Michigan Scholastic Cycling Association

Michigan Scholastic Cycling Association
PO Box 1133 | Brighton, MI 48116
Phone: (248) 671-3029
www.miscabike.org

TEAM ONBOARDING & SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Late Winter/Early Spring

Start gathering your team!

- Begin recruiting potential coaches and solicit interest from your local community. If you have a scholastic team, work to find a liaison that works within the school district to represent the team.
    - Frontload your coaches before determining how many riders your team can accommodate.
    - Be conservative for your first year! There is a lot to take in, and it will help make a better experience for your riders to not have a team that is beyond your coaches' capacities!
- Understand what age groups you would like to target (Elementary, Middle School, or High School), or if you are open to any and all ages.
- Composite teams may be affiliated with a bike shop sponsor, or simply a local community of riders and coaches.
- Scholastic teams may allow riders from outside of the school district to join them during practices, but these riders will not score points for the scholastic team at races.
- For scholastic teams, understand your school's requirements if you are affiliated as a club or official sport through the school. This is a discussion to have with the school's club coordinator.
- Understand if you may require additional team fees from your riders throughout the season
    - In addition to MiSCA annual league fees ($75 per athlete, $30 per coach), some teams charge a range of fees that go straight back to the team. This may cover team jerseys, team tents for races, supplies for race day and practices such as first aid supplies, water, snacks, etc. Teams currently charge a range of $25-150 per rider (some teams will also offer a family fee to reduce costs for families with multiple riders).

March 1 - MiSCA League & Race Series Registration opens

- Register your team ($150 per year) with the MiSCA league prior to any practices or team events! This ensures that any liability/insurance is active once teams start practicing.
- You will need to set up a WePay account to collect team-specific fees (if applicable) that are not directly affiliated with MiSCA league fees.

Develop a means of team communication

- Have a dedicated team email address (monitored by head coach or team manager) and webpage (can be a Facebook page)
- Some teams will create a team chat or Facebook page to communicate informally throughout the season. CCN integrates with TeamSnap. Band and Slack are other popular apps.
- Emails are highly recommended for more formal communications
- Determine how practice cancellations will be handled, and when those announcements will be made (weather, trail conditions moving the practice to pavement, etc)
- This can be organized by the head coach or someone identified by the head coach to handle communications

Determine what practice locations will work well for your team, and work to understand if other teams or groups have regular rides at those times. It often works best to not overlap these rides to reduce trail congestion, so ask your local bike shop and mountain bike advocacy chapter if these exist where you plan to ride! Not all practices need to be on trails. Paved path rides are good endurance building activities for teams. Switch it up to keep the kids from getting bored.

Plan and schedule a welcome meeting as people begin to register

- Invite riders, parents, and coaches
- Consider a local sponsor shop or park pavilion as a gathering place
- Use this meeting to communicate team expectations, practice times, practice frequency, and locations the team will meet

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Mid-Spring (April/May timeline)

Have coaches register and attend league-provided coaches trainings where applicable

- Identify your coaches' commitments to MiSCA's coach curriculum, and ensure that enough Level 2 and 3 coaches are present at all practices. (see rules document for these requirements).
- Every coach needs to register as at least a Level 1 coach, which ensures that all coaches in attendance have passed a background check.
- See MiSCA's coaching section on miscabike.org for more details on coaches training.

Host initial practices

Understand the time commitment you and your coaches can adhere to throughout the season. There is no requirement from MiSCA, but it is generally recommended that teams meet 1-3 times per week in order to provide some consistency for the riders. Some teams will wait until spring sports are completed to begin regular practices, and some teams will make practices optional until August. This depends on your team's needs and situation.

