

YOUTH ELITE AND JUNIOR ELITE DRAFT-LEGAL RACING

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup? Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups are USAT-designated, draft-legal triathlons organized exclusively for athletes between 13 and 19 years of age. Each year, USAT designates three or four of these events to serve as national-level racing opportunities. In addition, these events are used as qualifiers for the ITU Junior World Championships team, to crown national champions, qualify athletes for international competitions, and sometimes even serve as international championships.

I can't find a Junior Elite Cup nearby. Are there other opportunities to participate in a draft-legal triathlon? Two other options for athletes between the ages of 12 and 19 are USAT-designated "Youth F1 Triathlons" for ages 12 to 16 and "USAT Elite Development Races" for ages 16 to 23.

What does "draft-legal" mean? The term "draft-legal" refers to the competition rules that are followed in the ITU/Olympic short-course triathlon format. During a draft-legal triathlon, athletes draft behind other athletes to save energy. This is often referred to as riding in a "pack" or "peloton." Under USAT Rules, drafting off another athlete would result in a penalty. Under international competition rules for this style of racing, there is no penalty for drafting...in fact, it is encouraged. Drafting in this format of triathlon adds another dimension to race tactics and skill.

Where do I learn about international competition rules? Go to www.triathlon.org. Click on the "Inside ITU" tab, then click "Documents" on the dropdown menu. You will find the current ITU Competition Rules on this page. Because these rules are written specifically for World Cup and World Championship Series events, there are portions of them that may not be applicable or enforceable in developmental, junior elite races. If you have a question about the rules, be sure to raise it at the mandatory pre-event briefing.

What is the purpose of these types of events? Because the Junior, Collegiate (FISU), Under-23, and armed forces world championships all are draft-legal triathlons, Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups provide America's young athletes an opportunity to develop the skills and experience necessary for international-caliber racing as they progress through the developmental pipeline. They also serve as a stepping stone toward becoming an elite/professional triathlete competing in the ITU World Championship Series or even the Olympic Games.

What are the race distances and format? A Youth Elite Cup is comprised of a 400 meter swim, a 10 kilometer bike, and a 2.5 kilometer run. Youth F1 events may be slightly shorter. Junior Elite Cups and Elite Development Races are comprised of a 750m swim, 20k bike, and a 5k run. The swim starts from either a platform (dive from a floating pontoon, pier, or riverwalk) or a beach start. The bike course is typically multilap (e.g. 4 x 5k). The run is also multi-lap (e.g. 2 x 2.5k). As with any triathlon, distances may vary slightly from venue to venue.

Why are these races so short? I though triathlon was an endurance event? The distances for Junior Elite Cups mirror that of the ITU Junior World Championship. Since Junior Elite Cups combine the usual elements of a sprint triathlon with the dynamics and required skill level of draft-legal racing, reasonably short distances are most advisable. At age 13 or 14, an athlete is transitioning from the very short Youth distance races to the dynamics of draft-legal racing. Physiologically, these athletes are in a very important stage of human development as well. The Youth Elite distances provide a safe, age-appropriate distance upon which to build a foundation for success in the junior ranks.

How old must I be to compete? For Youth Elites, eligible racing ages are 13, 14, or 15 years old as of December 31st of the competition year. Youth F1 provides a slightly enlarged age range, from 12 to 16. For Junior Elites, eligible racing ages are 16, 17, 18, or 19 years old as of December 31st of the competition year. Elite Development Races allows athletes 16 to 23, and those over 23 by special invitation.

May I "race up" a division? No. Athletes must compete according to their age as of December 31st of the competition year. For example, a 12 year old who does not turn 13 by December 31st may not compete in a Youth Elite Cup. Likewise, a 15 year old who does not turn 16 by December 31st may not compete in a Junior Elite Cup. In the same spirit, an older athlete may not "race down" a division. Some exceptions to this rule may be allowed at Youth F1 races.

