

## USA Cycling 2014 LA Summit

Notes by Jeff Poulin, 8-9Nov14

NYSBRA is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest LA based on total racing licenses behind No CA, So CA, CO, TX and NEBRA

### Themes from NY

Based on input on *nyraces* prior to the summit, I discussed the following themes with USAC staff:

- RD license program problems
- Officials requirements (SafeSport, Background Checks, CEUs)
- Need to improve communications from USAC to us (i.e., rationale for new requirements)
- Need to reduce barriers to the people (i.e., RDs, Officials) that do so much for the sport
- Reminder that most of us are really volunteers that do this for the love of the sport!

### Friday, 7Nov

Reception and welcome from Steve Johnson, CEO of USA Cycling

### Saturday, 8Nov

About 50 attendees including USA Cycling staff at USA Cycling headquarters, Col Springs

8:30-8:40 The Weekend ahead and Expectations, Jeffrey Hansen, Regional Programs Manager

- Almost the entire agenda has been dedicated to discussion. This year are sitting in groups of 6-7 at tables rather than auditorium-style as in the past

8:40-9:45 2014 in Review and 2015 Preview, Gordon Weldon, Vice President of Membership Services

- In 2014 USAC went to a \$70 license that covered all disciplines. The results: total license sales are overall down very slightly nationally (only 302!).
- When purchasing their license, people indicated their primary use; most are RR and ~20% were for CX. MTB was next, BMX, and Track were very small.
- Online Registration: 34% use USAC, 29% uses BikeReg. 16% use none at all!
- 2014 Accomplishments
  - Single license for \$70
  - Automated insurance applications
  - Enhanced online reg
  - Officials assignment tool
  - Multiple releases of mobile app
  - Online CEUs available and tracking for RDs
  - Online sales of one-day licenses, regardless of online registration system (**NOTE** that even BikeReg event, which is most of NY, can have riders buy a one-day license in advance of the event through USAC so you don't need to mess with collecting \$15 and the triplicate form. Set this up while filling out your on-line permit application.)

- 2015 Preview
  - Introduce “membership tiers” to recognize long-standing members and frequent racers. Like frequent flier, it will give recognition, points, discounts, or other perks TBD
  - Introduce a club recognition program
  - Member retention and acquisition promotions TBD
  - Multi-year licenses (i.e., 2-yr license for \$140 and 3-yr for \$210. There will NOT be a discount. The advantage to the rider is not having to renew every year and price protection in case the license fee goes up)
  - We had a long discussion on pricing licenses for partial year or seasons (i.e., CX because it crosses a year boundary), etc. The best idea is probably offer first time racers a 16-month license on 1Sep, which would get them in at the start of CX season.
  - USAC on-line registration rebates continue and will possibly increase, working on ability to “skin” the reg page with event logos, and continued enhancements. USAC registration will include event cancellation insurance.
  - Web site and communications will increase focus on “getting started” as a rider, RD, official, etc. Expanded opt-out for emails to better get targeted info emailed to riders
  - “Going green” with annual licenses; the default will be no paper license. Riders can request a free paper license, but riders should use the USAC Mobile App (iOS, Android).
    - IMHO the USAC app is pretty good and everyone should be start using it. Your license info is always up-to-date.
  - Officials Assignment Tool will NOT be mandatory in 2015
    - ~32 of 40 LAs said the tool was not ready
    - USAC wants visibility into who is officiating all events
    - USAC will form task force to fix it (seeking volunteers now...)
    - Intend to make the tool mandatory within 1-2 yrs
  - USAC wants to increased collaboration to grow the sport, officials, promoters (RDs)

9:45-11:20 2014 Creative Problem Solving Session: Growing Officials, Gordon Weldon, Vice President of Membership Services

