

# Rules of Mt Bike Ultimate v3.1

*Version 3.1 posted July 5, 2016 incorporating changes proposed and accepted during the Great Rules Debates of 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016*

*Most recent updates were to Sections II.4 and X.3*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. General Description. Mountain Bike Ultimate (MBU) is a non-contact sport played by two teams on bicycles. The object of the game is to catch a pass behind the "clear line", like in half-court basketball, then advance the disc downfield and complete a pass through two "goal cones". Once any pass is caught, the receiver may not pedal but may continue to coast. They must then pass the disc before they run out of speed and put a foot on the ground. Any time a pass is incomplete or intercepted, a turnover occurs and the other team gets the disc and becomes offensive. The teams can be any size, but 3 or 4 players per team are recommended. Optional: For odd number of players a "Full-Time Offense" player can be designated. Typically the only rule added to the Full-Time O player is that they are not permitted to Scoop (see Section IV.)

2. Spirit of the Game. MBU depends on a spirit of sportsmanship that places the responsibility for safety and fair play on each player. It is up to each player to adhere to the rules, and ride responsibly to avoid collisions, injury and equipment damage. While some collisions are unavoidable, playing dangerously cannot be tolerated.

## II. FIELD OF PLAY

1. The field of play is a grassy area with two cones marking the goal line and additional cone(s) marking the clear line. The field may be of any size and the out-of-bounds areas usually follow natural boundaries and topography, rather than any pre-determined markers.

2. The two cones marking the goal line should be approximately 10 yards apart, in the middle of the field width, and there should be at least 15 yards of space for an end zone behind the goal line. Optional: Instead of cones, vertical poles (typically thin PVC) can be used to create "goal posts" which help in the through/not-through calls during play.

3. The cone(s) marking the clear line should be positioned mid-width across the field and have at least 15 yards of maneuvering space behind it. There should be about 50 yards between the goal line and the clear line, but this can be decreased in high-wind situations. At least one, but preferably three cones should be used for the clear line. Two cones is definitely a no-no.
4. If the disc lands out of bounds, any player may retrieve it and place it on the field near the landing point. The disc is then put into play from this point. The person who retrieves the disk may place it on the field either heads-up, or tails-up.
5. The defender may not force the thrower out of the field of play. The thrower may continue to roll alongside the boundary without being cut off or slowed down by a defender.
6. In tournament play, additional cones may mark the boundaries between adjacent fields. If so, then a pass caught out of bounds is a turnover, and the receiver must place the disc on the field near the boundary. Catching the disc in bounds, then rolling out of bounds is not a turnover, but the thrower must roll back in-bounds before throwing or a turnover will result. The defender may not follow the thrower out of bounds, nor block them from coming back in-bounds or a foul may be called.

### **III. STARTING AND RESTARTING PLAY**

1. Starting play - the scramble: At the beginning of a half, players line up on the clear line and someone throws/rolls the disc towards the goal line in a somewhat random manner. After the disc is thrown, players may start riding. Whoever picks up the disc becomes the first thrower.
2. Turnovers are not a stoppage of play. After a turnover, any player on the offense may scoop the disc. This should be done as quickly as reasonably possible.
3. Interruptions during play: When play stops, the player who was in possession retains possession and should scoop the disc to re-start play. After a foul, the fouled player must scoop the disc. If the player who had the disc substitutes out, the substitute should scoop the disc.

### **IV. THE SCOOP**

1. A scoop is executed by picking the disc up off the ground while riding. After the disk is picked up, the player may not pedal.

2. If any part of the player or his/her bicycle touches the disc and the disc is not picked up, a turnover results. This rule does not apply during the scramble (section III.1).

3. The offense may scoop while traveling in any direction and speed. The defense may not block or hinder the scooper in any way until a reasonable grace period after the scoop is made. To do so is a dangerous play.

4. A player attempting to scoop the disc may decide to wave off the attempt and, as long as the disc is not touched, another attempt may be made. If the offense waves off the second scoop attempt on the same play a turnover results. This rule does not apply during the scramble (section III.1).

## V. PASSING

1. The person in possession of the disc (the thrower) must throw the disc before pedaling or touching the ground with any body part (typically a foot) or a turnover will result.

2. If the thrower takes his foot off the pedal before, during or after the catch but before throwing, the foot must come back to the pedal at least momentarily before it hits the ground. A turnover results if one of the thrower's feet hit the ground before contacting the pedal after the throw.

3. A pass is considered complete as soon as it is caught, as long as no part of the receiver's body is in contact with the ground. If the receiver's foot is off the pedal when the disc is caught and then touches the ground before touching the pedal, it is a completed pass followed by a turnover.

## VI. CLEARING

1. The offensive team must be "clear" before a goal can be scored. A team becomes clear after catching the disc behind the clear line. The disk itself must be fully behind the clear line when caught.

2. If the defense intercepts a pass behind the clear line, that team is automatically clear (an auto-clear).

## VII. SCORING

1. A goal is scored when an offensive player completes a pass to a teammate from the clear-line side of the goal line to the other side of the goal line. The **disc** must travel in the air across the line between the two goal cones.

The exact positions of the thrower, receiver and/or their bicycles are irrelevant.

2. After a goal is caught, play continues uninterrupted in a make-it-take-it fashion. The offensive team must clear the disc before scoring another goal. It is customary for someone to call out the game score.

3. A player cannot score by riding through the goal cones with the disc. Should a receiver's momentum carry him/her through the cones after gaining possession, play continues without interruption.

4. A player must acknowledge that s/he has scored a goal. If that player plays the disc unknowingly into a turnover, then no goal is awarded.

