



Great Lakes Cycling Team Handbook

Welcome to Great Lakes Cycling!

Great Lakes Cycling is a Wisconsin Non-Stock Corporation whose teams are members of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) and the Wisconsin High School Cycling League. The team is now into its 6th year of NICA sanctioned racing in Wisconsin and we are the reigning 2017 Division 2 State Champions!! You are taking part in the first organized high school mountain bike team in Kenosha County! (See www.wisconsinmtb.org) The plan for this year is to have lots of fun and to see each individual athlete have their own success. The overall goal is to grow the team and develop great riders who in turn share what they learn with the next group of students.

Great Lakes Cycling provides competitive mountain, road, cyclocross, and gravel biking opportunities for southeastern Wisconsin area mountain bikers with structured practices and an opportunity to compete on an individual and team basis.

Purpose: This organization provides structure, support, and the governing body for teams riding and competing within our geographic area submitted to NICA.

Mission: Great Lakes Cycling provides all youth that have a desire to ride a bike an opportunity to build strong body, mind and character through cycling. Great Lakes Cycling encourages athletic excellence and good sportsmanship towards all participants and supporters.

Great Lakes Cycling is open to male and female athletes in grade school - College. Great Lakes Cycling is run by a board of directors and volunteer coaches who are certified in youth mountain bike coaching, safety, and have passed federal background checks. The costs of the organization are the responsibility of its members and are covered by membership fees and fundraising activities. Pre-season training opportunities begin May 1st. The official practice season begins on July 1st with multiple practice times being offered each week, generally in the evening, and some weekends. Not all practices are mandatory, but the team philosophy is you get out what you put in. Practices are often held at Silver Lake Park in Salem, WI and some other locations throughout SE WI and Northern IL. A practice schedule is issued at the beginning of each season.

Race season is during the months of September and October. Race participation is not mandatory, but encouraged. Race schedule and locations are posted on the WI League website.

Great Lakes Cycling provides a great opportunity for a well rounded experience allowing athletes to participate at their own level while being part of a fun team experience that also engages in trail work and bicycling and environmental advocacy.

Getting Started

Athlete Eligibility: Athlete membership is open to all students (boys and girls) from Grade School - College in Racine & Kenosha counties and surrounding areas including northern Illinois (as defined by geography registered with NICA).

All student-athletes must join Great Lakes Cycling and register on the Pitzone website which includes membership to NICA and the WI League. All student athletes who participate in any of the events associated with Great Lakes Cycling, including but not limited to races, training rides, clinics, camps, and practice skills sessions, do so at their own risk. Whether or not they are registered in Great Lakes Cycling or NICA, no liability shall be attached to Great Lakes Cycling or NICA or any of its officials, coaches, parents, volunteers, and participants with respect to any loss or injury sustained or caused by anyone participating in these events.

Student Athletes agree to adhere to the NICA Rules & Guidelines Book.

Try-outs are not required and membership is open to anyone who wishes to join Great Lakes Cycling. If an athlete would like to “try” before joining, NICA policy allows a rider to participate in one practice day with a signed waiver. After a rider has participated in a “try it day,” and wishes to continue participation, a commitment to join the team is required. We don’t have tryouts. If you try, and keep trying, you’re on our team. NICA has a proven history of creating capable and confident riders out of timid, out-of-shape beginners, year after year. Athletes already in good condition (ie: cross-country runners) adapt quickly and do very well.

While we look forward to 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. A very successful pro cyclist said “there are no secrets -- this is a hard sporting event and hard work wins it.” The Great Lakes Cycling athletes will really work hard and will be transformed by the process. Nearly every athlete (and parent) describes his/her participation as life changing in a remarkable way.

Equipment: All riders are required to have a mountain bike that is safe and adequate for race riding. Athletes are REQUIRED to wear a helmet at all times while riding their bike at any activity associated with Great Lakes Cycling. Athletes will be required to wear a team jersey while racing. Other equipment and gear is recommended later in this handbook. If an athlete does not have an adequate bike, a loaner bike program is available for eligible students.

