Moving up to National Trophy racing



Cyclo-cross is great, but you already know that and now you, or the ultra keen young person you look after, wants to take it to the next level and race in the National Trophy series.

Loads of pro riders started in cyclo-cross and quite a few big names still race cx.



…a van is way more practical.

But what do you need to know? You've heard that there are different rules and race requirements but what affects a new youth racer vs an older category racer?

This guide is primarily intended for youth riders and their support crew who are moving up to Trophy races for the first time. Some of this will be relevant to any rider starting to race the National Trophy rounds but some is for Juniors and Seniors only however it may be interesting and explain some of the things that you may have heard. This is not going to give you training or racing tips, it's more to provide a bit of extra information around the rules that may be different to what you are used to. Please let me know if there are any glaring mistakes or obvious omissions.

There are some great websites and organisations out there who can help too. Evo Devo Cycling has a great online advice hub with much more granular information about race prep, what kit to bring etc, I'd definitely recommend checking that out.

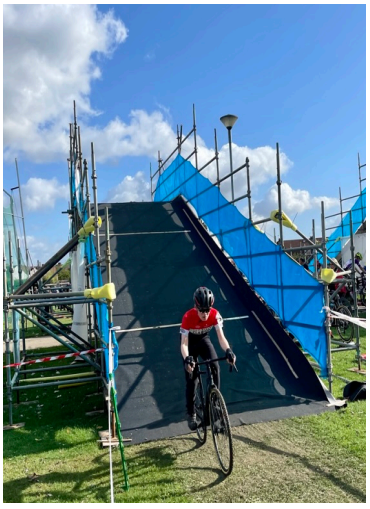
Finally, rules change so it is worth keeping an eye on the British Cycling updates and at least know where to find the UCI rules. The contacts at British Cycling have always been very helpful and also the Commissaires on the day too.

Useful links

https://www.evodevocycling.org.uk/
https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/cyclocross/article/bcst_rulebook_and_constitution
https://www.uci.org/ Cyclocross under Disciplines
https://rijden.uk/blog/cyclocross-news-and-rumours/
https://cyclocrossracer.co.uk/
Crosscast podcast https://thecrosscast.buzzsprout.com/

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The courses themselves

In many ways the National Trophy races are more of the same; more as in longer courses, with more (and larger) features compared to a typical local course. You may be lucky to race in a region with big features but you're unlikely to have flyover bridges etc.

Most things can be practiced in advance and the technique for descending off a bridge is no different to a long bank.



I managed the Derby bridges as a newbie 49 year old so a youth rider will be fine I'm sure.*
** albeit, in the one-off fun race not the actual Trophy race.*







Iconic venues/features:

- The Wall at Falkirk
- The steps and long bank traverses at Cyclopark
- Bridges, banks and the Bombhole at Derby
- Bridge onto Beach and the Dragon climb at Irvine
- The infamous red mud at Paignton
- Sand sections overlooking the sea at South Shields

There are few new ones to us, that we've heard a lot about, coming this season too:

- Peel Park, Bradford
- Shrewsbury

Bikes & Equipment

Typically there are no restrictions on the bikes and wheels used in regional league races. For Trophy and National Champs most categories are unrestricted too but **Juniors** and **Seniors** need to be aware of the UCI regulations - see below.
U14 and U16 Youth, along with the Masters riders can use any human powered freewheel drop handlebar bike…and there are no gear restrictions in Cyclo-cross…*thank goodness!*

You do not need expensive bikes, the main thing enjoying the racing on the same courses as elite riders race on, not many other supports allow youth competitors to enjoy their sport at the same venue as the top competitors in the country along with international competitors. Before splashing out on expensive kit encourage the rider to improve their skills and things like fitness will follow naturally until they're older and want to start formal training.

