

ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL MOUNTAIN BIKE TEAM INFORMATION FOR RIDERS AND PARENTS 2018-19

Started by two enthusiastic riders and their supportive parents in the 2005-06 academic year, the Albany High School Mountain Bike Team is now a fully developed athletic program. Although the AHS MTB Team has "club" status, it operates much like any other sport at Albany High and, as such, joining the team requires a serious investment of time, energy, focus, and finances.

Why commit? The AHS MTB Team has much to offer: as a team we learn skills quickly, receive valuable coaching, and push each other to achieve. When you ride with a team, it makes training seem like fun instead of hard work; the improvement comes quickly and steadily and soon your racing results improve. This team is about setting personal goals and improving your skills. You will be encouraged to strive for your personal best - and you'll always be racing against yourself.

The AHS MTB Team is a cross-country mountain bike team, a specific form of cycling which is set apart from road riding, downhill racing, dual slalom, trials, BMX, cyclocross, and track racing. Cross-country mountain biking includes the broadest range of skills and team members often bring with them backgrounds and skills gained from the other sports. For the greater good of the team and high school racing, this team's activities are focused upon preparing for and racing at cross-country mountain biking events only.

The coaching staff's highest goal is to provide students that have the desire to mountain bike the direction and camaraderie that will help them achieve both competitive success and personal development in a safe and enjoyable manner.

How to get started?

1. Please read through the following information, think about your interest in the team and your (and your family's) ability to make the commitment, and contact me if you have any questions.
2. Sign up at the AHS Club Rush day, making sure to give us email addresses that we can read clearly. We will then be in touch with information about the start of the season.
3. Attend the mandatory meeting for all riders and parents/guardians. This is held at AHS in mid-October.
4. Attend the kick-off gathering in late October or early November and submit all needed paperwork so that you are ready to start riding!

The Albany High School Mountain Bike Team community and I look forward to welcoming new racers and their families to our team.

Happy Trails,

Dana Albert and Francis Chapman
Coaches

ahscougars@gmail.com

www.ahscougars.com

The Albany High School Mountain Bike Team is one of the teams in the Northern California High School Mountain Bike Racing League. (www.norcalmtb.org) Each year we've had lots of fun and great success, growing the team and developing great riders.

Overview: Unlike most team sports, mountain biking is co-ed and we are proud to have both boys and girls on the AHS team. The NorCal League seeks to strike a balance between being a competitive individual and team sport and remaining open to athletes who are new to competitive cycling. For this reason the League has designed several racing categories so beginners, intermediate and advanced riders are pitted only against peers of similar ability and experience. To compete, the student athletes are placed by gender into the following categories: freshmen, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity.

There is one pre-season race and then five League races, all in Northern California, most a 1½ - 3 hour drive away. In addition, for those who qualify, there is the State Championship Race which can be held anywhere in the State. Riders are scored individually as well as on a team basis and the AHS trophy case highlights some of our team achievements. Transportation to the races as well as important race-day support is provided by every team family.

Why cycling? Cycling is a family-friendly fitness activity that can be done lifelong, with great social qualities. Groups of cyclists (except when climbing difficult hills) can talk and joke as they ride. Enthusiasm for cycling as an alternative sport and healthy lifestyle is at an all-time high, especially here in the East Bay with so many great places to ride.

Is Participating Dangerous? Forget what you have seen at the X-Games or in commercials. There are several different types of mountain biking. We are not a downhill/freeride team. We are a cross-country mountain biking team. In cross-country bike races, the average speed is usually around ten to twelve miles per hour. However, faster speeds are definitely attained while descending. This is an endurance sport where the fittest athletes win. The races are won going uphill.

We do our best to minimize the risks to the athletes. Certain risky behaviors are discouraged or forbidden and we teach each athlete bike-control skills early in the season to minimize the risk of crashing. *We do our best to minimize risk, however, we cannot eliminate it. Any sport that requires the participant to wear a helmet is a sport that involves the possibility of injury, or worse.* And despite our best efforts, crashes and injuries occur. As a crucial safety measure, all team members are required by law, by the League, and by the team to wear a helmet whenever they ride a bike, whether with the team or not. Expulsion from the team can be the consequence of not wearing your helmet every time you ride.