Season: Pre-season training opportunities begin May 1st. Official team practices begin July 1st. Several practice times and locations are offered each week. Student athletes are not required to attend all practices, but encouraged to participate as often as possible to improve their skills. The practice schedule will be posted at the beginning of the season and further detail will be communicated via email and the team website. There are typically five races held during the months of September and October. Race locations are throughout the state of Wisconsin. Travel and lodging is the individual athletes responsibility. Dry camping is available at all race locations with prior reservations. Race registration is not included in membership and done on an individual basis.

Overview

Overview: Like other Wisconsin 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 school's coach does their best to carefully place riders in the following categories: middle school, freshmen, JV2, JV3, and varsity.

Why cycling? Cycling is a family-friendly fitness activity that can be done lifelong, with great social qualities. Groups of cyclists (except when climbing difficult hills) can talk, joke, and reminisce about past experiences. Enthusiasm for cycling as an alternative sport and healthy lifestyle is at an all-time high, especially here in the Midwest with so many good places to ride.

Training and racing with a team provides life lessons in self-discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship, along with 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 us 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 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. 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. Participating on the mountain bike team is at your own risk, and you should have your own personal medical insurance. If you do not, be aware that the team's policy would not be sufficient if an injury would require much more than basic care. The team does purchase a high-deductible policy that supplements your personal plan and generally helps cover the cost of co-pays.

It is the intent to provide many parent/coaches as ride leaders, each equipped with a first aid kit and cell phone on every ride, and at least one adult for each group if we split the team. Occasionally, circumstances arise where this is not possible. In this instance, we will designate and equip a student/athlete who we believe is adequately mature, responsible, and capable in the ride leader role.

Bike Racing is Girl-Friendly: There are lots of girls racing in the League. In fact, girl participation is the fastest growing demographic. Great Lakes Cycling hopes to set the standard for girls' participation in the Wisconsin League.

In the 1992 classic movie “A League of Their Own” Tom Hanks (as coach Jimmy Dugan) exclaims with surprise and dismay: “There’s no crying in baseball!” echoing the old-school world-view from the no-pain, no gain masculine perspective. In fact, there is crying in cycling, also pre-race makeup, hair, nails, and other surprises! The captain of the elite women’s VeloBella cycling team explained: “We girls sometimes cry. It’s not because we’re sad, it’s an emotional release. We might cry when the training is hard and we’re struggling a little, or during a stressful race, and we definitely might cry when we win. It’s ok! Don’t feel bad about it like you’ve done something to upset us. We want to be here (training and racing) and yes, we also like to feel pretty on race-day.” We haven’t said any of this to frighten you or indicate that our girls will be doing lots of crying...they won’t be; but rather to make the point that the League and our own Great Lakes Cycling team culture is truly co-ed, and we do work hard to provide an experience that encourages and celebrates girls’ different needs and tastes.

Team Structure

Athletes will be placed on a team within Great Lakes Cycling that corresponds to their geographic high school. Great Lakes Cycling will follow NICA tier definitions and team requirements.

There are two types of teams:

School-Based Teams - Comprised of full-time students from the same school; public or private. Student eligibility to race on a school-based team will be determined by the school they are racing for. If a student is eligible for a school's JV or Varsity sport, they should be eligible for a team on that school. Schools may allow students from other schools to practice with them but they will not earn points for the team.

- School-based teams are not required to be officially or otherwise formally affiliated as a sports team or club with the school in which its members are enrolled.

Composite Teams: Comprised of students from more than one school, individual riders, or home school students.

Membership Fees

As a club sport, Great Lakes Cycling does not receive any school or state funding, so annual dues are the financial foundation of the team. Dues go towards coach expenses, first aid training, race day support and infrastructure, practices, activities, and uniforms. **No student has been denied participation due to a lack of resources.**

All athletes that are members of Great Lakes Cycling will be required to pay:

1. membership dues for Great Lakes Cycling - due July 16th or immediately upon join gin if after the due date.
2. register with NICA & pay the annual fees associated with NICA registration - due prior to attending second team practice or second team function.

