

AusCycling
Performance
Pathway



Rider Development Principles





Rider Development Principles

The Pathway to Performance

AusCycling has bold high performance ambitions: to remain a top three cycling nation at Olympic and Paralympic Games ahead.

This is no small endeavour. The global bar continues to rise across every cycling discipline and sustained success will depend on how well our performance pathway identifies, confirms, and equips riders to meet ever increasing international standards.

The rider's route to excellence is a deliberate journey. It's sparked in vibrant local clubs/ Academies, elevated within State Institutes and perfected in the 'finishing schools' of AusCycling National Centres of Excellence. Seamless rider progression through the pathway depends on a united philosophy and technical model of development, with every layer aligned, purposeful, and preparing riders for the demands of the level above.

Our Rider Development Principles are developed by the AusCycling Performance team in collaboration with State Institutes, Coaches, Clubs, Parents, and Selectors involved in junior development. They provide a shared compass for the junior rider journey (typically U15, U17, U19). These are the critical progression years that underpin the

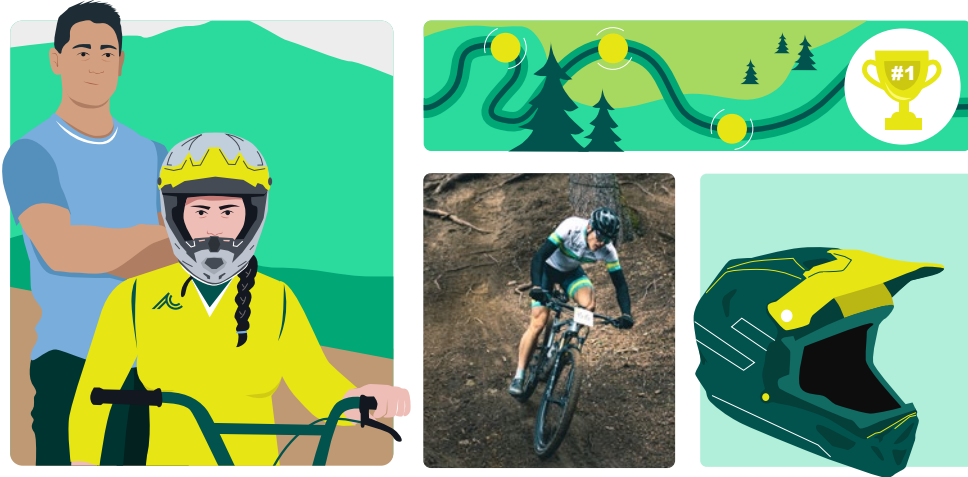
development of our future medal winning champions for decades to come. Not all principles carry the same weight across U15, U17 and U19. We have indicated where each becomes more or less important as riders progress through these development years.

Purpose

The Rider Development Principles aim to give everyone in the performance pathway a clear picture of what matters most in the U15, U17 and U19 development years, and why. They also align to the Australian Institute of Sport [Elite Youth Athlete Guidelines | ASC](#).

They capture the core tenets of how world-class riders progress: the skills to be mastered, the environments that shape growth, and the experiences that accelerate potential. By applying these principles consistently across the pathway we can give every talented rider the best possible chance to go as far as their talent and ambition allows – whether that is state champion, national champion, or wearing the green and gold and winning on the world stage.

Development coaches who shape people and performers



Overview

The single greatest influence on a junior rider's trajectory is their development coach. These specialist coaches shape the skills, physical and technical qualities, and high performance habits that underpin elite cycling careers.

Just as importantly, they instill the mindsets, routines, and high performance habits that prepare riders for the highest levels of sport.

Great development coaches set the bar high while staying deeply invested in the rider as a whole person.

They focus on embedding strong foundations with a long-term view – producing riders who are fully equipped to win races on the world stage in their twenties and thirties, not just dominate their age group today.

They are also deeply committed to improving themselves, actively seeking feedback and continuing to upskill ahead of their riders' development.



In Practice

- > Look for development coach/es that possess technical and tactical expertise with high emotional maturity, willingness to engage parents, understand education demands, and maintain a long-term development focus.
- > These coaches stay ahead of the riders talent by leaning into their own development. They are open and curious about their continuous learning and being mentored.
- > Having different coaches as riders progress along the pathway is not unusual. Different coaches provide different expertise and perspectives at different stages of development. Matching coaching expertise to the riders stage of development is essential to keep progressing.
- > When appropriate, development coaches collaborate well with Performance Support Team specialists (physio, strength and conditioning, doctor, nutritionist), to guide the development of training and competition programs and ensure optimal rider health and preparation.

