NICA NATIONAL INTERSCHOLASTIC CYCLING ASSOCIATION

GUILFORD GEARS MTB TEAM

Guilford Gears Family Guidebook

2026/27 Season

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NICA

Welcome to the team!

Welcome to the Guilford Gears! We are proud to be a part of the North Carolina Interscholastic Cycling League and welcome all new and returning student athletes to the 2027 season. Our dedicated coaches are passionate about working with riders of all abilities, from those who are here for community and progression, as well as our more competitive athletes. There's a place for everyone on our team.

About Guilford Gears

Guilford Gears is the composite middle and high school mountain bike team for Guilford County. We're proud to be part of the North Carolina Interscholastic Cycling League (NCICL). NCICL is governed by NICA (the National Interscholastic Cycling Association), a national youth development organization founded in 2009 that now spans 32 leagues, 29 states, and more than 25,000 student-athletes. Guided by NICA's core values — fun, inclusivity, equity, respect, and community — we operate on a simple promise: there are no cuts and no bench warming. Every rider gets a spot on the team and every rider gets to race.

Season information

Pre-season: October 15 - December 1, 2026
Regular season: December 1, 2026 - May 2027

Part of the pre-season could include:

- Bike checks and bike fit
- Mechanical workshops
- All inclusive fun rides
- Trail maintenance
- Skills clinics

Typical schedule:
Copperhead Trail at Country Park is our main practice trail. We are grateful to Piedmont Fat Tire Society for our partnership and allowing us to utilize this as an "all weather" trail. However, our team is fortunate to have a variety of easily accessible trails and regularly practice out of Bur Mil, Blue Heron, or other trailheads. Our goal is to ride all the local trails at some point during the season.

We are also located near two of the most heavily utilized race venues, Farris Memorial Park (Mayodan) and Angler's Ridge (Danville, VA). In order to best prepare our riders, we may practice at one of these two venues, both of which are within an hour of Greensboro. Please utilize TeamSnap to coordinate transportation if needed. Starting in December, we will practice twice a week with a third "flex" practice some weeks.

- Tuesday - standard practice day
- Thursday - flex practice (backup weather date, Teen Trail Corps, GRiT, mechanical clinics, team building, etc.)
- Weekend practice: Saturdays with option to change depending on weather/coach availability.

Student-athlete expectations

Student-athletes are expected to follow team values, attend with a positive attitude, and be willing to challenge themselves. They must also sign the NICA Student-Athlete Code of Conduct.

NICA Athlete Code of Conduct

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Parent expectations

Parents and guardians are expected to read and respond to team communications and review this team family guidebook. Our coaches are volunteers and we need your support to have a successful season. The more helping hands, the better the experience we can give our kids.

Helpful NICA resources:
Parent Guide - Riding Tips for New Riders
Questions to open up parent-athlete communication

Necessary equipment

The safety of student athletes is NICA's first priority! Our coaches and experienced student athletes are happy to help you select the most appropriate gear for practicing and racing. At a minimum, riders should bring the following to EVERY practice:
Mountain Bike- Minimum tire size 26 inch*

- Helmet*
- Gloves
- Water bottles or hydration pack*
- Weather appropriate clothing
- A pack to keep extra clothing and extra items in
- Extra tube, Tire Lever, Small hand pump or co2 and inflator
- Snack
- Headlamp (seasonal)*
- Small Multi-tool

* Mandatory – if you don't have a bike let us know!

Helpful NICA resources:
NICA Gear Guide
ABCDE Bike Check Handout.pdf
Student-Athletes Practice Checklist
Washing Your Bike.pdf

Team kits and apparel

Team kits will be ordered and arrive in time for the first race. We will also work with a local provider to ensure riders and families have the opportunity to purchase merch and apparel.

What to expect at practices

[High-level agenda for typical practices: Where to meet, what athletes should do when they arrive, the type of activities that might occur, how dismissal works.]

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Group assignments

The team is composed of three riding groups or "teams" that are named by color and grouped by skill level, not age. Each team has at least one lead coach (Level 2 or 3) plus Level 1 coaches who support the lead coaches. Students (and coaches) may move between groups throughout the season.

Team	26/27 Lead Coaches
Black (Advanced)	John Thomas, Chris Barefoot,
Blue (Intermediate)	Nate Olander, Mike Swofford
Green (Beginner)	Brian Spangler, Liz Jernigan

Race weekends

2027 Weekend Festival Series

Dates and locations for our regular season events are now official as listed on this page.

- Events 1 through 5 constitute the regular season race series.
- Event 6 will be a "winner take all" state championship open to all student athletes.
- Reminder: Event locations and dates are always subject to change based on multiple factors out of the league's control.

