

CRCA WOMEN'S BIKE RACING CLINIC FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of bike should I ride?

We recommend that you ride a road bike with drop style handlebars. Some people have shown up on a mountain bike, but it's harder to keep up because of the thick tires and lower gearing. Please make sure your bike is in good working condition, which means if you haven't ridden it in a few months, take it to a shop to ensure that the brakes, shifters, etc., will do what they supposed to do, and that the wheels and tires are in good shape. If you're riding somebody else's bike, ride it before the race, and have adjustments made to the seat, handlebars, and stem, so it fits you as well as possible. Also, make sure your bar ends have secure plugs, and inspect your cleats to ensure they are not overly worn.

What other things should I bring or wear?

Wear a helmet, cycling gloves, and a jersey with sleeves. Racing rules do not permit sleeveless jerseys. Don't wear street clothing — as it won't protect you and your skin in the event of a crash — unless you don't have any cycling clothing at all. Bring water or a sport drink, and maybe something to eat afterward (like a banana or an energy bar). At New York City races, people normally leave a small bag near the finish line, with items such as frame pumps and seat bags, which are not allowed on the bike during a race.

How much will the race cost?

If you register early at A Bicycle Shop (345 West 14th Street), you will pay only \$5. Preregistration will be noon-6 p.m. on Saturday, June 10. Day-of registration will be \$10. In addition to the lower entry fee, registering early gets you a one-time 15% discount for anything at the shop and a free water bottle. The fees go toward buying a one-day license from the U.S. Cycling Federation (the sport's governing body), as well as other costs incurred by the CRCA in putting on the race (paying the marshals and motorcycle drivers, etc.).

What time does the race start?

The race is at 6:00 a.m. Registration starts at 5:15. There will be a mandatory pre-race meeting for clinic participants at 5:40.

What time will it end?

Races are finished by 7:30, early enough for you to go out for breakfast, and still be home before your roomie/husband/boyfriend has gotten out of bed!

Why does it have to be so early?

The CRCA, which is obligated to hold a permit from the Parks Department in order to hold races there, has agreed to schedule its races at this time in order to accommodate other park users.

How long is it?

The loop of the Central Park drive is just over 6 miles. The race will be four laps, making it a 24-mile race.

Where is the finish line?

The start/finish for all Central Park races is at the top of a small rise called Cat's Paw (named for the statue of a cat on the left side of the road as you're ascending the hill).

Where do I go the day of the race?

Race registration and number pickup is held at the parking lot for the Boathouse. The Loeb Boathouse is located on the left side of the East Drive, just above the 72nd Street transverse. The parking lot is a hundred yards past the Boathouse, also on the left side of the road. If you've already registered, you still need to pick up your number and attend the pre-race meeting.

Can I drive to the race?

Cars are not allowed in Central Park, but there is adequate street parking outside the park. Make sure to park on the east side, near the park's 72nd Street entrance, off Fifth Avenue.

What is a race number and what do I do with it?

A race number is the primary means of identifying a rider. It is attached to your jersey with safety pins (which are provided at registration). For CRCA races, attach the number to the left side of the back of the jersey, so it can be read easily by the race officials. Pinning another rider's number for them is a standard pre-race ritual. Do not attempt to pin your number while wearing your jersey.

I've registered and put my number on; now what do I do?

You should give yourself an adequate warm-up, including riding sufficiently before the race starts so your body is ready to ride hard. Stretching is also recommended. Don't miss the 5:40 meeting before the race!

Are there any hills?

The park drive is a gently rolling course, with the biggest climb at the northernmost end of the park. It is usually called Harlem Hill or just "the Hill." It is only a third of a mile long.

What is a paceline and I do have to know how to do one?

Pacelining is how riders achieve maximum efficiency. By riding close behind other cyclists, you use less energy by not having to pedal into the wind. For the clinic or racing in general, it is helpful to have group riding skills, but you don't have to know how to ride a paceline per se.

What if I get dropped?

The Women's Sports & Fitness team and its designated clinic coaches will do their best to make sure that nobody is dropped from the race. However, if a rider's speed is dramatically slower than the rest of the riders, we can't guarantee that rider will be able to finish with the pack. If you do get dropped, there are two shortcuts on the northern and southern ends of the park, and somebody will be happy to point them out.

What if I crash?

Crashing is something that happens in bike racing. That said, it doesn't have to happen to you, and you shouldn't have anxiety about it. Each rider can do certain things to ensure that he or she won't crash. Making sure your wheel doesn't overlap another rider's wheel is one. During the pre-race meeting we will go over safety tips and the race format. Also, our coach, John Tomlinson, has written a great article on avoiding crashes, which can be found at Elizabeth Emery's web site at www.jt10000.com/goyoe/best/stayingup.htm.

What do I get if I win?

We are putting together a number of cool prizes for the top finishers, including an outfit from Psoas, which makes great-looking women's-only bike clothing; a gift certificate from New York Sports Club; and a gift certificate from A Bicycle Shop. All participants will receive a goodie bag with stuff from PowerBar, etc.

How many people will be there?

Last year 35 women participated in the clinic. This year, we are expecting at least as many.

Who will be coaching?

Aside from its own members, the Women's Sports & Fitness team will be enlisting the help of its men's counterpart team, Setanta, as well as other experienced riders in the CRCA.

What if I want to race some more?

If you're bitten by the bug and want to participate in other races, all you have to do is become a member of the U.S. Cycling Federation (www.usacycling.org). To participate in CRCA races, you must also belong to the CRCA and marshal one race before actually racing.

What is the CRCA?

The CRCA, or Century Road Club Association (www.crca.net), is the country's largest bicycle racing club. It celebrated its 100th birthday in 1998, also making it one of the oldest racing clubs in the U.S. Aside from its members-only and open races in Central Park, from March through November, it hosts two road races at Harriman State Park, and criteriums at Orchard Beach, in the Bronx, and Grant's Tomb, in upper Manhattan.