

Fastest times list isn't perfect

By Charles Clines



There is no one more aware of how the Fastest Times at Metroplex Races list has its flaws. One of the main concerns by me and others is that some courses might not be as accurate as they should be. Some races use courses that haven't been USATF certified, though that doesn't necessarily mean they are not accurate.

I've thought about limited the list to just those runners who compete on certified courses, but I know of some courses that haven't been certified, but are accurate. So, would it be fair not to include those runners?

Yet, there are some events that are conducted and the course measurement is not so accurate. Usually, these courses are easy to detect when times of runners I know are much faster across the board. It's always possible, and probable, that a few runners will enjoy a great day and post a PR. But if more than a few are doing this at a race, the course's length certainly comes under question. Sometimes, the course is correct, but a turnaround cone might have been placed in the wrong spot, causing the course to be short.

However, over the course of a year, I believe the list will reflect the top 15 overall and age group runners. There might be a few who slip in who shouldn't be there, but that's something I can't fully control.

I rely a lot of runners to report to me if they believe a course is not accurate. If someone questions a course, I'll check to see if the course is certified and then check to assure that it was set up correctly. Sometimes, that's not an easy task, and it can be time consuming.

A suggestion was made that the timing companies should include a course's USATF certification number, if it has one, on the results they either post on their websites or send to the media. I believe if runners are concerned, they should check for certification at the [USATF website](#). If, however, the course has been newly certified, it might not be listed. Often, an event's website will post the certification number. If a number isn't listed, I suggest contacting the event to see if it's using a certified course.

The purposes of the Fastest Times is to not only recognize the top 15 runners in each age division, but also to let the competitive runners have fun trying to top each other, and for others to see just how much they need to improve to move into a spot on the list. It should be a fun thing, but it also should be fair. I try to be aware of times that seem too fast and there have been a few races that I didn't include their times.