- How does USAC address the 22% loss of Officials nationwide (NY lost 14%, going from 86 to 74 licenses).
- Top suggestions:
  - Make it easier to become an official, provide on-line tests in addition to C clinics or live webinars offered several times a year by USAC
  - Active officials need to recruit from the rider pool; e.g., recruit officials for the Road season from the pool of CX racers that don’t race on the road
  - Better use of technology to support officials
  - Have an officials forum
  - Have parents/athletes sign a code of conduct to educate them on how to deal with officials (e.g., please stop yelling at them)
  - Provide an incentive program to recognize experienced and active officials

- Increase marketing, possibly using a role model and through human interest stories
- Have a reimbursement program for officials costs (fees and equipment)
- Create a streamlined SafeSport renewal; i.e., a 10-15 minute refresher targeted at officials rather than coaches (NOTE: Gordon said USAC knows this is an issue and is working to reduce this barrier, but it remains a requirement from the Olympic committee that USAC must comply with).
- Mentor juniors to get them into the officials program
- Make officials clothing look more professional and faster time to deliver
- Better communication from USAC on new officials requirements and why
- Overall, reduce barriers to being an official

*11:30-12:20 Discussion: Scheduling Conflicts & Denied Permits, Jeffrey Hansen, Regional Programs Manager*

- USAC's goal is GROWTH
- USAC's primary growth metric is changing emphasis from "Annual Licenses" to "Racer Days"
  - USAC is down 1% on annual licenses, NY is down 1% (2,719 licenses in 2014)
  - USAC is down 3% on Racer Days, NY is flat at 0% (28,833 racer days in 2014)
- What is the best way to handle schedule conflicts (and what *\*is\** a schedule conflict, anyway)?
  - Much discussion on what constitutes a schedule conflict and how to handle it
  - The group did not perceive this as a big issue
  - However, some LAs will deny permits if the LA perceives a conflict
  - NYSBRA does not give date protection but tries to identify and resolve conflicts when building the annual race schedule, now in progress for 2015
- What is the best way to handle a race permit application made directly to USAC after the LA denies a permit (which could happen for a variety of reasons)?
  - This situation happens rarely
  - USAC needs to coordinate with the LA on a case-by-case basis

*1:15-2:15pm Discussion: Growing the Number of Women in Cycling, Tara McCarthy, Race Director Certification Manger*

- USAC's goal is to grow the portion of women riders to 20% by 2020 from 13.5% in recent years
- Top three issues:
  - Reducing barriers to entry and providing intro and cycling education for women
  - Increasing exposure through media, mentorship, and role models
  - Increasing funding, such as higher prize lists
- Should we have a Cat 5 category for Women?
  - Would allow a better experience for new women riders
  - But there are (generally) not enough women to support a separate Cat 5 field
  - Small events would in practice have Women's Cat 4-5 fields (just like the men)
  - Larger events would have separate Women's Cat 5 fields (just like the men)
  - The group was divided on this

- How can we achieve the “20% by 2020” goal?
  - This consisted of group exercises; Tara collected our notes with the task of consolidating them and reporting back tomorrow.

*2:15-3:15 2014 Creative Problem Solving Session: Growing Racer Days, Gordon Weldon, Vice President of Membership Services*

- USAC’s goal is to grow the number of racer days to 800,000 by 2020 from 487,803 in 2013
- A “racer day” is counted by totaling the \$3 insurance surcharges; twice in one day does not count
- Top suggestions:
  - Starting juniors cycling in local schools
  - Combine fun rides (e.g., Gran Fondos) with races to reach other demographics
  - Increase Race Quality; provide a RD forum for RDs to exchange best practices
  - Help RDs financially
  - Attract spectators with media exposure, beer tents, etc.
  - Create bike donation program to help juniors and new riders
  - Reduce barriers to new RDs; have a “Race Director Starter Kit”
  - LA Newsletter from USAC with success stories
  - Adding a day to an existing event that caters to new riders and/or additional fields
  - Adding team competitions to events to incent teams to bring more riders
  - Allow riders who no longer have annual licenses that used to be higher than Cat 5 (men) or Cat 4 (women) to race again without having to buy an annual license

