

10 simple things to remember when racing as a team

By *B.J. Basham*

This past weekend, I was working with a team of riders who were preparing for an important local race. As I was writing a pep-talk e-mail, I decided to remind them of all the things that we all really already knew but were not putting into practice, and have been learning the hard way.

These things seem like common sense when you are standing on the sidelines, but sometimes do not even come to mind in the heat of the racing action. Below is a list of such “rules” that we can all benefit from when racing, either as a team, or even when you are the only one from your team or club that shows up.

1. Have a reason for every effort you make in the race. Jumping off the front and hanging 20 yards ahead of the field for a couple of laps is a waste of energy. If you are going to try a move, give it 100% commitment. If you do not think it will work, then you do not have a good reason for doing it.
2. Stay in the front half of the field for the whole race. There is nothing to be gained by sitting more than halfway back. You cannot respond to an attack or launch one of your own.
3. Don't try to chase on the front of the field all alone. If you are racing with a team, get three or more riders to share the work. Don't start chasing hard until you have your backup. If you are racing without a team, try to instigate the other riders in the field to start working. Even if all they do is pull through and off, they are keeping the speed up.
4. If you get into a break, don't be the only rider in the break who is working to establish the gap. If you find that no one else wants to work to get away, they probably will let you work until you. Sit up and try again later in another break.
5. Get to the race early enough to talk to the rest of the team about the race and how the team might ride. This is a good chance for the riders on the team to share experiences with the course and other riders in the race. Make a plan for how the team will ride the race and make sure everyone on the team knows the plan.
6. Have a back-up plan in case your original one does not work out, and make sure that everyone knows, without discussion, when it is time to switch to it.
7. When going for a team win, it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice the results of a few riders on the team. In the truest sense, finishing the race should not be first concern of anyone on the team. If a rider is worried that if they work too hard they may not finish in the field, then that rider has essentially limited the amount of work they can contribute.
8. Stick around long enough after the race to talk about what happened, what went right, and what went wrong. Waiting too long can make it harder to remember so plan on a team meeting right after the race, while you are cooling down or after everyone has cleaned up.
9. If you get a good result due to the team working for you, remember to let them all know how much you appreciate their efforts. Some teams share in the prizes, but a verbal “thank you” is usually the reward that most riders really value.
10. Never give up. The race is not over until someone crosses the finish line.

B. J. Basham is an associate coach with [Peaks Coaching Group](#). A competitive cyclist since 1984, in many disciplines and at various levels, B.J. is available for coaching and questions at BJ@peakscoachinggroup.com.