



BUFFALO
Bicycling Club

INTRO TO BIKE RACING

Introductions

Alison Merner 🚴 *Devin Erdmann* 🚴 *Erin Haskell* 🚴 *James Thompson* 🚴

Not your average team sport.

- Cooperation among competitors
- Team sport with one winner
- Eating/drinking during competition

More than a “faster group ride.”

Group dynamics

- Organized pacelines vs. race pack; “washing machine”
- Steady-state riding vs. variable pace/intensity
- Personal space
- Expectations around “being dropped”

Technical skills (essential for safety and strategy)

- Gearing choices, braking, drafting, eating/drinking while riding
- Protecting your front wheel, “holding a line”
- Drafting, pacelining, cornering, bumping, wheel contact

Disciplines and specializations

- Road Race
- Criterium / Crit
- Time trial

But what do I actually *need* to race?

The Essentials

A working bicycle
Helmet
Athletic Apparel (sleeves)
Shoes (clipless or platform)
Nutrition/hydration
Bottle cages
Saddle bag/flat-fix kit
A positive attitude!

Nice-to-Haves

Cycling kit (shorts, jersey)
Gloves
Cycling shoes
Clipless pedals
Sport sunglasses
Cycling computer
Heart rate monitor
A USAC license

Not Necessary (Really.)

Carbon everything
Power meter
Smart trainer
Performance coach



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How should I train for this?

Some basic tips

- There is no substitute for base miles.
- Rest days matter!
- “Polarize”
- Stretching and core strength
- *The best process is the one that works for you!*

How NOT to train!

- Ride tempo or “hard-ish” all the time
- Large, sudden increases in volume
- Train every day

The Nitty Gritty: Sanctioning, Category-Based Racing and Registration

Organization (USA Cycling)

- USAC license (\$110) = access to events and upgrades
- Category-based racing = “field parity.” Grouping riders of similar experience and fitness makes the races more interesting (and safer) for everyone.

Categories (“Cats”)

- USAC: Category 5/Novice → Category 1; age-based for juniors and masters
- Buffalo Bicycling Club (BBC) uses an A/B/C category system at club races.

Finding Events:

- BikeReg <https://www.bikereg.com/>
- USAC website <https://usacycling.org/events>
- BBC *club* races do not require registration beyond purchase of club membership. Members must register for *USAC* races promoted by BBC separately (on BikeReg).

OK, I’m interested. What’s next?

1: Ride with others <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Get comfortable riding with others- Be predictable- Learn self sufficiency- Manage nutrition, hydration- Learn to fix a flat- Read the wind	2: Organized Group Rides <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shop rides (L&S, Campus)- Organized rides (Tues EA)- Attend skills clinics- Drafting, group riding skills- Communication	3: Development Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BBC mentorship program- Attend rides and clinics- Receive coaching in BBC club races (C)- Contact BBC Education Director Frank Grillo at fgrillo77@gmail.com
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Racer Speak: Demystified

Attack — a sudden attempt to get away from a rider or group of riders. May be followed immediately by a “counterattack” by another racer when the attacking rider is caught.

BBC — the Buffalo Bicycling Club. Your local bicycle racing club, offering racer development and mentorship programs to weekly training races, and a calendar of USAC-sanctioned events!

Bell lap — the last lap of a race. A bell is rung by race officials as the riders cross the start/finish line to begin the final lap. The next time across the line is the finish. The lap counter will read “1” at the beginning of the bell lap, meaning “1 lap to go.” When you hear the bell, it is time to go fast. (See *also, prime.*)

Bonk — have you ever completely cracked on a ride? Found yourself three-quarters of the way up a climb or on the curb outside a gas station two hours from home, sobbing into a bag of Haribo? That, friend, was a bonk. Practice self-sufficiency and avoid the embarrassment of bonking on a group ride or in a race: eat/drink early and often — if you feel hungry or thirsty, it might already be too late.

Breakaway / Break — a rider or group of riders who have separated themselves ahead of the main pack. Even if they are on different teams, they may cooperate to stay ahead of the main group to improve their odds of winning. Time-trial specialists often excel in breakaways.

