

## YOUTH ELITE AND JUNIOR ELITE CUP RACES

### 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. They also are used as qualifiers for the ITU Junior World Championships team and to crown national champions.

**What is a *Regional Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup*?** Regional Cups provide a logical starting point for athletes wishing to gain draft-legal racing experience and are good preparation for national and international competitions. For a schedule of events, both regional and national, visit: <http://www.usatriathlon.org/AthleteFocus/Junior.aspx>

**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.

**Where do I learn about international competition rules?** Go to [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org). Click on the “About ITU” tab, then click “Downloads” 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 Championships, there are portions of them that may not be applicable or enforced 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, and Under-23, and armed forces world championships all are draft-legal triathlons, Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups provide young athletes with 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 ITU World Cups 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. A Junior Elite Cup is 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 multi-lap (e.g. 4 x 5k). The run is also multi-lap (e.g. 2 x 2.5k).

**How old must my child be to compete?** For Youth Elites, eligible racing ages are 13, 14, or 15 years old as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the competition year. For Junior Elites, eligible racing ages are 16, 17, 18, or 19 years old as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the competition year.

**May I “race up” a division?** No. Athletes must compete according to their age as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the competition year. For example, a 12 year old who does not turn 13 by December 31<sup>st</sup> may not compete in a Youth Elite Cup. Likewise, a 15 year old who does not turn 16 by December 31<sup>st</sup> 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 smaller regional cup races at which fields are combined to enhance the draft-legal experience, in which case athletes would race at the shortest applicable distance.

**Does I need to be on a team to compete?** No. While there are a number of development teams focused 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. For a list of teams that serve youth and junior athletes, visit <http://www.usatriathlon.org/AthleteFocus/Junior.aspx>

**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](http://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. 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 World Cup athletes. USAT encourages this as it helps our talent identification staff get to know you.

**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?** Yes, 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 *regional* and *national* Youth Elite/Junior Elite Cups. To view the scoring system, please visit <http://www.usatriathlon.org/AthleteFocus/Junior.aspx>

**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.competitions.com](http://www.competitions.com). For starters, check out the junior races under the World Triathlon Championships banner.

**Still have questions?** Please refer questions to Steve Kelley, USAT Athlete Development Coordinator, [steve.kelley@usatriathlon.org](mailto:steve.kelley@usatriathlon.org)