



USA Cycling Free Lap Rules and Guidelines

Criterium races are events where bike handling skills, equipment choices and knowledge of the course are critical to the success of the competitors. In the case of accidents or incidents, it is important that everyone understand the regulations and the sporting principals of Criteriums. The following outline of current regulations, definitions and supplemental clarifications are presented as an integral part of USA Cycling regulations. These are consistent with USA Cycling regulations and are intended for all USA Cycling events.

All participants are expected to understand and respect the following information as a part of their participation. With these regulations and guidelines reinforced, we are setting a standard of expectation and conduct for athletes, officials and race directors, that unifies our events across the country.

DEFINITIONS

CRASH: A rider or riders directly involved in a person to person, bike to bike collision or fall, that stops their forward progress. In general, riders who fall to the ground have crashed.

FALL: To drop or descend under the force of gravity, as to a lower place through loss or lack of support or equilibrium. To come or drop down suddenly to a lower position, especially to leave a standing, erect or riding position suddenly, whether voluntarily or not. [Dictionary]

MECHANICAL: A failure or breakage of a required mechanical component necessary for riding (propelling-drivetrain, steering, safe operation), from impact damage, shearing, breakage, puncture or course debris, causing a loss of operation.

MISHAP: A *crash* or a *mechanical*. A recognized mishap is a stoppage of the rider or the use of the bicycle, that meets either of these two conditions. Where the above conditions are not met, ***no mishap has occurred***. See Mishap Example chart below.

INSPECTION: Referees shall inspect bicycles as needed, both before the race and in the case of ***apparent mishaps***, [USA Cycling Rule Book 1G5(b)]

NEUTRALIZATION: For safety reasons, a temporary suspension of racing where an official vehicle sets a controlled pace until racing can be resumed. Safety issues can be adequately dealt with while riders are still on the course and riding at a controlled pace.

STOPPAGE: The race is stopped for safety reasons; e.g. injured rider that requires transport, blockage of the course, safety of the course, extreme weather, etc. Riders are either stopped at the line or exited from the course as directed by the Race Director. If racing can safely resume, a restart shall be undertaken.

RESTARTS: Restarts from a neutralization shall be announced by indicating a set number of laps before the restart (at least one lap) to ensure riders are bunched together. The pace

vehicle shall maintain the controlled pace until the start is given. Riders may not pass or challenge the pace vehicle until it has pulled clear of the riders.

Restarts from a stoppage shall generally be taken as a normal start at the start line by the officials. Restarts shall be taken in consultation with the Event Director. Restarts shall, where practicable, take into consideration existing gaps and groups of riders clearly documented at the time of the stoppage. If inadequate information exists or gaps are too small to adequately organize separate starting groups, all riders in the race at the time of the stoppage shall be restaged and restarted from the start line. Should the stoppage occur near the end of the event, where the restart will likely be the controlling factor in the competition outcome, additional laps and/or time, where possible, may be added ensure a meaningful conclusion to the event. Riders significantly off the back of the field at the time of the stoppage may be pulled and not allowed to restart. All necessary decisions regarding the restart are the responsibility of the Chief Referee in consultation with the Race Director.

DELAYS: Riders who are impeded by a crash (avoiding crashed riders, slowing, stopping or delay in any manner) **have not crashed**. (See *Impeded below*).

Riders who create a course blockage behind a crash, where adequate space to pass exists, in order to create a stoppage may be considered uncompetitive and asked to withdraw from the event.

IMPEDED: Riders significantly delayed by a crash that causes a temporary blockage of the road (not a race stoppage) may request a free lap. Riders that have been significantly delayed (having to get off bikes, step over riders, forced detour off course to continue, etc.). may report for a free lap. Riders reporting are subject to the decision of the officials monitoring the course to allow the free lap. When provided by the race organizer, riders should report to an area that allows staging for re-entry without interfering with crashed riders or those that need mechanical assistance in the pit. All re-entry into the race shall be under the supervision of the pit official.

