



ROAD MODULE 4 – ASSISTANT REFEREE: CRITERIUM PIT



Purpose

The purpose of this module is to provide the Road Assistant Referee with the necessary information and experience needed for refereeing in the pit during criteriums.

Required Reading

1. 2013 USA Cycling Rulebook
 - a. **3D**. Criterium
2. USA Cycling Race Officials Manual Part 2: Officiating Road Events
 - a. Chapter 4 Criteriums
3. Working the Pits document (see last section)

Prerequisites

- Level C Official
- Module Pre-Test (see next section)

Goals

After successful completion of this module, the Level C Road Official will be able to do the following:

1. Understand the concepts and terminology for working the wheel pit during criteriums.
2. Score a criterium from the wheel pit (detailed or modified).
3. Determine the difference between a recognized mishap and an unrecognized mishap.
4. Apply the free lap rule to award or deny free laps to riders involved in mishaps.
5. Communicate with the judges regarding to riders in the pit, decisions on free lap rules, and inserting riders back into the race.
6. Insert a rider(s) back into the race with their appropriate group.
7. Keep accurate records of riders, their mishaps, and free lap rule application.

Tasks to be Completed

1. Score criteriums for a full day (or its equivalent) as a Wheel Pit Referee.
2. Determine the legitimacy of mishaps for at least 5 occurrences.
3. Apply the free lap rule to award or deny free laps for at least 5 occurrences.
4. Communicate necessary information to the judges for at least 5 occurrences.
5. Insert a rider(s) back into the race for at least 10 occurrences.
6. Provide the Chief Referee with your wheel pit notes for a full day (or its equivalent) of criteriums.



Criteria for Successful Completion

1. Score a Criterium: You can either use detailed scoring (as if you were on the judging stand) or modified scoring. With the latter approach you would just need to keep track of riders off the back and front and riders in smaller groups. In either case you should be able to figure out which group a rider coming into pit was in.
2. Determine Recognized and Unrecognized Mishaps: The “Working the Pits” document provides you with the information you need. Two questions to keep in mind: a) was it something proper maintenance could have prevented and b) was it a breakage of an essential part of the bicycle?
3. Apply the Free Lap Rule: Once you determine the legitimacy of a free lap, you can either inform the rider(s) that they are chasing, are going to be one lap down, or are awarded a free lap.
4. Communicate with the Judges:
 - a. Riders in the pit: Informing the judges which rider(s) is in the pit will help them keep accurate records of all riders. If there is a prime sprint coming up, riders coming in from the pit are not eligible for the prime.
 - b. Decision on the free lap rule: Include your decision so the judges can score the rider on even laps, off the back, or down a lap(s).
 - c. Insertion of riders: This will confirm correct placement of a rider back into the correct group.
5. Insert a Rider(s) Back into the Race: Typically it will be the main field, but there are instances when a rider was in a breakaway or in the second of two big groups. Your notes on the race and the judge’s confirmation will help.
6. Keep Accurate Records: Note the lap (or time) a rider comes into the pit, their mishap, your decision, and their insertion (or not) back into the race. After the race, provide the Chief Judge with your notes to help confirm proper placement of riders.



ROAD MODULE 4 – ASSISTANT REFEREE: CRITERIUM PIT Pre-Test



Prior to beginning the practical portion of this module, please complete the following pre-test and check your answers in the back of the document.

1. Which of the following is **NOT** a “recognized mishap”?
 - (a) Being delayed by a crash by the group ahead.
 - (b) A crash.
 - (c) A failure of an essential component of the bicycle.
 - (d) A broken chain.
 - (e) A puncture.

2. Handlebars with forearm supports may be used in which of the following sets of events:
 - (a) Individual pursuit (track), individual time trial (road), and team pursuit (track)
 - (b) Match sprint (track), individual time trial (road), and team pursuit (track).
 - (c) Team sprint (track), individual pursuit (track), and individual time trial (road).
 - (d) Individual time trial (road), initial stage of a stage race, and team pursuit.
 - (e) Team time trial (road), team pursuit, and scratch race (track).

