



RACING WITH SRMTB

We often receive a LOT of questions about [Texas Mountain Bike League](#) races.

Bottom line: races are *super* fun, and *super* rewarding.

Not sure if you want to race? Read on! Not sure what to pack, where to stay, or what to expect?

We've answered that, too!

Check out [this video](#) to get a sense of the spirit of NICA racing, or read more details in the [NICA Quick Start to High School Mountain Bike Racing](#).

Want a view into a race with SRMTB?

Check out this video by team Dad David Mills from the Tangle in Troy!

[Tangle in Troy](#)

During fall and winter practices, athletes focus on building endurance, learning skills and gaining confidence on the bike. It is up to each rider to determine whether or not they want racing to be a part of their NICA experience.

RACING BASICS

What is NICA racing?

NICA races are cross-country style mountain bike races. Courses consist of a loop of well-built single track as well as double-track sections. Courses offer a mix of terrain - from flowy trail to technical challenges - and each course is a bit different. Riders begin each race in a "mass start" and ride a predetermined number of laps depending on their grade (for middle schoolers) or ability (for high schoolers). First person to cross the finish line is the fastest - but all riders are guaranteed the reward of fun!

Who can race?

Any SRMTB team rider who is fully registered in NICA's PitZone, barring coach discretion (i.e. rider lacks safe riding skills/safe equipment) can participate in Texas League races.

What are the racing categories/age groups?

Riders are categorized by grade for middle schoolers and ability for high schoolers. Rider categories progress as follows: Grade 6, Grade 7, Grade 8, Freshman, JV2, JV1 and Varsity. There are separate male and female sub-categories for the aforementioned categories. Riders may petition to move categories (i.e. a fast, experienced sophomore may petition the league to enter the Varsity category) but this is rare.

What do you mean by "race weekend?" Is a race really that long?

Race events take place over a full weekend (see below for detailed schedules) but the race itself takes place on Sunday.

How long is each race?

Each race course is approximately five miles of mixed terrain. All middle schoolers ride one lap, Freshman rides 2 laps, JV2 rides 2 laps, JV1 rides 3 laps, and Varsity rides 4 laps. Depending on a rider's ability typical event times are:

- a. Less than 45 minutes for Middle School boys and girls
- b. Less than 75 minutes for High School categories
- c. Less than 90 minutes for Varsity.

My rider isn't sure that they want to race. Should we register?

We strongly encourage all team members to attend as many NICA races as they can, even if they don't personally choose to race. If your rider wants to experience the course without the competition, they can choose the Fun Lap option. This allows them to still pre-ride the course, hang out with their teammates, and cheer/provide team support. Additionally, each race weekend hosts a GRiT (Girls Riding Together) ride, which is open to all female riders, regardless of their race status. If your rider is new to the sport, come to one of the early-season races to experience the fun. A lot of the time, the energy and excitement of the race is enough to motivate even the most timid riders to jump into the mix!

How do I register an athlete for a race?

Go to [Pit Zone](#) and sign in. Click on the button that says "Register [RIDER NAME] for Events". Select the race(s) you want to register for by placing a checkmark on that row, and click on the "update order and continue" button. You can register for one race at a time, or for multiple races. For the 2023-24 season, each race costs \$50. If you purchased the Season Pass (\$180) option, your rider is registered for all of the races for the season!

Can I register an athlete the day of the race?

Online race registration closes at 11:59pm on the Tuesday prior to each race. The Texas League has stated that on-site registration will be permitted from 10a-12p on Saturday prior to race day; if you register on-site you will be required to pay a \$25 late fee.

RACE WEEKEND LOGISTICS

What makes a NICA race different from, say, a soccer game?

NICA races are structured a bit differently than most of the team sports families may be accustomed to... this means that knowing the schedule/what to expect is important to help riders feel relaxed and ready to go when their group is called up to the start line, but don't worry SRMTB will have many coaches and volunteers to help make sure our riders are warmed up and staged for their race on time! Race weekends start on Fridays (or Saturday mornings), and races take place on Sundays. Athletes have the option to come and go through the weekend, but there are key times at which they must be present. For example, a rider could pre-ride the course Saturday afternoon, and then leave, and return on Sunday to race. That said, we encourage riders to maximize their time at the race venue to soak in the entire experience.

Additionally, SRMTB offers a Team Dinner on the Saturday night before race day. This is a very fun time together! Team Dinners cost around \$8/pp and payment is due by the Tuesday before race weekend to allow for planning. Further information on this will be sent via email prior to each race. This tends to be a family favorite; eating together, celebrating athletes accomplishments and relaxing around the campfire (often with no cell service which means forced family fun time!!)

Where do riders stay during race weekends that are far from home?

NICA race venues offer a unique lodging opportunity for athletes and their families: camping! Camping is often recognized as one of the highlights of NICA race weekends by riders and families alike. The Texas League provides information for camping at each race venue. Those who wish to camp are responsible for knowing all of the rules and regulations associated with camping.

Access to the race venues is \$15 per person for the entire weekend which also includes camping for the full weekend. (CASH is required for entry fees) Some team members usually arrive Friday evening and mark out our team camping area. The location of the team campsite will be communicated through TeamSnap.

Of course, sleeping in a tent or RV might not be everyone's cup of tea - in that case, many families opt to find lodging at local hotels or via AirBnB, etc. - or, riders may choose to attend only one day of the race weekend and drive to/from the venue without adding lodging logistics.

It should be noted that NICA races are surprisingly large - several thousand people usually attend the events, which can cause a lodging shortage. Families are encouraged to plan ahead early in the season as lodging options will likely book up quickly. [**ONE TIME VENUE WAIVER**](#) (fill out once for the season)

Where do we go/where do we park?