Mastering Skills

Overview

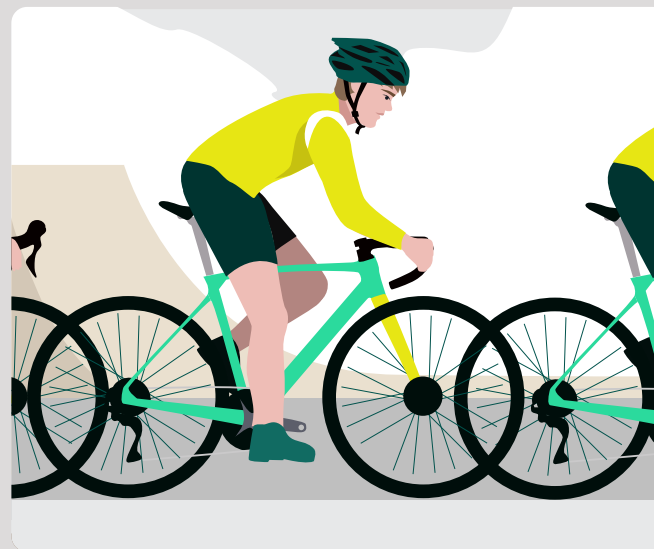
Underpinning every world class rider is an unrivalled repertoire of skills developed and refined during the junior years. This includes bike handling, positioning, and race craft that dictate how effectively power is applied, how efficiently energy is used, and how confidently riders adapt under pressure.

That is why the smartest early investment in the pathway is skill development - especially ahead of expensive equipment, or chasing early results. Exposure to multiple cycling disciplines also accelerates technical growth and sparks creativity. BMX skills can sharpen track bike handling, mountain biking can improve road bike handling skills, and

cyclocross can develop resilience and adaptability. These crossovers give riders a deep and versatile skill set to draw on in later years, while also keeping them fresh, motivated, and prepared for the demands of long, high-level careers.

In Practice

- > Junior riders should prioritise bike handling, race craft, and technical mastery in training and competition.
- > Coaches are encouraged to deliver training sessions, camps and competitions goals that support the learning, development, and execution of riders skills – not necessarily performance outcomes.
- > Junior riders are encouraged to engage in multiple disciplines to broaden and refine their technical skillset at younger ages.
- > Competitions are treated as skill and tactical laboratories, with coach–rider debriefs driving continuous skill and tactical improvement.
- > Competition calendars incorporate cross-discipline racing opportunities to stretch skill sets and race intelligence under pressure.



Technique Acquired



Master bike handling



Planning to progress – plan the ride, ride the plan!

Overview

Progress does not happen by chance – it's planned, executed, and reviewed on an annual basis.

One of the most powerful habits a developing rider can build is co-creating an annual plan with their coach, anchored in longer-term goals, not short-term wins. Strong, written-down plans set clear objectives, structure training blocks, balance cycling with study, social development, and recovery and review points – all essential in the teenage years.

This co-creation process builds ownership, accountability, resilience and the habit of being a 'coachable' rider.

When riders, parents, and coaches align around the same objectives, the plan is visible and understood, everyone pulls in the same direction, mixed messages are avoided, and the rider benefits from consistent support.



In Practice

- > Riders are encouraged to co-create their annual plans with their coach that include short and long term goals, perfecting skills in training and competitive settings, training blocks, recovery, and balance with study and social life.
- > Plans are visible and shared with parents, where appropriate school teachers, Performance Support Teams, and key supporters so objectives and success measures are understood.
- > Coaches and riders commit to regular reviews, using progression data and simple tools to track strengths, areas to improve, and adjustments required.
- > Rider plans should be flexible and simple.

Checklist

- Training goals _____
- Racing goals _____
- Skill goals _____
- Life goals _____



Racing to progress – not just to place



Overview

Competition is where training meets pressure – the ‘learning laboratory’ that tests skills, fitness, decision-making, and resilience.

It shows how well habits are embedded and whether riders can hold composure when it matters most. In the junior years, racing should be developmentally appropriate – less about results, more about rehearsing execution across different formats, conditions, and levels of opposition.

Over any one year, a balanced mix of competition experiences is critical: events above the riders level (to stretch and reveal gaps), at your level (to test yourself and fight for results in the close ones), and below your level (to build confidence and practise leading and winning). Junior World Championships is an important milestone in the junior performance pathway, but it is not the destination. Many Olympic and World Champions were neither standout juniors nor international medallists at that age.