We do our best to provide parents and coaches as ride leaders, equipped with a first aid kit, radio and/or cell phone on every ride, at least one adult for each group if we split up the team. Occasionally, circumstances arise where this is not possible. In these instances, we will designate and equip an experienced student-athlete whom we believe is adequately mature, responsible, and capable in the ride-leader role.

How We Build Our Team and Train: We don't have tryouts. If you participate and try, and keep trying, you're on our team. We have a proven history of creating capable and confident riders out of timid, out-of-shape beginners, year after year. Athletes who are already in good condition (like cross-country runners) adapt quickly and do very well.

We value and promote excellence, believing that ordinary athletes can attain big results through setting goals, mapping out a strategy, and giving the task disciplined effort. Our AHS MTB team members really work hard and are transformed by the process. Nearly every athlete (and parent) describes his/her participation as life changing in a remarkable way.

The training scheme is a carefully planned schedule of training rides that gradually increase in distance and difficulty over a seven month timeframe. The timeframe must be long to insure that the athlete progresses at a rate gradual enough to avoid injury and long enough to achieve peak fitness by season's end and the championship final race. This "gradualism" based training scheme cannot be artificially compressed into the normal sports season timeframe without diminishing its effectiveness. We are not able to provide one-on-one coaching and attendance is crucial to be able to progress as a group. It is essential that no one fall behind by missing practices.

The training is done in three basic phases so that everyone is adequately prepared once the racing begins. The first is the

“Base” or endurance phase where we ride at low speeds, teach handling skills (for safety) and gradually increase the ride duration to build a solid foundation of cardiovascular fitness. The second is the “Build” phase to add strength and power by increasing the intensity of the training. The last is the “Peak” phase where we add fast-paced race simulation.

During practice rides, we split the team into fitness-based groups since our goal is to challenge but not overwhelm each rider. All groups do a similar type of ride, albeit at different paces. We do our best to design a training scheme for each rider appropriate for his/her level of experience, fitness, and personal ambition. Groups are co-ed where practical. The number of groups we can field on any given day is dependent on the number of coaches and ride-leaders who are present. Interested in helping to ride with the team? Contact John Culp at ahscougars@gmail.com.

Each year, new riders and parents are often surprised when we tell them that by season’s end every rider will be able to easily ride for several hours in hilly terrain or do a hundred-mile road “century,” but it’s true! Athletes who follow our progressive training schedule will steadily gain fitness. However, those who miss practice will soon find themselves struggling to keep up which puts an unfair burden on our coaches and isn’t safe for the individual. Therefore, attendance at practice must be monitored and riders who aren’t able to commit to three practices each week will not be allowed to continue on the team.

What to Eat: Athletes are expected to be informed and responsible about their eating habits. While this is not a weight-loss program, fat loss and increased lean muscle-mass are typical results of training. Athletes will need more high quality calories from complex carbohydrates and will also need more protein than is required for a non-exercising lifestyle. An inadequate diet will put the athlete at a disadvantage compared to those who are eating well. Make sure to eat a quality lunch on after school practice days and a quality breakfast on Sunday morning training days and race days.

Camaraderie for the Whole Family: Road trips to the races are great. Our team is made up of friendly, supportive families with whom it is fun to spend the race weekends and you will discover that the other teams in the League are full of delightful students, with encouraging coaches and wonderfully supportive parents as well. At the races, the whole gallery of spectators cheer and ring cowbells not just for their own racers, but for yours too! This is a very friendly sport.

Parents are encouraged to join their athletes in training and your participation is critical and required on race weekends. For those on the brink of sending kids away to college and adult life, this is a special time to share. Many families have described the MTB team experience as incredible, eye-opening, and life-changing.

We ride on some of the most beautiful trails in California. In Tilden Park, we see lots of wild animals along with the spectacular wildflowers of spring. From the hilltops you can see the Pacific Ocean to the west and Mt. Diablo to the east. We will travel to Marin County as often as we can to ride at China Camp and Mt. Tamalpais and we will also train occasionally in Redwood and Joaquin Miller Parks in Oakland.

Discounts on bikes:

Trek Bicycle Berkeley is our sponsoring bike shop and they offer team members a 30% discount on all Bontrager products and 15% off other parts, 25% discount on a new bike, and 25% discount on a comprehensive tune-up.