- Have a robust check-in/check-out process to make sure all children and coaches are accounted for. Make sure a rider's parent is visible and present prior to officially checking them out.
- We ask that coaches, at minimum, follow the guidelines within our participation requirements and maintain at least a 6:1 rider to coach ratio, with a minimum of two coaches that can be at every practice.
- Your very first practices can be a very simple ride split up by age to help coaches understand a rider's capability. Keep these simple!
- Some teams will send out a survey ahead of this first practice to ask what experience a rider may have so they can begin to plan the group structure.
- The structure of these practices will depend on your riders' needs and capabilities. For example, younger riders with less experience may need more time focusing on basic skills in a grassy field prior to a ride. More experienced riders may benefit from a network of trails that allows them to focus on more advanced skills and get more mileage.
- It is recommended that practices are mixed up with various focuses. Some rides may be purely for endurance, while others may focus on skill building, and others may be "just for fun rides" to help build camaraderie and allow for active recovery after harder rides and races.
- Some teams will start with a lighter schedule in the spring, and ramp up throughout the summer leading into the fall race series. Again, this all depends on your riders' and coaches' time commitments and preferences.
- Commit to proper trail etiquette and work with your team to learn to be good trail advocates
    - Do not ride the trails when it is muddy - ride paved paths or gravel roads as a backup!
    - Learn the IMBA rules of the trail
    - MiSCA rules apply during practice or any sanctioned team event! Always wear that helmet when standing over the top tube of the bike.
    - Be respectful of everyone who is out there. Many trails are multi use and may have hikers, other bikers, runners, etc. It is on everyone to share, be polite, and practice proper passing etiquette!
    - Work with the trail coordinators of the places you practice to see if you can help with any trail maintenance. Many teams already commit to 1-2 trail days per year. This helps to foster a positive relationship with those who volunteer their time to maintain what is essentially your practice venue! Even if there is a small contribution such as trimming back overgrowth, this goes a long way! MiSCA staff can help with this introduction if needed.

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Summer (June - August)

Order equipment for team

- Jerseys (early summer/late spring)
    - It is recommended that teams wear matching jerseys to races. Some teams will start with a tech shirt prior to purchasing jerseys to reduce costs. Many bike apparel companies will work with teams to create custom jerseys (Borah, Voler, etc), but this requires some lead time to design and produce (6-8 weeks).
    - Borah is the official apparel sponsor of MiSCA and can provide league-exclusive discounts.
    - Best to do this once your initial roster is set
- Team equipment for races
    - Many teams will have a setup in the infield/staging area at races. At minimum this includes a 10'x10' canopy tent and a folding table. This creates a "home base" for the riders to get their plates and hang out during the race. Some teams will bring bike racks, grills, chairs, whatever suits the team best. Again, it helps to start small and build throughout the season. We don't allow vehicles to be parked in the infield during a race, so it helps to get the lay of the land prior to committing to hauling a bunch of gear!

Begin to work on race-specific skills and scenarios

- Work with riders to plan race nutrition and hydration
    - Teach your riders the golden rule: nothing new on race day! They should practice fueling and hydrating with what they plan to race with.
- Work on passing etiquette
    - Our courses are not a dirt highway. Passing is a critical skill in a successful race, and teaching how to pass and be passed and setting realistic expectations that the course will not be a wide open time trial can help the riders get used to learning how to handle the scenarios on race day!
    - We send off multiple categories within a wave (3 minutes apart). This means the fastest riders in a later wave will often catch up to the slowest riders in an earlier wave. This is where we have many conflicts and complaints. While we do our best to stage our waves to minimize conflict, passing and being passed is part of the sport. Remind your riders that everyone belongs on the course and to be courteous towards each other's experience. Blocking is penalized; and harsh, abusive behavior is not tolerated. Sometimes a new racer can get overwhelmed, but it is helpful that they understand this prior to race day! It helps to practice starts in close proximity as a group to get used to this feeling.

Plan rider category placement

- Refer to the rules document which explains what a racer can expect in a certain kind of course, and be realistic. If they are an advanced rider, they belong in an advanced category. If they cannot handle the estimated time a course is expected to take, consider moving them down. While we don't have official cutoff times at this point, MiSCA reserves the right to remove a rider from a race if they feel their safety and well-being is at risk.
- Be mindful that moving down is highly discouraged, especially if a rider has successfully completed a race in that category previously (i.e. we do not accommodate requests because a racer wants to win an easier category when they are performing in the more advanced category). Refer to our rules which explains this process further.