Do I need to be on a High Performance Team to compete? No. While there are many development teams that focus on preparing Youth Elite / Junior Elite athletes, being a member of such a team is not expected or required in order to compete at a Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup. If you are interested in learning more about USAT-designated High Performance Team, visit http://triathlon.teamusa.org/content/index/1965.

How do I register for these events? Registration is handled by the event organizer/race director. Because many Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups are held in conjunction with age group races, be certain you are registering for the Youth Elite (13-15) or Junior Elite (16-19) event. Contact the event organizer if you have a registration question.

Does my child need a USAT membership to compete? Yes. All athletes 17 and under must hold a USAT annual membership to compete. The price of membership is only \$5 for the entire year. Athletes 18 and 19 years of age should purchase an adult annual membership for \$39. One-day licenses may be available at events that do not carry World Championship Qualifier status. Purchase a membership at www.usatriathlon.org.

What type of bike do I need in order to participate? For Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups, you must ride a "traditional road bike," as opposed to a "tri bike," "time trial bike," or "mountain bike." For exact specifications, please consult sections E.3 and E.4 of the ITU Competition Rules (referenced above). For safety reasons, equipment that does not comply with sections E.3 and E.4 will not be permitted on the race course at a Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup.

Does that mean I need to own two bikes? Certainly not. A few minor modifications to your "traditional road bike" will make it race ready for a typical non-drafting triathlon. A road bike will provide the versatility to do both styles of triathlon at the lowest cost to you.

What is the "no bare torso" rule? An athlete must have his/her torso (upper body) covered for the full duration of the race...from swim start to run finish. Many male athletes choose to compete in a form-fitting tri-suit that does not inhibit their swim stroke and is hydrodynamic. Please note that this rule is strictly enforced.

Do I need to put my name on my race suit? No. Currently, there are no uniform guidelines for Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups, with the exception of the torso covering rule, so athletes are free to place logos of their choosing on their race suit. Many athletes choose to add their last name to either the upper front or lower back of their race suit, or both, in the style of ITU elite athletes. USAT encourages this as it helps our talent id staff get to know you. If you want to set up your site to the exact specs of an ITU athletes, a guide is available for download on the ITU documents page.

Why is there a mandatory pre-race meeting? The mandatory pre-race meeting is necessary to inform athletes of the competition rules and course specifics. Given the developmental nature of these events, these meetings serve as a critical part of the educational process. They also may be used as an opportunity to pre-inspect equipment (however, final inspection occurs as athletes enter the transition area). Whenever possible, these meetings will take place on the evening prior to race day. Please be aware that meeting space is often limited and access may be restricted to athletes only.

How long are these mandatory meetings? Approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Are wetsuits allowed? <u>Yes</u>, provided the water temperature is 20C (approximately 68F) or below.

Are relay teams allowed to compete? No.

May parents assist their children in the transition area? No. Parents and coaches are not allowed inside the transition area before, during, or after the event.

How are national rankings calculated? USAT tabulates an annual Youth Elite/Junior Elite National Ranking based on performances at Youth Elite/Junior Elite Cups. To view

the scoring system and rankings archives, please visit http://triathlon.teamusa.org/content/index/1963

Where can I watch video of this style of racing? The ITU offers a collection of recent event video under the Multimedia tab on its website – www.triathlon.org. For starters, check out the junior races under the World Triathlon Championships banner.

How fast must I be to be competitive at a Junior Elite Cup? Take a look at the *Junior Performance Benchmarks* posted at http://triathlon.teamusa.org/content/index/1964. For the most competitive juniors, financial support may be available to you via the *Junior Performance Plan* posted on the same page.

Where can I get hands-on coaching for this type of racing? One of the best places to learn the art of draft-legal triathlon is at USAT Junior Skills or Select Camp. Camp dates and locations are posted at http://triathlon.teamusa.org/content/index/2205. Another option is to join one of the growing number of High Performance Teams.

Still have questions? Please refer questions to Steve Kelley, USAT Athlete Development Coordinator, steve.kelley@usatriathlon.org