

# On supporting your Riders during a race

## Comments from a current Rider

*The following a must-read for parents and family who travel to races and wonder how they can best support their Rider... this Rider just nails it. Do these things, and your Rider will look at races with fresh enthusiasm. Great for new parents, and something every parent should read a few times a year:*

### **“Greetings, fellow howdy butts!...**

I don't know if you guys know this, but we have States this weekend. Wow.

I'm low-key freaking out. Let's all hydrate and sleep the heck out of the next few days, so we can make Sunday our best effort yet. But due to our numbers, most of us will not be actual point earners. Our team is just too awesomely big. Which is fine! Because I have a theory.

My theory is that cheering literally makes us go faster. So, even if you (like me) might not be one of those people they tally up, you are so vital! I carry the motivational things people say with me through my race, partially because my brain short-circuits a little bit and can't come up with new material, and mostly because it's fairly inspiring to have another person's parent screaming at you.

So, if you wanna do your part this weekend, keep your vocal chords primed! I have some tips that help me (and other riders have agreed with me on these). Parents, coaches, and other non-racing supporters are definitely one of the reasons we do so well! And, of course, the way us teammates shout at each other really is special, despite the copious amounts of Enos involved.

This is not a scolding. Our team does this really well. It is a reminder, and maybe a nudge towards having a state champion cheering section.

### **Now for the instructions (more like loose guidelines, really. get creative!)**

1. Be Loud! We are suffering, and even if it looks like we are not reacting to the noise, we soak it up and love it! If you're tired of yelling, clapping is good!
2. Names help. I know you might not know every rider's name, and that's ok, but try to learn it. "Go Lily" is so much better than "Go", especially

because I know you're talking to me and not to the girl who might be chasing me. And names sink in extra hard through a wall of noise and pain that can be a race.

3. Positivity. I know this seems like a no-brainer, and our team is really very good at it, but sometimes other team's coaches especially say things that make me sad, like "Go faster!" Fast is the general idea, and I know that. But to have someone tell me I'm doing a good job is so much more supportive. And we all really do do that very well. But it's going on the list of well-rounded cheering anyway.
4. Cheer for longer than you think they need. For example, if you see someone on the hill coming towards you, start cheering. Even if they're not right next to you yet. Sometimes I can see people I know will cheer well waiting for me to get closer to cheer me on. (And sometimes I get right in front of them and still nothing, but that's a separate issue that has been properly dealt with) Cheer after they've passed you, too! They can probably still hear you, and even if they can't sometimes it makes me feel very useful to exert some form of energy when the people going by are exerting so much.
5. Be responsive to everyone who goes by. I know that this is exhausting. And that howdy butts look out for other howdy butts. But the other teams need love, too! It's a real bummer to go by someone and have them not react at all, even if it means clapping for Redwood or something dreadful like that. Especially if you're alone on the course... If you're in a mob by the finish line or something, maybe take a break. But if someone's passing you and you're the only one around, help them out with some noise or else its just awkwardly loud breathing on the rider's end.
6. Don't worry about what you're saying. I don't have too hard of a time coming up with statements followed by a compliment, when I'm getting tired of the same old cheers. "Your helmet is blue, Tam Kid. Nice coordination!" or something like that is entertaining for the cheerer and helps the rider (hopefully) by letting them know you see them and notice something specific about them.
7. Reminders to drink are always good. I think this one is kind of tricky, because some people don't like coaching during their race. But sometimes I forget to drink. Excessive amounts of instructing, I think, should be avoided. But this is definitely more personal preference for the rider... Some people are more comfortable with feedback than others. Maybe during a race is not that time to give feedback, I'm not sure. But I think a reminder to drink is perfectly acceptable, as long as it comes at an appropriate time (don't tell someone sprinting downhill to drink, for example. They can do that later)

And to all who don't race, I know this is how you spend your day at the races. Thank you so much. It really does change the way I race to have you all there supporting me and everyone else! And it is exhausting to cheer for everyone. But we need to do it! This is our last push, and our shot at winning States! I am

so unbelievably proud of everyone, and I know we can kill it this weekend no matter what if we keep up the great motivation we always have! As always, no matter what happens, I will be impressed, because these races are truly impressive every time.

Love you all! Lily [Willis]"