



2009 Mountain Bike Category Changes FAQ

Why are the mountain bike ability categories changing in 2009?

In an effort to create a more competitive atmosphere for mountain biking, USA Cycling and the NORBA Board of Trustees (BOT) have developed a new categorization system for mountain biking which will be introduced in the 2009 season.

This change is the result of over two years of thought, analysis, and discussion by the NORBA BOT, USAC staff, and many people connected with the sport. The goals of the new categorization system are to strengthen the pro ranks and increase the competitiveness of the amateur categories.

The new categories will be Pro, 1, 2, and 3. Classes (age groups) will be included within all of the categories except Pro.

Revised USA Cycling Mountain Bike Categories (being introduced in 2009)

Pro: The highest ability category for both men and women in mountain bike racing. All mountain bike professional racers must meet the upgrading requirements, as outlined in the USA Cycling Rulebook.

Cat 1 (current Expert and Semi-pro): Racing skills, strength, race experience, and stamina have reached an exceptional level; racing is very competitive. Riders must have a racing age of at least 15 to race as a Category 1 in the endurance disciplines.

Cat 2 (current Sport): Racing reflects improved skills, strength, race experience, and stamina. A rider must advance to Cat 1 after placing in the top five in five races.

Cat 3 (current Beginner): Racing is for the entry-level rider. Racers have limited racing experience and have a lower fitness and skill level than in Category 2. After placing in the top five in five races, a Cat 3 racer must advance to Cat 2.

How will riders be converted from their current ability category to the numerical category?

Semi-pro

Riders currently categorized as Semi-pro may choose Category 1 or Pro during the 2009 season. Semi-pro riders will be offered the automatic upgrade to Pro during the 2009 licensing period December 1, 2008 to November 30, 2009. An annual license (domestic if Category 1 or international if Pro) must be purchased during this time period. If an annual license is not purchased in 2009 and the Semi-pro rider does not choose Category 1 or Pro, they will automatically default to Category 1 beginning December 1, 2010 and will need to go through the regular upgrading procedures for Pro categorization.

Expert

Riders currently categorized as Expert will automatically be converted to a Category 1.

Sport

Riders currently categorized as Sport will automatically be converted to a Category 2.

Beginner

Riders currently categorized as Beginner will automatically be converted to a Category 3.



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When will the new categories be displayed in my USA Cycling online account and on my license?

The new categories will be converted on December 1, 2008, the first day of 2009 annual license renewals. If a rider wishes to downgrade or upgrade, they may do so through their USA Cycling online membership account. The numerical categories will be listed on a rider's license when it's renewed.

What about the licensing?

Pro riders = international (UCI)

Category 1 = domestic (USAC-MTB) or international (UCI) if competing overseas

Licensing for the Category 2 and 3 riders will be announced once they are finalized.

Will the numerical categories be combined (i.e. Cat 1/2/3) like Road, without age-groups?

Age-groups will be offered within each category, based on the number of riders at an event. Promoters do have the option of combining categories, if fewer than five riders register for a category within the same age class.

As outlined in the 2008 USA Cycling Mountain Bike Rulebook, under the "Mixing of Classes in MTB Races":

1C4 (a): If fewer than five riders register for a category within the same age class, they may be required to race with the next highest category within the same age class. USA Cycling encourages promoters to make their best effort to split out awards and prizes for combined categories. For example, if fewer than five Master Category 2 riders register, they may be combined with the Master Category 1 riders, but they should still be awarded prizes for their category.

What about the USA Cycling Mountain Bike National Championships?

The 2009 USA Cycling Mountain Bike National Championship disciplines, categories, and age-groups have been revised with the new category system.

The 2009 qualification period started August 1, 2008 and will end July 13, 2009. Riders qualifying between August 1, 2008 and November 30, 2008 will be qualified based on the conversions (i.e. if a rider qualifies in Expert, then they would be qualified to compete in Category 1 for the 2009 USAC-MTB National Championships). If a rider upgrades during the season (i.e. a rider qualifies as Sport/Category 2, then upgrades to Expert/Category 1, they would compete in Category 1).