

“Information You Need to Know” For Parents and Athletes

The Cuyuna Lakes High School Mountain Bike Team is going into our 11th season. The schools that are a part of the team are Aitkin, Brainerd, Crosby-Ironton and Pequot Lakes. We also have home-schooled riders on our team.

We are part of the MCA, Minnesota Cycling Association www.minnesotacycling.org

Each year we've had a lot of fun and great success, and the team has grown and developed great riders.

Overview: Like other Minnesota High School Cycling League schools, our program seeks to strike a balance between being a competitive individual and team sport while retaining some gentler recreation club qualities. For athletes new to cycling, immediate immersion into training, racing, and the pressure to perform may be intimidating. This is the reason the League has carefully designed individual racing classes so beginners, intermediate and advanced riders are pitted only against peers of similar ability and experience. Each team's coach does their best to carefully place riders in the following categories: middle school, freshmen, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity.

Our League races are in Minnesota and are a 2-3 hour drive away. **Student Athletes are responsible for getting to both the races and practices on their own.** However, networking with other parents and families usually yields an ability to get their athlete to races and practices. Riders are scored individually and on a team basis. Girl's scores and boy's scores are added together in the team computation.

2023 Race Schedule for Cuyuna Lakes -We will race five of the seven MCA races.

All races are middle school racing on Saturday and high school racing on Sunday, except for the All-Team Finale which will have a different schedule, to be determined.

Race #2 – Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 9 & 10 – Lake Rebecca, Rockford, MN

Race #3 – Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 16 & 17 – Xcel Energy MTB Park, Shakopee, MN

Race #4 – Saturday & Sunday, Spirit Mountain, Duluth, MN

Race #5 – Saturday and Sunday, September 30 & 31 – Detroit Mountain, Detroit Lakes, MN

All-Team Finale – Saturday and Sunday October 14 & 15 – Mount Kato, Mankato, MN

Training and racing with a team provides life lessons in self-discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship, along with the fitness and camaraderie. Some sports tend to favor certain body types. Cycling is different. The bicycle is an equalizer, showing little favor to any particular body type by adapting to each rider with correct frame sizing, adjustment of seat height and stem length. Since good “bike-fit” is important, be sure to consult with me before purchasing a new or used bike!

Is Participating Dangerous? Are you new to mountain biking? Forget what you have seen on TV with the X-Games or soft drink commercials. In cross-country bike races, the average speed is usually around ten to twelve miles per hour. This is an endurance sport where the fittest athletes win. Each year, the League collects data on injuries from every team. Typically, for the whole nationwide League combined, there will be one or two broken bones, some sprains, a few cuts, some bruises, lots of nicks and scrapes, but little else. Statistically, we suffer fewer serious injuries than most other mainstream sports, especially contact sports.

We do our best to minimize the risks to your athlete. Certain risky behaviors are discouraged or forbidden and the League helmet rule is strictly enforced and we teach each athlete bike-control skills early in the season to minimize the risk of crashing. After all, if you crash you not only risk injury but also lose valuable time during races. Even with our best efforts, crashes and injuries can occur. Cuyuna Lakes requires all athletes in every

sport to comply with certain athletic eligibility rules, including that the athlete have personal medical insurance. The team also purchases an additional high-deductible policy that supplements your personal policy and policies the school may carry. We do our best to provide many parent/coaches as ride leaders, each equipped with a cell phone on every ride, one adult for each group if we split the team.

How We Build Our Team and Train: We don't have tryouts. If you try, and keep trying, you're on our team. We have a proven history of creating capable and confident riders out of timid, out-of-shape beginners, year after year. Athletes who are already in good condition (like cross-country runners) adapt quickly and do very well.

While we've enjoyed some elite results, we are not elitist. Instead, we value and promote excellence, believing that ordinary athletes can attain big results through setting goals, mapping a strategy, and giving the task disciplined effort. Our Cuyuna Lakes kids really work hard and are transformed by the process. Nearly every athlete (and parent) describes his/her participation as life changing in a remarkable way.