In Practice

- Competition is used as a learning laboratory – refining skills, tactics, and decision-making under pressure.
- Junior World Championship selection is treated as another development milestone, not a final predictor of long-term potential.
- Season calendars should balance events that stretch, test, and build the riders confidence in equal measure.
- Events include structured debriefs, with lessons captured and applied to future training and racing.
- Growth is celebrated through courage, tactical progress as much as placings or medals.

Principle 5

Valuing effort over equipment – build skills and engine first

Overview

World-class cycling is a blend of engine, skill, and equipment – but the sequence of development is crucial.

At junior level, the greatest gains come not from shiny new bike tech but from mastering core skills, building base fitness, refining race craft, and embedding disciplined training habits. Riders who invest in these foundations early are best placed to fully exploit high-performance equipment later in their rider journey. At elite level, advanced technology becomes a decisive asset – delivering the marginal gains only when built off a strong, well-prepared base.

In Practice

- > In junior years, progress is measured through improvements in training quality, skill execution, and adoption of high performance habits rather than technology.
- > Riders develop self-sufficiency by learning basic bike maintenance and mechanical skills.
- > Investment in advanced equipment occurs only when aligned with the rider's development stage and needs.



Principle 6

Thriving in Tribes – squad environments that spark belonging and connection



Overview

Great riders rarely progress in isolation. Development accelerates when riders are part of a thriving squad and/or club that provides a critical mass.

This enables bunch drills and racing opportunities, training partners, healthy peer pressure to sharpen skills and builds teamworking skills.

The best squads and clubs are vibrant and aspirational, blending high standards with fun, trust, and friendships.

They evolve into true “performance tribes,” where riders feel supported, challenged, and motivated to keep progressing.

Beyond results, these environments anchor riders in the sport for the long term, forging friendships and networks that endure throughout the journey and well beyond competition.

In Practice

- > Riders are encouraged to train in squads and/ or clubs that provide energy, positive culture, and quality coaching focused on skills and progression.
- > Shared rituals – warm-ups, debriefs, travel, celebrations are embedded to strengthen connection and accountability.
- > Squads are designed to support riders through transitions, setbacks, and key growth stages, ensuring long-term engagement.
- > A strong sense of identity and pride is cultivated so riders feel part of something bigger than individual results.

Developing character – mindset, habits, and professionalism

Overview

Talent opens the door, but character keeps it open.

Riders who transition from juniors to senior medal contenders are those who build strong mindsets, discipline, and professional standards from a young age. Professionalism is not just about results – it's about consistency, respect, and the ability to show up every day with intent.

Riders who develop resilience, accountability, and humility alongside their physical abilities are better prepared to handle the demands of high performance and the pressures of international racing.

In Practice

- Training ethic is demonstrated through commitment, and consistency.
- Riders take responsibility for their development, showing initiative and accountability in working with their coach and training squads.
- Professional behaviours are evident in respect shown to coaches, teammates, officials, and our sport itself.
- Resilience is reflected in how setbacks and feedback are used as opportunities to grow.



Principle 8

Win well – more than a bike rider

Overview

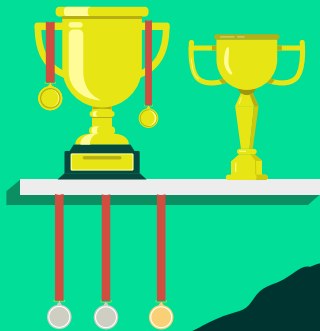
Only a small number of riders will reach the pinnacle of our sport.

For those in development phases, it is essential that “Plan B” is a deliberate part of your rider journey – whether through continuing education, vocational training, or broader interests alongside cycling.

Far from being a distraction, complementary pursuits beyond cycling are proven to enhance performance – helping riders win well and sustain success over the long term.

In Practice

- > Riders are engaged and are encouraged to remain in school, tertiary study, or vocations alongside their cycling development.
- > Broader interests are actively encouraged to support identity and a win well approach.
- > Weekly schedules incorporate space for study or work, supporting balance and discipline.
- > Coaches and mentors provide guidance that values whole-person growth, not just rider outcome.



Principle 9

Partnering with parents – riding the slipstream



Overview

Parents carry enormous influence on a young rider’s journey. When engaged, supported, and educated, their role becomes a powerful slipstream – giving riders the confidence to push forward.

Parental encouragement help juniors commit to the process and stay the course, making parents a vital part of the rider journey.

As riders mature, the parental role must evolve. Early on, parents may ride ‘close on the wheel’ – providing guidance, structure, and reassurance. Over time, they ‘ease back in the peloton,’ creating space for the rider to take the lead, build independence, and strengthen the coach–rider partnership.

Clear communication and process-focused praise keep parents aligned and ensure support fuels progress.