Multiple Bikes
Do you *need* multiple bikes? No…but most National Trophy courses, at least mid-season onwards will necessitate a bike change or the rider stopping to clean mud off. Whilst it's more money, if you're travelling a few hours to a race then it's worth having a spare bike even if it's definitely a reserve bike that they will only use if they really have to. It's better than knocking the derailleur or puncturing and having to pull out of the race…that makes for an emotionally challenging drive home. If the rider has a sibling or a parent racing with a bike the right size (ish) then great but remember to have seatpost sizes written down and a tape measure handy or better still put some sort of mark on the seatpost…but also remember to actually make the change! *I've personally jumped on a bike with the saddle way too low and in a different race jumped onto my other son's bike and found that I couldn't reach the pedals properly!*

However, they don't need brand new pro-spec carbon bikes (*they may still badger you for one though*). There are loads of second hand bikes for sale and also some very good alloy frame bikes that only weigh a bit more than their carbon equivalents. *Upgrading the wheels will probably recoup some of the weight difference and will feel a lot better too.*



Wheels & tyres
For Youth (and Masters) there are no tyre restrictions but in most cases dedicated CX tyres will be best anyway but you don't need to worry about UCI restrictions. Do keep an eye on rule changes in case it changes though.

You may have seen the Elite riders or teams on TV with a van full of wheelsets, that's great for a pro rider backed by a full team but not something you need, however if you do have spare wheels (possibly old alloy road wheels) then you can save yourself some hassle on the day and have a backup set in case of punctures i.e. they've decided to do a last minute practice just before the start of the race and hit a rock….
EvoDevo can recommend good starter options but simply: if you only have one set then go with mud tyres as you'll need those most in the UK. If you have a spare set then perhaps set them up with intermediate tyres. If you are racing or your racer as a sibling then sharing a spare set is very helpful. If possible, have wheels that are easily interchangeable between bikes. That can be tricky to organise so it's maybe something to consider when buying new or secondhand bikes.
At one point we had three bikes, shared between two riders, all with different, incompatible drivetrains which was a bit(!) of a headache.



Sometimes even mud tyres won't help…this is from a particularly muddy Clanfield, the bike ended the lap twice as heavy and neither wheel would rotate so it just ploughed a furrow as it was dragged back to the pits by my youngest.

Regarding wheels: we've used alloy wheels from Hunt and carbon lightweight wheels from Lowmass (Cyclocross racer) and have been very happy with them. We know some people have used 24 spoke Superteam wheels too and like the deeper rim depth.

Spare Clothes
Like a local race you need to keep warm and dry as best as possible beforehand and then changed asap afterwards. The courses are likely to be longer and tougher so there's more chance of getting soaked and muddy. It's a great idea to practice in old clothes and shoes and then change into clean dry kit, shoes and gloves for the race itself. Those old shoes can then be used as a back up mid-race if necessary. *One of the National Trophy sponsors and our Nottingham & Derby CX League sponsor, Grity, also do very helpful full length zip-off warm up trousers and new fleece adventure robes so they are worth checking out.*

Having clean, dry kit to race in is a big performance advantage, potentially much more significant than saving a few grams with expensive bike/wheel options.

Pit equipment

There's loads of stuff online about pit equipment and tips so we won't go into the specifics here but whilst a super powerful petrol jet washer may be appealing it takes up a lot of room, uses a lot of water and isn't great for your green credentials. There are loads of great battery powered washers out there now so I would definitely investigate those. Spare batteries may be needed for particularly muddy races but that's not a big deal. The EvoDevo website is a great resource for pit equipment to have with you too.
It's also a good idea to have a waterproof bag with some spare warm tops that the rider can throw on immediately after they have finished.

Towels

For the older parents who remember the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: always have a spare towel…or two, one at the van and one in the pits to dry off the saddle and handlebars and the rider.



Image courtesy of ChaptGPT

De-icer might be useful too!



Once it gets colder then a can of de-icer in your pit bag can be really useful for the derailleur, chain, pedals, cleats, pressure washer.

I wouldn't leave de-icer on the components but I'm sure you'll wash everything post-race.

Kit for UCI category races (Juniors, U23s and Elite/Senior)

This bit is for Juniors, U23s and Elites/Seniors and not really the aim of this document so feel free to skip.

Tyres
Whilst anything goes for Youth (and Masters) at National Trophy races and National Championships; in practice though, the appropriate CX tyres for racing will be 30-33c. However, for **Juniors, U23s and Seniors** the 33mm max width restriction is enforced and may be checked for. Keep an eye on the BC and UCI regs in case this changes.
For local rounds there is usually no tyre restriction but check local rules. Regional Championship events tend to be lenient too but Juniors and Seniors ought to be using regulation CX tyres.





