

## **Spectators Summary of Track Cycling Events:**

(See the USCF rule book or <http://www.usacycling.org/> for all the details.)

### **Mass Start or "Scratch" Race:**

Not surprisingly, all the riders in a Mass Start race start at the same time. The riders all cover the same distance, with the winner being the first rider to cross the finish line at the end of that distance. Although speed is important, tactics and teamwork are equally vital. Groups of riders often take an early lead, and then work together to increase it while their teammates try to block and slow down the "field." On a small track, the leaders may gain an entire lap on the other riders and then join in with the main group again.

### **Points Race:**

A variation of the Mass Start race, points are awarded to the top placing riders in a series of sprints contested at various intervals during the race. The winner of a Points Race is not necessarily the first to cross the finish line, but rather the rider who has accumulated the most points during the race.

### **Win-And-Out:**

A variation on the Scratch race where 1<sup>st</sup> place is decided on the final lap, however, only the winner is finished. In order to secure 2<sup>nd</sup> place that rider must be first across the line on the next lap. 3<sup>rd</sup> place is decided on the lap after that. Typically all other places are also decided by this third and final sprint. This makes for interesting tactics. It can be a very hard race if a rider tries gives their all to win only to be forced to continue and try again the next lap.

### **Point-A-Lap:**

A variation on the Points race where there is one point available by crossing the line first on every lap. The winner is the rider with the most points at the end of the race (not necessarily the winner of the final sprint).

### **Snowball:**

A variation on the Points race, similar to Point-A-Lap except that the number of points available to the leader of each lap is steadily increasing. The leader of the first lap may receive 1 point, the second lap 2 points, and so on. The final few laps will be where the big point totals can be accumulated.

### **Tempo:**

Another variation on the Points race. Very similar to Point-A-Lap except that on each lap 2 riders will get points. The leader of the lap will get 2 points, the second rider of the lap will get 1 point. The winner is the rider with the most points at the end of the race (not necessarily the winner of the final sprint).

### **Miss-And-Out or Elimination:**

Another variation of the Mass Start race that's sometimes called "Devil Take The Hindmost," because the last rider to cross the line after each (or every other) lap is taken out of the race. The field diminishes rapidly, until there are only a few riders left to contest the final sprint. This is always a very exciting race and crowd favorite.

**Keirin:**

This Japanese version of the Motorpace, which is subject to pari-mutuel betting in Japan, has become very popular in the US, although, so far, without the betting. Keirin races, in which all the riders on the track jockey for position behind a single motorbike, sometimes most closely resemble the "Roller Derby" of old, with riders jostling and jabbing each other with elbows to get into the "sweet spot" behind the motorcycle. Then, just before the last lap, the motorbike pulls off the track, and the riders sprint madly to the line.

**Madison:**

Named for the famed Madison Square Garden in New York City, and known as the 'American' race in Europe, this most prestigious of track events is a race for teams of two or three riders, and can last anywhere from six hours to six days!! All riders start at the same time, and the winner is the team covering the most laps in the time allotted. Each team has only one rider in the race at any given time. After covering one or two laps at top speed, that rider drops out of the race so that another member of the team can come in and ride for a while. During the changeovers, the rider coming off the track literally throws the second rider into the race- either with a handslung, or by grabbing onto a special handle sewn into the rear pocket of their teammate's racing shorts. The Madison is considered to be the ultimate event in bicycle track racing, not only because of the length of the race, but also because of its incredible combined demands of speed, endurance, teamwork and tactics.

**Kilometer, or 1000 Meter Time Trial:**

A timed race that pits a solo rider against the clock, the "Kilo" is a test of speed and stamina in which each rider tries to cover a distance of 1000 meters (usually three laps on most tracks) in as little time as humanly possible. Ridden from a standing start, the Kilo is won by a rider pushing himself to the utmost limits of his endurance.

**Match Sprint:**

A short event with 2 to 4 riders competing at a time in a tournament format. The final 200m of each race is sometimes timed, however, the racers are competing against each other, not the clock. Each race is either 2 or 3 laps long. It's in the Match Sprint that you may witness a "trackstand," wherein a rider will bring his/her bike to a complete stop and remain upright, balancing precariously. The reason for this peculiar behavior is that the rider in front is trying to control the race and wants to force the rider in the rear to come around, so that they can "draft" off of the front rider, following their rear wheel very closely, to decrease wind resistance and therefore conserve energy. By following in the slipstream of the other rider, a rider can not only keep a watchful eye on their opponent, but can also save enough energy to put on an extra burst of speed at the finish. When the tournament has whittled the field down to just 2 riders, the final contest is often best 2 out of 3. A Match Sprint tournament may also contain a second change bracket for riders who have lost their heats. This second chance bracket is called a "repechage". Before a tournament begins riders are often asked to do a timed flying 200m test. This is used to seed the tournament, but does not directly affect the race results.

**Olympic Sprint, or Team Sprint:**

"Take three of the fastest riders on the track (sprinters). Line them up, Team Pursuit style, with three more fast riders on the other side of the track. When the gun goes off, each team moves into Team Pursuit position, one in back of the other "single file", accelerating to top speed as quickly as possible. The first man rides one lap on the front and pulls out of the pace line. The second continues, pulling off after the second lap. The last man of each team continues solo for the third and final lap, driving through to the finish. This race is an all-out drag race, dependent for success on speed, teamwork, and consistency. There is no use of the banking as in the Team Pursuit, and no possibility of half-lap pulls." This event, although not yet an Olympic medal event, was run at the U.S. Track Nationals in Indianapolis, in 1995. It was won

by Bill Clay, Jeff Solt, and Sky Christopherson, and this was after they had been able to practice together for only 15 minutes!" (This "Olympic Sprint" description is from the excellent book "NO BRAKES!" by Sandra Sutherland, and was submitted to us by Dave Christopherson, Sky's dad!) (Editor's Note: Reader Paul Webb reminds us that the Olympic Sprint, while ironically still not an Olympic event, is however, now a 'medal event' at the World Championships.)

**Pursuit:**

A race in which two riders start on opposite sides of the track and chase each other for a given distance. If one rider "catches" the other before they've gone the full distance, the race ends immediately (although the winning rider may have to continue on to 'go the distance' so that he may record his overall time). If neither rider catches his opponent, the race goes the full distance, and is won by the rider who covers the distance in the least amount of time. Women and juniors go a distance of 3000 meters, amateur men go 4000 meters.

**Team Pursuit:**

A 4000 meter race, the Team Pursuit is like the Individual Pursuit, except that it involves two teams of riders instead of two individuals. There are four men on each team, and they ride in a single file "pace line." Each of the four riders takes a turn at the front, changing the lead every lap or every half lap. The front rider swings up the track's banking, letting his teammates pass, and then drops back down to catch on to the back of the line. Only three of the four riders need to go the full distance, because the team's total time is taken as the third rider in the group crosses the line.