

Detailed USATF Criteria for Event Directors Regarding Making their Events Eligible to Qualify Athletes for the Olympic Marathon Trials

It's not just the athletes who have to qualify; race directors have to qualify their events as well.

By Phil Stewart

It seems that with every Olympic Marathon Trials cycle there is at least one athlete who experiences the euphoria of bettering the Olympic Marathon qualifying standard only to have his or her performance denied because the race director did not comply with all of the USATF Rules required to have their event accepted as a qualifying event. When this happens, an athlete's heart is broken and a race director wants to jump off a cliff. (For the 2028 trials these standards are 2:16:00 for men and 2:37:00 for women between September 1, 2025 and 60 days before the trials date which has not been announced yet; half marathon times of 1:03:00 for men and 1:12:00 for women run after January 1, 2027 up until 60 days before the trials date),

It has already happened. Less than two months into the qualifying period for the 2028 Olympic Trials Marathon, Tessa Barrett, the women's winner of a the Marine Corps Marathon who bettered the qualifying standard will not have her time count as a trials qualifier *because the race was not sanctioned*. In response, USATF sent out its *criteria for an event to be acceptable as a trials qualifier*. **Every race director of a marathon or a half marathon should play close attention.** The requirements appear [here](#).

Allow plenty of time (months, not days) to complete all of the steps prior to your race date.

For those who have never applied for the required USATF sanction (only one of the requirements to have your event acceptable as a qualifying event), the process is a bit arduous and complex, so allow plenty of time. Complete details about sanctioning appear [here](#), but a short overview follows: The first step is for the race director to become "USATF 3 Step Safe Sport Certified." This involves the race director becoming a USATF Individual Member; undergoing (and passing) a USATF background screening; and becoming USATF Safe Sport certified which involves taking an online course. Complete details appear [here](#).

Please note that as race day approaches, other members of your team who interact directly with elite athletes must be Safe Sport Certified as well. This would include your elite athlete coordinator and any volunteers who work in the elite athlete suite (if you have one). The certification for these individuals has to be completed only prior to race day.

A final note for athletes, coaches and athlete managers – if you have an athlete seeking an Olympic Trials qualifying time, check with the race director to make sure the event meets all of the USATF criteria outlined above.