

Split Second Software Change Request

Software version: National/FIS 6.25 rev. 1 (released 7/1/2012)

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Subject: Improve support for importing standard csv formats

Type: enhancement request

Importance: high

Description:

The current UI for configuring column mappings for a csv data file import is very flexible and works well; the convenience feature that that last-used set of column selections is remembered across operations is very helpful when repeatedly importing from a standard source.

Over the past several seasons, use of online registrations systems has become widely used and a common usage scenario is now that an RA loads competitor race registrations into their Split Second data file by exporting a CSV file exported for the registration system rather than manually entering competitors through the standard data entry UI facilities. Registration systems currently in use for USSA races include ApineReg.com and SkiRaceReg.com (used by most masters divisions), along with an USSA initiative to develop an in-house system.

If an RA needs to load race data from different registration systems for different events, they need to carefully switch their CSV import settings to the mappings for the selected data source. This turns out to be somewhat error-prone – it's easy to get something wrong and not notice.

(Example: the first/last name column values in are in a different order in an AlpineReg data file than in a SkiRaceReg file, so on more than one occasion I've had to work with RA's to unscramble mis-loaded competitor names)

There are several ways that might be considered to add better support in Split Second for loading standard csv file formats that we know are in common use:

1. build the mappings into SST and make available through new File >> Import selections
2. provide column mapping sets via installed config files (standard sets of column specs per <ImportOptions> section recorded in National_FIS_Defaults.NatFIS)
3. add option to use the first row in the data file for the column mapping target (Used For values in the import dialog)

Option 1 is the least flexible and most brittle; bolting down specs for specified outside sources would need ongoing maintenance and entails choices of which get "blessed" for inclusion

Option 2 is flexible and allows customization so each race organizer can customize their own preferred import sets, in addition to any standard mapping specs provided either by the standard Split Second installation or by the vendor (e.g., we'd have standard import specs provided for AlpineReg, SkiRaceReg, etc). The downside of this approach is that we'd be asking RA's do manage files in their Split Second folder directly, which isn't such a good thing for RA's with less advanced computer skills.

Option 3 is probably the easiest for RA's as well as being flexible. The registration system vendors would be responsible for generating the first row in their export data files using column name values defined by Split Second, which would automatically handle the normal load-registrations case. On a per-file basis, the RA is still free to customize the column loading to handle exceptional cases.