

“Information You Need to Know” For Parents and Athletes!

The **Janesville Youth Mountain Bike Club** was organized for the first time in 2014 by the Janesville Velo Club (www.veloclub.org). We are planning for a larger team and more fun this year. We are members of the Wisconsin High School Cycling League (www.wisconsinmtb.org). The WI HS League is a member of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) (www.nationalmtb.org). Join us for lots of fun and great fitness. You can find more information at the above websites. For more info see the Janesville Velo Club website and visit the Youth Mountain Bike Club’s page. There is also a contact form there.

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.

- **Mission Statement**

To provide students, that have the desire to mountain bike, with the coaching and camaraderie that will help them to achieve both non-competitive and competitive goals in a safe and enjoyable manner.

- **Club Goals**

1. To teach beginners safe riding practice, an understanding of the sport and to give them a fun and challenging cycling experience.
2. Have intermediate riders advance both their fitness and skill level.
3. To have the advanced riders increase proficiency and develop and earn top honors at races.
4. Develop an awareness of the mechanics and care of the mountain bike with preventative maintenance and increasing their comfort level with unplanned repairs on trails.
5. Create an environment in which they may discover new friendships and role models.
6. Guide students towards learning new skills as confidence soars.
7. Foster a responsible attitude toward the use and care of trails.
8. Promote the value of cycling to our community as a mode of transportation and as a life long sport.

High and middle school student members are welcome to ride only for the fun, fitness and camaraderie that mountain biking provides. However the club will also strive to build a competitive cycling team and compete in the Wisconsin High School Cycling League. For athletes new to cycling, immediate immersion into training, racing, and the pressure to perform may be intimidating. For this reason the League has scheduled races for September-October, enabling all students to receive 2-3 months training on the mountain bike before any racing takes place. Developing safe riding skills will be the foremost emphasis at club practices.

The League has also 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 into appropriate races: middle school, freshmen, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity. Riders are further split into separate boys and girls races. Riders are scored individually and on a team basis. Girl’s scores and boy’s scores are added together in the team computation. The Wisconsin League is hoping for lots of girls and the Janesville club/team are intent upon being girl friendly.

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 some even sing as they ride. Enthusiasm for cycling as an alternative sport and healthy lifestyle is at an all-time high.

Training and racing with a team provides life lessons in self-discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship, along with the 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 a club coach 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, NICA collects data on injuries from every team in every league. Typically, for a 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. However, even with our best efforts, crashes and injuries can occur.

We do our best to provide many parent/coaches as ride leaders, each equipped with a first aid kit and cell phone on every ride, 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. Adults, please consider volunteering as a ride leader for our practices. You don't need to be a star biker to help out, ride along, and gain fitness with the rest of us.

How We Build Our Team and Train:

We don't have tryouts. If you try, and keep trying, you're on our team. We strive to create capable and confident riders out of timid, out-of-shape beginners, year after year. Athletes who are already in good condition (like basketball, hockey, track and other athletes) adapt quickly and do very well. We also believe mountain biking will be very attractive and beneficial to untraditional athletes, those who are not attracted to the stick and ball sports.

The Janesville club coaches will value and promote excellence, believing that ordinary athletes can attain big results through setting goals, mapping a strategy, and giving the task disciplined effort. In mountain bike racing there are no secrets, this is a hard sporting event and hard work pays dividends. Club members will work really hard and will be transformed by the process. Nearly every experienced athlete (and parent) describes his/her participation as life changing in a remarkable way.

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. Our practices start in June and continue through the last race, usually in October. Our training plan is to do our most essential training ride on a weekend mornings, allowing us time for longer practice rides than our regular weekday practices. We will combine the weekend practice with two shorter weekday workouts. This schedule is designed to get us fit in a time-efficient way, minimize time on the bike, avoid injury, fatigue, and mental burnout.

Athletes will need to continually monitor their 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.

Bike Racing is Girl-Friendly !