Great Lakes Cycling Fee Payment

Fees due at registration are Great Lakes Cycling and NICA registration. NICA registration will be sent via an email invitation and will be completed via the "Pitzone" website prior to attending practice. Great Lakes Cycling fees can be paid via:

1. Check - checks should be made out to Great Lakes Cycling
2. PayPal. (paypal service fee applies)

Required Forms

To participate on the team, riders must have a completed athletic packet to include the NICA waiver and should have a current physical. You most likely will be pushing your body harder than you have in the past. Make sure it is up to the challenge! A few additional forms will be required as well and will be emailed to all interested riders (forms will also available from the league website).

Late Fees

Upon completion of a five (5) day grace period following the original due date, a \$10 late fee will be assessed. At that time you will have an additional five (5) calendar days to pay the current payment plus the late fee. If all current fees are not paid in full at the end of the second five (5) day period, the athlete, effective immediately, will not be allowed to practice or compete until all fees are current.

Refund Policy

There are no refunds for athletes without a medical excuse. Any athlete with written medical documentation from a physician will have their Great Lakes Cycling fees pro-rated for that season from the date of the medical incident as noted by the physician.

NSF Check Policy

Any checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$25 fee. If within any fiscal year (September 1 – August 31), a family has two checks returned due to insufficient funds, all further payments must be made by cashier's check or money order for a full year from the date of the second returned check.

Scholarships

If dues are outside of what you feel your family can afford, scholarships are available. Every year the team works to reserve funds from our team sponsorships for team members in need of financial assistance. Scholarship funds are available to those families who would like assistance in paying for some of the expenses associated with team participation. We trust our community members to be the best judges of their own need and to reserve these funds for those in greatest need. Our team scholarship is an honor-based system and scholarship awards do not include a financial review of your household revenue and expenses. If applying for higher level scholarships through the Wisconsin League or NICA, additional information, review, and requirements may be applicable. The scholarship application is available by contacting: a coach or board member at westoshamtb@gmail.com with any questions.

ATHLETES

All members of Great Lakes Cycling are expected to adhere to this handbook, the NICA Rules & Guidelines, and the NICA Code of Conduct

Athletes are expected to display an excellent sporting attitude during all Great Lakes Cycling activities and should treat all other athletes, coaches, spectators, and officials with respect. Fair play and respectful, kind, supportive behavior is expected of all athletes. Profanity and abusive behavior in any situation is not acceptable.

Great Lakes Cycling encourages athletes to be diligent students and make school study a priority.

Inappropriate use of social media, substance abuse, or vaping is not tolerated at any time during the season. The use of caffeine, including energy drinks, soda, or other products containing caffeine are not allowed at any NICA practice or race.

Athletes are expected to respect trails, other trail riders, and adhere to local traffic laws.

Please review and refer to the NICA Quick Start Guide:
<http://www.nationalmtb.org/wp-content/uploads/NICA-Quick-Start-Guide.pdf>

Team Practice

The training scheme is a carefully planned schedule of training rides that gradually increase in distance and difficulty over a four to six month time-frame. The time-frame must be long to insure 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 time-frame 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 coed where practical.

Each year, new riders and parents are often surprised when we tell them that by season's end they will be able to easily ride for two hours and more in hilly terrain, or do a fifty mile "half-century," 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 potential. Accordingly, once school starts we do most of our training in the evening. This allows time for homework and for all the team members to

make it to practice. Since we have athletes from various districts and grades, this allows everyone the chance to attend. We generally do three weekday workouts, including core body strengthening and occasionally we will do a harder ride on a weekend day. These are commonly held at alternate locations from the regular weekday practice to help athletes experience and learn different riding locations. This schedule is designed to get us fit in a time-efficient way, minimize time on the bike, and avoid injury, fatigue, and mental burnout.

The athlete 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.

Several team practice times and locations will be offered throughout the season from May 1 - October 31.

Our team philosophy is you get out what you put in! So, the more you participate in practice, the better rider you will become.

There is no mandatory attendance requirement for practices. However, if you are working toward a high school sports club letter, some requirements may exist.

Athletes are encouraged to attend practice with their bike in good working order. Bike repairs are not to be done at practice unless emergency troubleshooting is necessary.

Athletes are encouraged to come to practice well rested, hydrated, and properly nourished for athletic participation.