3. Lapped riders in a criterium:
 - (a) May be withdrawn by the referees.
 - (b) May be allowed to continue racing until the event ends.
 - (c) May be directed to sprint early and then retire.
 - (d) Are NOT eligible for primes.
 - (e) All of the above.

4. No free laps may be granted in the final _____ km of a criterium.
 - (a) 30
 - (b) 8
 - (c) 6
 - (d) 5
 - (e) 4

5. On a course of less than _____ km, two laps may be allowed for any mishap.
 - (a) 2.5
 - (b) 2
 - (c) 1.2
 - (d) 1
 - (e) 0.8



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6. During a criterium, a rider passes the pit and then has a flat tire. In order to return to the pit quickly to change wheels, the rider makes a “U-turn” in the middle of the road, nearly hitting a group of riders and causing them to brake violently. What action should the Referee in the pit take?
- (a) Warn the rider that he may not ride backward on the course.
 - (b) Disallow the rider’s free lap.
 - (c) Disqualify the rider.
 - (d) Allow the rider’s free lap but report the incident to the Chief Referee.
 - (e) Either (a) or (b), to be decided per the judgment of the Pit Referee.
7. During a criterium, a rider enters the pit with a wheel that has pulled over because the quick release was not tight enough. What action should the Referee in the pit take?
- (a) Disallow the rider’s free lap and tell the rider that he must chase.
 - (b) Allow the rider’s free lap and ensure he is reinserted at the back of the group in which he was riding.
 - (c) Advise the Chief Referee and the Scorer that the free lap was disallowed, but do not advise the rider.
 - (d) Disqualify the rider for attempted fraud.
 - (e) None, as the rider has violated no racing regulations.



ROAD MODULE 4 – ASSISTANT REFEREE: CRITERIUM PIT Task Completion



The purpose of this document is to show proof that the Regional C Road Official has successfully completed each task required for mastery of the position as required for partial fulfillment for upgrade to Regional B Road Official.

| TASK TO BE COMPLETED | CHIEF REFEREE | DATE |
|--|---------------|-------|
| Score a Criterium | | |
| # of Races _____ | _____ | _____ |
| # of Races _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Determine Recognized or Unrecognized Mishaps | | |
| Occurrence #1 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #2 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #3 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #4 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #5 | _____ | _____ |
| Apply the Free Lap Rule | | |
| Occurrence #1 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #2 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #3 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #4 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #5 | _____ | _____ |
| Communicate with the Judges | | |
| Riders in the Pit | _____ | _____ |
| Decision on the Free Lap Rule | _____ | _____ |
| Insertion of Riders | _____ | _____ |



ROAD MODULE 4 – ASSISTANT REFEREE: CRITERIUM PIT Task Completion



| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Insertion of Rider | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #1 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #2 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #3 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #4 | _____ | _____ |
| Occurrence #5 | _____ | _____ |
| Keep Accurate Records | _____ | _____ |
| Turn in Records to Chief Judge | _____ | _____ |

When complete, please return to the [National Technical Commission member from your region](#)



ROAD MODULE 4 – ASSISTANT REFEREE: CRITERIUM PIT Working the Pits



Working the Pits – A Quick Review

Congrats – you’ve been assigned to work the pits at a criterium. Not a walk in the park really – you will have decisions to make that can directly affect the outcome of the race, so preparation (as always) is a must. What follows is a quick review of the position, including primary responsibilities and notes on managing the pits and administering the Free Lap Rule.

The Free Lap Rule

Somewhat unique to the sport of cycling is the provision in criteriums and in long mass start events on the track to allow riders who have mishaps to return to the race without penalty after repairs or replacements are made. It is difficult to think of another sport in which an attempt is made to compensate a competitor for bad luck, but that is exactly what happens in cycling. Again, the purpose of the rule is to allow a competitor to return to competition WITHOUT penalty should they suffer certain specified types of mishaps. Everything we do in the pits is focused on this specific goal.