Student Mentors and Assistant Coaches: Returning riders should consider taking on some of the important responsibilities that make the team function. Beginning riders need lots of help learning to keep their bikes in top mechanical shape, advice on training and racing, and lots of encouragement and reassurance from those who were beginners not very long ago. If you would like to be formally designated as a mentor in a specific area, let me know. I am also looking for parents who would like to be trained as assistant coaches. You do not have to be a talented rider or racer to function effectively in this role; you learn as you go, and it’s a lot of fun.

TO JOIN THE TEAM

Students who are interested in this sport and want to be part of the AHS MTB team must first read through all of this information with a parent/guardian, understand it, and be ready to commit to everything discussed here. This is necessary for the safety of students at practice rides and races and for the sustainability and smooth functioning of this team. Both the student-athlete and the parent or guardian will have to sign a participation agreement and adhere to our policies and procedures in order to be part of this team. It is very important to remember that this is a serious, competitive, racing team, not a recreational group; that it is self-funded, coached by community volunteers; and functions thanks to the time and energy of the families involved.

The following forms need to be completed, signed, and submitted at our gathering in early November 2018

- Participation Agreement signed by both the student and a parent/guardian.
- A Medical Examination Clearance for Athletic Participation form. *****Make your Dr's appointment ASAP.*****
- Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk form -- for the Albany High School Club & Coaches.
- Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk form -- NICA form for the NorCal League.
- A kit (uniform) order form.
- Payment for the kit. Please make a check for \$(tbd).00 payable to the AHS MTB Club.

In addition, all team members must take the bike for a safety inspection at Trek Bicycle Berkeley prior to the start of practices. Watch your email for details.

TEAM REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory Equipment

The required equipment listed below is a big part of our efforts to ensure a safe riding environment.

- Snell approved helmet. Most helmets are Snell approved. The helmet must have good ventilation, not be cracked, must fit well, and be properly adjusted. Skateboard helmets are not advised since they do not provide adequate ventilation. You can find great YouTube videos about helmet fit. Helmets must be worn ALWAYS when riding, whether with the team or on your own.
- Mountain bike. Never buy a bike without consulting with the coaches. Discounts are available to all team members. ***You will need a bike that has an air spring suspension fork and not a coil spring suspension.*** It will allow for much broader and better suspension adjustments. A hard tail bike (no rear suspension, only front) generally is better for cross country competition and will lower the cost of the bike. It would be better for the suspension travel on either a hard tail or full suspension bike not to exceed 120 mm. Bikes with carbon frames are a bit lighter than those with aluminum, but might not be worth the extra cost. Any bike with 29" (or 27.5" if you are under 5' 8") wheels, hard tail, with air spring fork within the \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00 range would be good for what we do. If you go below that price range, it won't be able to handle what we put these bikes through.....real mountain biking for close to 2000 miles per year.
- Clip-in pedals are recommended for both safety and efficiency.
- Gloves. We recommend thin, long-fingered, padded cycling gloves.
- Team jersey and shorts. The team jersey must be worn at all races. Team members can wear any combination of jersey and bike shorts for training rides.
- Proper clothing for the weather. Leg and arm warmers are highly recommended as temperatures can vary during rides. (Long sleeve jerseys, jackets, tights, and other such items are usually not practical for racing since they can't be easily removed.)
- Eye Protection. You can buy inexpensive glasses at any hardware store or you can pay more for cycling specific glasses.
- Lights will be required at all afternoon practices until the days are long enough that we are no longer returning at dusk. Red flashing light for rear of bike and white light for the front of the bike. Lights must be in functioning order at each practice, will be checked by coaches, and riders will be sent home if lights are not working properly.
- Hydration. Riders must have either a Camelbak or two bottles of water and cages for carrying them.
- Mini pump or CO2 cartridge, tire levers and tube for correct wheel size, multi-tool set (with chain tool), chain quick link for your chain size (9, 10 or 11spd chain).
- Some source of calories. We recommend energy bars, shots, or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
- **The coaches want to stress that riders will not be allowed to participate if they fail to show up at practice with the required items.**

