

## PARENTS GUIDE TO YOUTH ELITE AND JUNIOR ELITE CUP RACES



**What is a Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup?** Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups are USAT-designated, draft-legal triathlons organized exclusively for athletes between 13 and 19 years of age. Each year, USAT designates three or four of these events to serve as national-level racing opportunities. They also are used as qualifiers for the ITU Junior World Championships team and to crown national champions.

**What is a *Regional Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup*?** Regional Cups provide a logical starting point for athletes wishing to gain draft-legal racing experience and are good preparation for national and international competitions. For a schedule of events, both regional and national, visit: <http://www.usatriathlon.org/AthleteFocus/Junior.aspx>

**What does “draft-legal” mean?** The term “draft-legal” refers to the competition rules that are followed in the ITU/Olympic short-course triathlon format. During a draft-legal triathlon, athletes draft behind other athletes to save energy. Under USAT Rules, drafting off another athlete would result in a penalty. Under ITU Competition Rules for this style of racing, there is no penalty for drafting...in fact, it is encouraged.

**Where do I find the “ITU Competition Rules”?** Go to [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org). Click on the “About ITU” tab, then click “Downloads” on the dropdown menu. You will find the current ITU Competition Rules on this page.

**What is the purpose of these types of events?** Because the Junior World Championships is draft-legal, Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups provide young athletes with an opportunity to develop the skills and experience necessary for international-caliber junior racing. They also serve as a stepping stone toward becoming an elite/professional triathlete competing in ITU World Cups or at the Olympic Games.

**What are the race distances and format?** A Youth Elite Cup is comprised of a 400 meter swim, a 10 kilometer bike, and a 2.5 kilometer run. A Junior Elite Cup is comprised of a 750m swim, 20k bike, and a 5k run. The swim starts from either a platform (dive from a floating pontoon, pier, riverwalk) or a beach start. The bike course is typically multi-lap (usually 5k). The run is also multi-lap (usually 2.5k).

**How old must my child be to compete?** For Youth Elites, eligible racing ages are 13, 14, or 15 years old as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the competition year. For Junior Elites,

eligible racing ages are 16, 17, 18, or 19 years old as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the competition year.

**May my child “race up” a division?** No. Athletes must race according to their age as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the competition year. For example, a 12 year old who does not turn 13 by December 31<sup>st</sup> may not compete in a Youth Elite Cup. Likewise, a 15 year old who does not turn 16 by December 31<sup>st</sup> may not compete in a Junior Elite Cup. In the same spirit, an older athlete may not “race down” a division.

**Does my child need to be on a team to compete?** No. While there are a number of development teams focused on preparing Youth Elite / Junior Elite athletes, being a member of such a team is not expected or required in order to compete at a Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup.

**How do I register my child for these events?** Registration is handled by the event organizer/race director. Because many Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups are held in conjunction with age group races, be certain you are registering your child for the Youth Elite (13-15) or Junior Elite (16-19) event. Contact the event organizer if you have a registration question.

**Does my child need a USAT membership to compete?** Yes. All athletes 17 and under must hold a USAT annual membership to compete. The price of membership is only \$5 for the entire year. Athletes 18 and 19 years of age should purchase an adult annual membership for \$39. One-day licenses may be available at events that do not carry World Championship Qualifier status. Purchase a membership at [www.usatriathlon.org](http://www.usatriathlon.org).

**What type of bike does my child need?** For Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups, your child must ride a “traditional road bike,” as opposed to a “tri bike,” “time trial bike,” or “mountain bike.” For exact specifications, please consult sections E.3 and E.4 of the ITU Competition Rules. Equipment that does not comply with sections E.3 and E.4 **will not be permitted** on the race course at a Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cup.

**Does that mean my child needs to own two bikes?** Certainly not. A few minor modifications to your “traditional road bike” will make it race ready for a typical non-drafting triathlon. A road bike will provide the versatility to do both styles of triathlon at the lowest cost to you.

**What is the “no bare torso” rule?** An athlete must have his/her torso (upper body) covered for the full duration of the race...from swim start to run finish. USAT recommends that athletes consult the ITU Uniform Guidelines prior to selecting their competition apparel. Go to [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org). Click on the “About ITU” tab, then click “Downloads” on the dropdown menu. You will find the current ITU Uniform Guidelines on this page. Please note, there are no logo restrictions/color requirements at Youth Elite / Junior Elite Cups.

**Why is there a mandatory pre-race meeting?** The mandatory pre-race meeting is necessary to inform athletes of the competition rules and course specifics. Given the developmental nature of these events, these meetings serve as a critical part of the educational process. They also may be used as an opportunity to pre-inspect equipment (however, final inspection occurs as athletes enter the transition area). Whenever possible, these meetings will take place on the evening prior to race day. Please be aware that meeting space is limited and access may be restricted to athletes only.

**How long are these mandatory meetings?** Approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

**Are wetsuits allowed?** Yes, provided the water temperature is 20C (approximately 68F) or below.

**Are relay teams allowed to compete?** No.

**May I assist my child in the transition area?** No. Parents and coaches are not allowed inside the transition area before, during, or after the event.

**How are national rankings calculated?** USAT tabulates an annual Youth Elite/Junior Elite National Ranking based on performances at *regional* and *national* Youth Elite/Junior Elite Cups. To view the scoring system, click on the link below.  
[http://www.usatriathlon.org/upload/pdfs/juniors\\_junior%20elite%20national%20ranking%20system.pdf](http://www.usatriathlon.org/upload/pdfs/juniors_junior%20elite%20national%20ranking%20system.pdf)

**Where can I watch video of this style of racing?** The ITU offers a collection of recent event video under the Multimedia tab on its website – [www.triathlon.org](http://www.triathlon.org). For starters, check out the Junior races under the World Triathlon Championships banner.

**Still have questions?** Please refer questions to Steve Kelley, USAT Athlete Development Coordinator, [steve.kelley@usatriathlon.org](mailto:steve.kelley@usatriathlon.org)