*3:30-4:15 Beginner Racer Program, Stuart Lamp, Southeast Regional Coordinator*

- USAC is creating a Beginning Racer Program (BRP)
- BRP is a mentor program for new racers modeled of the N. Cal “Early Bird Series,” which have on-bike instruction and a mentored race
- Goal is to increase the number of new and returning members
- Basically BRP formalizes the rule that gives race day credit towards upgrades for taking a clinic
- BRP is optional; will consist of 5 clinics (protecting your wheel, cornering, formation/anticipating, sprinting, and putting it all together)
- People (i.e., licensed coaches) seeking to get the course materials can apply at: <http://www.usacycling.org/beginner-racer-program.htm>.
- USAC will give 2 race day credits per clinic, using the rationale that the clinic contains a mentored race. I challenged this as not being within the spirit of the rule that says “up to five race days may be substituted with clinics” (the program is giving 10 race day credits for attending 5 clinics).
- NOTE: NY highly encourages rider clinics and offers grants to organizers of rider clinics. Guidelines for receiving upgrade credit for clinics is at <http://www.nysbra.com/about/upgrades/>

*4:15-5:00 Discussion: Usage of USA Cycling Rebates, Jeffrey Hansen, Regional Programs Manager*

- USA Cycling rebates \$10/annual license to the LAs plus \$5 per each license in excess of last year's total
- With 2,719 current riders, NYSBRA receives approximately \$27,000 per year
- Jeffrey presented how LAs generally spend the rebate money they get from USAC , in order:
  - BAR/BAT/State Championships- 28.5%
  - Unspent- 15.9%
  - RD grants to subsidize the cost of putting on races- 14.9%
  - Stipends for volunteers and staff- 13.1%
  - Junior programs- 9.5%
  - Race equipment- 8.3%
  - Officials programs- 7.0%
  - Misc admin- 5.1%
  - Banquet- 3.4%
  - RaceClean- 2.4%
  - Beginner programs such as clinics- 2.0%
  - LA Summit travel- 1.8%
  - Elite development- 1.6%
  - Annual planning meeting- 1.1%
  - Women's programs- 1.1%
  - Marketing- 0.2%

6:00-7:30 Race Manager event management software, Jon Kinnick, sponsor of dinner reception and owner

- Presentation on software designed to fill the gap between the BikeReg download file and submitting results, to include entering day-of registration, printing start lists, generating results, and uploading to USAC results DB
- See: <http://www.kinnick.net/racemanager/>
- Although the SW is currently only licensed per LA, Jon will consider requests from individual RDs

## Sunday, 9Nov

8:30-9:30 Creative Problem Solving Session: The LA Rebate Program, Frederike Blattspieler, Member Services Manager

- Reminder that USA Cycling rebates \$10/annual license to the LAs plus \$5 per each license in excess of last year's total
- USAC is clearly considering changing the rebates to be based on "racer days" rather than "annual license sales"
- Group exercise on issues and possible changes to the LA Rebate Program
- Top Suggestions:
  - USAC could mandate where LAs spend their rebates
  - Provide incentives for inviting former riders back into the sport

- Increase the amount of rebate from \$10 to something like \$12 to make up for inflation since the beginning of the program and additional work that USAC is asking the LAs to do
- Give a large rebate for new licenses and reduce the amount rebated each year for returning riders (making new licenses more valuable to the LA)
- Add a bonus rebate program that would incent LAs to support NCC/NRC events
- Assuming a future change to “riders days,” let LAs keep \$2 of the insurance fee and only send \$1 to USAC
- “Rider Days” is not a good plan because of affects outside the control of LAs, such as weather

