



Mountain Bike Club Starter Kit

For Schools, Coaches & Athletes

Section 1: Why Mountain Biking?

There are a multitude of cycling disciplines, and it may not be obvious why mountain biking makes the most sense for a youth program in the midwest considering the amount of ball sports available. But not everyone is the ball-sports type so here's how mountain biking fills the gap:

MTB Builds Self-Esteem. Research shows that regular involvement in physical activity increases self-esteem and confidence in people. In particular, the opportunity to practice and gain competency in a skill contributes to young people's self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Many young riders find themselves shedding excess pounds and making better dietary and lifestyle choices, both of which foster a more positive self-concept. And don't forget the added benefits of getting outdoors!

Skill Development. The sport of mountain biking calls for a wide variety of skills such as agility, balance, and focus. It requires both upper and lower body strength and cardiovascular fitness. It also demands a strong mind, as well as critical-thinking and decision-making skills. It develops an ethic of self-discipline and self-care.

It's About the Team and the Individual. Youth mountain bike clubs/teams allow young people to participate in a sport in which they are an integral part of a team and experience the benefits of team sports, such as having a coach, teammates and a network of support and camaraderie. But mountain biking is also an individual sport in which the main goal is to become a better, stronger rider. In contrast to other team sports in which only a handful of athletes participate at one time on the court or field, *in mountain biking everyone can be on their bikes, improving their abilities at the same time! Nobody gets benched!*

Health-Related, Academic, and Social Benefits. Students on a mountain bike team will experience a range of benefits. They will become more interested in a healthy lifestyle: one that includes regular exercise, healthy eating habits and smart decisions regarding drug and alcohol use. They will often experience a greater sense of obligation to their schoolwork. Many students have increased their interest in academic learning and improved their grades through positive involvement in an extracurricular activity. Socially, students on a team will have the opportunity to socialize with a diverse group of peers, make new friends, develop healthy relationships, and often, youth who never quite “fit in” will find a place where they are welcomed and accepted.

It’s Something Different than P.E. and Mainstream Sports. At most schools students can choose from mainstream sports like baseball, football, soccer and basketball, or more up and coming sports like lacrosse, field hockey or ice hockey. Yet, despite all of the sports offered, most students are not involved in any athletic activity. Some of the most important life lessons – lessons that are learned through sport – are being missed. Cycling presents an opportunity for a vast array of important lessons, and often proves to be a tremendous builder of self-esteem among students who are often on the fringe, underachieving, and full of pent-up energy. Often these are students who do not thrive in P.E. classes and have never been interested in mainstream sports. Whereas these students were once falling through the “athletic cracks,” they now have a place to experience the lifelong benefits of a physically active lifestyle. Mountain biking is an open door to all that want to try it.

Connection to the Outdoors. As mountain biking is done on dirt trails in the outdoors, it helps to develop young people’s connection to our natural environment. In this day and age of video games and media saturation, it is critical that we help foster this connection. Riders can be taught to become stewards for the environment and responsible trail use.

Section 2: Why Should YOU Start a MTB Program at Your School?

Why should there be a mountain bike team at the school in which you work, the school your child attends, or at a high school in your community? Why should you be the one to make it happen? Below is a list of compelling reasons:

Leading a Team is Fun and Rewarding! Leading a mountain bike club or team is downright exciting. It is incredible to watch the youth on your team develop skills, confidence, and a love for the sport. They finish their first race. They climb onto the podium for the first time. They make new friends. They adopt healthier eating habits. They support each other in moments of frustration and triumph. And you are there for it all! When you start a mountain bike club for young students, you create an opportunity for them to get inspired about their lives. Chances are you'll also get inspired.

Personal Health Benefits for Coaches. Forget about sitting on the sidelines blowing a whistle – when you are a mountain bike coach you get to ride! You will find the regular exercise will help you be a fit, trim endurance athlete. Most teams thrive best when they have coaches of varied abilities, from beginners to experts – because any sizable team also has a great variety of abilities. As a bonus, you just might find that you, too, are feeling better and better! Perhaps you start riding your bike more, eating better, and feeling happier. Providing a great experience for young people makes you feel that you are doing meaningful work.

