

Why WMA Age Graded Scoring?

Ever ask the question...who has the best performance in a road race? Your answer might be, "the runner with the fastest time." This answer would be true if performances were based solely on time, which is the case in the Open and age group categories. The first runner across the finish is always the winner.

But, what if you are trying to determine the best performances for prize money within a large age range such as the Masters? This includes ages 40 through 80 and older in some events. Certainly, if it goes to the first runners across the finish it will almost invariably be the 40-44-group excluding all the older runners from any chance of receiving prize money. What is fair about one 40-year age group?

What is the best performance in a 5 km race...a 40-year-old runner posting a 16:20 or, for example, a 65-year-old runner who is timed in 19:02? What about a 53-year-old year who posts a 17:35 or even a 79-year-old runner who covers the course in 23:12?

An innovative and equitable way to score the "best performances" for the runners age 35 and over and 19 and under has been developed. WMA (World Masters Association) did a lengthy and comprehensive study that involved the tracking of hundreds of thousands of times for runners age 35 and over and 19 and under taking into consideration the ageing and slowing process. The result was a formula for each age by sex which converts a runner's actual time to an open time or in theory what a runner would have run in his or her prime. (somewhere in the age range of 21-33)

With this formula it is possible to determine within reason the best performance among all Masters finishers regardless of age or among all finishers. Age graded scoring does not replace the open or age-group scoring

This formula is used for team scoring by totaling the top three or four age/sex-graded times which allows everyone regardless of sex or age to contribute. Male Open runners approximately age 21 to 33 (depending on the race distance) receive no handicap. Males approximately age 34 and over are age-graded. Female Open runners (approximately age 21-33, depending on race distance) are sex-graded with a handicap of approximately .9000 (depending on distance). Females approximately 33 and over are age-graded and then sex-graded. In short, WMA scoring makes everyone age 25 and then compares times.

It is also used for Clydesdale/Filly scoring by age-grading the finishers in each weight group.

Most Oklahoma races use this system for Master's money winners, Teams and Clydesdales. Scoring with the RUNSCORE computer program will automatically score these categories. The vast majority of Oklahoma races use RUNSCORE.

National Masters News has a complete packet on age-graded scoring which includes race walking and track and field. If you would like more information, contact, USATF/Oklahoma at (918) 834-3259 or 633-1510. Or email us at okrunjoe@cox.net. We can send you the age-graded tables and sex-graded factors for each distance.