Questions and Answers about the New Steel Challenge Classification System

By Zack Jones, L4038

In July 2016, USPSA deployed an updated classification system. Since that time we’ve received a number of questions regarding it. This article lists some of the questions and answers about the updated classification system. If you have a question that isn’t addressed here, please feel free to contact the steel challenge classification POC, Zack Jones at zack@uspsa.org.

Q: Why do we have a new classification system? What was wrong with the old one?

A: The old classification system did not include classifications broken down by division. Your classification was your fastest stage time shot in any of the centerfire divisions. With the updated classification system, we now have classifications for all divisions to include Rimfire, which under the old system was not used for classification.

Q: What are Peak Stage Times? How were they determined and will they be reviewed/updated in the future?

A: Borrowing from USPSA terms, the Peak Stage Time (PST) is the high hit factor for the stage. Because steel challenge does not have hit factors a new name, to signify the fastest stage time, needed to be created. The original PSTs where published in the December 14, 2014 USPSA Board of Directors minutes. As we got closer to implementing the new classification system, the original PSTs where reviewed and in some cases revised based on the results from the past two World Speed Shooting Championships. In addition, PSTs where determined for the two Rimfire rifle divisions and the currently provisional Carry Optics and Pistol Caliber Carbine divisions. PSTs for all divisions will be reviewed at least once annually at the conclusion of the World Speed Shooting Championship. Periodically informal reviews will take place upon the completion of Level 2 or 3 matches.

Q: If PSTs are reviewed and perhaps lowered, does that mean my classification could drop as a result of the review?

A: Yes and no. After the annual review, if a PST is lowered, it’s possible your classification
percentage will be lower; however, your letter classification will not be lowered. Once a letter has been earned it is retained regardless of your current percentage. This holds true even if your percentage drops below the threshold for your current letter classification.

**Q:** Is your classification based on your four fastest stages out of the eight or do you have to shoot all 8 stages before you become classified.

**A:** To become classified you must shoot a minimum of four different stages in a division. Once you have shot the four stages, and the results are uploaded to the Steel Challenge web site, your initial classification will be calculated. As you shoot the remaining stages those will be included in your classification. Therefore, it’s possible to be classified based on four, five, six, seven or eight stages.

**Q:** Can you provide an example of how an initial classification is calculated?

**A:** Yes. Let’s assume a competitor is shooting Pistol Caliber Carbine Optics (PCCO). At the club level match, he shoots 5 To Go, Showdown, Smoke &amp; Hope, Roundabout and a made up stage that’s not part of the eight official Steel Challenge stage set. His time for the five stages are: 13.31, 11.26, 9.48, 11.13, and 10.01 respectively. The PSTs for the four official stages are 11.50, 9.00, 8.50 and 9.00. To determine the classification, we sum the stage times (13.31 + 11.26 + 9.48 + 11.13) = 45.18 and we sum the PST’s (11.50 + 9.00 + 8.50 + 9.00) = 38.00. Next we divide the PST total by the stage time total (38.00/45.18) = 0.8425. Finally, we multiply the result of the division by 100 to get the percentage. 0.8425 * 100 = 84.25. A percentage of 84.25 is an A classification in PCCO and very close to M classification.

**Q:** If I shoot a stage slower than my best time will it cause my classification to drop?

**A:** No. Only your fastest times count towards classification. If you shoot a slower time it will be ignored.

**Q:** Under the old classification system I was B in Open and now with the new one I’ve dropped to C. Why did that happen?

**A:** Join the club. The same thing happened to me. In my case the inclusion of Outer Limits and Speed Option caused my percentage to drop below the new B class cut off. I would calculate your percentage excluding those two stages and see if that was the cause for your classification drop.

**Q:** Are PST’s the fastest time ever shot on that particular stage?

**A:** No. There are shooters that are capable of shooting times faster than the PST.
Q: Will the rankings go away for good? It’s always been fun to see where we compared to others around the nation?

A: No. The ranking system will be back but it will become part of the classification lookup page. Once it is implemented when you perform a classification lookup you’ll see, in addition to your letter classification, text similar to the following: You are ranked 100 out of 195 competitors and ranked 15 out of 45 B class competitors. You’ll see an entry similar to the above for each division in which you are classified. Additionally, a top 20 in division ranking page will be created to show the top 20 shooters, by division and class like we have on the USPSA web site.

Q: We use PractiScore for managing our matches and currently there is no way to automatically update classification data for steel challenge matches like you can for USPSA matches. Will this feature be added to PractiScore?

A: Yes. We are currently working with the PractiScore development team to define the file format and other requirements for this process. Once everything is in place you’ll be able to update classifications for all competitors with the tap of a button. Internet access will be required for PractiScore to download the classification update file.

Q: I shot a match earlier this year but I’m not seeing my classification. What could cause that to happen?

A: There are several possible causes:

1 – The match director didn’t upload the activity report to the steel challenge web site. Check the results page (http://steelchallenge.com/steel-challenge-display-match-results.php) and make sure the match is listed. If it’s not listed ask the match director to upload the activity report to the web site.

2 – Assuming the match is listed in the results list, click the match name. If you see a notice that the activity fee hasn’t been paid, contact the match director. Until the applicable activity fee is paid the match results will not be used for classification purposes.

3 – If you see the matches listed (Main Match, PCC, Rimfire Pistol, Rimfire Rifle) look to see if there are any warnings such as missing stage codes (SC-XXX) values. If you see a warning for one of the eight official Steel Challenge stages, then contact the match director. The match director will need to correct the problems and re-upload the activity report.

4 – Verify that your USPSA number is listed in the results shown on the steel challenge web site. If they are missing, contact the match director to have your USPSA number added. If everything appears to check out and you still can’t determine why you can’t see your results in the classification lookup page contact me at zack@uspsa.org and I’ll look into you.

Q: I had to make corrections to a previously uploaded match to add missing USPSA numbers.
When I uploaded the new results I’m prompted to pay the activity fee for the match. I had previously paid the activity fee do I have to pay it a second time? Also once the activity fee is paid will the updated match be used for classification purposes?

A: When you upload corrected match results you do not have to pay the activity fee a second time. Please contact USPSA headquarters at office@uspsa.org and someone will make sure your match is marked as paid. Once the match is marked as paid it will be used by the classification calculation engine on the next weekly update.

Q: There are match scores showing up in my classification results, but I never shot at that match. What could cause this to happen and can it be corrected?

A: Odds are the problem was caused by the wrong USPSA number being entered which results in the scores being applied to the wrong USPSA member. If this happens contact USPSA headquarters at office@uspsa.org and someone will flag the applicable results as invalid for your classification. When contacting the office please provide the name and date of the match along with your USPSA number.

Q: I have a question that’s not related to the classification system that wasn’t addressed here. Would it be alright to contact you with my question?

A: Absolutely. That’s why I’m here. I welcome any and all questions/comments/feedback about steel challenge. Email me at zack@uspsa.org and I’ll answer as quickly as I can. If I can’t answer the question I’ll find someone who can.

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