In Practice

- > Riders are engaged and are encouraged to remain in school, tertiary study, or vocations alongside their cycling development.
- > Broader interests are actively encouraged to support identity and a win well approach.
- > Weekly schedules incorporate space for study or work, supporting balance and discipline.
- > Coaches and mentors provide guidance that values whole-person growth, not just rider outcome.

Opportunities and choices – never guarantees

Overview

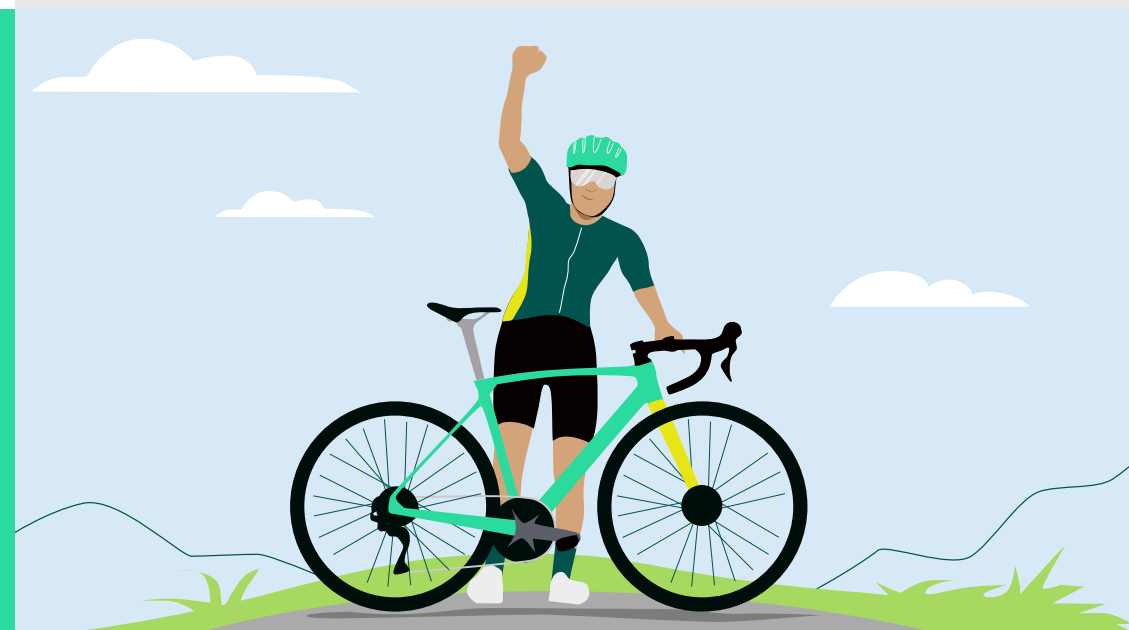
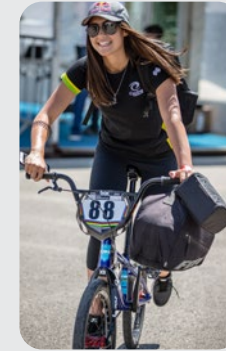
Our pathway offers many opportunities and choices but never guarantees.

No one can predict who will become a world-beater, but we do know the experiences, skills, and habits that optimises a rider's potential.

Riders, coaches and parents who treat every moment as a chance to learn and lay strong foundations give themselves the best chance of longterm success. Some days bring breakthroughs, others bring setbacks – all are part of the journey.

In Practice

- Riders are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their journey early, working hand in glove with their coach.
- Every opportunity – whether a race, camp, selection/deselection, or feedback session – is a chance to grow, reinforced through the language and behaviours of coaches, parents, and selectors.
- Choices about transitions across the pathway are made thoughtfully, with expert guidance from coaches and AusCycling pathway staff.



AusCycling Rider Development Principles

	U15	U17	U19
Principle 1. Development coaches who shape people and performers	●●●	●●●	●●●
Principle 2. Mastering Skills	●●●	●●●	●●
Principle 3. Planning to Progress – plan the ride, ride the plan!	●	●●	●●●
Principle 4. Racing to Progress – not just to place	●	●●	●●●
Principle 5. Valuing Effort over Equipment – build skills and engine first	●●●	●●●	●●
Principle 6. Thriving in Tribes – squad environments that spark belonging and connection	●●●	●●●	●●
Principle 7. Developing Character – mindset, habits, and professionalism	●●	●●●	●●●
Principle 8. Win Well – more than a bike rider	●●●	●●●	●●●
Principle 9. Partnering with Parents – riding the slipstream	●●●	●●	●
Principle 10. Opportunities and Choices – never guarantees	●	●	●

Key

- Important
- Very important
- Critical / highest priority