It Creates Community. When you start a youth mountain bike club, you put in motion a community of diverse individuals and families. For many, this new community can help build meaningful and lasting connections and relationships.

Section 3: How to Start a Mountain Bike Program at Your School

Who Can Start a Team or Club?

Administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community members can start a cycling club at their local schools. While it is not always necessary for this person to be a school “insider” (teacher or administrator), this is often very useful. Students are also encouraged to form clubs of various types and generally only need to find a sponsoring teacher. A teacher or administrator within the school possesses certain advantages, such as knowledge of the school community, bureaucratic systems and channels, and has convenient and regular access to the student body. If you are an individual, such as a parent or community member, it is highly recommended that you find someone within the school system. This may be a teacher or an administrator whom you discover has a passion for cycling too!

Recruitment 101.

Once you have the go-ahead from your administration, you may already know some students or adults who are into mountain biking. You are now ready to make cycling accessible to the masses. One bulletin may be all that separates you from a roomful of enthusiastic and excited students. STOP! Make sure you are ready for what is to come. Make sure you have a clear idea of what you want to do and are able to do as your club begins. Be clear about how many students you can accommodate, based on the number of adults you have available to help and the amount of energy you have to run the club. Remember, it is best to start small and grow slowly over time.

See next page for recruitment tips.

Athlete Recruitment Tips.

- Use the school P.A. system;
- Post the announcement around the school (try to get some students to do this for you);
- Get an article in the school paper;
- Use the school e-mail tree, which is used to make announcements to the student body, parents, and the community;
- Use online social apps and connect them to NICS
- Get students to recruit their peers;
- Get parents to talk to other parents;
- Once you are up and running, publicize photos and articles (get students to do this) to keep generating interest in the team.
- Schedule an info day or have a table at the school's club info day
- Remind them that racing is not a requirement!

Note: Interscholastic cycling clubs around the country have noticed their popularity growing among many of the non-traditional student-athletes or non-athletes. Be sure flyers are put up around the band room, study halls and classrooms. Students that seem to be loners or on the fringe can find a home in a cycling club since competing is not a requirement. They may just want to be part of something that gives them a healthy outlet without the pressure of competition.

Coaching Staff Recruitment

Most high school mountain bike programs have a three-tiered coaching staff consisting of one head coach, several assistant coaches, and a good number of ride leaders (the number of ride leaders needed will depend on the size of the team.) While the needs of each team will differ, the basic steps involved in recruiting and retaining assistant coaches remain essentially the same.

Coaching Recruitment Tips. The head coach must be sure to:

- Identify volunteer needs;
- Create clear assistant coach / volunteer job descriptions;
- Define target volunteer groups;
- Brainstorm and implement recruitment ideas;
- Develop a timeline;
- Provide proper tools and training;
- Practice on-going marketing and volunteer recruitment; and
- Provide feedback and rewards.

Good help (and lots of it) allows a coach to:

- Have time to observe, consider, plan, and react to individual and team circumstances;
- Spend more one-on-one time with the kids who need it;
- Develop specialized and nuanced training routines for veteran riders;
- Allow teams to be split into smaller units to eliminate long "waiting" interruptions on the training rides;
- Provides more eyes and ears on each ride to insure safety and observe the progress of individual training;
- Consult and share thoughts and opinions with volunteers for collective and better decision-making;
- Provide continuity: have the same coaches and helpers each year.

Possible assistant coach candidates might come from the following sources:

- Collegiate racers and team alumni;
- Pro/semi-pro racers;
- Masters racers;
- Bike-shop employee types;
- Non-racing adult riders (not fitting the above categories);
- Parents of your kids.