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Plan to pre-ride race courses

- Try to plan visits to race venues, which are announced ahead of the season start. (December/January)
- Check MiSCA's website for the latest course information and maps. Our goal is to have all preliminary course designs publicly available by June. Some minor changes may occur once a course is released but will be communicated as they happen. MiSCA reserves the right to modify a course if deemed necessary.
- Some venues may be 2-3 hours away for a team, so try and encourage families to scout these trails on their own if a team practice is not possible.
- There is preride time available on Saturday of race weekend prior to racing (at which point the course is closed unless you are actively racing). These Saturday prerides will be incredibly busy. These times can become difficult to navigate with so many people, so it is highly encouraged to pre-ride before the crowds show up and to go ride earlier in the season.
- Be mindful when scheduling these practices. Race venues will get crowded leading up to a race, and it helps to try and share the time. Use social media channels and workplace Coach Advisory Group (head coaches are on this) to try and communicate if possible.
- Maps and course GPX files are available on the MiSCA website as courses are designed and modified. Maps are provided by MiSCA and are the gold source for understanding the course. MiSCA is not under obligation to provide gpx files. Oftentimes, trail density and a lagging signal does not work well on our courses when following your computer. While cumbersome, we prefer riders to reference the map as they ride the course.

Get familiar with the rules!

- MiSCA's website has the latest rules document posted at all times. This can be lengthy, but take the summer to really get familiar with these, as not adhering to our rules can result in avoidable penalties. These were carefully developed over time by the league's board and staff as we have evolved and they exist to provide a fair and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. Having a printed copy at your team tent and with your team's paperwork may be helpful to reference at practices or at a race when a question may arise. The staff is always happy to discuss any questions regarding our rules, so when in doubt, just ask us!

Preparation for Race Season - Helpful Info

Race season in the fall is an exciting time, but it can feel overwhelming leading into it without experiencing one in person. With a little planning and the right equipment, race days can be a lot of fun! Prior to the first race of the season, here are some helpful tips to know:

- Ensure riders are prepared with proper hydration (those early races are HOT!), nutrition, and are properly rested leading up to a race. Don't go hard on the pre-ride, save it for when it counts!
- Plates (which will have the riders' timing chips) for the team are picked up from registration at the first race. These are the riders' plates for ALL RACES! Therefore it is important to try and keep track of the plates so that riders do not have to pay for replacements ($10 each). Many teams will have a coach or parent be in charge of hanging on to and distributing the plates to their riders at a race, and collecting them after they are done for the day. It is imperative that plates do not get mixed up and go to the wrong rider. These errors, while possible to fix, can create issues for our timing team throughout the day!
- Help your families ensure they are ready to arrive on time for their rider's race. We recommend arriving around an hour before their staging time (which will be posted in the race day schedule by MiSCA). As MiSCA grows, parking is becoming less than convenient at our venues, and overflow parking is becoming a normal aspect of our events. Allow for plenty of time to park and prepare to race. Allow for some warm up time for the rider as well! Remember that riding on an active race course is cause for penalty. Do not use trails being used for active racing to warm up.
- Try to keep it fun for the kids! There is a lot going on, but remember that these are kids and this is supposed to be fun for everyone. Make sure everyone is aware of the rules and be safe (wear that helmet any time you are over the top tube of your bike!). Learn proper race etiquette (especially passing!) and teach your riders to be respectful to each other out there. Try and show up for the awards ceremonies if you can to congratulate those who made the podium. Share some snacks and cheer on other riders while you are not racing. While cycling is an individual sport, it is our community that makes it great. Taking in the experience and making new friends will create a memorable season!

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Season Checklist

Late Winter/Early Spring

Team recruitment
March 1 - MiSCA League & Race Registration opens
Develop a means of team communication
- Head coach email
- Team website/Facebook page
- Team chat app (TeamSnap, Band, GroupMe, Slack Channel, etc.)

Determine practice locations
Plan and schedule a welcome meeting

Mid-Spring (April/May timeline)

Have coaches register and attend league-provided coaches trainings where applicable
Host initial practices

Summer (June - August)

Order equipment for team (ideally no later than June)
Plan rider category placement
Plan to pre-ride race courses

Fall

Race season!!!
Consider a team wrap-up party/banquet to celebrate team accomplishments