

## **ABC Race Format**

We had an officers meeting last week where the A,B,C racing scenario was discussed in depth. The idea stems from a couple of concerns. First, race turnout has been low this past season, and we want to attract some new people from outside the club, such as from TAB, Team Toledo Tri, local universities and elsewhere. Second, we get a fair number of people each season who are interested in racing, but they are nervous and hesitant about mass group riding, and/or they are concerned about getting dropped. Consequently, we would like to eliminate the age group categories and transition to an ability based A, B, C system to give new or slower riders a chance at racing with riders of similar skill and fitness. Ultimately we propose moving away from age group points standings and converting to the A, B, C format, which is very similar to the format the Club used in the 1980s.

One of the major goals of the Club is to encourage and further cycling in the greater Toledo area. The Club's current membership is very much showing its chronological age, and we are failing to attract new, and specifically younger, riders. If the Club is to continue for another decade or more, then we need to begin placing the greater good of cycling (and that of the Club) ahead of an individual's ability to win a category.

Within this A, B, C group system Club members will have the option to pick the group in which they want to race. If winning is an important goal to an individual's involvement with racing, then an intermediate ability rider can race the B Group, and the member can have a competitive chance of winning the B group championship. On the other hand, if a rider is at the upper end of intermediate ability and the individual places personal performance ahead of winning, then that member may elect to race with the A group.

You could choose to race the A's or B's, depending on your training , motivation, etc. We understand that some folks want to compete against others within their age group so that they have a chance to win their age category. And although those same age group riders may be strong enough to ride with the A Group, they may never have a chance to win or place within the A group. In other words these age group riders serve as "pack filler" rather than viable competitors, and to some this can be quite discouraging, and understandable so.

Ultimately, if the system is to function as intended, not everyone will be allowed to start in the A group. The criteria for A group participation may need to include the holding of a Cat 3 license or having raced in a specific number of MVW races. The details of this criteria have yet to be fully established. We will, however, have a system of upgrading similar in concept to that of USA Cycling. Once an individual has won a specific number of races or accrued a specified number of points through placings, then a rider would no longer be obligated to remain in the C or B group. Once a rider meets the requirements to upgrade, doing so is at the discretion of the individual.

This system should help to make racing safer by allowing for greater concentration on racing skills and less focus on holding a wheel or staying on the rivet. Those individuals who are striving to move up, to challenge their competitiveness and to improve, may upgrade in the middle of the season (provided they have met the upgrade criteria). Should they do so, however, the points and placings earned from previous racing category will not transfer up, and the rider may miss out in earning an season-end overall placing in the previous group.

As for how the mechanics of races would be handled, each of the three groups would start individually. For example, the A's would start first, then thirty seconds later the B's followed by the C's. So as not to completely discard a larger group race we could have as many an half

the races begin as a mass group combining A's, B's and C's. The idea here is to give all riders experience in faster and larger group racing.

A change in awards would also accompany this transition to A, B, C group racing. Awards would be given to at least the top five places (and possibly six or seven) in each category, versus the current three places. Ultimately, this new system would provide a means for Club members of all abilities to have a venue for equal competition.

Members with little experience would have the opportunity to actually compete in a series, while providing the same to those of intermediate and advance ability. Of course, this system may not serve the purpose as intended. If such were the case, then a shift back to age group racing could be made the following season.

Ultimately, the Club wants and needs to attract new members, but that's not happening or at least not to the degree desired. A wise definition applied to insanity may be relevant to our past and current approach to Club growth. "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."