Primary Responsibilities of the Pit Official

1. Administer the Free Lap Rule

The pit official must be a decisive individual, as delays in making rule determinations in the pit can eliminate a rider from contention in a race. The free lap rule (FLR) gives three circumstances in which a free lap may be awarded:

- Crash
- Puncture
- Breakage or Failure of an Essential Part of the Bicycle

We shall address these in turn:

- a. Crash: Usually a rider who has crashed will not need to prove they have fallen – it should be quite clear that something has happened. If we have a motor official working the event, they should radio numbers of riders involved in a crash to you and the Chief Referee. Make a note of these riders. Riders who are merely delayed by a crash are not typically awarded free laps! If in doubt, award the lap and err on the side of the rider. If they have misrepresented what happened, we have time in the remainder of the race to figure that out and apply some corrective measures to the results (loss of a lap). Again, the intent of the rule is to compensate for bad luck, so don’t worry too much about being overly lenient. Leniency early in the race is a good trait, and as we get closer to the end, the good official tightens up.
- b. Puncture: As with a crash, this is usually easy to verify – the tire will be flat! In the case of a slow leak, allow the lap and instruct the mechanic to re-inflate the tire to racing pressure, note the time, and check the pressure later. If it hasn’t lost air, tell the CR that the lap is denied. You might also consider keeping the offending wheel away from prying eyes and fingers.



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- c. Breakage of Essential Component: This is the tough one for many officials – what is essential? One definition is that those items which make the bike go, stop, or hold the rider up are essential. For example:

Essential items

Frame
Spoke
Derailleur
Cables
Seat post/saddle
Crank/Pedals
Handlebar/Stem
Chain

Non essential items

Computers
Water bottles/cages
Other accessories

There is a big caveat here – no free lap can be given in the case of failure of a component (essential or not) that hasn't been properly tightened or prepared. In this category we find loose quick releases (most common), loose seat post clamps/bolts, unglued tires that have rolled or crept, loose cranks and headsets, and slipped cables. No lap is awarded and the rider must be sent on their way immediately after a repair has been made

2. Reinsert rider into the race

- a. Immediately: As just mentioned, this is to be done immediately if you rule that a lap has been denied. As you can imagine, this is news that likely isn't going to play well with the rider, so you need to be direct yet show some empathy in giving directions. Don't bark orders at a stressed rider. Just tell them what you are doing and what you expect them to do, and in such a way that everyone understands that this isn't a negotiation or dialogue.
- b. At rear of the field: At least that's what the rulebook says to do when you award a lap. In reality, you will release the rider a little early so he can reach racing speed as the rear of the field approaches. Timing is everything here, as is communicating your intent and actions to a stressed rider. Sometimes, if the course is very technical, or the pits are located next to where the peloton will approach a corner, you may release the rider a bit early to ensure safety. What we don't want is the rider having to sprint to close a gap on a field that has already passed your location. What we really, really don't want is to send the rider out so late that s/he gets dropped (and eventually lapped /pulled). Err on the side of the rider.
- c. Free laps for breakaways: What happens when a rider in a breakaway has a mishap? If it's a multiple rider break, no problem. Back to their group they go, if



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it's still a break. If the group is caught during the lap your rider is in the pit, put the rider back in the field with his break partners.

If it's a solo rider, you may need to have a sense of either how far or how long (in time) the break was off the front. A stopwatch does become useful here. One of the softer sciences of officiating is determining when a break is "established" enough to merit returning a rider to a position in front of the field. One can look at road races and see that officials usually don't put a motorcycle on a break until it has 15-30 seconds off of the field. This would be a good starting point for considering the plight of the solo break with a flat – with less than 15 seconds, we are inclined to put the rider back in the field rather than to try and reinsert immediately in front of a charging peloton. This is especially so if the break has only been away for a lap or two.

- d. At one lap down: Occasionally, a rider will be reinserted as if they were awarded a lap, but scored at one lap down. This usually follows a denial of a free lap or an extended (botched?) repair. There is nothing wrong with re-entering a rider at one lap down, so long as the CR and CJ are aware of what you are doing. If in doubt, get approval from the CR.

3. Score the Race

Pit officials are expected to assist in scoring the race. While it is not expected that you will have a complete score sheet, you should have a working sense of the composition of breakaways, location of the field, and numbers of riders off the back.