Section 4: NICS Race Rules

The NICS is sanctioned by and therefore under the rules of USACycling. Rules and regulations can be read in full on USACycling's website: <https://www.usacycling.org/resources/rulebook>

For simplicity sake, here are the more obvious rules:

Events are subject to weather! In case of inclement weather, updates will be made to our home page and on Facebook.

Helmets must be worn at all times while on a bike at all NICS events. Even in the parking lot, by your car, after your race, everywhere! Your brain is worth it and accidents happen too often in the dumbest places.

No earbuds or headphones may be worn during any event for the safety of other participants. No loud radios on your person. Listen for other riders, be aware of your surroundings, enjoy nature.

You are expected to be self supported! During the race: You may access a personal cache of water and tools (pump, tube, etc) place only in the designated "feed zone", but you may not receive assistance from others, nor access materials and equipment outside the feed zone area. Feed zones will be determined by officials.

NICS reserves the right to disqualify any competitor accessing abnormal outside assistance, at promoters judgement and discretion. Prepare and support yourself!

NICS reserves the right to adjust start times and mileage.

Events held in Nebraska State Parks require a park permit. Day passes and annual passes are available online or at the specific park's visitor center.

Helmets and shirts with a school logo are required to participate in the events.

If someone is approaching you from behind on the trail, and they ask to pass you, let them as soon as you are able. Thanks for being courteous!

If you need to pass someone: announce your presence as soon as possible, repeatedly if necessary to make the racer in front aware of your presence. Overtake the racer only when it is safe for both of you! Communicate!

Please practice Leave No Trace and do not drop your trash onto the trail.

DNFs (did not finish) must be reported to the timing & scoring staff.

Chips need to be returned immediately after you cross the finish line. Failure to return chips results in a \$100 charge to your team.

Cursing or poor conduct is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. NICS events are family-friendly.

Cutting a course is dumb. This is for fun. Don't cut the course or you'll be disqualified on the spot, in front of everyone. Stay on singletrack!

Section 5: Who's Managing the Races?

The Promoters. NICS is managed by seasoned USACycling sanctioned promoters who have been putting on races for over 15 years. They are also mountain bike skills coaches who've worked with youth and adult riders for many years. Their goal is to assure everyone is safe and has a good time.

The Courses. NICS managers work closely with many of the league's coaches to create courses that will assure a successful experience for both the athlete and the fans. Because teams generally have a wide variety of talent from never-ever to the best in the state, NICS understands how to make the courses challenging enough for the best riders yet "doable" for the never-evers. Courses are created to minimize the danger or difficulty level in such a way that all riders should be able to complete the course (even if that means they have to get off and walk a tough section or two).

NICS also understands that the fans want to be able to watch the action so courses are generally under 2 miles per lap to allow athletes to ride by and hear their fans multiple times! The number of laps for Varsity, JV and Middle School is determined by the course. A more difficult course may have less laps than an easier course. Also, Varsity will do the most laps followed by JV then Middle School. Sometimes, Middle School and JV will complete the same amount of laps.

NICS races are weather-dependent. If the weather has affected the trail in such a way that it presents dangerous conditions to the athletes or presents a situation where using the trail would be destructive, the race will be cancelled or postponed.

Section 6: Athlete Race Day Prep

Race day can be hectic and nerve racking. Here are some tips to be prepared and have a successful day on the bike:

- Make sure your bike is in working order
- Test ride it in your driveway or local park
- Shift through the gears
- Test the breaks and make sure your tires are pumped up to the proper pressure
- Make sure the chain is lubed (do not use WD40)!
- If you're using a hydration pack, make sure it's full and the mouth piece works

Use this check list as a guide for what to bring

- Helmet
- Shoes
- Team Jersey
- Gloves
- Eye protection
- Food/Snacks
- Hydration Pack or Bottles
- Post race change of clothes
- Good Attitude
- Directions to the race starting area

Prepare to race

- Racing begins at noon or soon after unless otherwise stated
- Arrive at the venue 45 minutes to 1 hour ahead of time
- Sign in at registration for number chips and number plates; attach them to your bike
- Get your gear ready
- Listen for announcer to call racers to the line. There they will announce number of laps and any conditions that need to be brought to the athletes attention.
- Go have fun!