There are lots of girls racing in state leagues throughout the country. In fact, girl participation is the fastest growing demographic. The Janesville Club will make every effort to have girls feel welcome. NICA requires all leagues and clubs to follow the “Safe Kids” program (more info available).

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 California based 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 Janesville Club culture is truly co-ed, and we do work hard to provide an experience that encourages and celebrates girls’ different needs and tastes.

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. Road trips to the races (camping if weather allows) are the best of all. 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 cheer and ring cowbells not just for their own kids, but yours too! This is a very friendly sport that encourages everyone’s participation.

Parents are encouraged to join their athletes in training and even racing. Your help is critical in helping the team travel to each venue. This year ride leaders (parents and coaches) will train alongside the student-athletes. For those of us on the brink of sending their kids away to college and adult life, this is a special time to share. Other families who were introduced to the sport described the experience as incredible, eye opening, and lifestyle changing. **If you choose to participate I am sure you will find mountain biking with your kid(s) extremely enjoyable, creating memories you will cherish for the rest of your life!**

How Communication Happens:

We will use email to communicate with parents and athletes. This method is used because word-of-mouth, flyers, and phone communication has proven time consuming and ineffective. Emails will discuss training schedules, offer feedback about rides completed, include team news, tips, motivation and encouragement, recognition, strategic planning for races, travel planning, unrelated fun tidbits, bike culture and more. Please check your email daily! Of course, you will also be able to reach coaches by phone for more urgent communication.

About Commitment:

If your athlete regularly misses workouts, especially the weekend rides; he/she will not progress at the same rate as fellow athletes. I guarantee that this will become a source of frustration for your student once they start having difficulty keeping up and will send a clear signal to others that they are not committed to the team.

We promise to treat your athlete like a responsible young adult. Accordingly, we will interpret a habit of missed practices and a pattern of disinterest as a signal to be dropped from the team and email communication. If your athlete is unable to attend any of the agreed-upon practice rides because of school homework, job schedules, family commitments or other concerns, it is really important that they consult with their coach so we can create an alternate plan to keep the season on track. **Repeated unexcused absences can result in a rider being removed from the team.**

The Janesville Youth Mountain Bike Club has a race team and, as such, each participant is encouraged to try at least one race. If, after this experience, the rider determines that he/she is not into racing, then they are not forced to continue racing. The main goal of the club is to encourage participation in a fun healthfull sport that will contribute to the developing character of students.

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 the Janesville Youth MTB Club, Janesville High and Middle Schools and as ambassadors of cycling, athletes are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that status and follow the Janesville HS Club 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.**

Riders will Need Some Equipment:

- An appropriate bike.
- Approved helmet.
- Cycling clothing.
- On bike hydration equipment (water bottles or Camelback).
- You must have a way to carry on bike tools & tubes (seat bag or camelback backpack).

Bicycles and helmets must be inspected and approved for function and safety, then re-inspected at regular intervals.

Getting all the equipment can be challenging. Prices vary widely and much is available both new and used on the internet at discount prices. It is possible local riders will be willing to donate or loan needed gear and equipment. Please consult with me before you buy anything so I can help you get the right gear and minimize the cost. The Janesville Club has a few bicycles to loan to students who do not have an appropriate bicycle at their disposal. If you are interested in borrowing a bike for the season, contact a coach to explain your needs.

Cost of Participating:

Athlete expenses:

- The annual Wisconsin HS Cycling League rider registration (\$50).
- Entry fees to any of the High School league races you are participating in (\$35).
- Race weekend expenses will include travel costs and perhaps overnight camping.(?)
- **It is the clubs intention that no student be denied participation due to a lack of resources.**

Assistant Coaches and Team Officers:

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 were beginners not very long ago. We are also 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.

Please be sure to let me know if you have any questions. I ask that riders planning to be on the team have all forms completed before June 1st. Find more info at the JVC website (www.veloclub.org/).

Join Us!

Head Coach Ken Pearson

Contact: janesvilleMTB@gmail.com