply to all the events impacted by this difference. Sprints, jumps, and throws get a positive effect from being at altitude, due to the lower gravity pressure, but not all negatively impacted events receive a conversion. While the NCAA recognizes that sprinting at altitude has performance benefits, and has a negative conversion applied, jumps and throws receive similar performance benefits, but do not have the same negative conversion factor applied. Indoors, six events are not converted, while outdoors, one event is partially

converted and eight events are not converted. In attempting to create a fair process for qualifying to the National Championships, an unfair disadvantage is unintentionally created for over a third of events.

Our recommendation would mean that the actual performance mark achieved in competition by a student-athlete, regardless of geographic location, is the actual performance mark that is counted for National Championships qualification purposes. While well-intentioned, the altitude conversions do not have the effect that they were designed to create, are questionable in their accuracy, and create a disadvantage for the events which are left unconverted despite similar impacts. Removing these conversions would improve competitive equity, and follow in the path of other governing bodies which oversee track and field, including USA Track and Field and World Athletics, neither of which allow altitude conversions in any events.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments you may have. We look forward to speaking with you in the near future to discuss this recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tina Fernandes
President
Division II Track and Field Coaches
Head Men's and Women's Track and Field and Cross
Country
California State University Los Angeles



Sam Seemes
CEO
U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches
Association

cc: Donisha Carter
Assistant Director of Championships and Alliances
NCAA

Sources:

Chapman RF. The individual response to training and competition at altitude. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2013; **47**: i40-i44.

