

USSA Masters Vola SkiAlpPro Capabilities Assessment

2015-2016 Vola SkiAlpPro 4.0.x

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The announcement by USSA in late October 2015 that an exclusive agreement had been signed with Vola for use of the SkiAlpPro software in the 2015-2016 season presented significant challenges to the entire USSA community involved in race timing and administration. Organizers involved in putting on age-class USSA Masters competitions needed to deal with issues specific to age class competition rules, in addition to general aspects of transitioning race administration and timing operations to a new software system.

A working group from the Masters community was formed in November 2015 following the initial US training sessions for the Vola software with the objective of developing procedures and resources for masters competitions to supplement the primary training materials developed through the USSA Alpine Officials Education working group and the support services provided by USSA staff.

The Masters working group has published documentation on procedures, resource files for configuring Vola to support USSA masters rules and recommended formats, and sample event data files for demonstration and training purposes on the Vola operations support page of the ussamasters.org web site.

Resources

- USSA Timing and Race Administration resources:
<http://ussa.org/timing>
- USSA Masters documentation, resources, samples for Vola:
<http://ussamasters.org/raceops/vola>

General Observations

The issues for running masters age class competitions using Vola SkiAlpPro are primarily related to race administration (RA) activities (preparing competitors lists, start lists, and race results). We are not currently aware of any issues with the timing capabilities of Vola that are specific to age-class masters competitions.

It is not possible to run a USSA masters competition with Vola "out of the box" – it is absolutely necessary to have supplementary configuration files installed on the RA's computer for use in preparing start lists and results. Distribution and installation of additional files needed for working with Vola is a significant barrier.

It is essential that an RA has additional training and familiarity with the customizations required for a masters age-class race – start list running orders require a specific filter set be applied to install the masters age class start order rules (MCR rules M1282.3, M1282); format customization is strongly recommended for start list and race results reports to provide suitable age class-related presentation.

The need to use supplementary configuration files (running order filters, report formats) for specific operations can be reduced by using template Vola event files that are pre-configured with appropriate defaults, but again this presents distribution and installation barriers and requires that RA's be educated in how to use.

Vola SkiAlpPro 4.0.x Issues

Built-in USSA Masters age class category definitions

The built-in set of USSA masters age class category definitions (system installation file ***USSA-MA.cat***) that was delivered with the 2016 v4.0.x releases of SkiAlpPro did not use the recommended category name convention requested by the USSA masters working group in November 2015 and which is required by other supporting resources (notably the age class running order filter and its age class report titles).

http://ussamasters.org/vola/scr/requested/vola_change_request_ussa-ma-categories.pdf

The built-in ***USSA-MA.cat*** delivered in v4.0.x was also not updated with the 2016 age group changes in men's groups A, B, and D (M1282.2).

Add USSA Parallel event type for USSA Masters

All USSA Alpine event types should be available in a USSA Masters event. The two event types for Parallel events (qualifications and finals) are not currently supported.

Start List editor needs additional competitor information

When creating or updating a start list order, the competitor's age class category needs to be displayed so that it is possible to work with the order according to the masters age class start order rules (M1283), which require competitors to be placed within age class category. For a second run start order, the first run result (finish time or status) should also be displayed.

Currently the only way to proof a start order or determine insertion position for updating is to exit the ***Start List*** editor and separately run a start list report with the necessary information included. Adding a competitor to a first run start list requires knowing the age class, as does adjusting a second run start list to move unclassified competitors from the end of the list to correct position at the end of their class. And because report preview is a modal view, the report actually has to be generated and saved so it can be printed or viewed while returning to the ***Start List*** editor. This is very tedious and very error-prone.

Unable to include unclassified competitors within age class (filter group) on reports

When generating run or race results reports or second run start lists, there is no way to have unclassified competitors (DNF, DSQ, DNS) listed at the end of their class. The report options provide two options: *Print those not classified* and *Print the unclassifieds after filters*. When both options are specified and filters are used in the report to install age group categories, unclassified competitors are listed only at the end of the report following all qualified competitors by class. Specifying printing of unclassified but turning off the "after filters" option results in no printing of unclassified competitors; no way to get the desired effect of printing unclassified within (at the end) of their filter group.

Need report field that renders time or status for a run result

When generating second run start lists and race results, the report files for *Run 1* and *Run 2* only display times; for an unclassified competitor, no value is rendered. Need a report field with displays the complete information about a run result: time if classified, status if unclassified (DNF, DSQ, DNS).

This is desired on run 2 start lists because unclassified competitors may run at the end of their age class (M1283.4) and we want to display DNF/DSQ status. On race result reports, we wish to display complete information on each run even for unclassified competitors – if they started a run, we should show their result, whether a time or a status indicator.