*11:30-12:00 Open Forum, Gordon Weldon, Vice President of Membership Services*

- Q: How does USAC spend its money? When USAC increased the license fee to \$70, why didn't the LAs get some of that?
  - Gordon gave general examples of expenditures needed to run USAC; the complete annual financial report contains the details
  - USAC considers the LA rebate program as directed at funding “Grass Roots Development”
- Q: Can we reduce the new \$15/one-day license fee back to \$10? For example, if bought on-line they only pay \$10?
  - USAC does not plan to change the cost back to \$10
  - Gordon asked how would USAC make up for the lost revenue?
  - Last year, however, CEO Steve Johnson said the reason to raise the one-day fee to \$15 was to prevent occasional riders from “gaming the system” by racing on one-days instead of buying an annual license. Revenue was not the reason for the increase to \$15
  - A lively discussion ensued with the LAs unanimous against the \$15 one-day
  - Riders are leaving USAC but remaining in the sport (still riding their bikes). The trend is clearly down
  - One LA stated: it appears USAC is “just driven by dollars and cents”
  - It is important to remember that there are always two sides to everything...
- Q: When will USAC support automatic calculation of upgrade points and number of starter counts to help upgrade officials?
  - This is still in the works
- Q: Can we use the rankings or upgrade points calculations to urge upgrades when appropriate?
  - Discussion ensued; at lower levels automatic upgrades made by the computer may make sense
- Q: Can we increase the visibility of the rankings program to get people excited about competing locally?
  - USAC will look at publicizing the rankings more and possibly including that info on a rider's account info page
- Q: Any major rules changes for 2015?

- 2015 rule changes are not final but USAC doesn't foresee any major changes
- When the 2015 rules are final USAC will set up the annual rules refresher webinar (which has always been required for all Officials and is now called a "CEU")
- Q: Late fees at 8 weeks out are excessive. Can that change, especially for non-competitive events?
  - Last minute permits of any kind cause the staff to divert from planned business to deal with the request. The late fees help reduce the last minute requests
  - USAC does waive late fees on a case by case basis so the late fees will remain as a deterrent but especially for non-competitive events please call and ask for a waiver
- Junior Elite rider topics:
  - Should juniors be forced to upgrade? This could make them ride too much at high intensity too early. Parents should be a key to deciding; this probably is a case-by-case basis
  - There needs to be more transparency in the selection process for Junior National Teams; e.g., identify the pathway to get to Junior Worlds. The downside of specific criteria is it removes flexibility for extenuating circumstances when making selections
- Aaron Denny of KY made a presentation on "We are Agents of Change"
  - A inspiring personal account on how cycling changed his life
- Q: What were the outputs from the "How to grow Women's Cycling" session yesterday?
  - Tara presented the consolidated notes
  - Need to provide more prize money, have equal payout for the men, get local sponsors, give more opportunities to race, subsidize women's fields, provide daycare, mandate beginner-only fields, more women coaches and clinics, etc.
  - Counterpoint is that the prize list doesn't drive women's racing but more encouraged by associated with the overall experience
  - CX and TTs are great ways to get new riders, including women into competitive racing.
  - LAs need to have women's coordinator(s) to focus on growing women's cycling (NYSBRA does!)
  - Much discussion ensued
- Q: The RD program was put in place largely to mitigate USAC's liability risk but also to "raise the level of the sport." Most of the people involved in promoting/officiating cycling are volunteers or close to it. The implementation of the RD program raises many real and perceived barriers; what can we do to fix the RD program?
  - Tara said that most of the complaints come from the experienced RDs; the new ones just do it and learn from the material
  - There are still experienced RDs that fail the test so the test is needed.
  - We ran out of time for discussion.

*12:00 Concluding Remarks, Steve Johnson, President and CEO*

- USAC changed the format of the summit to allow much more time for valued discussion

- USAC is continually striving to provide the best value to all involved; the way to growing the sport is providing the best and highest quality experience
- Cycling is inherently a dangerous sport and we have to be best-in-class in all we do
- USAC needs to improve how they communicate to their customers and will improved how they present what they are doing and why
- Thank-you for coming!