

# A Utah First - Draft Legal Racing

## A Triathletes of Utah Interview



Picture courtesy of Eduardo Miller ©

**A new format of racing is coming to Utah next month. Draft Legal triathlon is a little unique and not many people get the chance to race and experience these shorter faster races. We tapped the knowledge of Intermountain Tri President Nat Harward to tell us more about draft-legal racing and the upcoming Wasatch Tri.**

**Nat, thanks for answering a few questions about the new draft-legal race coming to Utah next month. Can you tell us a little bit about what draft-legal triathlon is?**

You bet.

Draft-legal is the format of the Olympic Games, NCAA Triathlon and most tris abroad. The key difference is drafting is allowed on the bike, hence draft "legal."

Drafting while swimming or cycling allows you to go a lot faster with a lot less effort. So competitors in a draft-legal race will ride in packs, just as you see in criteriums and pro cycling races like the Tour de France. For triathlon, this also means road frames instead of TTs, generally more technical courses, "punchier" races with attacks and chase groups, and that having sharp bike skills has a greater impact on your results.

Overall, it makes for an exciting race with A LOT of position changes and the opportunity for team strategy. When it comes down to it, I'd say that non-draft is an individual time trial race of *time*; draft-legal is a race of *position*.

**This is a first for our state, correct? How did a race of this format come to be hosted here?**

As far as I know, yes.

USAT has been asking Wes (BAM founder/head coach, and Team USA Youth & Junior Nat'l Team Coach) for years to get another draft-legal event established in the western US. Since DL is the format of the Games and Age Group Sprint Worlds, we need more opportunities for people to develop and compete in this format in order for the US to be well represented on the international stage.

The impetus for making it happen now is that Tri Monroe, one of the few DL events in the west for youth & juniors, cancelled abruptly a few weeks ago. One of the USAT High Performance managers didn't want to leave all those youth without a race, so he asked Wes and I if we could make it happen this year. We got to work. After scouting several locations, we approached Mapleton City and the developers of Maple Lakes, which has a man-made water skiing lake. Both groups have been supportive, so we've moved forward and opened registration on Wed, May 19.

**Who will be able to participate in this style of race format?**

Everyone 7 and up!

There are several divisions:

Youth Age Group - These are the only non-draft options of the weekend, and are designed for youth with no or little triathlon experience. Very short distances. Non-draft bike. Heats for 7-11 year olds and 12-19 year olds. Great option for single-sport athletes who are open to giving triathlon a go!

Youth Elite - Ages 13-15

Junior Elite - Ages 16-19

Under 25 / Elite Development - Ages 19-25

Age Group - Ages 19 to 100!

The Age Group race is open to any adult and will be draft-legal, so a great DL first-timer option! Normally, you'd have to go to Clermont, FL in March to have this opportunity.

For all youth as young as 7, the Youth Age Group is open without requirement.

So there's a place for everyone somewhere in the weekend, whether brand new to triathlon, brand new to draft-legal, or very experienced in the DL format.

**Is there anything special people should know about racing in this type of race?**

Yes, for sure.

These races are very short!!

All events are Super Sprint distances ... so half of a Sprint!

375m swim  
10k bike (two 5k loops)  
2.5k run (two 1.25k loops)

(The Youth AG race for 7-11yo is even shorter.)

We will have A LOT of out-of-state competitors. After Day 1 of registrations, just 3% are from Utah!

Several heats will be capped at 30 racers. The rest will max at 75. And heats have the entire course to themselves until they finish, so this is different from an AG triathlon with rolling or wave swim starts separated by only a few minutes.

Some rule variations:

Drafting allowed, obviously. Which also means you can pass on the right.

Road frames only, and no aerobars that extend beyond the drops. They must be connected across the front.

All wheels must have at least 12 spokes.

Get ready to swim! As I said before, DL is a race of *position*. You'll want to come out of the water in a good *position* -- with as many people as possible so you can be part of the biggest draft pack, which is the best position to be in ... benefitting from the draft of lots of other athletes.

Also plan to leave the wetsuit at home. We anticipate plenty warm temperatures, and because the swim in the Super Sprint is so short, the positive tradeoff of gained buoyancy for faster speed comes with the liability of a much longer T1 as you try to strip off your suit as everyone else is jumping on their bikes, leaving you behind with no drafting partners.

ALSO...

For the Junior Elite and U25/EDR races, we are doing a Prelims + Finals format!! Prelims on Friday, reseeded heats for Finals on Saturday.

As far as we know, this will be the first time EVER that a prelim-finals race has taken place anywhere in the country! Very exciting development, following a direction that international racing is headed.

**Will this course and format be spectator friendly?**

Yes! We think so.

With smaller fields (30-75 at a time), it's a little easier to track what's going on.

Everyone in a wave starts at the same time, so your course position is absolute. There's no crossing the finish line and waiting 15 minutes to see if someone who rolled into the water at the end of the line ends up with a faster total time than you.

The course is MUCH smaller. The entirety of the swim and run, and about 1/4 of the bike course (which is, itself, just a 5k loop), all happen around the same block, half of which is Mapleton City Park. So from the Park, spectators can quickly see their racers at various places throughout the race!

We plan to have a technical bike section in a school parking lot, which will be fun to watch but furthest away. We hope to figure out a way to livestream portions of that so people can follow the action there from wherever they are.

**Is this a once in a chance event or will it be a regular thing on our calendar?**

For now it is once-in-a-chance, but we hope it will be a successful weekend that becomes an anchor event on the intermountain west multisport event calendar.

**Thanks again Nat for informing us about some of the exciting things that this race will bring!**

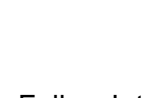
You're welcome! Thanks for asking.

Hope to see everyone there and I personally invite everyone to race and/or volunteer ... because we will need A LOT of people on the bike course to keep racers safe.

**To register for the Wasatch triathlon [CLICK HERE!](#)**

**The Wasatch Triathlon is a production of Intermountain Tri and BAM Juniors, 501(c)3 organizations driving adult and youth participation in sport throughout the intermountain west, with support from Balanced Art Multisport.**

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