

Palmer Park Velo

Riders Guide to the 2019 Club Cyclocross Championship Race

Date: Sunday 16th December 2018

Event: Wessex Cyclocross League – Promoted by PPV and Newbury Road Club

Venue: Newbury Racecourse, Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, RG14 7NZ

About the event

Palmer Park Velo are using this existing race to be the PPV Cyclocross championship with the permission of the organiser. There is no separate PPV event and in all circumstances we will be following, and bound by, the rules of the Wessex Cyclocross league (which is itself bound by the British Cycling rules of Cyclocross), the decisions of the British Cycling event Commissaires and the event organisers (PPV/Newbury Road Club) and officials. Likewise the results as finalised by the event organiser will be considered final by PPV.

Details of the venue, timings etc. can be found on the British Cycling event calendar and the Wessex Cyclocross league website.

Riders from all age categories at PPV will be able to compete. U6, U8, U10 compete in race 1 (U10), with the U12s in their own separate race (race 2). U14 and U16 compete in race 3 (Youth). As what you need to know about the races differs they are considered separately below, but first a few general points:

What bike do I need?

Cyclocross specific bikes are like road bikes but with some modifications - notably increased frame and fork clearance for knobbly, mud-gripping tyres. Some makes of junior road bikes are specifically designed to be for cyclocross as well as road (for example Isla bikes) so if you have them, or can get hold of some, you can just fit knobbly tyres to your road bike and away you go.

Otherwise you will be fine on a mountain bike – there are always riders at Wessex events on mountain bikes so there will be no need to feel out of place, or ask around, the club may be able to fit out some of its Islabikes for members to borrow and some people may also have spare bikes that they may be willing to lend.

What about cycling clothes?

Helmet – you won't be able to race without this

Your Palmer Park jersey – if you have one, or any cycling jersey or lightweight jacket

Cycling shorts / tights. Plus leg warmers if it is cold (which it probably will be).

Gloves – you need to be able to change gear and brake so need to keep your hands warm

Base layer – thermal is best if it is cold

Shoes – typically mountain bike cleats are used rather than road cleats (you will find it very difficult in road cleats if you need to run) or trainers with good grip and flat pedals.

What do I need to do when I get to the race?

Park up – you will either be directed to a parking spot or it will be fairly obvious where everybody is, unload yourself and your bike, ride to the sign on tent and enter (obviously you can also walk to the sign-on, but why walk when you can ride your bike). Allow yourself at least an hour or so before your race to get signed on, collect your number and transponder, and have a go around the course. Be fair to the organiser and try to be early rather than late. And remember it will be cold at the end of January and cyclocross is outdoors, so wear plenty of layers before your race.

How do I enter?

This event is either enter in advance or on the day for all PPV age categories. If you are entering on the day all you need to do is turn up with your entry fee queue up at the sign on tent and enter. You will be asked to fill in a sign on sheet with your name, club (the organisers know that PPV stands for Palmer Park Velo), your license number (although this isn't necessary for the U10 or U12 race), an emergency telephone number (please fill this in even if you are on site with your phone in your pocket as the organisers are required to have a contact number), your date or year of birth and a signature. Hand over your money, receive a number in return, pin this to your back, get your transponder (see below) and you are ready to go.

What if I don't have my license?

Not a problem if you are U12 or younger as BC points for Cyclocross are only for U14 and above. If you are U14 or U16 you just need your parents permission to ride, and you don't need to pay for a day license. But do try and remember to bring it, as it makes the sign-on team happy.

Why might they keep my license?

You will need to hand over your license in exchange for a transponder chip. If you don't have a license the organiser will ask for a credit card to act as a deposit.

A transponder?

Transponders are now used in all Wessex CX races to log the riders as they cross the line. This makes results easier than relying on manual judging.

You will be given a transponder chip unique to you in your race, and an ankle strap. Attach the transponder to your leg around the ankle straight away, so you don't lose it or get it mixed up with another rider. You are not allowed to race without a transponder.

Number pinned on – now what?

Now is the time to have a ride around the course. There will be several other riders doing this so find a friendly face and tag along – and hope they know where they are going. If not, ask one of the officials (they will be wearing grey BC coats). The course for the U10s and U12s will be different from the older riders so if you are 6 make sure you don't tag along with a 16 year old.

Go around a couple of times so you know whether there are any tricky bits where you might need to slow down or get off and run.

The start

About 5 to 10 minutes before the race time riders will line up at the start ready to be gridded. This means that they will be placed in order of their current standing in the Wessex league.

However, don't worry if you don't have a gridding position, if you are a strong rider and have the necessary skills you will get to the front of the pack anyway.

Then what?

This is where it varies depending on your age.