Details for each race venue are available at the Texas League Race Flier page. Go to the [RACE SCHEDULE](#) tab and click on the race name for venue-specific information.

What should I pack?

Riders are expected to be self-sufficient during their race weekend. Athletes need to be prepared for the weather (bring lots of clothing options!), possible mechanical issues (spare tires/tubes, CO2, bike levers, multi-tools, etc!), and changing course conditions.

IMPORTANT: Don't forget your race kit (jersey) and race plate (given out at the first race)!!

How should a rider prepare for the race?

Just like any other sporting event or athletic endeavor, proper preparation for a NICA race is key to an athlete's success, and their safety. Riders have been preparing for race fitness during our season, but they can always supplement practice time with additional training. Riders should stay hydrated the day before and day of the race; they should get adequate sleep and eat a healthy meal the evening prior to the race, and a lighter, healthy meal before the race in the morning. If a rider is nervous or anxious (which is entirely normal), we encourage them to chat with a coach or trusted teammate to help them ease their anxiety! More than anything else, we believe racing should be FUN.

What is a typical race weekend schedule?

Races take place over a full weekend:

- **FRIDAY:** Texas League staff arrive and set the course. Athletes do not need to be present on Friday, but many families choose to travel to the race location, setup camp, or check into their lodging, and socialize with other teams/families. There are opportunities for parents (and sometimes riders) to volunteer and assist with course setup!
- **SATURDAY:** Riders and coaches arrive at the race venue to formally set up camp and the team "pit zone" (canopy tents, bike racks, table & chairs). Our team will be assigned a time that we are allowed to pre-ride the course. This is when coaches ride the course with riders and point out any tricky sections or things to be aware of. This is also a time for riders to 'session' a section that they may be uncomfortable with. A pre-ride is not *required* to race, but can benefit riders greatly as it provides them with familiarity with the course, builds their confidence, and allows them to strategize certain technical sections of the course if they wish.
 - **Do I have to register for a race to pre-ride the course?** Yes, in order to pre-ride the course, you must be registered for that race, and you must have a race-plate affixed to your bike.
 - **Typically on Saturday afternoon, NICA holds a GRIT ride for female riders.** ALL females are invited and encouraged to participate (moms, siblings, etc.)! This is strictly a fun ride; not competitive!
- **SUNDAY:** Today is the day! The first race usually begins at 8am and continues throughout the day. The race awards ceremony takes place at approximately 3-4 p.m.

Wow...that's a packed schedule. Is there any downtime?

Yes! Race weekends have plenty of down time, so bring some activities to stay entertained in the gaps between events.

Can we spectate, cheer, and take photos?

Absolutely! Spectators can get pretty serious about their cheering duties at NICA races - everything from cowbells to costumes are encouraged. Positive sporting attitude and enthusiasm are required! Spectating is different on each course - if you're not sure where to go, ask a veteran NICA family, or watch to see where other fans are flocking to cheer. It is important to be aware of the course/where you spectate at all times during the weekend, so that everyone stays safe. ***You are not allowed on the course at any time!***

Are parents required to participate?

Required is a strong term... but yes, **parents are expected to participate by volunteering** with our team and/or with the league at each race. Quite literally: we cannot do it without you! There are a wide variety of roles to help out with and more details will come closer to each race. For our team, some tasks we ask for help with include: meal preparation & clean-up, camp set-up/tear-down, merchandise sales, etc. For the League, they require over 100 volunteers each race helping with things like: traffic control, scoring assistance, race sweep, etc. For more information on volunteer roles within the league, please visit:

<https://texasmtb.org/volunteer-2/>

Additionally, student athletes are not permitted to camp on-site without a parent or guardian. If you are unable to attend a race, please make arrangements for your child to attend with another responsible adult.

Will the team provide food or beverages during the race weekend?

Generally speaking, families and riders are responsible for their own food and beverages. Most weekends, our team will organize a dinner together on Saturday evening so athletes and families can spend time together. SRMTB will provide some food for the races (granola bars, bananas, water bottles, gatorade) but if racers have specific dietary needs or preferences, they should plan on bringing their own food.

On race day, the league contracts several food vendors to attend the event. You're welcome to picnic!

Remember, "leave no trace!"

NOTE: NICA rules state that riders **cannot have any caffeine the day of the league race**. For a full list of banned substances and race rules, see the [NICA rulebook](#).

Will there be bike mechanics on-site?

Riders should make every effort to ensure their bike is in prime condition before race weekend. Ultimately, a rider's gear is *their* responsibility. Riders should have everything they need to be self-sufficient on race weekend. That said, we have several experienced mechanics who volunteer as coaches. Minor repairs and fixes may be completed on-site during race weekend in our team pit zone. Additionally, the league schedules an on-site mobile mechanic (Trek!) for each race weekend, who provides mechanical services as well as complete bikes/bike parts for sale.

Are races ever canceled?

The league will generally make every effort possible to hold races; even if weather is less than ideal! Please see the official [Texas League Weather Policy](#) for details. NICA races can be hot, humid, and buggy, or riders might find themselves riding in rain and biting wind. It is the athlete's responsibility to make sure they have appropriate clothing for all conditions.

Are dogs allowed?

Dogs **may** be allowed by the venue, but are required to be on-leash and attended to at all times. Check the detailed race information on the Texas League Race Flier page for venue-specific rules/regulations.

- NO DOGS AT SACKET FAMILY RANCH IN TROY. NO EXCEPTIONS.

- NO DRONES!

ONE TIME VENUE WAIVER (fill this out one time for the entire season!)

2023/2024 Texas League Race Season Schedule

MORE RESOURCES

[NICA Handbook](#)

[2023 Texas Specific Handbook Appendix](#)