Festival Weekends

- March 6-7, 2027 — Browns Creek, Elizabethtown
- March 20-21, 2027 — Salisbury Community Park
- April 3-4, 2027 — Tryon International, Mill Spring
- April 10-11, 2027 — Raindate 1, Farris Memorial Park, Mayodan
- April 17-18, 2027 — Anglers Park, Danville, VA
- May 1-2, 2027 — Rock Hill BMX, Rock Hill, SC
- May 8-9, 2027 — Raindate 2 TBD
- May 15-16, 2027 — Championship, Farris Memorial Park, Mayodan
- May 22-23, 2027 — Championship Raindate, Farris Memorial Park, Mayodan

Helpful NICA resources:
PZ 2.0 Navigation
Quick Start Guide To Attending a NICA Event
Student-Athlete Pre-Race Checklist

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Team app/calendar/communications

1. **Pitzone** - this will be used for all registrations, beginning with registering your SA for the season and including registering for races, adventure events, GRiT events and any other events offered by NICA or NCICL. Waivers are signed during the registration process in PitZone and NICA/NCICL fees are paid as part of the registration process.
2. **TeamSnap** - this is our primary communication tool. Once your SA is registered in Pitzone, we will send you an invite for TeamSnap. You can access it via a phone app or your computer's browser. TeamSnap is used to RSVP for ALL team events and practices.

Mandatory Requirements:

RSVP to every practice at least 24 hours in advance. Sooner is better; it helps us determine how many coaches we need for practice.

- Photo in profile (easy to see photo)
- All team communication goes through TeamSnap
- Must include parent or guardian contact information within profile
- Read your emails/chats PLEASE!!!!

Best Practices:

- Laptop/Desktop vs Phone:
    - Laptop/Desktop - more features and ease of use
    - Phone – more convenient, includes chat function
- Schedule – review the entire season schedule for your sub-team only. Sync to Calendar
- Messages – Email and Chat features
- Invoicing – Guilford Gears - Team Fees are invoiced from TeamSnap.
- When in doubt use the Help & Support orange tab
- TeamSnap Website

Schedule changes and cancellations

Schedule changes will be communicated through TeamSnap. We make every effort to get tires on the ground, but safety is our top priority and practices may be cancelled due to lightening, rain, snow/ice, and extreme cold or heat.

Weather preparedness

Athletes are required to dress appropriately for the weather, which generally includes layers. Even on cool days, overdressed athletes may overheat. This will be covered early in the season.

Attendance

Athletes and coaches are required to commit to practices through TeamSnap. This is incredibly important as we have to organize ride groups that meet NICA required standards for coach/athlete ratios. There is no mandatory practice requirement although we see athletes progress more quickly the more practices they attend.

Warning/suspension/expulsion

Head coaches will make every effort to work with student athletes to correct behavior before addressing concerns with parents/guardians. Head coaches reserve the right to suspend or expel student athletes who do not fulfill the NICA Code of Conduct requirements.

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Transportation

Families are responsible for getting student-athletes to and from races, practices, and other team activities.

Injuries and concussions

Advanced-level coaches on the team receive regular first-aid training. Additionally, all coaches receive risk management training each year that includes training to recognize signs and symptoms of concussion.

If an athlete falls and hits their head or is suspected to have hit their head, coaches will let the parents know what occurred and whether there were any concussion signs or symptoms. If so, parents should take the athlete to a medical professional for evaluation. In the event of a concussion, the athlete won't be allowed to practice or race with the team until medical clearance is provided.

If any injury that occurs while participating with the team requires a medical visit and/or the athlete having to miss school, work, or practice, please let the team director or head coach know. This is a "reportable injury," and we'll need to file a safety report with NICA.

Helpful NICA resources:
Safety Study Overview for Parents and Student-Athletes

Loaner equipment, scholarships, and financial assistance

Financial assistance is available via the league's website: https://northcarolinamtb.org/ride-help/

Volunteer coaching staff

Coaching is a great way to support the team while improving your own skills! More information is available on the league's website: https://northcarolinamtb.org/become-a-coach.

Volunteer and sponsorship needs

We NEED Your HELP!!!

We are asking each family this year to commit to volunteering in some way. More information on volunteer opportunities coming soon. Do you want to be a SPONSOR of Guilford Gears or know a person or business who does? If so, please email Liz Jernigan at guilfordgearsmtb@gmail.com.

Check out (and support) our sponsors and find information about sponsorship on our website!

Helpful NICA resources:
Team Volunteer Roles

Terms to be familiar with

Pit Zone – NICA's registration platform.
Pit zone – The team tent area at NICA league races.
Practice-ready – Status describing a coach or student-athlete that has completed all requirements to be able to attend practices.
NICA League – The state division of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) that our team participates as a part of.
Conference/region – The division within the NICA league that our team races in.

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Online resources

Team website:	https://www.guilfordgears.com
Team Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/GuilfordGearsComposite
Team Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/guilfordgears/
League website:	https://www.northcarolinamtb.org
League handbook:	https://northcarolinamtb.org/
NICA website:	https://nationalmtb.org
NICA benefits:	https://nationalmtb.org/athlete-coach-benefits-2
Local trails org.:	https://piedmontfattire.org/

Contact information

Head Coach	Nate Olander	njolander@gmail.com	1-701-306-1531
	Brian Spangler	bwspangler@gmail.com	1-336-263-3056
Team Director	Liz Jernigan	guilfordgearsmtb@gmail.com	1-336-314-5232

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