Unable to assign bibs by group

The standard technique for assigning bibs for championship masters events is to assign bibs sequentially to competitors across age classes or by age; frequently this is done by group so that "holes" can be left in the assigned bib ranges for late additions to the event competitor list. There does not appear to be any way to manage bib assignments that allows this procedure to be performed using the **Assign Bibs** editor.

(maybe do-able by repeated use of filter conditions to insert groups, but at best tedious compared to Split Second capabilities to assign to selected set of competitors)

Need to be able to save Competitor import specifications

Note: *this is a general capability; not specific to masters or age-group competitions*

When importing competitor entries from an external file (e.g. csv or spreadsheet), need to be able to Save and Load the column mapping specifications. This capability of saving configuration specifications is well-supported in many areas of Vola but is missing on the *Import Competitors from a File* operation.

It is common to have standard data formats for loading competitor data from an external source (e.g., an online registration system) and it is extremely tedious and error-prone to have to re-specify input column mappings to Competitor data fields.

Need to be able to enter or import elapsed times

Note: this is a general capability; not specific to masters or age-group competitions

There is currently no easy way to manually enter a competitor's elapsed time – complete start/finish TOD value pairs must be entered before the competitor's time is accepted. For the rare but occasionally encountered scenario when a race must be run without the computer and times need to be entered from the timing tape, this is excruciatingly painful.

Also want to be able to import competitor results (elapsed time or unclassified status DNF/DSQ/DNS) from an external file (e.g, a csv file containing race data). This is essential to assist in preparing sample data files from existing results data.

Event backing store does not preserve multiple start list report format customizations

When preparing a prototype event file which is pre-configured with standard configuration settings (age class categories, running order filters) and report formats, most of the customizations are preserved in the event file. This is extremely helpful in enabling delivery of "starter event" .spro files which are prepared with standard conventions and reduce the need to rely on installation and usage of external configuration files.

For the run start list reports, however, alternate formats for the first and second runs are not saved. (?although differing titles are?) Only the last-used start list format is preserved. This makes it impossible to prepare a prototype event file for a two-run GS or SL race with different formats for the first and second run start lists, as desired for a masters age class competition.

Unable to export results XML for unscored event with small field

If there are less than 10 competitors in the event, the **Export Event** operation to generate the results data XML file fails with error "Penalty calculation is wrong". The export operation should not be executing the penalty calculation for an unscored race (USSA Masters, active USSA code option *Event with Race points=NO*) and blocking the export operation in this case, since the generated XML entries for penalty values in the <MA_raceinfo> section are not used for an unscored event. (The normal results XML is generated in 0.00 and 990.0 placeholder values for penalty entries in an unscored race).

Incorrect handling of short-term membership licenses on ussalivetiming.com

Note: this is a general capability; not specific to masters or age-group competitions

Competitors participating with a short-term USSA membership who are not yet registered in the USSA membership database with a member # are coded in the race data file with a placeholder 7-digit USSA number of the form "M0000001", "M0000002", etc, per instructions from USSA Competition Services, with the only requirement being that a license number be unique within a results XML file for upload to USSA.

The **ussalivetiming.com** site is not handling presentation of these competitors correctly; needs to be able to handle not-yet-registered competitors; cannot assume that any license number can be located in the USSA membership database – use the competitor name in the

race data if the license number is not registered (typically these will be single digit or low double-digit placeholder numbers)

Need capability to include optional auxiliary competitor fields in results XML data file

Note: this is a general capability; not specific to masters or age-group competitions

We need to have a convention for Competitor data fields that can be used to store auxiliary information whose values are included in the exported results XML data file in order to be available for post-race processing applications.

For the 2015-2016 season, masters events set up in Vola used the existing **Club** field in competitor data to encode supporting information needed by division processing and registration systems because **Club** is otherwise unused for our competitions and that value is included in the generated results XML (The **Nation** field was the only other "available" field that gets included in the xml but it was deemed best not to use that field to avoid overlapping other potential uses or possible problems with USSA's results data upload processing). However, the **Club** field started to be used this season in competitor data for scored Alpine competitors in the USSA points list data and was displayed on **ussalivetimes.com**, which is undesirable exposure of supplementary processing data intended only for systems use.

Split Second supports two supplementary data fields for attaching auxiliary data to a competitor entry named "XRef1" and "XRef2"; some equivalent designation of a specific data field e.g. an "Aux" field, or a way of designating existing fields in the backing data store for inclusion in the results xml is needed.

No support for multi-select and bulk edit of competitor fields

Note: this is a general capability; not specific to masters or age-group competitions

There is no way to select and edit data fields of more than one competitor at a time. This bulk-edit capability is an extremely useful capability of Split Second that allows appropriate fields to be set to a specific value for selected sets of competitor entries; completely lacking in Vola.