Cadence — the number of rotations of the crank per minute (rpm). Everyone has a natural cadence, and an optimum balance between using muscle strength (low rpm) and the cardiovascular system (high rpm) to achieve maximal efficiency and minimize fatigue. As you build fitness, that natural sweet spot might change. (“Spin to win” refers to turning your pedals faster to go faster.)

Cat — a small, domesticated mammal; alternatively, one’s racing category according to their USAC license. Racers begin as “cat 5” or “Novice” and may gradually upgrade to higher categories through a point system. Cat 1 is the highest amateur racing level for U.S. riders. “Point hunting” is a reference to actively seeking upgrade points.

Climber — James Thompson; alternatively, a rider who loves when the road goes up. These riders produce a lot of power relative to their weight over a long period of time, but generally lack the ability to match the explosive acceleration of sprinters.

Criterion / Crit — “The NASCAR of bike racing.” Crits are road races of a shorter duration (30-75 minutes) and higher intensity, run on a course of ~1mi in length with multiple turns per lap. These races require technical skill and ability to repeat short, hard efforts; they often favor sprinters.

Drafting — riding in the slipstream of another rider, generally within 2 feet of another’s wheel and often closer. A rider drafting off another may expend up to 30% less energy (more if you are in a larger group). The faster you’re riding, the more wind resistance you feel, and the more important drafting becomes for conserving energy.



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FTP — functional threshold potential. For training purposes, this is generally defined as the power (in watts) you could sustain riding at a constant, maximal effort for 1 hour. FTP, and the results of your latest FTP test, are best left out of conversation on the group ride.

NYSBRA [*nais-bruh*] — the New York State Bicycle Racing Association. NYSBRA is a local affiliation of USAC; they help organize racing (including events, teams and educational programs) on the state, regional and local level. If you meet someone who is a member of the NYSBRA board, say “thank you.”

Peloton / pack — That expensive exercise bicycle was named after the term for the main group of riders on the road during a race. (A break may be up the road, a chase or “gruppetto” behind.)

Prime [*preem*] — an intermediate sprint during a criterium. A bell is rung by officials and riders may choose to sprint across the line on the next lap for a bonus prize, often money or merchandise. *Do NOT confuse a prime with the last lap / bell lap.* Refer to the lap counter (a display of the number of laps remaining, located at the start/finish line) regularly during the race. If the lap counter says anything other than “1” when you hear the bell, it is a prime.

Pull — a turn at the front of a paceline, blocking the wind for other riders. If someone yells at you to “pull through,” they want you to move to the front of the group and share the work of keeping the pace. If you decide to contribute, you’ll want to “pull off” before you get too tired — flick your elbow and move over to let someone else pull through.

Sprinter — A rider who excels at short, explosive efforts. You’ll usually find them at the back of the group or “sitting in,” saving their energy for the last 500m of a race. As they favor short efforts and tend to have more muscle mass, they do not love hills. (Warning: not loving hills does not automatically make you a sprinter.)

Time-Trial / TT — “the race of truth.” Riders compete based purely on individual effort over a fixed distance (often 20, 30 or 40km). They start individually and may not draft another rider. This discipline favors those who produce high sustained power (regardless of weight) and have the ability to ride in an aerodynamic position to minimize wind resistance. It also favors those who really enjoy suffering.

USAC [“you-sack”] — USA Cycling, the organization that oversees and regulates bicycle racing in the US. Often referred to in the context of licenses, upgrades and races where upgrade points are available.

Watt — the unit of electrical power equal to one ampere under the pressure of one volt. Also, the unit in which power production is measured in cycling. See also: Robert Förstemann *Olympic Cyclist versus Toaster* on YouTube.

W/Kg — “watts per kilo,” or the ratio of power being produced in watts to the rider’s weight in kilograms. There are deep, dark recesses of the Internet and entire books dedicated to this topic and how to apply it (and FTP) to training. Also best left out of conversation on the group ride.

Wheel sucker — a derogatory term used to describe someone who “sits in” without taking a turn at the front (refuses to “pull through”). This may be particularly relevant in a break or when the peloton is trying to organize to chase down a break. Wheel sucking will save energy but it will not make friends.