



# Walkers Cycling

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 we understand cycling

## An Introduction to: Road Racing

### Road Racing

As the name suggests, this type of cycle sport is held on surfaced roads – either on the public highway (as permitted by act of parliament) or on closed road circuits. However, the name can sometimes cause confusion as Time Trials and Road Races both take place on the road.

Time Trials are a test of an individual rider's ability whereas Road Racing refers specifically to "massed start" events in which a group of up to 80 competitors race against each other, with first across the finishing line being the winner. (See our 'Introduction To: Time Trials' information sheet for details about "against the clock" racing)



Road racing caters for a wide variety of age and ability groups but, for safety reasons, under 16's can only compete on circuits closed to other traffic. Most events are held in the main road season between February and September.

Races fall in to three main types: -

- Scratch Races: All riders start in a single group, or "bunch". The winner is the first across the finishing line.
- Handicap Races: Riders are set off in groups according to their ability or licence category with the better competitors starting last. The aim is for each group to catch the one in front and the winner is the first across the line. Prizes are often awarded to the leading finishers in each category. This type of event is often billed as an Australian Pursuit Race, or APR, as this kind of racing is popular 'down under'.
- Stage Races – the event comprises several individual races – or "stages" – usually spanning two days or more. As with a scratch race, all riders start each stage together.

The stage winner is the first across the line on an individual stage.

The race winner is determined by reference to the cumulative time taken for the riders to complete all stages. The rider having taken the least time to ride all stages is the overall race winner. Any rider failing to complete a stage, or finishing too far behind the winner of a stage, is eliminated from the event.

Prizes are awarded to the leading competitors in each stage as well as for the race overall. The world's biggest and best-known stage races, the so-called 'Grand Tours' of France, Italy and Spain are each held over three weeks!

A road race often has other competitions within the main race where prizes are awarded to the leading team, sprinter, climber, under-23 rider and so on.

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Most events are held on open roads as permitted by an act of parliament specifically covering cycle road racing on the public highway although some events are held on closed road circuits, or on roads closed by local authority order for the duration of the race.

In the UK, events on the calendar range from grass roots type events, ideal for getting a first taste of road racing, right up to British Cycling's *Premier Calendar* races, a season long series of single and multi-stage events for elite riders.

TV cycling commentator Phil Liggett often likens road racing tactics to a game of chess, owing to the number of offensive and defensive moves and counter moves that can bring about an infinite variety of outcomes. It is this tactical intricacy that helps make road racing such an exciting sport – for competitors and spectators.

### The Road Racing Bike



You don't need a particularly expensive bike to take part in road races. Your machine must be roadworthy and stripped of any accessories such as mudguards, carrier racks etc. Dropped handlebars are the norm giving the rider a variety of positions for speed, comfort, climbing etc.

However, road racing, in common with every cycling discipline, has seen the evolution over many years of specialised machines which can cost many thousands of pounds.

The ideal road racing bike is light but strong enough to cope with the stresses imposed by rider and road. Lightness and strength comes from the use of materials such as aluminium alloy, titanium and carbon fibre. Very narrow rims and high pressure tyres reduce rolling resistance and a good range of around 18 gears with precision shifters will help the rider tackle everything from steep climbs to high speed sprints.

### I Would Like To Try Road Racing – How Fit Do I Need To Be?

Successful road racers usually need a mix of abilities – climbing, sprinting, endurance and an appreciation of the tactical element of road racing. At every level, a rider simply has to be fit enough to maintain the pace of the main bunch.

The training required varies according to a number of factors but in general, riders competing in higher category events will require more "miles in their legs".

The shorter 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> category events are more suitable for beginners with lower average speeds. At the other end of the scale, elite category riders require the ability to maintain average speeds of around 25mph over several hours duration.

As a rider progresses in the sport he or she may develop as a specialist climber or sprinter and tailor their preparation and training accordingly. It is always a good idea to employ the services of a coach when planning a training schedule.

Many clubs have one or more qualified coaches in their ranks. There are also a growing number of self-employed and commercial coaches who offer clients a one-to-one service. The national governing bodies all maintain a register of qualified coaches.



## **Walkers Cycling – An Introduction to: Road Racing**

### **How Do I Get Started in Road Racing?**

By far the best route into road racing is to join a club where you can tap into the facilities, help and support offered by experienced riders and coaches. You'll be able to get advice on the right type of bike, clothing, riding technique and much more.

If you fancy having a go at road racing to see if it's for you, British Cycling have a membership package available that includes a few free 'single event racing licences' allowing entry to events suitable for beginners.

### **Joining a Cycling Club**

Club membership opens up opportunities to get help, advice and support from like minded riders. Walkers Cycling Club is an Ayrshire based club that aims to encourage participation in all types of leisure and competitive cycling – including road racing.

Visit the club web site at [www.walkerscyclingclub.com](http://www.walkerscyclingclub.com)

The national governing bodies – British Cycling, Scottish Cycling, Welsh Cycling Union etc. – maintain lists of affiliated clubs.

### **Where to Buy**

The best place for the beginner to buy a road racing bike, accessories and clothing is at a local, independent cycle dealer who should be able to offer a range of good quality products to suit your requirements.

At Walkers Cycling we aim to get people cycling – and keep them cycling. Our customers can benefit from the knowledge and experience our friendly staff have gained doing most types of cycling. We want you to enjoy your cycling as much as we do and can help you choose the best kit for the job.

## Walkers Cycling – An Introduction to: Road Racing

### Contacts/Further Information

#### **British Cycling**

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#### **Scottish Cycling**

Caledonia House,  
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#### **Welsh Cycling**

Welsh Cycling,  
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#### **British Schools Cycling Association**

Web: [www.bsca.org.uk](http://www.bsca.org.uk)

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