

An open letter to riders, organisers, and officials of Cycling Time Trials

Equality in sport has been an issue that has been frequently raised across sports including at Cycling Time Trials events. Although we have seen great progress in recent years, with many events embracing equal prize money for male and female competitors, we feel it is time that this progress is reflected in the regulations of the governing body. Although amendments to the rules are not being voted on this year, we call for a voluntary adoption of our proposal and hope that by building momentum, the regulation can be readily adopted into the CTT regulations next year.

We propose an amendment to CTT regulation 27 (k), that at a minimum, prize money for male and female competitors finishing in the top 3 across all age categories be equal provided there are a sufficient number of finishers within that category. An organiser may choose to award fewer than three prizes in a category, but this must apply to both male and female competitors. This level of equality is a minimum standard that we feel can be met at all events. Although our proposal does not in all cases provide the complete equality we feel is deserved, we aim to build a consensus that can be accepted universally.

We believe our proposal is beneficial to riders, organisers, and the sport more widely. Female athletes put in equal efforts to male athletes and it is right that those awarded prizes are given the same opportunities as the male athletes they are competing alongside. Female competitors are also underrepresented at events and measures that encourage greater participation are likely to yield far bigger increases in race entry numbers than those disproportionately favouring the saturated market of male competitors. Furthermore, Cycle racing on public roads is in decline and in order to encourage more young riders to take part and protect the future of the sport, it is necessary to align the values of the governing body to those held in wider society. Gender equality is a key part of this.

There is widespread backing for equal prize money. Not only do a large proportion of events already meet or surpass our proposal, a 2019 survey by Grass Roots Cycle Racing (full report at <https://bit.ly/2GW6LBX>), recorded 81% of respondents in favour of prize equality with support from very large majorities amongst both male and female respondents. We are also aware of several recent successful campaigns calling for organisers to provide equal prize money. We are not aware of any recent popular campaigns to redistribute prize money unequally. Delegates to CTT meetings are there to promote the views of those they represent rather than simply their own personal opinions. The evidence is unequivocal that there is overwhelming support for prize equality.

There are several commonly raised concerns regarding equal prize money, we believe these to be unfounded and provide reasons why below.

i. Prize money is limited and cannot be increased

It is entirely the decision of the organiser whether or not they award prize money and how much they allocate to the prize fund. We are not calling for the fund to be increased, simply distributed in a manner that offers a fair opportunity to male and female competitors.

ii. More men enter and prize money should be allocated proportionally

Allocating prize money based on proportion of entries reinforces existing inequalities and offers no means of addressing the problem of low female participation. If a job advert posted a salary that was twice as large for successful male applicants as for successful female applicants, we would not expect as many women as men to apply for that job. The same is true of prize money in CTT races. The argument of proportional prize money effectively blames the female riders who have entered for not encouraging more people to compete against them. This is simply not their responsibility, they are there to compete. The argument also misrepresents equality. We would not think it fair if a millionaire paid the same in taxes as someone on minimum wage, rather we would consider a more equal society is one where the millionaire pays more. Fairness means using our resources to favour those that are most disadvantaged in order to help address inequalities. This principle also applies to our problem. If that means the male field is subsidising the female field slightly, then it is doing so in the name of equality, not in opposition to it.

iii. Women can just win the overall prize

Whilst there have been some notable cases where female riders have won races overall, this is the exception and not the rule. There are well characterised biological differences in male and female athletes that put males at a significant advantage. The level playing field that this argument relies on is simply non-existent.

iv. What about other categories

We are not denying the existence of other inequalities and encourage organisers to address those where they have the ability to do so. We cannot solve all problems in one go and instead propose a realistic step in the right direction. Creating momentum for removing one inequality paves the way for others to be addressed in future.

We believe what our proposal offers is both realistic and acceptable to all. By building support, we can bring about a positive change that is in the interests of all concerned and encourage riders, organisers and officials to support and share our proposal. We urge delegates to raise it at district AGMs and hope that we will help build momentum towards greater equality in our sport.

Team Lifting Gear Products/ Cycles in Motion