Practices may include but are not limited to:

- MTB Singletrack
- Road
- Cyclocross
- Public gravel trails for endurance training
- BMX track
- Variety of trails that avoid roads to improve different techniques.
- Skills practice in fields

Practice season begins with a focus on skills and building endurance. As the season progresses race techniques will be incorporated.

If practice is cancelled for any reason, notification will be made via email or other electronic communication.

Team Communication

The team will maintain a website with up to date information and communication. The current team website can be found at: www.glcycling.com

Additional notices and registration for races is done through the Pitzone website portal.

The team may also use other means of communication such as text, email, or app based platforms.

Facebook Team Page

Equipment

Bicycle

All athletes must have an adequate bike in good working order that is race ready and sized properly for the rider.

Bicycles must be properly maintained and in good working order. The volunteer coaches are not mechanics and should not be expected to be responsible for regular maintenance. Coaches will be available to help troubleshoot a breakdown during practices or races if needed.

“Obviously, the main equipment cost is the bike, The main bike question is, “How much do you really need?” You can spend between \$100 and \$10,000 on a mountain bike. Yes, \$10,000! Does cost matter? It can - many times you get what you pay for. There are very real functional differences between the bikes, and if you don't have enough bike for the job it can be frustrating and even dangerous on tricky terrain. Most racers are well served by bikes that, when they were new, retailed for \$800 to \$2000. Below \$800 retail, and you're solidly in the racer frustration zone. Above \$2500 is only truly needed if you're pretty hot stuff, and you want to compete with the best. But those are retail numbers, and there are other options. One of the most common options is to take advantage of the discounts offered to NICA racers at partner bicycle stores. If you're patient on Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace you can find something race-worthy well under \$1000. There are still more options of course, to explore them you just need to talk to us.”

- Black Mountain Composite MTB Team

Helmets

Wearing Helmets Strictly Enforced

Student-athletes and participants (parents, volunteers, coaches, spectators, and staff) with a leg over a bicycle must wear a helmet at all times. Under no circumstances shall a student be on their bicycle without a helmet fastened to their head, even when riding a very short distance.

Student-athletes must also keep their helmet on when walking or running on the course with a mechanical problem.

Approved Helmets should meet one of the following standards:

- American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standard Z90.4.
- Snell Memorial Foundation Standard "B" or "N" series.
- American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standard F-1447.
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standard for bicycle helmets.
- European Committee for Standardization (CE EN1078) standard for bicycle helmets

Lights

While not required, athletes will get use out of battery operated front lights for riding during dusk. We occasionally go on fun evening rides and lights can help with late season practices.

Uniform Kits

Athletes are required to wear a team jersey during races. The race jersey is to be worn on Race Day ONLY. Race Jerseys should only be worn at NICA races. Race Jerseys are NOT to be worn at any other race.

Race pre-rides - Riders should wear team practice jersey during race pre rides. If athletes do not purchase a practice jersey, then a race jersey may be worn for NICA pre-rides.

Practice - Riders can wear any comfortable clothing that does not hinder riding. Clothing should not be loose fitting. Closed toed shoes are required.

Other equipment:

Riders are encouraged to keep spare tires/tubes/chains and pumps. Other equipment is at the rider's selection and discretion as long as it complies with NICA rules.

Cell phones must be secured during practice and are for emergency purposes only during practice rides. Cell phones should not be carried during races.

Portable music players are prohibited during practice and races for safety reasons. Riders must be alert and able to hear and respond to surroundings, other riders, and race officials.

Go pro or athletic cameras may be used. They must be properly secured via a bracket or harness intended for the camera.

Team Policies

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 area schools and ambassadors of cycling, athletes are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that status and follow the school 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

Community Service: As part of being on the team, members are required to undertake two hours minimum of community service during the season. An excellent opportunity will be to help the local cycling club KAMBA (Kenosha Area Mountain Bike Association) maintain the trails at local parks. The dates are tentatively scheduled in the team calendar throughout our season.

Concussion Policy

Coaches will educate the athletes on the signs and symptoms of concussions and encourage students to notify a coach if they or a teammate exhibits those signs or symptoms. Coaches shall immediately remove from participation/competition any athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury.

