



Dear Slalom Community,

Recently, the ACA Canoe Slalom Committee (“Committee”) approved the Athlete Selection Procedures (“Selection Procedures”) for the Junior, U23 and Senior Canoe Slalom (“CSL”) and Extreme Canoe Slalom (“CSLX”) Teams, which among others govern participation at the 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships (“2019 CSL World Championships”).

Several members of the Potomac Whitewater Racing Center (“PWRC”) community have contacted the Committee before (and since) the Selection Procedures were approved to voice their objection to the Section 15.2.1.2 of the Selection Procedures which requires athletes to compete at international races before competing at the 2019 CSL World Championships. Through this letter, the Committee would like to explain our thought process for the inclusion of Section 15.2.1.2’s requirement.

In 2018, the ACA Canoe Slalom Staff conveyed to the Committee the opinion that the Selection Procedures should require the U.S. Canoe Slalom Athletes to compete in at least three (3) 2019 Canoe Slalom World Cup Series (“2019 CSL World Cups”) competitions before competing in the 2019 CSL World Championships.

The Committee realizes that the 2019 CSL World Championships is (1) the most important competition for the National Team in 2019, and (2) the second most important competition of this quadrennium after the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. Also, the 2019 CSL World Championships is the 2019 Global World Qualification Competition for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 with the U.S. Canoe Slalom Team having realistic chances to qualify multiple Olympic spots at 2019 CSL World Championships. To increase these chances, the U.S. National Team must optimize its preparation for the 2019 CSL World Championships and focus its efforts on athletes that commit themselves to this goal.

ACA Canoe Slalom National Team Coach (“Team Coach”), Rafal Smolen, strongly believes that “athletes need a certain number of high international level competitions to achieve an optimum level of preparedness to the final competition of the season. Between the Team Trials and the 2019 CSL World Championships (in a period of five months), there are five 2019 CSL World Cups competitions. Team Coach Smolen has specifically stated that: “I think that the National Team member should attend a minimum of three of these competitions for optimum preparation.” Also, Team Coach Smolen has conveyed to the Committee (which was corroborated by the two Olympians and Athlete-Members of the Committee) that: “The time around the World Championships will be exceptionally stressful for the athletes. To reduce any additional stressors other than the competition itself, athletes need to have a certain level of comfort with each other. This can be achieved by the Team training and competing together for at least a few weeks after the Team Trials and before the 2019 CSL World Championships.”



As a result, the Committee published a draft Selection Procedures for public comment with the requirement that the U.S. Canoe Slalom Athletes compete in at least three (3) 2019 CSL World Cups competitions before competing in the 2019 Worlds (“Three World Cup Requirement”). The Committee received multiple comments from members of Potomac Whitewater Racing Center (“PWRC”) conveying to the committee that the Three World Cup Requirement was too onerous on student-athletes and working-athletes, thus the Three World Cup Requirement should be removed from the Selection Criteria.

In direct consideration of PWRC’s comments, Committee drafted new Selection Procedures which altered the Three World Cup Requirement to make a less onerous requirement (“First Modified World Cup Requirement”) as follows:

15.2.1.2 To be eligible to compete in the 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships, an athlete must compete in a minimum of two 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup competitions, unless:

15.2.1.2.1 He/She is also a member of the 2019 USA Jr CSL Team or 2019 USA U23 CSL Team, in which case he/she must compete in a minimum of one 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup competition and qualify to the final round of the 2019 Jr/U23 CSL WCH.

15.2.1.2.2. He/She is selected as a replacement athlete due to the removal of another athlete for reasons defined in Section 21.

In response to this First Modified World Cup Requirement, members of PWRC continued to convey to the Committee that the First Modified World Cup Requirement was still too onerous on student-athletes and working-athletes. While the Committee does feel that the First Modified World Cup Requirement was an appropriate compromise and requirement, in direct response to these new comments, another new Selection Procedures was drafted which – again – altered the Three World Cup Requirement to make an even-less onerous requirement (“Second Modified World Cup Requirement”) as follows:

15.2.1.2. To be eligible to compete in the 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships, an athlete must compete in a minimum of two 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup competitions, unless:

15.2.1.2.1. He/She is also a member of the 2019 USA Jr CSL Team or 2019 USA U23 CSL Team, in which case he/she must compete in a minimum of one 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup competition and the 2019 Jr/U23 CSL WCH.

15.2.1.2.2. He/She is selected as a replacement athlete due to the removal of another athlete for reasons defined in Section 21.



Ultimately, the Committee included this Second Modified World Cup Requirement in the Selection Procedures because, in the opinion of the Committee, the U.S. National Canoe Slalom Team needs to (1) maintain presence at the highest-level international competitions like 2019 CSL World Cups and 2019 CSL World Championships and (2) keep improving the results in these. Furthermore, there is a significant concern among the international community about future of Canoe Slalom in the Olympic Games after 2024, since the U.S. will be the hosting nation in 2028, and our athletes' participation and results are going to be looked at by the LA 2028 organizing committee for next few years. As such, the Committee believes that the Selection Procedures, as drafted, strikes a balance between allowing athletes some flexibility in their schedule and making sure the athletes competing in the 2019 CSL World Championships are the U.S.'s best chance for qualifying the Olympic slots at this very important competition.

We look forward to a successful 2019 Canoe Slalom Season, and we express a heartfelt thank you to all those who have conveyed to us comments related to the Selection Procedures.