



Policy on Junior Participation in Mountain Bike events

DRAFT 17/2/2010 - Revised 26/6/2010

Purpose.

The purpose of this policy statement is to define what MTBA considers to be an appropriate minimum age for participation in mountain bike events.

Coverage.

The MTB events that are currently included in this policy are Cross Country styled; Olympic format, multi-lap (3hr - 24hr) endurance format and marathon (60km and over) format. This policy is only applicable to these activities. MTBA will devise an extension to this policy for gravity activity shortly.

Introduction.

The inclusion of endurance mountain bike events in the form of 24hr MTB racing onto the Australian MTB calendar in late 1999 has led to an explosion in events of this style being conducted all over Australia. Other MTB endurance events such as marathon style events have also started to increase in number, along with participation, over the last few years.

An increasing number of those participating in these events are junior aged, that is under the age of 18 on race day. This, together with the introduction of a children's membership has created the need to more actively define the limits of accessibility of our young members to these events. This policy covers participation from 3 to 18 years of age.

MTBA currently adheres to the guidelines for junior MTB cycling as set down in 1995 by the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Cycling Federation and are used here to set the guidelines for the policy for Olympic styled Cross Country activity. Those guidelines, however, predate the advent of endurance mountain bike events in Australia and thus, to a large extent, are inappropriate for application to endurance mountain bike events.

With increased junior participation and the active courting of school involvement by race organisers in some endurance mountain bike events MTBA needs to ensure that junior participation is at a level that is appropriate based on the best information we have.

For the best physical and skill development of junior participants, consideration must be given to factors related to growth and maturation when assessing readiness for progression in training and competition followed by specialisation and intense training.

MTBA recognizes that young people differ from adults in the quality of their tissues and are not able to take the same stresses. Consequently training and competition must be conducted differently for young people.

The most common problem is soft tissue injuries (muscles, ligaments and tendons) due to trauma or overuse. Rare problems include the risk of

- fractures particularly during the growth spurt when bones are lengthening and are relatively porous; and
- injuries to the growth plate of bones caused by high contact forces or repetitive loading in some sports.

In the context of endurance mountain bike activity MTBA will recognize the developmental aspects of juniors by:

- encouraging appropriate participation in endurance mountain bike events as part of a team structure for younger aged juniors; and
- implementing age restrictions in the specialised area of solo and individual competitions.

The former will serve to develop the basis for long-term participation in mountain biking through the development of life skills (such as communication, concentration and commitment), learning about responsibility and discipline, learning how to work with others in team environments, learning to cope with success and failure, developing a sense of community, loyalty and cohesion and finally, helping some gifted young people become aware they are role models for

others. As age increases specialisation founded on the groundwork of earlier team participation will provide a structured pathway towards elite competition.

Junior Age rulings.

Olympic Style Cross Country.

Age group	participation characteristics	comments
3 - 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single session per week • Activities place an emphasis of fun group learning outcomes • each session no longer than 15 minutes • Genders are not separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions are activity managed by accredited adult • sessions are conducted in full view of parents or responsible adult • No competition aspects
8 - 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single session per week • Activities place an emphasis of fun group learning outcomes • each session no longer than 30 minutes • Genders are not separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions are activity managed by accredited adult • sessions are conducted in full view of parents or responsible adult • No competition aspects
11 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total training per week between 2hr and 5hrs, each session no longer than 1.25hrs or 30km on road • Training activities place an emphasis of skill development; bike handling and race craft • Maximum of 1 race per week of duration between 15-25 minutes • Genders are not separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions are activity managed by accredited adult • Club level competition only - either intra-club or inter-club
13 - 14 (U15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total training per week between 3hr and 8hrs or between 40 and 100km on road • Each session no longer than 2hr or 60km • Activities place an emphasis of skill development; bike handling and race • Maximum of 1 race per week of duration between 30 - 60 minutes • Genders are separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions are activity managed by accredited adult • Club level competition only - either intra-club or inter-club • State and National level competition • National Championships
15 - 16 (U17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total training per week between 6hr and 14hrs or between 150 and 350km on road • each session no longer than 4hr or 90km • Activities place an emphasis on both skill development and physical conditioning with some specificity in training in 16th year • Maximum of 1 race per week of duration between 60 minutes - 1.25 hours • Genders are separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions are activity managed by accredited adult • Club level competition only - either intra-club or inter-club • State and National level competition • National Championships