INJURED RIDERS/DAMAGED HELMETS: Riders injured in a crash, that precipitate a race stoppage, in general should not reenter the race. A damaged helmet from a crash indicates compromised safety equipment and a possibility of a concussion. In cases of helmet damage, reentry may be granted with an undamaged helmet. The referees are empowered to deny re-entry to the event without an undamaged helmet, or observations of a serious medical issue.

FREE LAP RULE SYNOPSIS: One or two free lap(s) may be granted for **each mishap** (*either or both reasons simultaneously*) subject to the following rules. [\[USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5\]](#)

Courses > 1km one free lap is allowed

Courses ≤ 1 km, two free laps are allowed

- **Official Pits:** Bicycle inspection, repairs and granting of Free Laps, must be made in an official repair pit with a referee. [\[USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5\(a\)\]](#)
- **Number of pits:** Pits are required for each kilometer of the course.
- **Pit Referee Determines Mishap:** A referee, stationed in the pit, determines if the mishap is recognized or unrecognized (see Mishap) and if the mishap is recognized, grants a free lap. [\[USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5\(b\)\]](#) A free lap is not given for an unrecognized

mishap. The Chief Referee may rule on the validity of any free lap mishap, even if initially granted.

- **Free Lap Return:** A rider who is granted a free lap must return to the race in the (relative) position held at the time of the mishap. ***A rider who was in a group shall return at the rear of the same group.*** [USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5(c)]
- **Last Return:** Riders given a free lap must re-enter the race before the final 8km of the race (in the field before the field crosses the line with 8k or less to go.; after that moment, the returning rider is now behind the field, the number of laps taken in the pit. [USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5(d)]
- **Getting To The Pit:** Riders are permitted to cut the course to get to a pit, but only while the Free Lap Rule is in effect. [USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5(a)] Riders may only ride in a forward direction on the course but may dismount and run backward to a repair pit when it is safe to do so. Riders may cut the course to get to a pit with a mechanical as long as free laps are still in effect. [USA Cycling Rule Book 3D2]
- **Not Eligible For Primes:** A rider returning to the race after a free lap shall be ineligible for sprint prizes for one full lap immediately following their return (see Free Lap Return). [USA Cycling Rule Book 3D5(c)]
- **Lapped Riders;** Riders lapped by the field or riders so far behind as to be considered out of contention will be removed from the race by the officials and will be placed according to the distance covered and placing among all riders pulled on the same lap. [USA Cycling Rule Book 3D3(a)]

Mishap Examples

RECOGNIZED MISHAP	UNRECOGNIZED MISHAP
<i>Breakage, Crash or Puncture</i>	<i>Inadequate Adjustment/Maintenance*</i>
Handlebar cracks or fails	Handlebars slip position*
Saddle/rails break	Nose tips down/up because of pothole impact*
Seat bolt breaks	Seat post slides down*
Derailleur inoperable due to crash or collision	Batteries dead or undercharged
Puncture, flat tire	Low pressure**, burped tire
Crank arm breaks, retraining bolt sheared	Crank arm fastening bolts loose or falls out. Bottom bracket shell slippage.
Brake cable or hydraulics severed, sheared	Brake shoes rub
Pedal attachment breaks, damaged by accident	Rotation/sliding/slippage of pedal attachment
Brake/shift lever broken, no longer functions	Levers and shifters maladjusted
Rider crashes	Rider (s) delayed
Significant delay/stoppage (impeded) due to mass crash or road blockage (See Impeded below)	Rider(s) momentarily slowed delayed but with sufficient course access to resume racing
Inspected/reported mishap	Unreported mishap

* *Slippage of any mechanically fixed component, regardless of manufacturer's tightening specifications, is not a mishap. It is simply a choice to use equipment that did not suit the course conditions.*

** *Punctured or low pressure flats are generally reinflated to test the serviceability. Any tire used in acquisition of a free lap found to maintain pressure will be considered an unrecognized mishap.*