



Policy on Junior Participation in Endurance Mountain Bike events

1/1/2005

Purpose.

The purpose of this policy statement is to define what MTBA considers to be an appropriate minimum age for participation in endurance mountain bike events.

Coverage.

MTB events that are currently included in this policy are 4hr - 24hr endurance and marathon (60km and over) events.

Introduction.

The inclusion of endurance mountain bike events in the form of 24hr MTB racing onto the Australian MTB calendar in late 1999 has led to an explosion in events of this style being conducted all over Australia. Other MTB endurance events such as marathon style events (defined by the UCI as cross country competitions over 60km in length, see also MTBA marathon technical regulations) have also started to increase in number, along with participation, over the last few years.

An increasing number of those participating in these events are junior aged, that is under the age of 18 on race day.

MTBA currently adheres to the guidelines for junior MTB cycling as set down in 1995 by the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Cycling Federation. These guidelines predate the advent of endurance mountain bike events in Australia and are aimed at events in the Olympic XC format and thus, to a large extent, are inappropriate for application to endurance mountain bike events.

With the increased junior participation and the active courting of school involvement by race organisers in some endurance mountain bike events MTBA needs to ensure that junior participation is at a level that is appropriate based on the best information we have.

For the best physical and skill development of junior participants, consideration must be given to factors related to growth and maturation when assessing readiness for progression in training and competition followed by specialisation and intense training.

MTBA recognizes that young people differ from adults in the quality of their tissues and are not able to take the same stresses. Consequently training and competition must be conducted differently for young people.

The most common problem is soft tissue injuries (muscles, ligaments and tendons) due to trauma or overuse. Rare problems include the risk of

- fractures particularly during the growth spurt when bones are lengthening and are relatively porous; and
- injuries to the growth plate of bones caused by high contact forces or repetitive loading in some sports.

In the context of endurance mountain bike activity MTBA will recognize the developmental aspects of juniors by:

- encouraging appropriate participation in endurance mountain bike events as part of a team structure for younger aged juniors; and
- implementing age restrictions in the specialised area of solo and individual competitions.

The former will serve to develop the basis for long-term participation in mountain biking through the development of life skills (such as communication, concentration and commitment), learning about responsibility and discipline, learning how to work with others in team environments, learning to cope with success and failure, developing a sense of community, loyalty and cohesion and finally, helping some gifted young people become aware they are role models for others. As age increases specialization founded on the

groundwork of earlier team participation will provide a structured pathway towards elite competition.

Minimum Age rulings.

Event	Participation group	Minimum age
4hr – <8hr	Solo	16
	Team	To be defined
8hr – <12hr	Solo	17
	Team	To be defined
12hr – <24hr	solo	18
	Team	To be defined
24hr +	solo	18
	Team	To be defined
Marathon (1)	Individual, full marathon	18
	Individual, half marathon	16
	Team, marathon	To be defined

(1). See also MTBA marathon technical regulations

Application.

- Age will be determined as at the first day of the event.

Minimum ages for junior participation in teams at events covered by this policy are yet to be defined. An updated policy statement will be published in due course once these become defined.

Additional technical regulations for the conduct of MTB endurance events will be published shortly.

References:

Junior Sport Framework, 2004. *Australian Sports Commission*

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