17 - 18 (U19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total training per week between 8hr and 18hrs or between 240 and 550km on road • each session no longer than 6hr or 160km • Activities place an emphasis on both skill development and physical conditioning with some specificity in training in 16th year • One race per week of duration between 1.25 hours - 1.5 hours • Genders are separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions and activity managed by accredited adult • Club level competition only - either intra-club or inter-club • State and National level competition • National Championships • International Competition
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Endurance Cross Country for Individuals

Event	Participation group	Minimum age
4hr – <8hr	Solo	16
8hr – <12hr	Solo	17
12hr – <24hr	solo	18
24hr +	solo	18
Marathon (1)	Individual, full marathon	18
	Individual, half marathon	16

(1). See also MTBA marathon technical regulations

A marathon is defined as a single loop or point-to-point race with no part of the course being ridden more than once. A full marathon has a distance of between 60 and 120km. Other distances are possible.

Endurance Cross Country for Teams

Entry into endurance events in a team environment allows for a younger member to participate.

Junior participation as part of a team in multi-lap endurance events, regardless of the team size, is based on a concept of maximum race time. That is the maximum time a youth is permitted to race in a single 24hr period.

The following table gives these maximum times.

Age	Maximum total race time
12	1 hour
13	2 hours
14	2 hours
15	4 hours
16	8 hours
17	12 hours
18	unlimited

In the following graphics red is not permitted, while green is permitted. These designations are predicated upon teams with members all of the same age. If a team comprises various ages the total race time at the event needs to be observed for team members covered by this policy.

Some examples of the implications of this ruling are:

- A team of four 15 year-olds cannot race in an 18 or 24hr race since the total race time for the whole team is 16 hours.
- A team of four riders that includes a 15 year-old can race any multi-lap endurance race. If the lap time is 1 hour then the 15 year-old will only be able to race 4 laps, the other 3 riders will need to ride all others.

	age	total race time	solo	pair	trio	quartet	sextet	dectet
24hr	12	1hr	red					
	13	2hr	red					
	14	2hr	red					
	15	4hr	red				green	
	16	8hr	red		green			
	17	12hr	red	green				
	18	unlimited	green					
	19	unlimited	green					
	age	total race time	solo	pair	trio	quartet	sextet	dectet
12hr	12	1hr	red					
	13	2hr	red					
	14	2hr	red					
	15	4hr	red		green			
	16	8hr	red	green				
	17	12hr	green					
	18	unlimited	green					
	19	unlimited	green					
	age	total race time	solo	pair	trio	quartet	sextet	dectet
8hr	12	1hr	red					
	13	2hr	red				green	
	14	2hr	red				green	
	15	4hr	red		green			
	16	8hr	green					
	17	12hr	green					
	18	unlimited	green					
	19	unlimited	green					
	age	total race time	solo	pair	trio	quartet	sextet	dectet
6hr	12	1hr	red				green	
	13	2hr	red		green			
	14	2hr	red		green			
	15	4hr	red	green				
	16	8hr	green					
	17	12hr	green					
	18	unlimited	green					
	19	unlimited	green					
	age	total race time	solo	pair	trio	quartet	sextet	dectet
4hr	12	1hr	red				green	
	13	2hr	red		green			
	14	2hr	red		green			
	15	4hr	red	green				
	15	4hr	green					

	16	8hr						
	17	12hr						
	18	unlimited						
	19	unlimited						
	age	total race time	solo	pair	trio	quartet	sextet	dectet
	12	1hr						
	13	2hr						
	14	2hr						
3hr	15	4hr						
	16	8hr						
	17	12hr						
	18	unlimited						
	19	unlimited						
	age		60+km	40-60km	20-40km	under 20km		
	12							
	13							
	14							
Marathon	15							
	16							
	17							
	18							
	19							

Application.

- Age will be determined as at the first day of the event.

Exceptions

Exemptions to this policy may be gained by applying to MTBA in writing. To be successful the rider must have written documentation from an cycling coach with at least NCAS accreditation at Level 2, who has coached the athlete in a professional capacity for at least 12 months, that the young person is capable of riding outside these policy constraints. The supporting documentation will include:

- Permission from the rider's parents or guardians
- A statement that the rider's coach has read and understood the provisions and concepts of this policy
- All contact details for the coach, including appropriate details of qualifications to make the assessment for a change in policy application
- Any previous exemptions granted for the rider
- History of the rider's performance in other cross country events, and
- Statements on the rider's training regimen

References:

ACF Junior Cycling Policy 1995

Junior Sport Framework, 2004. *Australian Sports Commission*