Racing Duration

- Expect to be on course for 30-40 minutes.
- Lap counts depend on category and venue. They will be announced at the race.

Categories

- Athletes will be put into either Varsity or Junior Varsity categories by the team's coach
- Boys and girls will be on the course at the same time racing each other but scored by gender
- Categories within a gender only race each other. Varsity will not race against JV, nor JV against Middle School (although they may be on the course at the same time)

Post Race

After all of the races have completed and the scores officially recorded, female and male racers who placed in the top (3) of their category will be asked to come up on the podium to receive a medal.

Scoring / Points

- Athletes who race will score individual points and team points
- The male and female racer with the most points in their category (V, JV or MS) at the end of the season will be recognized as the Series Champion
- The high school with the most points at the end of the season will be named the Nebraska State Champion

Section 7: League Fees & Registration Info

Participation fees vary by team, as each school works to cover costs associated with their respective program. Most team costs include jerseys, insurance, apparel, refreshments, practice and race supplies. Athletes are expected to use their own bike and helmet. Please see your coach or administrator for clarification on what the team does and does not provide.

Fees are mandatory regardless if the student races or not. There are costs associated with putting on races and they are run by volunteers. Monies collected by teams pay for the cost of race production, equipment, officials and insurance. Team Coaches will collect these fees from their members and submit to the NICS in advance of the first race. Teams that have not submitted their forms ahead of the first race will not be allowed to compete.

Team and racer licenses and league fees are required before athletes can participate in their first race.

TEAM CLUB RACE FEES \$40 + \$50 = \$90

Step 1a: If the athlete doesn't already have one, they must purchase a \$40 annual USAC license* from USACycling.com.

Step 1b: Each athlete must also pay a \$50 league fee. For league fees, please cut one check from the school payable to Psycoypath Racing Inc.

Step 2: Team-clubs must submit a team roster to NICS prior to the first race. Roster needs to include athletes name, category (V, JV, MS), gender (Girls, Boys). Send roster to roxanne.abbott@gmail.com and to receive further instructions on where to mail payment.

NON TEAM-CLUB RACERS

Step 1: Racers not associated with a club-team can purchase an annual license for \$40 at USACycling.com if they don't already have one. (New USACycling members will need to set up an account). Or they can buy single day licenses for \$10 each when they register for the race.

Step 2: **New for 2019** non-team racers must register for each event at a cost of \$20 per race on BikeReg.com. Links for each event will be listed on highschoolcycling.com.

****Note: Licenses will be sent to the athlete via US Mail or to the coach from USACycling. If the athlete hasn't received the license but has paid for it, please bring proof of purchase to event registration.***

Team Club Contact Info

Millard West High School

Coach Ryan Moseley: rmoseley@mpsomaha.org

Millard North High School

Contact: Casey Lundgren: cilundgr@mpsomaha.org

Papillion (all schools)

Coach Jeff Schram: scramou812@hotmail.com

Assistant Admin Cori Flores: corijoflores@gmail.com

North High School

Coach John Skradski: john.skradski@gmail.com

Westside High and District 66 middle schools

Coach Mike Farrell: farrelly@cox.net

Coach Joe Choquette: joemer94@cox.net

Coach Shane Buscher: shane@buscherhood.com

Greater Omaha Composite Team

If your school doesn't have a team, you can join this one!

Coach Steve Barr: steve.robert.barr@gmail.com

League Contacts

Ryan Feagan | ryan.feagan@gmail.com

Roxzanne Feagan | roxzanne.abbott@gmail.com

WWW Information

highschoolcycling.com

Facebook: Nebraska Interscholastic Cycling Series

Twitter: @NICSbikes

Instagram: [ne_highschool_cycling](https://www.instagram.com/ne_highschool_cycling)