Other brands are available…and I'm not getting into the tube, tubeless and tubular debate…
Please make sure the tyre measures under the limit when fitted, as the trend for wider road and gravel wheels can make the tyre measure wider than stated

Frame requirements (Junior and Seniors only)
Again, for Youth (and Masters) riders then currently any frame (with drop bar handlebars) is allowed (amended rule CX2.1.4). For **Juniors** and **Seniors** in National Trophy, National Championships and UCI races they need to use UCI approved frames. The UCI publishes a list of approved frames which should be clearly marked with a UCI frame sticker from the manufacturer. There is also the handlebar width requirement, same as the road regs, to be aware of: UCI Management Committee confirmed the measurement of 400mm for the overall width of the handlebars (outside to outside), a maximum flare of 65mm and an inner measurement limit between the brake hoods of 280mm.
I'm not sure what the rule is exactly for riders who need to use flat bars, so please check with BC and the Comms team in advance.

Wheels SImilarly a new rule means that only approved *carbon* wheels with rims less than 65mm deep are allowed *however* even the approved wheels do not have UCI stickers and are not always easy to identify; at the time of writing it is unclear how this will be enforced other than the depth requirement. Keep an eye on the regulation updates.
NB Alloy wheels with 24+ spokes are allowed and do not need to be accredited.

On the day

EvoDevo have some great advice on their site (EvoDevo Advice Hub) so I'm not going to repeat all that but please have a look.

Arrival & Sign on

Generally riders need to sign on first before Practice, even if you don't have a number on you will usually need your ankle chip on in order to do practice laps. The pit crew will usually have two pit bands in the race pack envelope and anyone wanting to enter the pit area must be wearing the correct colour band for that time. If you have more helpers then some can stay in the wash area (lucky them!).

Pits

Like any race: riders make sure you have enough time to practice and pit crew make sure you know where the pit area is and cart your kit over in good time. You may not be able to get into the pit area itself straight away but it's useful to have it ready especially if you need to wash a muddy bike after practice. *Sometimes the pit area is a long way from the parking, so be warned and don't forget your boots —->*



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It is also useful to check the race manual to see if there is a water supply on site and where it is. You then need to make a decision about how much water to carry and whether you want to risk needing to refill. Some venues provide jet washers for a small fee. Although you need to queue, they are usually high pressure which clean the bikes quickly; you can then finish off with your own kit after the race…in the pits, not the car park please.

A great pressure washer area provided at the Clanfield event 2025

Fuelling

This is very personal and specific to the rider ***BUT like anything do not try a new thing especially not food, gel or energy mix on race day, try new things at home when a bathroom break is easier to manage.***

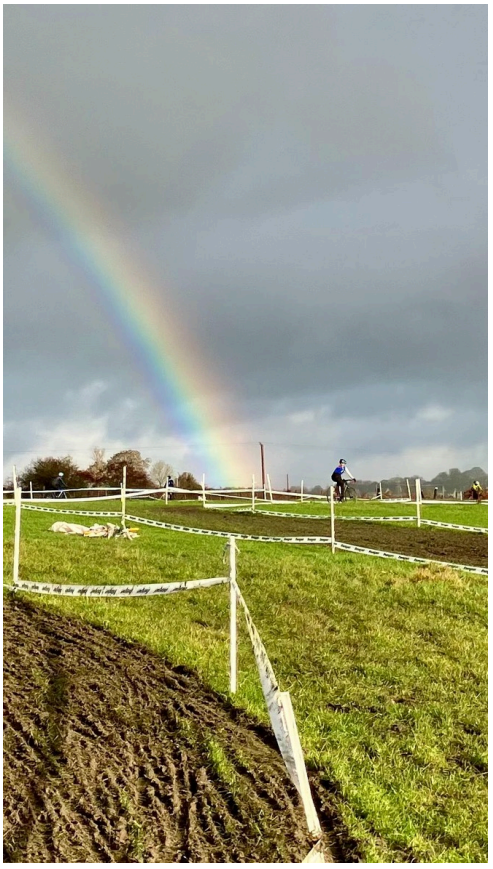


Eat healthily but the odd Belgian Fries snack is great too

Practice

In the UK there are set times for the categories to practice the course so please stick to these otherwise you face disqualification. Also check that there aren't further category restrictions during the practice window.

If possible, use old shoes, socks and gloves for practice. If it's really wet a whole set of cycling clothes may be needed.



Post race

Get the rider warmed up and fed as soon as they can stomach food.

Also, remember to "Support the people that support the sport"

The commissaires, the marshalls and organisers are volunteers; please do thank them; and respect them even if you're told off for something. On

that note, arguing will NOT be successful, it will certainly not make you any faster and it could have repercussions.