Required Practices November - May

- Monday and Wednesday practices will start about 30 minutes after school gets out and meet behind the AHS gym.
- Monday: 4:00 - 5:30++
- Wednesday: 3:10 - 5:30++ We ride longer as the season progresses and the sun sets later
- Sunday: 8:30 or 9:00 - 1:30 - Endurance Ride. These rides will likely involve travelling to Marin or similar distance and will require parent drivers to transport the riders and their equipment.
- **Monday, Wednesday and Sunday Practice is MANDATORY.** If a student has a valid excuse for an unavoidable conflict, s/he must contact John by email, copying a parent/guardian, by 9:00 pm the night before any practice to be missed (or as soon as possible in case of illness or injury). These absences must be kept to a minimum, especially in the first months of training, or the student will be dismissed from the team. Riders missing 3 practices for any reason in a four week period will receive a warning email, missing 6 practices for any reason may lead to probation, and missing 10 practices may lead to being asked to leave the team. Families that have plans to go away for school breaks should take into consideration the practice absentee policy. Please note that participation in another extracurricular activity that causes multiple conflicts is not a valid reason to miss practice. It is simply not possible for our volunteer coaches to manage practices if some riders aren't progressing adequately and it isn't safe for a rider to participate in more challenging rides without proper training. If you are interested in another activity, please compare activity calendars and submit a request in advance to ahscougars@gmail.com. We will then let you know if it will be possible to combine the MTB team with your other interest.
- Unless otherwise specified, rides leave from the corner of Thousand Oaks and Pomona, near the back door of AHS. Weekday rides will be local, but most Sunday rides will require that parents drive their student.

Mandatory Races

- **All student-athletes must participate in all races**
 - 1 pre-season race, usually in early February
 - 5 NorCal races, February - May
 - State Championship race (if qualified) in May
- **Each racer must have a parent/guardian at each race** - to transport and support your own racer and to help the team.
- Races are all-day events. Everyone shows up at 7:30am to set up the team pit zone and stays until 4:30/5:00 when clean-up is done, the trailer is packed up again, and podiums have been celebrated.
- Races are always out-of-town, often near Monterrey or Sacramento (sometimes in SoCal for the State Champ race), so many families drive the day before the race and stay overnight - sometimes involving a fun group dinner!
- Pre-rides - These are very important to safety and strong results on race day and are led by a coach the afternoon before the race. Attendance is strongly encouraged.

Academics

We want each student-athlete to make academics a priority. **Plan ahead for schoolwork** - exams, papers, and projects - so you can balance schoolwork and cycling. Each student must have a GPA of at least 2.0. Some families require more and we support that.

Code of Conduct and Safety

We are committed to safety. We think about safety, teach safety, and require each rider to always ride in a safe and controlled manner. Riders who repeatedly flaunt our safety rules or engage in behaviors that present unnecessary risk to themselves or others will be dropped from the program. As visible representatives of Albany High School, athletes are also expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that status and follow the AHS rules of behavior at all times.

- Never take risks - This is the number one rule, athletes that have a risk-taking attitude or are witnessed taking risks will not be tolerated.
- Wear a helmet whenever you ride - whether or not you are with the team.
- Always yield - Remember that bicycles in the backcountry can be an unwelcome experience for horses and hikers. Being sensitive to how others perceive you will assure a positive image for our sport.

- Pass with care - Let others know of your presence well in advance. Use a bell or audible greeting to avoid startling others. Be especially careful when passing a horse, as each will react differently; stop and ask the rider for instructions. By asking if the horse is easily spooked, you show an awareness of the rider's needs and the sound of your voice will be reassuring to the horse. Sometimes it may be necessary to dismount and remove your bike from the trail to allow others to pass.
- Stay on trails - Riding off-trail damages meadows and other fragile ecosystems. Never cut switchbacks as this accelerates erosion.
- Control your speed - Safe speeds are relative to terrain and your experience as a rider. Be able to stop safely without skidding in the distance that you can see ahead. Approach switchbacks and turns in anticipation of someone coming around the bend.
- Respect wildlife and livestock - Do not frighten animals. Close gates as you pass through.
- Do not litter - Pack out what you pack in and if possible, carry out more than your share.
- Ride only on authorized trails - Stay off trails that are closed to bicycles.
- Plan ahead - The off-road bicycle will open new horizons to you. Some of these should be approached with respect. If distances are involved, do not travel solo. Expect weather changes. Leave word where you plan to go and when you plan to return.
- Minimize impact - The practice of minimum impact wilderness use is the philosophy of responsible off-road cyclists. Take only pictures.

Bike Maintenance - crucial for safety and performance. Stay on top of it!

