



USA CYCLING ATHLETE SELECTION CRITERIA
2026 UCI XCO World Championships
U23 Women and Men
August 26 – 30, 2026
Val di Sole, Italy

SELECTION AND QUALIFICATION INFORMATION

Below you will find information on how an athlete can qualify for nomination to the 2026 MTB XCO World Championship Team (“Team”). In cases where there are available start positions after the automatic qualification process, any available positions may be filled via discretionary criteria. There are extensive Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) requirements for entry into 2026 MTB XCO World Championship Team at the nation, event and individual levels. Those requirements can be found on the UCI website under rules and regulations – World Championships: <https://www.uci.org/inside-uci/constitutions-regulations/regulations>

ELIGIBILITY

- U23 Women and Men: Racing age 19-22 years old.
- Athlete must be eligible to represent the United States in a UCI competition.
- Athletes must have a valid UCI International Racing License and meet all eligibility requirements of USA Cycling and the UCI.
- Athletes must be in good standing with USA Cycling, UCI, U.S. Center for SafeSport and the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA).
- The selection process will consider only events listed on the UCI calendar.
- ***To be considered for selection, athletes must meet the following minimum standards:***
 - ***All U23 M/W nominees must have finished a minimum of two World Cups on the lead lap in 2026 World Cup events between January 1, 2026, and July 14, 2026.****
- The selection process will consider only events listed on the UCI calendar.

*If injury or sustained illness prevents an athlete from competing at two World Cups, USA Cycling may consider an exception to this minimum eligibility criteria. Please note, lack of selection for World Cup entries is not considered an injury or sustained illness.

Athletes can express interest in participating by submitting a [petition](#).

EVENT SELECTION STRATEGY

The primary objective of USA Cycling’s U23 MTB XCO event selection strategy is to select athletes who are assessed as Medal Capable or Future Medal Capable at the World Championship level. Selection decisions will prioritize athletes who demonstrate the performance level, consistency, and competitive readiness required to contend for podium outcomes now or within the current Olympic cycle.

The secondary objective is to identify and select athletes with the demonstrated potential to finish within the top 30 at the UCI Mountain Bike World Championships. This assessment will be based on objective performance

indicators, including top 25 percent finishes* at UCI World Cup competitions and/or time gaps to race winners that indicate competitiveness relative to a top-30 World Championship standard.

USA Cycling may opt to not fill all available quota spots.

*A finish in the top 25 percent is defined as an athlete's placing divided by the total number of athletes who are scored on the results sheet and given a final placing and therefore did not record a DNF or DNS. Finishers who are scored on the results sheet as defined does not indicate whether the rider finished on lead lap. It includes all riders who finished the race, regardless of the lap they finished on.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Level 1: USA Cycling will provide one economy class, single destination airfare, which includes up to 3 pieces of luggage: up to two bikes or one bike and one wheel case, plus one suitcase each under 50lbs (excess weight or additional bag charges are the responsibility of the athlete). USA Cycling will also provide competition and casual clothing, lodging/food, ground transportation at event location, all mechanical/race support, and travel insurance throughout the duration of the event with USA Cycling.

Level 2: Athletes will be responsible for paying a service fee of \$1,000.00 by the date outlined in this document ("Fee"). This Fee includes: competition and casual clothing, lodging/food, ground transportation at event location, all mechanical/race support, and travel insurance throughout the duration of the event with USA Cycling. Athletes are responsible for their airfare and baggage expenses.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Deadline for Submission of Petitions:
Team Selection:

July 13, 2026
Week of July 27, 2026

Eligible athletes can submit interest in the event [here](#).

CRITERIA FOR NOMINATION TO THE TEAM – U23 Women and Men

USA Cycling Sport Performance staff are responsible for applying the respective selection criteria set forth herein, subject to the approval of the [Selection Committee](#).

Maximum Quota Spots: Women TBD and Men TBD

USA Cycling may choose to not fill quota positions.

A. OBJECTIVE CRITERIA

The following criteria are considered in priority order with all quota positions being filled through Criterion 1 first, then through Criterion 2 if quota positions remain, and so on.

Funding Level 1

1. Any athlete placing in the top fifteen (15) at the 2025 World Championships in the same event and category will be nominated to the Team.

- a. If more athletes meet this criterion than available quota positions, the athlete with the highest placing will be nominated first, followed by the athlete with the next highest placing, and so on.
2. If quota positions remain after considering the preceding criteria, any athlete who finishes in the top ten (10) of a U23 UCI World Cup XCO event between the dates of January 1, 2026, and July 14, 2026, will be nominated to the Team.
 - a. If more athletes meet this criterion than available quota positions, the athlete with the highest placing will be nominated first, followed by the athlete with the next highest placing, and so on.
 - b. If two or more athletes share the same placing, the athlete with the most recent result will be nominated first, followed by the athlete with the next most recent result, and so on.
3. If quota positions remain after considering the preceding criteria, any athlete who is ranked in the top twenty-five (25) of the 2026 UCI Individual World Cup Overall U23 XCO rankings on July 14, 2026, will be nominated to the team.
 - a. If more athletes meet this criterion than available quota positions, the athlete with the highest ranking will be nominated first, followed by the athlete with the next highest ranking, and so on.

Funding Level 2

5. If quota positions remain after considering the preceding criteria, the winner of the 2026 USA Cycling MTB U23 XCO National Championship, provided the race is held in its entirety and run under UCI regulations, will be nominated to the Team.
6. If quota positions remain after considering the preceding criteria, athletes may be nominated to the Team in accordance with USA Cycling's Discretionary Selection outlined below.

