

## **“Information You Need to Know about the SRV Mt Bike Club Team” For Parents and Athletes!**

This is the 4th season for the San Ramon Valley Mt Bike Club Team (<http://www.srvmtb.org/registration.html>) and we will participate in races against 40 other teams in Northern CA as part of the NorCal High School Mt Bike League. (See [www.norcalmtb.org](http://www.norcalmtb.org)). Last year we had 45 racers: 17 girls and 28 boys. Two of our lady riders placed 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> in the State Championship Race and (10) of our racers qualified for the National Mt Bike Championship in Granby, Colorado. Most importantly all of our riders had a great healthy experience. We are planning for an enjoyable and successful season for each student.

**Overview:** Like other NorCal League schools, our program seeks to strike a balance between being a competitive individual and team sport while retaining some gentler recreation club qualities. For athletes new to cycling, immediate immersion into training, racing, and the pressure to perform may be intimidating. This is the reason the League has carefully designed individual racing classes so beginners, intermediate and advanced riders are pitted only against peers of similar ability and experience. Each school’s coach does their best to carefully place riders in the following categories: freshmen, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity.

The six league races are all in Northern California, most a 2-3 hour drive away. Riders are scored individually and on a team basis. Girl’s scores and boy’s scores are added together in the team computation. Riders must register with the NorCal League to have their results counted.

Why cycling? Cycling is a family-friendly fitness activity that can be done lifelong, with great social qualities. Groups of cyclists (except when climbing difficult hills) can talk, joke, and some even sing as they ride. With Lance Armstrong’s incredible 7th straight Tour De France victory, enthusiasm for it as an alternative sport and healthy lifestyle is at an all-time high, especially here in the East Bay with so many good places to ride.

Training and racing with a team provides life lessons in self-discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship, along with the fitness and camaraderie. Some sports tend to favor certain body types. Cycling is different. The bicycle is an equalizer, showing little favor to any particular body type by adapting to each rider with correct frame sizing, adjustment of seat height and stem length. Since good “bike-fit” is important, be sure to consult with me before purchasing a new or used bike!

**Is Participating Dangerous?** If you new to mountain biking, forget what you have seen on TV with the X-Games or soft drink commercials. In cross-country bike races, the average speed is usually around ten to twelve miles per hour. This is an endurance sport where the fittest athletes win. Each year, the League collects data on injuries from every team. Typically, for the whole League combined, there will be one or two broken bones, some sprains, a few cuts, some bruises, lots of nicks and scrapes, but little else. Statistically, we suffer fewer serious injuries than most other mainstream sports, especially contact sports.

We do our best to minimize the risks to your athlete. Certain risky behaviors are discouraged or forbidden, the League helmet rule is strictly enforced and we teach each athlete bike-control skills early in the season to minimize the risk of crashing. After all, if you crash you not only risk injury but also lose valuable time during races. Even with our best efforts, crashes and injuries can occur. SRV requires all athletes in every sport to comply with certain athletic eligibility rules, including that the athlete have personal medical insurance. The team also purchases an additional high-deductible policy which supplements your personal policy and policies the school may carry.

We do our best to provide many parent/coaches as ride leaders, each equipped with a first aid kit and cell phone on every ride, one or more adults for each group if we split the team. Occasionally, circumstances arise where this is not possible. In this instance, we will designate and equip a student/athlete who we believe is adequately mature, responsible and capable in the ride leader role.

**How We Build Our Team and Train:** We don't have tryouts. If you try, and keep trying, you're on our team. We have a proven history of creating capable and confident riders out of timid, out-of-shape beginners, year after year. Athletes who are already in good condition (like cross-country runners) adapt quickly and do very well.

We value and promote excellence, believing that ordinary athletes can attain big results through setting goals, mapping a strategy, and giving the task disciplined effort. Lance Armstrong, on his seventh Tour winner's podium in July 2005 said "there are no secrets — this is a hard sporting event and hard work wins it." Our SRV kids will really work hard and are transformed by the process.