Coaches shall not allow an athlete who has been removed from activity because of a suspected concussion/brain injury to return to activity until the athlete has received written clearance from a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of brain injuries.

Coaches

During practice rides our teams adhere to a coach/athlete ratio in line with NICA guidelines.

Skilled and dedicated NICA volunteer coaches are the most important aspect of NICA interscholastic mountain bike teams. A NICA volunteer coach puts the safety and overall well-being of their student-athletes as the first priority. NICA volunteers are role models and teachers who are open to learning the best practices of youth mountain bike coaching and actively work to hone their leadership skills.

All volunteers are required to obtain a NICA Certification License at one of three levels. Coaches are required to complete federal background checks to complete their certification as well as various training, including first aid and safety.

Races

Participation in races is not required to be a member of Great Lakes Cycling.

The five League races are in Wisconsin, most a 2-4 hour drive away.

The Great Lakes Cycling team “caravans” to these. Riders are scored individually and on a team basis. Girl’s scores and boy’s scores are added together in the team computation.

Generally we will leave on Saturday and pre-ride the course so everyone is familiar with it and will know what to expect. It typically makes sense then to stay at the venue and camping is the least expensive option (if you already own a tent)! Pre-riding the course the day before and camping is not a requirement but it is common. You are also welcome to find a hotel and not camp, the choice is yours.

We encourage riders at all levels to stay throughout the race day, even after their race is complete. Throughout the race day, team members are encouraged to watch and cheer teammates on the course and participate in the awards ceremony. All awards, individual and team, are given out at the end of the day.

Nutrition

Athletes are expected to be informed and responsible with 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. Do not use any of the popular “high this, low that” fad-of-the-month diets. Nutrition will be discussed more as the season progresses.

Hydration is a very important component as well. Please ensure you have adequate water bottles for all rides.

Family Participation & Fundraising

One of the wonderful attributes of NICA racing is the culture shared throughout the League. This culture encourages family participation through volunteering, coaching, developing a lifelong sport your family can enjoy together, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and socializing together during race camping, meals and other opportunities. It is truly an all inclusive culture that supports one another and builds friendships.

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. You will discover that the other teams in the League are full of delightful kids, with encouraging coaches and wonderfully supportive parents. At the races, the whole gallery of spectators cheers and ring cowbells not just for their own kids, but yours too! This is a very friendly sport.

Parents are encouraged to join their athletes in training and attending the races. Parents, your help is critical in helping the team travel to each venue. For those of you on the brink of sending your kids away to college and adult life, this is a special time to share. Throughout NICA, families who were introduced to the sport this way described the experience as incredible, eye opening, and lifestyle changing.

We ride on some of the most beautiful trails in Southern Wisconsin. There will be opportunities to see lots of wild animals along with the spectacular fall color change.

Assistant Coaches and Team Officers: Starting out with a brand new sport, 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. 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 may have more experience. We are always 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.

Parental Involvement

While our team operates with member dues, there are several remaining components to be fulfilled to ensure we have a well run organization to best support our athletes and coaches throughout the season. Parental involvement is a key piece of the puzzle to this. We ask parents and family members to get involved with volunteer and fundraising opportunities as they are able.

Fundraising

One opportunity to support the team is through fundraising. Raising additional funds above and beyond our dues will provide the best resources available. We will ask for family participation in various fundraisers, including a major sponsorship campaign and small fundraisers. Any way you are able to participate is most appreciated and contributes to the overall good of the team.

Committees

To alleviate an overload of responsibilities on the head coach, our organization looks to parents to be on various committees during the year. Time obligations can range from a few hours to substantially more depending on your availability and willingness to participate. More hands make light work as they say, and we ask each family to participate in some capacity.

The committees that will be providing team support are:

Fundraising
Race Day
Clothing
Camping
Baquet/Social
Membership/Recruiting/Communication

Miscellaneous

Photo Sharing

By participating in Great Lakes Cycling, photos during the year may be shared between families various photo sharing services such as a shared Dropbox folder. These photos may be used for team promotional purposes.

Accident Reports

All incidents or accidents should be reported to the head coach.