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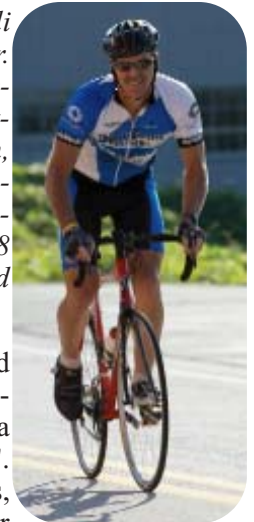
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From Frazier Cycling: Issue and Questions in Youth Cycling Development #11 The Importance of Coaching Fees for Juniors

Ralph Frazier and Kelli Rogan- Frazier Cycling

Frazier Cycling's Atlanta-based Junior Development Program was developed by Ralph Frazier and Kelli Rogan. Ralph has over 35 years of cycling experience as an endurance and marathon racer and a coach. Kelli has 10 years experience of coaching juniors and masters as well as an impressive track and race racing career. Frazier Cycling has a mission to develop the next generation of cyclists with an appreciation for the sport, life-

long physical fitness, sportsmanship, teamwork and commitment. As the southeast's largest junior development program, they have been recognized by USA Cycling News as "an excellent model for other junior development initiatives"...focusing on "character as much as athletic ability." The 2008 Frazier Cycling Juniors team holds 9 state championships and 9 national medals, including 2 national championship titles.



Ralph Frazier

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Up to now, Coach Kelli and I have discussed various topics concerning creating, growing, and maintaining youth cycling programs. One important topic that we have yet to discuss is charging fees for services to your junior clients. This topic is sensitive to some because there are a few in the cycling community that believe charging juniors is contrary to "growing the sport". There are some who feel that juniors should receive free coaching to help alleviate all of the other expenses, which are inherent to cycling. Perhaps, you share this view, but it is our emphatic belief that charging for your services actually promotes "growing the sport" and gives credibility to our coaching profession.

We point to the USA Cycling Level 3 Coach Manual and the chapter entitled Administering Your Program. In the section, The Coach as a Professional, the manual states: "One of the goals of USA Cycling is to increase the view of the public and cycling community that coaching is a profession even when the coach does not derive his/her total income for coaching. In the past (and continuing now), cycling coaches have often provided their services for free. In order to improve the view of the cycling coach as a professional, USA Cycling suggests charging all clients or the club a fee for services."

At Frazier Cycling, we are as passionate about making coaching a profession as we are about bringing in new juniors to the sport. We agree with USA Cycling's suggestion and we encourage all coaches to charge for their services. In our case, Frazier Cycling is a business and coaching is our primary income. It is imperative that we provide quality services that hold value for our clients that are worth paying for. But we don't believe it is less important to those who coach as a "side" job. We feel that all coaches should perform the job as if it was their primary income. Charges and payments not only promote the profession, but they promote accountability. Those who pay are more likely to be accountable and those who charge are more likely to feel obligated to provide quality services. Our experience over the past eight years has shown this statement to be true.

A few years ago, we decided offer "scholarships" to certain juniors who need financial aid to




Kelli Rogan

afford our coaching services. Originally, we made a few mistakes with our "scholarship" set-up. Basically, we just waived our coaching fees and we did not establish any specific rules for maintaining the scholarship. Our expectation was that "scholarship" kids (and their parents) would really appreciate the scholarship and they would be dedicated to take advantage of the offering. To the contrary, often our expectations were not met. More often than not, these kids had poor attendance to practices, workouts, and races. Unfortunately, we extended the problem by continuing the scholarships with hopes that attitudes and actions would change. Unfortunately, nothing changed. In the end, we vacated the scholarships from the individuals, which caused some dismay on both sides: the clients/parents felt abandoned and we felt a little betrayed.

One lesson we learned was that when clients pay for the services, they tend to show up. Also, we revamped our scholarship program by finding a sponsor who provided "scholarship" fees. Perhaps it's a coincidence, but when a sponsor's money was identified both parties reacted better. The clients show up and we don't feel unappreciated.

"How much do I charge?" The answer to this question is a tough one. Maybe a better question is "How much can I charge?" Of course, your fees will be based on what services you are offering, how much of your time is involved, any overhead required, etc. For Frazier Cycling, we considered those mentioned items, but we also considered our competition - other junior sports in our market. Always check your competition and compare your offerings. Perceived value is what clients are willing to pay. We recommend that you put together a preliminary business plan that includes these details with your vision and mission. Furthermore, we recommend that you conduct a business plan review and "brain storming" session. When we decided to start up Frazier Cycling, we conducted such a review with close business associates, clients, family, and friends. Many great ideas will come up, also some that aren't so great, but it is a very good way to get started in defining your business, your programs, and your fee structure.

Final comments: When setting your prices, remember that consumers (clients) are looking for a bargain (beware of "free is better"), but also remember that you are a business person and business people believe that "profit is better." Setting your fee structure is a balance between to two.

Our next article, we will continue this topic with more discussion on the challenges of charging fees, justification, billing and collection of payments, announcing fee increases, and our answers to some questions that we have received relative to this topic. 

Got a Youth Development Question?

If there is a particular topic you'd like us to discuss or if you would like to share a junior coaching experience or ask a question, contact us at 770-513-8640 or info@fraziercycling.com. We will publish your requested information in the next issue as space allows.