B. DISCRETIONARY CRITERIA

If after application of the Objective Criteria above, additional quota positions remain, USA Cycling may, but is not required to, nominate athletes to the Team through discretionary criteria. The following criteria are considered in priority order, with all quota positions being filled through Criterion 1 first, then 2 if positions remain, and so on.

1. **Medal Capable Athletes** – USA Cycling may nominate Medal Capable athletes to the Team. A medal capable athlete has clearly demonstrated the ability to produce a medal winning result in the competition for which the athlete is being selected by winning a medal (top 3 finish) in the past 24 months at the World Championships or Olympic Games and demonstrating the continuing ability to perform at that level or higher based on results and performances in World Cups in the past 12 months.
2. **Future Medal Capable Athletes** – USA Cycling may nominate Future Medal Capable athletes to the Team. A Future Medal Capable athlete has the potential to produce a medal-winning result within three years at the event they are being selected for by demonstrating a recent trend of improvement in key performance indicators outlined in the Data to Support Discretionary Selections in World Cups or training.

3. **Best Predicted Finish** – USA Cycling may nominate athletes to the Team based on Best Predicted Finish. USA Cycling will determine which athlete or athletes it predicts will finish highest in the event for which they are being selected using Data to Support Discretionary Selections. This forecast aims to provide an evidence-based estimate of the athlete's final standing.

Data to Support Discretionary Selections

USA Cycling considers data useful when making discretionary selections. USA Cycling can consider the following datapoints (but does not have to consider all of them):

For all criteria (in no particular order):

- Times on courses (or portions of courses) of similar length or course profile and/or in similar environmental conditions to this event;
- Athlete power data
- Consistency of results
- Race results
- Aerodynamic drag data
- Event and/or specific role demands
- Times (overall and splits) relevant to the event in consideration
- Event and/or specific role demands
- Average speed
- UCI Individual Rankings
- Race specific proficiency (tactics, skills, acumen)
- Fitness/form/training stress-balance/athlete readiness

For choosing between two or more athletes under the same criterion (in no particular order):

- Head to head competition results
- Race results
- Sport Performance staff's assessment of an athlete's ability to meet the performance demands of the event
- Sport Performance staff's assessment of an athlete's ability to meet the performance demands required to execute USA Cycling's strategy or race plan

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION ON THE TEAM

1. Athletes who are eligible for selection to the Team will be contacted by USA Cycling by phone and/or email the week of **July 27th** of their (non)selection. Selected athletes must commit to a position on the Team within 72 hours from notification by USA Cycling or they may forfeit their place on the Team.
2. If an athlete declines a spot on the Team (or fails to commit as per #1 above), that spot will then be filled in accordance with the procedures described above. An athlete declining a position must submit their declination in writing.

Alternates: An athlete who is withdrawn from the Team due to illness, injury or any other reason may be replaced in accordance with the Team procedures described above or by a previously nominated Alternate.

3. Athletes named to the Team are required to maintain fitness and prepare properly for the event's travel and competition. An athlete is required to report any situation that may affect the athlete's ability to travel and compete to their Discipline Director in a timely fashion.
4. Alteration: USA Cycling reserves the right, based on consultation with the UCI, the USOPC, and the State Department, to alter the conditions of travel for this Team trip if conditions in the host country warrant.
5. Anti-Doping Requirements: Athletes must adhere to all IOC, WADA, UCI, ITA, USADA, USA Cycling and USOPC anti-doping protocols, policies, and procedures, as applicable. This includes participation in Out-of-Competition Testing as required by the IOC, WADA, UCI, ITA, USADA, USA Cycling and USOPC Rules, as applicable.
6. An athlete may be removed from the Team for an adjudicated violation of IOC, WADA, UCI, ITA, USADA, USA Cycling, and/or USOPC anti-doping protocol, policies, and procedures, as well as the U.S. Center for SafeSport Code, the USOPC Athlete Safety Policy, and USA Cycling's Safe Sport Program, as applicable.
7. An athlete may be removed from the Team for an injury or illness. A physician (or medical staff) approved by USA Cycling provides certification that the athlete has a debilitating condition. If the athlete refuses to provide verification of their illness or injury by a physician (or medical staff), their injury will be assumed to be debilitating, and they will be removed from the Team.
8. In addition to Eligibility Criteria outlined above, each athlete 18 years of age or older must complete and pass USA Cycling's background screen and SafeSport training program. All athletes under 18 years of age must complete SafeSport for Youth training and USA Cycling's onboarding. Athletes in both age categories must sign the National Team Program Agreement.
9. Financial Responsibility: Fee is due by **August 20th**.

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Level 2: Athletes will be responsible for paying a service fee of \$1000.00 by the date outlined in this document ("Fee"). This Fee includes: competition and casual clothing, lodging/food, ground transportation at event location, all mechanical/race support, and travel insurance throughout the duration of the event with USA Cycling. Athletes are responsible for their airfare and baggage expenses.

10. Casual and Competition Clothing: As a member of a Team representing USA Cycling and the United States of America, athletes will be provided with competition clothing that must be worn during all official training sessions and competitions. Athletes will also be provided with casual clothing that is required to be worn at official Team functions and while participating in activities as a Team member.

All competition and casual clothing worn must be the **current edition issued by USA Cycling**, accurately representing current sponsors and partners. **Clothing from previous years or editions is not permitted** under any circumstances.

Failure to comply with Team clothing requirements may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the Team.