- Clean your bike weekly. This may help <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg-e3X6OaBI>
- Repair your bike as soon as any problem arises. You can learn to do some basic maintenance and repairs with the help of YouTube videos and you should establish a relationship with Trek Bicycle Berkeley, our sponsoring bike shop.
- Get your bike tuned up at least every other month.
- Learn to repair flat tires and broken chains. Practice! and be ready to do repairs quickly during rides and races.

Shop Rules

Our reputation is great at our sponsoring bike shop - Trek Bicycle Berkeley - let's keep appreciating them!

- Always bring in a clean bike
- Make an appointment in advance whenever possible
- Remember that other customers come first (after all, they pay full price)
- Be courteous and polite
- No rudeness, bad language, or impatience. Such behavior reflects poorly on the team and may jeopardize the team's sponsorship
- If you have any concerns, please address them with Carl of Trek Bicycle Berkeley and/or with John

Costs of Participating

This is an expensive sport. Everyone will need a mountain bike that can stand up to intense rides and races on a variety of terrains, appropriate clothing and equipment, etc. There will be other expenses as well and they will add up quickly.

- A bike good enough to race on - \$1800+ (The AHS team has a limited number of loaner bikes for new riders - see Equipment Use Agreement on our website. Applications due right after the first meeting in October.)
- Bike maintenance during the season - \$400-\$500
- Team kit (uniform) - \$150-\$250
- Bike clothes and shoes, replacement tubes, chains, other bike parts, race food, etc - \$250+
- Gas, food, and sometimes hotels for races. Many races are near Monterey and Sacramento and the State Championship Race will be in Southern California some years. These costs vary widely by family.
- Initial League registration fee and fees for each race - total of around \$350-\$400 (Limited scholarships available for these fees through NorCal. See their website for info and deadline.)
- Pre-season race registration fee - around \$50
- At this time we are able to cover team insurance, team registration with the league, registration of team coaches with the league, coach training and licensing fees, team equipment purchases, and incidental costs with fundraising. Without the fundraising efforts of the team families, each family would have to pay \$300-\$400 more

per student each season.

- The team is fortunate to receive support from a number of local businesses and organizations. Please support these business and thank them for their sponsorship.

Trek Bicycle Berkeley

Velocity Lock and Key

RC Imports Auto Repair (Coach Daniel)

Benchmark Pizza

Albany Community Triathlon

Ice Chamber

Little Star Pizza

Mr. Dewie's Frozen Desert

Albany Subaru

Mechanics Bank

Berkeley Bicycle Club

Steve's Autocare

Counterforce (founding alum parent)

McNally Realty Advisers

Precision People's Car Care

Student and Parent Participation

- **Students are required to undertake at least six hours of community service** during the season by participating in organizing events like the Albany Crit, the Albany Triathlon, the Solano Stroll, etc. These events are a lot of fun, help build and maintain our positive image in the community, and are an important source of team funds.
- **Parent participation is also crucial.** Parents are needed to help organize the events listed above, to participate in the smooth functioning of the team by taking on leadership and support roles, to transport and support their student, to meet race-day needs, and to participate in fundraising efforts. This is a great community and participation can be a lot of fun. Ask the team manager how you can help!

Communication

Read and respond to email daily! Email is our means of communication and it is necessary that the student and at least one parent/guardian check email daily and respond promptly to all correspondence. We also encourage everyone to join our Facebook page for additional posts and fun photos and comments. Ask to join "Cougars Mountain Biking" in Facebook.

Websites of interest

- Team web site www.ahscougars.com
- League Website is www.norcalmtb.org
- Facebook - Cougars Mountain Biking

I know there is a lot of information to digest here and I will be happy to answer your questions. I also encourage you to talk with other families to learn more about this great opportunity. This is a wonderful community, one worth supporting, and I look forward to meeting all of you who decide to join us.

Remember that all forms are due at our gathering in early November 2018.

- Participation Agreement signed by both the student and a parent/guardian.
- A Medical Examination Clearance for Athletic Participation form. *****Make your Dr. appointment ASAP.*****
- Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk form -- for the Albany High School Club & Coaches.
- Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk form -- NICA form for the NorCal League.
- A kit order form.
- Payment for the 3-piece kit. Please make a check for \$(tbd) payable to the AHS MTB Club.

Sincerely,

Dana Albert and Francis Chapman

ahscougars@gmail.com

www.ahscougars.com