Types of Bicycle Races

Bicycle racing encompasses a diverse group of sporting events. USA Cycling oversees five different disciplines: road, mountain bike, track, cyclo-cross, and BMX. Within those disciplines there are different types of events that allow a large number of possibilities for competitive and non-competitive events. USA Cycling outlines rules for the five disciplines within their Rule Book. There are a variety of other race types that are not specifically governed by USA Cycling. Regardless the type of race involved in your case, the experts at Robson Forensic can help you understand the applicable standards of care.

Road Racing takes place on paved roads and is generally divided into three types of racing: road races, time trials, and criteriums. Road races typically take place on public roads and can be point-to-point races or multiple circuits of a loop generally from five-25 miles in length. They are team-oriented, mass start events that are either one-day or multiple-day stage or omnium races. They can be held on closed, partially-closed, or open roads with or without controlled traffic safety measures in place as determined by local authorities.

Track Racing is conducted on a velodrome, a special track made for cycling on which competitors race on a fixed gear bike. A velodrome has two banked turns and two straights. Velodromes are usually between 150 meters and 500 meters and can be indoors or outdoors and are made of wood or cement. The two most common sizes of velodromes in the U.S. are 250 meters, which is often used for international competition, and 333 meters. There are individual, team, and mass start sprint and endurance events in track racing.

Mountain Biking participants compete on larger bikes with suspension components to handle the rough terrain which can include rocks, roots, sand, mud and large drops. Mountain bike races are typically divided into endurance (cross country, short track cross country) and gravity (downhill, dual slalom, Super D) events.

Bicycle Moto-cross (BMX) racing features head-to-head competition typically with 8 riders taking the start on a dirt track. The top four riders competing in each heat advance to the next round. BMX race circuits are usually over 350 meters long and contain jumps and berm turns.

Cyclo-cross can best be described as a cross between road cycling, mountain biking, and steeplechase. Races generally take place on a closed circuit between 2.5 km and 3.5 km in a park or other open land with competitors racing multiple laps for a set amount of time. Riders begin in mass start fashion and must navigate through both paved and offroad terrain, often times dismounting their bikes to hurdle barriers, climb steep hills or stairs, or traverse other man-made obstacles.

FEATURED BICYCLE EXPERT: Luke Ehrath had designed, built and maintained all types of bicycles. He has extensive experience in the saddle competing, commuting and touring. He has worked as a product manager for large and small bicycle manufacturers, raced competitively on road and off, organized bicycle events and worked as a metropolitan bicycle courier. While working in the bicycle industry he regularly commuted by bicycle over 20 miles each way and he regularly engages in ‘century’ rides of 100 miles or more. Luke's casework includes all matters related to bicycles including bicycle design, maintenance and assembly, rider actions, and event organization.

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