Stay to cheer on your team mates. If you can, watch the Elites. Chat with your fellow riders, learn how they did and get to know them. Making friends now might lead to the chance to join new teams, training camps and race weekends away in future. It also means you have other people to practice the course with.

Also try to support the Trophy and race sponsors like Schwalbe and Grity.
Go to the podium, celebrate the winners because it might be you in future. Make friends with the commentary team, you might get extra shout outs at the next race.

Clearing up
Please do not dump unused water in the pit / washing area as it makes for very challenging conditions for the pit crews in later races. Ideally give the water to another team that needs it, or pour it carefully down a drain, or just take it home.

Also, please do not start washing bikes down in the car park unless it clearly states that you are allowed to do so! Most venues do not allow it and it may jeopardise the organiser's chance of using that venue in future. Your rider may face some sort of penalty too, plus you wouldn't want someone spraying your vehicle with dirty water so just don't do it.

The drive home
Your pit crew might be tired but talking about the race will usually help the journey go quickly. Try and think about the positives or what you would do differently. If there's things that you'd like your pit crew to do differently then say so but perhaps in a nice way.
Reflect on your goals, what went well, what can be improved?

Pit rules

This is probably the biggest area of confusion and the biggest change from going from local races to National Trophy races. Local league pit areas tend to be fairly relaxed and compact whereas the Trophy pit areas are generally much larger and the pit rules (usually) enforced.

Remember your pit passes
The race pack received at sign on will usually contain 2 pit passes for their pit crew to wear. The pit crew must have this to be allowed into the pit area.

Choose a pit box
Unlike Continental UCI races you can choose your own pit box. Once chosen you need to stick to that numbered box. If possible agree with your rider in advance which box you will be in but be prepared to move if it is unreasonably full. Again Evo Devo have great resources about this and their early season camps for U16s and above are a great way to learn more.

When do I get the bike ready in the pit lane?
This is no different to local races but will be more important to follow as there will be more people involved. Only move to the front of the pit box when your rider should be approaching. This will become easier once the race progresses after the first lap. Still, only move the bike actually into the pit lane once you see your rider approaching. Hopefully they will signal that they need to come in but if not wait until they have gone beyond the 2nd flag (pit lane exit).
Do not move outside your box and definitely do not move into the pit entry/exit zone.

Is there something about only taking 2 steps in the pits between bike swaps?
This is an odd one as it's not in the BC Tech Regs or UCI rules *but* the rider and support team should be in the same pit box which practically means only taking a small number of steps when swapping bikes. What you mustn't do is stand in a downstream pit box to receive the bike and the rider run without a bike on to their actual pit box to collect the new bike.
Due to Pit Boxes not being allocated in UK races, and some movement being allowed for practical purposes (e.g. two riders who are close to each other in the race have their pit crew in the same pit box, so one moves to another box) there is an additional British Cycling rule stating that riders must only take 2 steps (or 2 strides, but don't get hung up on counting foot strikes) when changing bikes. If the rider's pit crew remain in their chosen box then this will not be a problem. Although not in the regs, this additional rule has been sent in the event email for the last few seasons.
__Riders__: do not in any circumstances dump your bike, even if broken, at the start of the pits and run on to your pit box for your replacement bike. You must have a bike with you at all times and this will probably be a disqualification. *A rider at the 2026 World Cup did this and was DQ'd; they had run half a lap carrying their bike which must have been frustrating/tough but they just had to run a handful of metres further to carry on with their race.*

Hopefully it won't happen but a rider must finish with a complete bike with two wheels…i.e. do not take out a damaged/punctured wheel and leave it on the course. You must finish with two wheels!

What if they are a "dirty side" dismounter?
The Commissaire team will probably ask at the start of the race if anyone needs to stand out in the pit lane against the racing line fence.
Only these teams can stand out there and should only move into position when they see their rider approaching but must not impede other riders.
No other teams should stand next to the fence, not even to shout encouragement to their rider.