The training scheme is a carefully planned schedule of training rides that gradually increase in distance and difficulty over a four to six month timeframe. The timeframe must be long to insure that the athlete progresses at a rate gradual enough to avoid injury, and long enough to achieve peak fitness by season's end and the championship final race. The "gradualism" based training scheme cannot be artificially compressed into the normal sports season timeframe without diminishing its effectiveness.

The training is choreographed in three basic phases so that everyone is adequately prepared once the racing begins. The first phase is the "Base" or endurance phase where we ride at low speeds, teach handling skills (for safety) and gradually increase the ride duration to build a solid foundation of cardiovascular fitness. The second is the "Build" phase to add strength and power by increasing the amount of hill climbing. The last phase is the "Peak" phase where we add fast-paced race simulation.

Once the actual riding starts, we split the team workouts into fitness-based groups since our goal is to challenge but not overwhelm each rider. All groups do a similar type of ride, albeit at different paces or distances. We do our best to design a training scheme for each rider appropriate for his/her level of experience, fitness, and personal ambitions. Groups are coed where practical.

New riders and parents will be surprised when we tell them that by season's end they will be able to easily ride a full four hours in hilly terrain, or do a hundred-mile road "century" but it's true! Riders who "made it to practice," that is. Athletes who follow our progressive training schedule will steadily gain fitness and those who skip practice will soon find themselves struggling to keep up.

Practice will not take place each weekday like some sports. For fitness sake, three one-hour rides do not equal one three-hour ride. Longer rides are much more effective in creating the endurance and fitness we need. If your athlete ignores our schedule and trains intermittently on their own, he/she will likely fall short of potential. Accordingly, we do our most essential training ride on Sunday afternoons at 1:00pm. This allows time for morning breakfast, family time, church and homework prior to our ride, with more family time in the evening. Combined with two shorter weekday workouts, including core body strengthening, yoga, running, spin bike rides at the 24 Hr Fitness, and rides during the week, this schedule is designed to get us fit in a time-efficient way, minimize time on the bike, avoid injury, fatigue, and mental burnout.

Starting in early January, the team will begin practices on Tuesday, Thursday and Sundays. January practices will consist of skills training, core body strengthening and building aerobic endurance. Starting in late January, we will begin Sunday rides and spin room instruction at the San Ramon 24 HR Fitness. Athletes will be required to attend 2 spin classes per week. Once the days are long enough to ride after school, we will begin riding Tuesday and Thursday at 3:30 pm from Macedo Ranch, Monte Vista HS or San Ramon HS. The team will ride on Mt Diablo and rides will be finished by 6:00pm at the latest (lights on bikes will be required).

Athletes will need to continually monitor his/her own fatigue level and discuss it with the coaches. Rest and recovery, hydration and fueling are critical parts of any training plan. It is important that your athlete avoids the temptation to do extra workouts beyond what is recommended.

**Bike Racing is Girl-Friendly:** There are lots of girls racing in the League. In fact, girl participation is the fastest growing demographic. We are looking to bring beginner young ladies into the sport and help develop more advanced riders. We already have 4-5 women ride leaders who plan to help be good role models for the girls.

In the 1992 classic movie “A League of Their Own” Tom Hanks (as coach Jimmy Dugan) exclaims with surprise and dismay: “There’s no crying in baseball!” echoing the old-school world-view from the no-pain, no gain masculine perspective. In fact, there is too crying in cycling, also pre-race makeup, hair, nails, and other surprises! The captain of the elite women’s VeloBella cycling team explained: “We girls sometimes cry. It’s not because we’re sad, it’s an emotional release. We might cry when the training is hard and we’re struggling a little, or during a stressful race, and we definitely might cry when we win. It’s ok! Don’t feel bad about it like you’ve done something to upset us. We want to be here (training and racing) and yes, we also like to feel pretty on race-day.” We haven’t said any of this to frighten you or indicate that our girls will be doing lots of crying...they won’t be; but rather to make the point that the League and our own SRV team culture is truly co-ed, and plan to work hard to provide an experience that encourages and celebrates girls’ different needs and tastes.