U12 and below – Riders born in 2007 or later

U10, U8 and U6 all race together in the U10 race, and the U12s in the next race. The event organisers will produce the results and we will do the rest in terms of putting your result in the correct category for the PPV club championship.

How long will the race be?

The race will last for 10-15 minutes, usually several short laps of a course. Event duration and number of laps is determined by the event officials on the day depending on the speed of the leader. All riders finish on the same lap (so if you are lapped by the leader you will do fewer laps than they do).

What will the course be like?

U12 courses are typically mainly on grass (or mud) with few technical challenges, There may be the odd corner or bank where riders need to dismount and run / push but this is all part of cyclocross. Abingdon has a mix of some tight twisty sections up and down small humps (part of a 4x4 driving course), some tight corners on flat grass, and a tarmac part good for overtaking.

What if I fall off?

Falling off is quite common in cyclocross, but usually you fall on soft grass or mud and so can quickly jump up and get back on. If your chain has come off then you should try to put it back on yourself, but if you are struggling there is usually a friendly spectator somewhere near who will help you.

What if I have a puncture or other mechanical problem?

There are no pits for U12 races and no laps out at all in cyclocross so your only option is to run with your bike for the rest of the race – perfectly possible if you are on the last lap, but hard work otherwise.

What if I get overtaken?

Firstly, you quite possibly will be unless the laps are quite long, so don't worry about it. Faster riders coming past may call out for you to keep straight or stay left or stay right. Hopefully they will be polite about this, but sometimes they can get a bit stressed if they are trying to keep ahead of somebody and there are a lot of smaller riders in front of them. Just keep riding and don't worry. If you keep going then they can go round you without problem.

How will I know the race is over?

There may be a lap board telling you 3 laps, 2 laps etc. to go, or you may just hear a bell as you start your last lap. If you get overtaken by the leader on their last lap then you may not ever get the bell as you will finish on the lap that they finish on. There will be a chequered flag for the finish so just cross the line and keep going for a bit until you are clear of any riders who may be sprinting to a finish behind you.

U14 and U16 – riders born 2006, 2005, 2004 and 2003

U14 and U16 race together.

How long will the race be?

Approximately 30 minutes – with the duration and number of laps being determined by the speed to the leader in the same way as the U12 race. All riders finish on the same lap as the winner.

What will the course be like?

Longer than the U12 course and with the possibility of more technical challenges (banks, sandpits, drops, steeper off-camber sections etc) as well as obstacles that require you to dismount and run with or carry your bike.

What if I fall off?

Apart from being potentially wet and muddy you will hopefully be fine to jump up and get going again. U14 and U16 riders are expected to put their own chains back on and assistance outside of the pit area is not permitted under any circumstances and will lead to disqualification.

Pit area?

There is a pit area which will be alongside a section of the course (or sometimes 2 sections if the course is designed to go past it twice). Here you can position a helper (usually a parent) and arm them with spare wheels in case you have a puncture, a brush and bucket of water if the course is very muddy and your bike is likely to get clogged up or with a spare bike if you are lucky enough to have one. If you have a mechanical problem out on the course then you must get yourself to the pits – either running or riding if your bike is still ride-able - but you must still follow the course without turning back or taking any short-cuts, and there you can get mechanical assistance. If you are unlucky and have a mechanical when you have just passed the pits then you will need to run for possibly a whole lap before you get back there.

As soon as your bike is fixed you simply re-join the race. There are no laps out or other allowances for problems in the race – it is all just part and parcel of the event.

All age categories

What happens at the end of the race?

If you are somewhere near the front of the race you should find the winner and congratulate them. Otherwise you should find those that you were racing against (usually sat on the grass or leaning on their bikes getting their breath back just next to you) and congratulate them on their race.

Will there be a podium?

Usually, yes. The organisers try to do this as quickly as possible after the race finishes, but sometimes it can take a while. Sometimes it is just for the overall 1st, 2nd and 3rd and sometimes there is a podium for each sub-category (but remember this is generally only U12 and U10 for the younger riders) and for boys and girls separately.

Will I get a prize?

U12 races are run as Go-Cross and often there is a small token prize for every competitor (sweets etc.) The winners may get something a bit more than this.

Winning riders in the youth races will usually get a cash prize or a voucher of some kind.

Then what?

Return your number and transponder (remembering to collect your license). U12s often get their token prize as a reward for the return of the number. Remember to collect your license and say thank you to the organiser – or the people doing sign on if you don't know who the organiser is. They, after all, are often in a cold tent for most of the day giving out and collecting in numbers.

And then?

If you can, stay and watch the next races and cheer on the members of the PPV coaching team and committee racing in these.