The training scheme is a carefully planned schedule of training rides that gradually increase in distance and difficulty over a two-to-three-month timeframe. The timeframe must be long to ensure that the athlete progresses at a rate gradual enough to avoid injury, and long enough to achieve peak fitness by season's end and the championship final race. The "gradualism" based training scheme cannot be artificially compressed into the normal sports season timeframe without diminishing its effectiveness.

The training is choreographed in three basic phases so that everyone is adequately prepared once the racing begins. The first is the "Base" or endurance phase where we ride at low speeds, teach handling skills (for safety) and gradually increase the ride duration to build a solid foundation of cardiovascular fitness. The second is the "Build" phase to add strength and power by increasing the amount of hill climbing. The last is the "Peak" phase where we add fast-paced race simulation.

Once the actual riding starts, we split the team workouts into fitness-based groups since our goal is to challenge but not overwhelm each rider. All groups do a similar type of ride, albeit at different paces. We do our best to design a training scheme for each rider appropriate for his/her level of experience, fitness, and personal ambitions. Groups are co-ed where practical.

Each year, new riders and parents are often surprised when we tell them that by the end of the season they will be able to easily ride a full three hours in hilly terrain, but it's true! Riders who "made it to practice," that is. Athletes who follow our progressive training schedule will steadily gain fitness and those who skip practice will soon find themselves struggling to keep up.

Practice will not take place each weekday like some sports. For fitness sake, three one-hour rides do not equal one three-hour ride. Longer rides are much more effective in creating the endurance and fitness we need. If your athlete ignores our schedule and trains intermittently on his own, he/she will likely fall short of their potential. Accordingly, we do our most essential training rides on **Saturday mornings at 9:00 am until noon**. This allows time for morning breakfast, family time, and homework in the evening. Combined with three shorter weekday workouts, **Monday-Wednesday-Friday from 5:00-7:00** including core body strengthening, and yoga, this schedule is designed get us fit in a time-efficient way, minimize time on the bike, avoid injury, fatigue, and mental burnout. Athletes will need to continually monitor his/her own fatigue level and discuss it with the coaches. Rest and recovery are a critical part of any training plan. It is important that your athlete avoids the temptation to do extra workouts beyond what is recommended.

Bike Racing is Girl-Friendly: There are lots of girls racing in the League. In fact, girl participation is the fastest growing demographic. Cuyuna Lakes is proud to have set the standard for girls' participation. The League and our own Cuyuna Lakes team culture is truly co-ed, and we do work hard to provide an experience

that encourages and celebrates girls' different needs and tastes. We have many great female coaches on our team as well.

What to Eat: Athletes are expected to be informed and responsible about their eating habits. While this is not a weight-loss program, fat loss and increased lean muscle-mass are typical results of training you should expect. Your athlete will need more high-quality calories from complex carbohydrates and will also need more protein than is required for a non-exercising lifestyle. An inadequate, or junk food diet, will put your athlete at a disadvantage against those who are eating to win. Nutrition will be discussed more as the season progresses. **Additionally, no pop or caffeine is allowed once practice starts. Any student racer getting caught with caffeine at a race may be subject to disqualification, per league rules.**

Parents and Others Ride Along: Training for bike racing is hard work. Fortunately, it's also a lot of fun and the team sometimes end rides with social time. Parents are encouraged to join their athletes in training and even racing. Your help is critical in helping the team travel to each venue. Last year, the coaches trained and raced alongside the student-athletes. Each of these families who were introduced to the sport in this way described the experience as incredible, eye opening, and lifestyle changing. **Every parent who would like to ride lead must register in the CCN (registration website) and complete the necessary background checks and fees. This is necessary to provide insurance and is also a requirement from the league that all adults that are involved with minors have been properly screened.**

How Communication Happens: To streamline communication and planning, we are using the app TeamSnap. TeamSnap is an online and mobile application that allows for coaches, players, and parents to communicate, plan and share. After supplying your email address for team registration, athletes and parents will be sent an invitation to join our team on TeamSnap. The mobile app is available for Android and iPhone apps. Don't have a smart phone? No worries! TeamSnap is also available via any web browsers.

Before your invite, go ahead and download the free app. If you'd like more information about TeamSnap and the powerful tools it has to offer our team, visit www.teamsnap.com.

