

# PERFORMANCE CYCLING CONDITIONING

A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO IMPROVING CYCLISTS

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## Issues and Questions in Youth Cycling Development #8 - The Importance of Recruiting New Youth Cyclists: Growing the Sport

*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.*



**BEG INT** For those who have read our past columns, you all ready know that Frazier Cycling is a company that owns and coaches a junior development team with about 40 members based in the Atlanta area. We have just expanded our program this fall to the Mobile/Fairhope Alabama area. Frazier Cycling Fairhope has 10 junior members and is run by a USAC cycling coach/parent who attended our coaching clinic, Coaching Junior Cyclists - the team approach, in January 2010. Our clinic is based on our junior development program is truly a grass-roots initiative based on the "team approach".

In this column, we want to discuss the importance of recruiting new youth cyclists; a topic that arises repeatedly in emails and phone calls to us. You probably remember reading a chapter in your USA Cycling Level 3 Coaches Manual entitled "Administering Your Program". If you recall, this chapter lists and describes basic administration areas for running your program. Among these basic areas is "recruiting athletes into your program." With regards to recruiting, this manual states: "Growth is the lifeblood of many cycling clubs and other organized programs. All sports actively seek out participants, and cycling should be no different." We could not agree more!

Recruiting is the lifeblood to any program. Recruiting new members not only builds your client base and/or team, but it maintains it because you will face attrition for various reasons. Here are some examples of why juniors have left our program:

- The family moves to another city.
- A change in family finances.
- A change of teams and/or coaching due to new opportunities, experiences, or prestige.
- A disagreement with our coaching philosophy.
- A new interest in another sport or activity.



Kelli Rogan



Ralph Frazier

Where do you find juniors for your program? You could recruit juniors from local cycling clubs and teams. You could go to races and hand out brochures and business cards to juniors and their parents. We suggest that you get permission from the clubs before you make this move!

Frazier Cycling does not recruit any junior cyclists from other teams or clubs. It is our policy is to recruit outside of our sport, indeed from other sports. Just like other sports, we actively seek out participants - but not cyclists. Why? Because "Growing the sport" is our mission. Also, we prefer not to stir up trouble with other teams and clubs. Of course, there are a few of our members who raced for other teams, but we did not pursue them, they came to us. Reputable coaches and clubs will attract clients and members who want to make a coaching or club change. Also, there are cyclists who eventually decide to hire a coach for the first time. We don't discourage turning away these clients; however we encourage you to extend your program to find and develop to new cyclists.

Looking back to our first article for this newsletter, *Creating and Nurturing a Youth Cycling Pipeline*, (to read it click [HERE](#)) we discussed how to start a junior cycling program. We stated that "Growing the sport" must be a part of your mission because "increasing the number of young cyclists will ultimately increase the popularity of the sport." It's difficult to deny that the popularity and reputation of competitive cycling could use a boost. We believe that recruiting and developing new cyclists is mainly the job of coaches. Coaches have the knowledge and abilities for teaching, motivating, and advising people new to our sport. It makes sense that we, as coaches, pursue and convince people to join.


We put a lot of energy into promoting our junior program on our website and facebook. We visit schools and businesses and give cycling clinics and presentations. We post advertisements in community newsletters. We post brochures at bike shops, which has been a very good source for recruiting. We give presentations about cycling to youth groups. We use targeted mailing lists of families with children of appropriate ages. The most successful way we have of recruiting new juniors, though, is through reputation. We have mentioned this before but feel very strongly about that reputation is everything. And reputation travels by word of mouth. There are other avenues for recruiting juniors, but these are our top producers.

Whether you are promoting on-line, on printed material, or giving a presentation, remember your customer is the parent and the importance of key points for your program will differ if you are addressing non-cycling parents versus cycling parents.

Most important to the non-cycling parent is SAFETY. Other benefits to promote to parents are family-oriented, year-round activity, healthy lifestyle, life-long sport any kid can master and parent participation (parents ride not just watch). If your program is team-based you can market your focus on teamwork, sportsmanship, and commitment while developing national champions; program offers fitness, friendships and FUN! Another selling point is having a program for kids who do not qualify or have an interest in playing traditional sports and giving these kids a chance to excel in a team sport.

Parents with cycling backgrounds especially former racers are interested in results, national titles, bike and equipment discounts, advancement through the program, opportunities to ride with their child and the chance for their child to ride with a team.

For many coaches, recruiting and marketing are the least favorite and most uncomfortable part of the job. "If you build it, they will come," does not apply here. Unless you hire an outside resource or work within a coaching company that supplies you with clients, you will have to "pursue (recruit) and convince (sell) to potential customers.

We are interested in how other coaches have been able to recruit new juniors successfully. Please email us and let us know what worked and didn't work. We can share them in a future issue. 

### **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](mailto:info@fraziercycling.com). We will publish your requested information in the next issue as space allows.