



Palmer Park Velo novice guides:

Cyclocross



Cyclo-cross (CX) is arguably, the most accessible and inclusive form of bicycle racing with events for all ages and abilities run between the months of September and February, although summer cyclo-cross is becoming ever more popular.

Events take place off-road in public parks, private estates or schools predominately on grass but with others surfaces being incorporated where appropriate and/or available at the venue. Courses vary in length and technicality depending on rider age with shorter, less technical courses for younger riders. Courses will not exceed 3.5km in length and will be fully marked using barrier tape (or similar) and are excellent for spectators who can get close to the action without encroaching on the racing itself.

Equipment

There are no bike restrictions for local races, but we recommend you ride either a cyclo-cross or mountain bike. Rules for national level races restrict riders to cyclo-cross bikes. As races are generally run in winter it's important to consider clothing carefully; multiple layers, full-fingered gloves, overshoes, leggings and waterproof jackets will regularly be needed. As with all other bicycle races, a helmet is compulsory.

For those wishing to compete at national level (open to U14 and above) equipment demands become significantly more important. Tyres to cope with varying conditions, two bikes for wet conditions (riders change as bikes become clogged with mud) and for those in the pits, a power-washer capable of cleaning filthy bikes quickly.

Racing

But for a handful of exceptions, cyclo-cross races follow the same format for all ages. Multiple laps of a clearly marked course for a given time period adjusted according to age. With one lap remaining, riders will hear the sound of a bell signifying the final lap. When the lead rider crosses the finish line at the end of the final lap the race finishes for all competitors, including those who may have been 'lapped'. Prior to racing, riders will be able to pre-ride the course at specific times stipulated by the event organiser.

Races are often run as part of a series or league with points awarded according to finishing position for all competitors in each race. At the end of the season, prizes are awarded for series or league winners.

Entry to most races can be done in advance on-line or on-the-day at the venue although many event organisers give a concession to those entering in advance. While it isn't always a requirement to hold a BC license to enter a race, all club riders become BC members so for those events requiring a license, you will already have one.

Prizes – for age categories U14 and above, monetary prizes are award to the winners in accordance with regulations set by British Cycling.

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Both boys and girls compete in the same race and will be categorised within the overall and by gender. As an example, a girl may place 4th overall but will be recognised as 1st girl at a prize or podium presentation..

Required skills

If you can ride a bike, you can race cyclo-cross. Of course this is simplistic, but it is the base requirement to race. The techniques needed to improve can be learnt at coached club sessions. These advanced techniques include; starting, dismounting, remounting, cornering, group riding, climbing, descending, off-camber riding etc.

Training

The key components of fitness for CX racing are covered in coaching sessions at PPV. But as cyclo-cross occasionally includes running (up steps, across banks etc.) as riders progress through the age categories, consideration should also be given to this. Cyclo-cross racing requires endurance and an ability to maintain a high-tempo whilst making decisions about the best way to tackle the terrain in front of you. Coaching sessions run by qualified cyclo-cross coaches will be structured so that both fitness and technical elements are developed.

Progression

Those starting at a young age, will enter Go-Ride races where lap times are between 2 and 4 minutes in duration with races typically being about 10 minutes in length.

Run throughout the UK Regional Races are open to all categories and will be part of a series or league. As riders advance in age, race durations increase with a maximum race time of 30 minutes for the U16 category.

The National Trophy Series typical consists of six rounds held throughout the cyclo-cross season and is open to all race categories.

The British National Championships is the most prestigious race in the country with championship jersey's being awarded to race winners. National Championship jersey's may be worn at subsequent races in the same year or in the following year where riders remain in the same age category.

More information

British Cycling – How to get into cyclo-cross: <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/getintocyclo-cross/?c=EN>

British Cycling cyclo-cross regulations:
https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/zuvvi/media/bc_files/rulebook/2017/C11_-_Cyclo-Cross_Specific_Regulations.pdf

Local events

Wessex CX League: <http://www.wessexcx.co.uk/>



Palmer Park Velo novice guide: **Cyclocross**

Wessex CX Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/105868812783905/>

Central Cyclo-Cross League: <http://centralcxl.org.uk/>

Central CX Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/CentralCXLeague/>

National Events

British Cycling National Trophy Series: <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/nationaltrophy?c=EN>

British Cycling National Championships: <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/britishcrosschampionships?c=EN>

*Note. Palmer Park affiliates to the Wessex CX League where most of our riders compete.

*Chris Macleod
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