Can I take photos or film video in the pits?
No - you should not be using a camera or phone in the pits. The pit area is often a busy environment and you will not be paying proper attention if taking photos or videos. This may not be an issue in local races but it is enforced at Trophy races so it will be best to get used to treating the pit area as a working area. If you want to take photos etc then leave the pit area. This also applies to taking phone calls which can be tricky if you're on your own needing extra help!
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What if the rider misses the pit entry?…or they have a mechanical alongside the pits?
Providing the rider has not gone beyond the second set of yellow flags marking the pit exit they can turn around and go back to the pit **entrance** and enter the pits as normal. Even if they are closer to the exit they must run back to the pit entrance. They may have missed the entrance because the course was congested, or they had a mechanical issue after the pit entrance or because they simply missed because they were too focused on beating the rider in front.

Also note that the rider can turn around in the pit lane if the bike they received had an issue and need to go back for their original bike. This means the pit crew should watch their rider leave the pits and not immediately run off to wash the bike they just received.
In all cases the rider must not impede other riders and must return to the pits safely.

Note that if the rider leaves the pits then they have to continue on the course, no turning back once beyond the yellow exit flags unfortunately.

What if they come into the pits in error?
The rider might get forced into the pits or may come in looking for a clean bike that's not ready for them. The rider should come to a stop and receive/seek external assistance but this can be as superficial as a helper wiping mud off or touching an Allen key to a seat bolt.

Key things to remember

- Have fun
- Race hard
- and just enjoy it…*maybe once you're warm and fed*.

Thank those who support the race: the organisers, marshals, sponsors, commentators;
…and thank those who supported you!



Thanks to Andy Humbertson, Mike Cooke and Neil Mansfield for their contributions.

Finally, thank you for reading to the end.

Rob plus friends & family

Appendix: Bits and Bobs

Miscellaneous stuff which we think applies to all races, local Leagues and National Trophy.

Can I wear a camera in races?

Cameras can only be used by riders over the age of 17 years old. They should be securely fastened to the bike, by use of the manufacturer's approved mount. **No chest or helmet cameras are permitted.**

CX2.4 Cameras
CX2.4.1 Subject to CX2.4.5, cameras are permitted during British Cycling sanctioned Events. Use of cameras is restricted to full Licence Holders who are in the year of their 17th birthday or older. Riders with a Day Licence are not eligible.

CX2.4.2 Cameras must be fitted to the bicycle using a system designed for bicycles and must not affect the certification of any item of the bicycle.

CX2.4.3 Riders must ensure that the manufacturing guidelines are followed in respect of mounting all equipment and the camera does not cause any risk of danger or distraction to the rider or others.

CX2.4.4 The rights in any footage captured during an Event are assigned to British Cycling. The rider is granted a worldwide, perpetual, royalty free, transferable licence to use the footage for any purpose. In using the footage, riders must act in accordance with British Cycling's Code of Conduct. Riders shall make any footage available to British Cycling upon request.

CX2.4.5 Cameras shall not be permitted if reasonably restricted by the Chief Executive, the Organiser or upon any restrictions imposed by a facility or location.

Can I use a drone to film the racing?

Any adult wishing to film any part of a British Cycling sanctioned event using a drone or moto must apply to British Cycling in advance. (https://bit.ly/3RYMAUT)

Can I wear earbuds/headphones?

Awaiting an update to the Cyclocross rules from British Cycling *but* this is an omission and it is expected that earphones and similar are not allowed whilst on the course whether in sighting laps, warm up or the race.

Can I wear my replica pro team clothing?

No - You should aim to wear your first claim cycling clubs currently sanctioned clothing or plain clothing with minimal logos. Replica or other team clothing must not be worn to race in.

CX2.2. Clothing
CX2.2.1. Where racing clothing has been registered by a Club or Team, that racing clothing must be worn by all riders representing such Club or Team when competing in Events.

CX2.2.2. Riders must be clothed from neck to at least mid-thigh in appropriate clothing for Cyclo-Cross. Jerseys must be sleeved beyond the shoulder.

CX2.2.3. All riders in Junior categories and above must wear the registered design or colours of their Club or Team unless required to wear the British National, Home Country or Regional colours, British National Championship jersey, or, in British National Trophy Events, the series leader's jersey.

CX2.2.4 Except in British National Events, Youth riders and those who do not hold Racing or Day Licences are permitted to wear any suitable clothing whilst competing.

CX2.2.5. If not representing a Club, Team, Region or Home Country, all riders in Junior categories and above must wear predominantly plain clothing free of any lettering save for the mark of the manufacturer.

G2.2.1. Riders must not wear a political or offensive slogan, sign or badge whilst participating in an Event.