**What to Eat:** Athletes are expected to be informed and responsible with their eating habits. While this is not a weight-loss program, fat loss and increased lean muscle-mass are typical results of training you should expect. Your athlete will need more high quality calories from complex carbohydrates and will also need more protein than is required for a non-exercising lifestyle. An inadequate or junk food diet will put your athlete at a disadvantage against those who are eating to win. Do not use any of the popular “high this, low that” fad-of-the-month diets. Eating a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, lean meats and staying hydrated with water will be emphasized. Most important is that your student comes to practices and races properly fueled. This is an endurance sport. Nutrition will be discussed more as the season progresses.

**Parents and Others Ride Along:** Training for bike racing is hard work. Fortunately, it’s also a lot of fun and the team often ends rides with social time. The NorCal League puts on four weekend rider camps held in November and December. These are fun, very instructive, and remarkably inexpensive and strongly encouraged for newer riders. Road trips to the races (camping if weather allows) are the best of all. You will discover that the other teams in the League are full of delightful kids, with encouraging coaches and wonderfully supportive parents. At the races, the whole gallery of spectators cheers and rings cowbells, not just for their own kids, but yours too! This is a very friendly sport.

Parents are encouraged to join their athletes in training and even racing. Some of the races have adult divisions and your help is critical in helping the team travel to each venue. Last year, the coaches trained and raced alongside the student-athletes. For those of us on the brink of sending their kids away to college and adult life, this is a special time to share. Each of these families who were introduced to the sport in this way in 2007 described the experience as incredible, eye-opening, and lifestyle-changing.

We ride on some of the most beautiful trails in California. Mt Diablo is AMAZING! We see lots of wild animals along with the spectacular wildflowers of spring. On the hilltops and ridges you can see the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Delta and Sierra foothills to the east.

**How Communication Happens:** We use email to communicate with parents and athletes. This method is used because word-of-mouth, flyers, and phone communication has proven time consuming and ineffective. Posts and website updates will discuss training schedules, offer feedback about rides completed, include team news, tips, motivation and encouragement, recognition, strategic planning for races, travel planning, unrelated fun

tidbits, bike culture and more. Please check your email daily and the team website <http://www.srvmtb.org/registration.html> periodically!

**About Commitment:** If your athlete regularly misses workouts, especially the Sunday rides; he/she will not progress at the same rate as fellow athletes. I guarantee that this will become a source of frustration for your student once they start having difficulty keeping up and will send a clear signal to others that they are not committed to the team.

We promise to treat your athlete like a responsible young adult. Accordingly, we will interpret a habit of missed practices and a pattern of disinterest as a signal to be dropped from the team and email communication. If your athlete is unable to attend any of the agreed-upon practice rides because of school homework, job schedules, family commitments or other concerns, it is really important that they consult with me so we can create an alternate plan to keep their season on track.

Some athletes may want to try and do two sports at once. We recognize that our long training timeframe may create an unavoidable overlap for part of the season. This is ok. We believe however, that once the season really gets going that trying to do two sports at once is a recipe for frustration and failure at both, may lead to exhaustion and sickness, and can impact academic performance. **We discourage this idea.**

The club is a race team and, as such, each participant is required to try at least one race. If, after this experience, the rider determines that he/she is not into racing, then they are not forced to continue racing. However, this is strongly discouraged and students who join the team must be open to experience racing. Due to the leagues great success and limited space at race venues this year teams will be limited to 30 registered racers per race. We will be introducing team guidelines for race participation.

### **2011 TENTATIVE RACE SCHEDULE (all races on Sunday)**

February 27th – Prologue

March 13th – Race # 1

March 27th – Race # 2

April 10th – Race # 3

May 1st – Race # 4

May 15<sup>th</sup> - State Championships (must qualify)

Nationals for those who qualify mid July (location TBD)

**Code of Conduct:** We are committed to safety. We think about safety, teach safety and require each rider to always ride in a safe and controlled manner. Riders who repeatedly flaunt our safety rules or engage in behaviors that present unnecessary risk to themselves or others will be dropped from the program. As visible representatives of San Ramon Valley and ambassadors of cycling, athletes are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that status and follow the SRV rules of behavior at all times. **If a team member is seen riding without a helmet at any time during the season, the rider will be removed from the team – no excuses.**

**Active Community Service:** This year we are planning to organize active community service with Save Mt Diablo and Bay Area Trail Counsel as well as a community and bike safety, maintenance & fit check event.

