

MADISON TEAM RACING GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

The Madison, (AKA "American" to the rest of the world, because it was invented at Madison Square Gardens) is a points race contested by teams of usually 2, but occasionally 3 riders. As such, it works like a normal points race, with the teams continually relieving riders like tag-team wrestling, except for the big belt buckles and capes.

THE TRANSFORMATION INTO A RELIEF RIDER

After completing the exchange, the previous field rider (the one who was in the race) stays low and holds his/her line on the track until traffic clears. After looking back, this rider turns up the track to slow down and then circles slowly next to the railing, waiting for his/her partner. This rider is now the relief rider and his/her partner is the field rider.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RELIEF RIDER

If relief riders are within 50 meters of one another, they should ride in the same order as their partners in the race. Thus if the pack's order is X-Y-Z then the relief riders should line up X-Y-Z. In general, if you are riding relief and you have a rider in front of you whose partner is behind your partner in the race, you should pass that relief rider. It is the responsibility of the rider riding behind in relief to change the order to match the order of the pack.

In any case, relief riders should position themselves in order and spacing to match their teammates in the field. For example, the field order is X-Y-Z and you are relief rider X riding behind Z. You should pass Z who should in turn see to it that there is about 1 bike length between he/she and you, leaving room for field rider Y to react to team X's (your) exchange. This only sounds more complicated than it really is.

PREPARING FOR THE EXCHANGE

The relief rider should pre-judge when and to what level to descend when his/her partner is within 50 meters (about 1/6th lap). From the relief position the relief rider takes one last look back before descending, then looks forward, choosing a single straight line dropping him/her down to the exchange level. In general, it is better to come in too soon than too late and better too fast than too slow.

To set up an exchange, the relief rider should prepare to descend to the level on the track one meter above where his/her partner is positioned, taking into account the partner's speed as well. Generally the first team in the pack will make their exchange at the bottom of the track, with the relief rider coming down to the sprinter's line. When traffic is dense teams towards the back of the pack may have to exchange higher up the track.

If riders are new or uncertain of exchange protocol the field riders can slap their right hand on their right hip to signal an upcoming exchange. The field rider can also call terse instructions to the relief rider like "up, down, faster and slower". This is especially helpful when the field's order changes in the last moments before your exchange. For that matter, you can talk to other teams to alert them to situations they might not have noticed, e.g. an exchange coming up.

THE EXCHANGE

Riders' shoulders should be 6" apart during the exchange. This means the exchange is a push through and not a side sling (which is very unstable)! For hand slings the relief rider puts his/her hand on his/her hip, palm open and facing backwards, with the thumb against the side seam of his/her pants. This hand position is easier for the field rider to grab onto, as opposed to laying one's hand on the small of one's back. For hip slings the relief rider should keep both hands of the drops. The field rider will grab onto a jamming tool in an internal pocket in the relief rider's special madison shorts. Jamming tools are frequently old socks taped into a firm cylindrical shape approximately 1.5- 2" diameter by 6" in length.

Hand slings permit relief riders to come in at slower speeds than with hip slings because there is more "recoil" distance in the exchange in which to absorb the greater speed difference. Because of this extra recoil, hand slings launch the relief rider harder than with a hip sling. However, hand slings also require more time to complete, which may negate the advantage of their greater push.

Immediately prior to and during the exchange the field rider should endeavor to maintain position in the pack and not drift back off the wheel in front of him/her.

The intensity of the sling will vary with circumstances. For example, during a chase, the riders push as hard as possible. When the field is bunched up a gentle push may suffice. It's foolish to throw a rider in hard only to have him/her back pedal immediately to avoid running into the rider in front of him/her.

GENERAL RULES FOR FIELD RIDERS

Don't ride between two riders who are attempting an exchange! Go over the top of the relief rider.

Never pass underneath another rider who is in the sprinters' lane or exchanging! In general, it is safer to pass over top of all field riders.

Look before moving up or down the track, just as in any massed start race. Pay particular attention to matching jerseys so as to anticipate other teams' exchanges!

Every team must have unique, matching jerseys! This is an important safety consideration that should not be dismissed as a mere formality. Without matching jerseys, other riders cannot predict a team's upcoming exchanges and cannot, therefore, correctly position themselves.

RACE TACTICS

Exchanges can be made at any interval, e.g. every passing (most common) or every other passing. Alternately, one rider can stay in for several laps to keep his/her partner fresh for a sprint.

Rules vary as to where the last exchange can be made before a sprint. In some races the last 200 meters are off limits for exchanges on a sprint lap. Other races have no restrictions. Make sure you know before the race begins.

Laps gained or lost are the first criteria in determining the finishing order. Points earned in sprints throughout the race serve only to determine the relative order of riders on even laps. The following is an example of the finish order for a race with 6 teams.

first team a 87 points 0 laps

second team b 80 points 0 laps

third team c 120 points -1 laps

fourth team d 30 points -1 laps

fifth team e 45 points -2 laps

sixth team f 13 points -2 laps

Teams may wish to gather points through various strategies. Some will do better by staying off the front for 20 laps, getting reeled in, recovering at the back of the pack while getting no points and then taking off again for another 20 laps. Others will do better by sitting in and sprinting.

Getting well set up for the sprint will always benefit a team. This may mean simply being near the front or it may require a teammate to attack with 2 laps to go before the sprint. The first rider can go flat out for a lap, hopefully maintaining a gap, and then throw his/her partner in on the bell lap.

Bob Muzzy

June, 1983