Your primary motivation for doing this is selfish. You need to know into which group you will reinsert a rider after awarding a free lap. Yes, this information can (and has) saved many a judge in resolving questions of DNF riders, so keep a notebook. When it is time to attend to a rider in the pits, you are not expected to keep scoring – first things first. Don't be afraid to ask for help from the judges – they are on the stand scoring the race in large measure to assist you, as you are there to provide some measure of information to them.

4. Watch the race

On top of all the fun in the pits, you are also a field official – and are expected to be paying attention to the conduct of the race itself, particularly providing eyes on sprints and areas of the course not visible to the finish line, if feasible. Toward the end of the race, you may be directed to move your position to better observe the sprint and support/extend the field of view of the Chief Referee.

Managing the Pits - Notes

Work cooperatively with the mechanics: Respect the work they do, and they'll give you the respect you need to do your job. In general this means resisting the urge to give direction to the mechanics on how to fix bikes, hold riders, etc. You are expected, however, to control how and when the rider returns to the race. Don't let the mechanic



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make rulings on legitimacy of mishaps – ask for information if you need it (they might see a broken hub cone, for example, that you didn't catch), but you make the calls. Good mechanics know the rules, and professional ones have had officials training too. However, mechanics have a slightly different set of motivations than you do as an official. They get their kudos from getting the rider back into the race at all costs.

Control re-entry back in the race: Stand in front of the rider being held, watch the field approach, and communicate calmly with the rider as to when you are going to release them. When it's time to release, step aside and wave them on (We sometimes give a quick tap on the shoulder to reinforce that it's time to go).

Anticipate the release: We really don't want riders to have to sprint to catch the back of the field, as that isn't consistent with the purpose of the rule. Much better to be a little too loose than too strict on this point, particularly on tight/technical courses, where a late release means a rider may no longer be in contention. That is totally dependent on the size and speed of the peloton – the faster and larger the field, the more lenient one might be. There are courses so technical that if you don't put the rider out before the front of the peloton comes by, you won't be able to send the rider out at all. In such a case, a good option is to tell the rider, "I am going to put you out early so you can get up to speed and into the pack safely. I expect to see you drop into the back half of the field by the time you reach the next corner. Do you understand?" If the rider then bolts from the pit and takes the first wheel, you can put the rider down a lap.

Free lap determinations are called tighter late in the race: One of the reasons we feel comfortable putting a rider in halfway back in the field late in the race is that we are also much more rigorous in enforcing the rule late in the race. We don't want someone to take advantage of the FLR to get a late rest, so be both quick and thorough when the rider approaches.

Be decisive! Whatever decision you make, make it quickly. This gives the mechanic time to do their thing, or at the very least gives a rider with a denied lap an opportunity to chase – they probably won't get back in the field, but a quick return might save them a heavy pro-rated time penalty in a stage race.

Manage how riders approach the pit: Remember, riders can't ride backward on the course to reach the pit. A rider doing that – or making a U-turn on the course to come back – has earned at least a denial of the free lap, or removal from the race if their actions endangered others.

Don't penalize the rider for a mechanic's mistake: Occasionally, a mechanic screws up – we're all humans. Don't deny a second free lap for something out of the rider's direct control, even if the replacement bike had, say, a loose quick release.

Have fun in the pits – it's a great assignment!



ROAD MODULE 4 – ASSISTANT REFEREE: CRITERIUM PIT Pre-Test Answers



1. Which of the following is **NOT** a “recognized mishap”?
 - (a) Being delayed by a crash by the group ahead.

2. Handlebars with forearm supports may be used in which of the following sets of events:
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3. Lapped riders in a criterium:
 - (e) All of the above.

4. No free laps may be granted in the final _____ km of a criterium.
 - (d) 8

5. On a course of less than _____ km, two laps may be allowed for any mishap.
 - (d) 1

6. During a criterium, a rider passes the pit and then has a flat tire. In order to return to the pit quickly to change wheels, the rider makes a “U-turn” in the middle of the road, nearly hitting a group of riders and causing them to brake violently. What action should the Referee in the pit take?
 - (e) Either (a) or (b), to be decided per the judgment of the Pit Referee.

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