Also, please check the team Facebook page **Cuyuna Lakes High School Mtn Bike Team** periodically! We also have a website <http://cuyunalakeshsmtb.com/>

About Commitment: If your athlete regularly misses workouts, especially the Saturday rides; he/she will not progress at the same rate as fellow athletes. I guarantee that this will become a source of frustration for your student once they start having difficulty keeping up and will send a clear signal to others that they are not committed to the team.

We promise to treat your athlete like a responsible young adult. Accordingly, we will interpret a habit of missed practices and a pattern of disinterest as a signal to be dropped from the team and email communication. If your athlete is unable to attend any of the agreed-upon practice rides because of school homework, job schedules, family commitments or other concerns, it is really important that they consult with me so we can create an alternate plan to keep the season on track. **3 unexcused absences will result in a rider being removed from the team.**

Code of Conduct: We are committed to safety. We think about safety, teach safety and require each rider to always ride in a safe and controlled manner. Riders who repeatedly flaunt our safety rules or engage in behaviors that present unnecessary risk to themselves or others will be dropped from the program. As visible representatives of Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Team and ambassadors of cycling, athletes are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that status and follow the Cuyuna Lakes rules of behavior at all times. **If a team member is seen riding without a helmet at any time during the season, the rider will be removed from the team – no excuses.**

Community Service: As part of being on the team, members are required to undertake two hours of community service during the season. Service can be done with a local organization or by assisting with team and League activities.

About Academics: The goal for Cuyuna Lakes is to help develop our students academically, physically and socially into mature young adults. To qualify to participate in Cuyuna Lakes Cycling, each athlete must be achieving academically in a manner satisfactory to wishes of his/her parents and the standards of the school. **Failure to maintain satisfactory academics during the cycling season is grounds to be dropped from the team.**

You'll Need Some Equipment: Your athlete will need an appropriate bike, cycling clothing and other items. Please consult with use before you buy anything, so we can help you get the right gear and minimize the cost. Bicycles and helmets must be inspected and approved for function and safety, then re-inspected at regular intervals. Getting all the equipment can be challenging. Prices vary widely, and much is available both new and used on the internet at discount prices. **Cycling shorts with a chamois, gloves, helmet, eye protection, shoes, and a team jersey are all required to participate on the team.**

Cost of Participating: Riders must pay for a MCA Membership (\$100), and entry fees to each of the five races and travel costs. Each race is \$50, or a Super Pass for all races can be purchased for \$150 – which is a \$100 savings over paying for races individually. The Super Pass registration ends of 8/1 and the per race registration ends on 8/15.

Scholarships are provided to those who need it through the MCA, forms are available once the season starts. There is also a \$50 team fee that covers incidentals such as tubes, lube, etc.

No student has been denied participation due to a lack of resources.

Required Forms: To participate on the team, riders must have a complete athletic packet completed in the CCN (registration website) before the first practice, slated for Saturday, July 30th. Please contact Team Director, Kathy Jo Rono to get registered.

Team Jersey and Kit: The only required item is a team jersey and black shorts. Team jerseys, bibs, shorts, wind jacket, and other items are available for purchase through an online team store. We will open up the store once before the season, lasting 10 days to order. Cost of the zippered jersey was \$85 and the t shirt-style was \$50 in 2022. Team jackets, shorts and bibs will also be available. Additional items will be available on the team site such as t-shirts, hoodies, caps, etc.

Assistant Coaches and Team Officers: Every year, for the kids to be successful we need lots of help from team parents and volunteers. Some help with transportation and other things, some act in the capacity of helper-coaches. Returning riders should consider taking on some of the important responsibilities that make the team function. Beginner riders need lots of help learning to keep their bikes in top mechanical shape, advice on training and racing, and lots of encouragement and reassurance from those who were beginners not very long ago. If your returning rider would like to be formally designated as a mentor in some specific area, let me know. I am also looking for parents who would like to be trained as assistant coaches and ride leaders. You do not have to be a talented rider or racer to function effectively in this role, you learn as you go, and it's a lot of fun.

Please be sure to let us know if you have any questions.

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