

Track Riding FAQs

How do I start riding at the track (Velodrome)?

You need to take a Track Class offered from Greater Houston Cycling Foundation at Alkek Velodrome. Classes are offered throughout the spring and summer. You will learn how to ride a track bike, and even better, you will work on and improve your bike handling skills. See the Events page for more.

What's so great about track cycling, anyways?

The track is a great way to improve your bike handling skills, your spin, your sprint, and to work on increasing your overall speed. It's also a fun and different way to enjoy two-wheeled motion!

Can I go to the Velodrome and just ride on my road bike?

The Alkek Velodrome is open for public use except during scheduled events (classes, training sessions, races, etc.) during open sessions. No experience is necessary and track bikes are only permitted on the track. We have these available for your use. The rules of the facility must be followed: bicycles only are allowed on the track (skateboards and motorized vehicles are prohibited); all riding must be in a counter-clockwise direction; helmets are required; do not ride on the track when the track is wet; keep the track surface clean. Have fun and be safe!

Track bikes don't have brakes, so how do you stop?

Part of learning to ride a track bike is learning how to stop. Stopping is done simply by slowly reducing the force you are putting on the pedals to move forward. As you slow down your pedaling, you will be able to come to almost a complete stop. Then, you can either grab the railing or release from your pedal and step onto the infield grass or warm up circle.

Types of Track Races

Antioquena – Point-a-Lap at the front (only for the leader), Miss-n-Out at the back, pulling down to 5 riders and then a 5 lap scratch race with 5,3,2,1 on the finishing lap. Rider with the most points at the end wins, ties are broken by the final sprint.

Australian Pursuit – A race where riders start at differing equidistant points around the track. The object is to catch the riders in front and therefore eliminate them from the race. The winner is the last rider remaining (not passed by anyone), or who catches the most in so many laps.

Avalanche - Unknown Snowball (see Snowball definition)

Belgian Win-n-Out - 12 lap race with the first bell ringing with 4 to go in the race. The first rider across the line on the next lap takes fifth place. The first rider in the next lap takes third place, etc. It ends up with the final lap for the first rider to cross taking the win with the second rider earning 6th place. Being greedy may not pay! A bit of a gamble to wait for the win and not get it.

Tempo – a tempo is run just like a Point-a-Lap, but with 2 and 1 points going to the first and second riders across the line each lap. The final lap is also worth 2 and 1 points. The rider with the most points at the end of the race wins. Ties are broken by the final sprint.

Keirin – The Keirin is a 5 lap race with 6-8 riders starting from a standing start. The riders draft behind a motorpacer for the first 2.5 laps with the motorcycle gradually accelerating up to 32 mph before it departs from the track. Riders draw for position prior to the race and must fall into order once the race starts, after 1 lap riders can reposition themselves as long as one rider takes the position directly behind the pacer. Once the motor pulls off,

with two to go it is an all-out sprint for the finish line. Riders cannot pass the leading edge of the front wheel of the motor before it exits the track.

International Tempo – new to 2017 according to the UCI after the completion of 2 laps the bell will be rung to indicate the start of the sprint laps. The first rider in each sprint shall be awarded 1 point, including the final sprint. Any rider that gains a lap on the main field is awarded 20 points and any rider that loses a lap will lose 20 points.

Madison – The Madison is a high speed, two person points race relay. One partner from each team starts the race from the rail while the “resting” partner pedals slowly along the top of the track. Partners exchange positions by pulling even with each other and then relaying or “slinging” the incoming partner into the race. Like a points race, sprints occurs at pre-determined intervals (typically every 5 laps) during the race, with points awarded the same as a Points Race. If a team laps the field 20 points are awarded, ties are broken by finishing position in the final sprint.

The Crawl (*The Original Longest Lap!*) – An event typically open to all racers on that evening. It is a timed track stand (balancing) contest rolled into a chariot race. Riders stage in turn 4 of the velodrome and roll off once the race is on. They may not cross the start line until an unknown timed bell is rung, indicating a 1 lap sprint. During the time prior to the bell, riders may not roll backwards per Sprint Rules; may not touch another rider; may not touch the rail; must stay on the track surface; may not put a food down on the track surface.

Miss-n-Out – This is another mass start race with all riders starting from the rail. After a neutral lap, the riders will get a bell indicating that on the next lap, the last wheel across the finish line will be pulled. This will happen on each lap until a predetermined number of riders (3 to 5) are left. The remaining riders are given a no pull lap and then the last lap is a sprint for the finish line with the first rider across the line winning.

OneKnown – An unknown distance with a twist. Prior to the race everyone will write down the numbers of laps that they want the race to be. A prime lap will ring within the first 5 laps. Whoever wins that prime lap their card is pulled and that is the unknown distance length, a bell will ring the lap prior signifying the last lap. That racer and the officials are the only people that knows the length hence the name – “one” known.

Point-a-Lap – A Point-a-Lap is a mass start race run over a set distance with all riders starting from the rail. After a neutral lap, the first rider across the line for each lap earns one point. Second place earns zero points. Final sprint awards 3,2,1 points to the first 3 riders. Rider with the most points at the end of the race wins. Ties are broken by the finish sprint.

Points Race – A points race is a mixture of sprinting and fast endurance racing. A predetermined number of sprints occur at set intervals. For example, a 6x5 points race will have 6 sprints every 5 laps. A bell rings with one lap to go before each sprint. Points are awarded to the top 4 riders across the line for each sprint (5,3,2,1), the last sprint has double points (10,6,4,2). Riders are awarded 20 points if they lap the field – or

conversely have 20 points subtracted if they lose a lap to the main field. The rider with the most points at the end of the race wins. Ties are broken by the finish sprint.

Scratch Race – The scratch race is a basic mass start race. All riders start from the rail and race for a set number of laps. A neutral lap may be required at the discretion of the officials. A bell rings with one lap to go. First rider across the line wins. **Snowball** – A Snowball is a mass start race run over a set distance. The first rider across the line at the end of the first lap earns one point. The first rider across the line at the end of the second lap earns 2 points, etc., with the number of points for the first rider across the line for each lap “snowballing” until the end of the race. Points only accumulate with the leader

of the lap. The rider with the most points at the end of the race wins. Ties are broken by the finish sprint.

Split Scratch - A points race with two sprints (5,3,2,1 both sprints).

Stayers' Race (*Derny*) – Elite riders act as pacers for juniors in a novelty scratch race. 10-15 lap scratch race distance where the combo must stay together, finish is based on the juniors front wheel.

Unknown Distance (*Scratch*) – As its name implies, the Unknown Distance is a mass start “scratch race” run over an unknown distance. A bell rings with one lap to go to signal the sprint to the finish.

Unknown Points Race - A set distance of total laps with a predetermined number of sprints, besides the last lap the riders don't know when the intermediate sprints will be. Intermediate sprints will be 5,3,2,1, the final will be 10,6,4,2.

Wheel Race (*handicapped scratch*) – Riders are handicapped based on their categories and abilities. Stronger riders are given a greater distance to complete. All riders for the night can participate and have an equal chance in winning.

Win-n-Out - 12 lap race with the first bell ringing with 4 laps to go in the race. The first rider across the line on the next lap takes 1st place. The first place rider in the next lap takes 2nd, etc. This is a difficult race, if you spend all your effort and come up short, you must summon another all out sprint the next lap and so on to fill the places.