**About Academics:** The goal for SRV is to help develop our students academically, physically and socially into mature young adults. To qualify to participate in SRV Cycling, each athlete must be achieving academically in

a manner satisfactory to wishes of his/her parents and the standards of the school. **Failure to maintain satisfactory academics during the cycling season is grounds to be dropped from the team.**

**You'll Need Some Equipment:** Your athlete will need an appropriate bike, cycling clothing and other items. Please consult with me before you buy anything so I can help you get the right gear and minimize the cost. Bicycles and helmets must be inspected and approved for function and safety, then re-inspected at regular intervals. Our textbook is Mountain Bike Magazine's *Mountain Biking Skills* available at Borders or Amazon.

Getting all the equipment can be challenging. Prices vary widely and much is available both new and used on the internet at discount prices. We also have free gear people have given the team, and other things available to loan. Let me help you find what you need.

**Danville Bike is one of our sponsors and they offer our registered team riders and families a variety of discounts and services..... (A copy of the team sponsor agreement will be provided to all registered riders)**

**Cost of Participating:**

1. NorCal High School League registration (\$35)
2. Entry fees to each of the six (6) races and travel costs (each race can cost up to \$30 w/ discounts if you register for all 5 races).
3. Team registration fee is **\$190**, which covers the cost of insurance and racing kit (Team Jersey, Shorts, Vest, Arm warmers).
4. We offer need-based scholarships with the goal that no student is denied participation due to lack of resources.

**Required Forms:**

Complete registration packet with check due by November 12th. Make checks out to **"SRV Mt Bike Club Team # 365"**. **You can mail packet and check to me at 91 Woodranch Circle, Danville CA, 94506 Attn: Ken Mozek** or drop off packet at **Danville Bike**, located at 175 Hartz Ave across from Uncle Wang's.

**Team Sponsorship:**

As part of our sponsorship, riders are able to purchase parts from the Danville Bike at a 20% discount. GIANT and Ellsworth bicycles are also available at discount prices. The team is also able to purchase sports nutrition products from Hammer and Cliff Bar at a discount through Danville Bike. Occasionally, other offers may become available and they will be relayed to the team. These discounts are ONLY available to registered riders in good standing) and their immediate family members.

The team is also fortunate to receive support from a number of local businesses, individuals and organizations, including **Steve Wells MD, Blackhawk Medical Walk-in-Clinic, Johnson Controls Inc, Clorox Co. , Chevron, Danville Bike, 24 Hr Fitness, Tim Leach MD, Hammer Nutrition, Ritchey, Giant Bike, San Ramon Presbyterian Church, and Ellsworth Bikes, Dave & Ann DiMaggio, Kinetics by Kurt, Kali Protectives.**

**Assistant Coaches and Ride Leaders** We need lots of help from team parents and volunteers. Some help with transportation and other things, some act in the capacity of helper-coaches. More experienced riders should consider taking on some of the important responsibilities that make the team function. Beginner riders need lots of help learning to keep their bikes in top mechanical shape, advice on training and racing, and lots of encouragement and reassurance from those who were beginners not very long ago. If you are an experienced rider and would like to be formally designated as a mentor in some specific area, let me know. I am also looking for parents who would like to be trained as assistant coaches and ride leaders. You do not have to be a talented rider or racer to function effectively in this role, you learn as you go, and it's a lot of fun.

Please be sure to let me know if you have any questions. I ask that riders planning to be on the team have all forms completed before the November 12th

Sincerely, Coach Ken Mozek

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Team website: <http://www.srvmtb.org/registration.html>

League website: [www.norcalmtb.org](http://www.norcalmtb.org)

PS. A thank you to all those parents that have provided me words of encouragement as I have moved forward with creating and growing our Mt Bike Team. Thanks for intrusting me with your young men and women.