5. Length of the Game. Games are played without a clock or time limits. A team wins after scoring a predetermined number of goals. Games are typically to 5 points, win-by-2, with a cap at 7. This number is often decreased in adverse weather (wind or rain) conditions. A short halftime break is usually taken after one team scores half the number of goals required to win.

## **VIII. TURNOVERS**

A turnover occurs when:

1. There is an incomplete, intercepted, knocked down, or out-of-bounds pass.
2. The person carrying the disc touches the ground before the disc is thrown. It is also a turnover if the thrower's foot leaves the pedal before throwing and does not return to the pedal before touching the ground.
3. The crankarms of the thrower's bike rotate in a forward direction.
4. The disc is handed from player to player.
5. The thrower intentionally deflects a pass to him/herself off another player.
6. The thrower catches their own throw. However, if another player touches the disc it is considered a complete pass and is not a turnover.
7. There is a foul or dangerous play called against the offense.

## **IX. FOULS**

1. Fouls occur when bikes and/or bodies collide. Only the player who was fouled can call a foul. The foul must be announced by calling out "You Asshole" or "Foul" immediately after the foul has occurred.

2. The player initiating contact (or arguing louder) is guilty of a foul.

3. Throwing Fouls: A throwing foul may be called when there is contact between the thrower and the defender. Contact occurring during the follow through (after the disc has been released) is not a foul. When a throwing foul is called, play stops and possession reverts back to the thrower after a scoop. If the thrower is fouled in the act of throwing and the pass is completed, the foul is automatically declined and play continues without interruption.

4. Cheezy foul rule: The thrower should not call a foul if they initiate contact by attempting to throw "through" the marker.

5. Catching Fouls:

A. A catching foul may be called when there is contact between opposing players and/or bicycles in the process of attempting a catch, interception, or knock down. A certain amount of incidental contact during or immediately after the catching attempt is often unavoidable and is not a foul. The person closest to the disc generally has a right to go to the disc unimpeded by other players, or block other players from going to the disc.

B. If a player on the offensive team calls a catching foul after successfully catching the disc, he must drop the disc for a scoop. Alternatively, he may elect not to call a foul and play on.

C. If a catching foul occurs and is uncontested, the player fouled gains possession at the point of the infraction. If the call is disputed, the disc goes back to the thrower. If an uncontested foul by the defender occurs after the disc travels through the goal cones, it is a goal.

6. Strip:

No defensive player may touch the disc while it is in possession of the thrower or receiver. If a defensive player touches the disc, the player in possession calls "Strip" and drops the disc on the ground for a scoop. The player in possession then scoops the disc and play continues.

7. Continuation Rule:

A. Disc in the Air

(i) If a foul, violation, or dangerous play is called while the disc is in the air, the play is always completed.

(ii) If the team that called the foul, violation or dangerous play gains possession as a result of that pass (e.g., a complete pass following a throwing foul), play continues. In this situation, players should call "play on."

(iii) If the pass is completed, but the defensive effort on the pass was affected by the violation, the pass does not count and possession reverts back to the thrower.

#### B. Disc Not in the Air

(i) If a foul, violation, or dangerous play is called while the disc is not in the air, and a player attempts a pass before play has stopped, and the pass is incomplete, it is a turnover.

(ii) If a foul, violation, or dangerous play is called while the disc is not in the air, and a player attempts a pass before play has stopped, and the pass is completed, the pass does not count, and possession reverts back to the original thrower.

### **X. POSITIONING AND DANGEROUS PLAYS**

1. It is the responsibility of all players to ride responsibly and avoid contact in any way possible. Unavoidable minor contact is not a foul.

2. A "Dangerous Play" occurs if a player moves into a position where dangerous contact could happen. Contact is not necessary for a dangerous play to occur. If a dangerous play is called by the defense, a turnover results and the player calling the dangerous play scoops the disc. If a dangerous play is called by the offense, the disc is dropped and the person in possession re-starts play with a scoop.

3. No player may cut directly in front of the path of another player, unless the other player has sufficient space and time to move away to avoid a collision. If two players are rolling side-by-side, it is the player in front that can force the other player to steer away or brake to avoid a collision. This is very dependent on the speed and direction of the players and whether the players are concentrating on catching or throwing the disc. If there is not sufficient space and time to avoid a collision, then a "dangerous play" may be called. Under most circumstances, the offense must yield to the defender and steer away to avoid a collision. If the disc is in the air, then under most circumstances the defender must steer away to avoid a collision.

4. The defender may gently "steer off" an offensive player from his current direction, except as noted below. Before steering off, the defender must change direction gradually enough to allow the offensive player to steer away from a collision. He must also start his movement far enough away from the thrower, such that the thrower can realize he is being steered off and has time to react.

5. After receiving a pass, the receiver may initially continue in the direction he had when the catch was made without interference or being steered off by the defender. After a brief recovery period the new thrower must avoid a collision with the defender or an offensive foul may be called.

6. A dangerous play occurs if the defender tries to steer off the thrower too quickly. An offensive foul occurs if the thrower contacts the defender when he could have steered away. This is a highly subjective situation and should be avoided by following the "spirit of the game".

7. Picks - Picks are legal (like in basketball), however the offense must avoid creating potential collision situations. The defender may call a dangerous play if a pick results in an unavoidable collision or near-collision.

8. If a defender has a foot on the ground, then it is illegal to continue to move their bike or body to a position that hinders the forward progress of a person on the other team. Blocking the disk is still legal.

## **XII. TIME-OUTS**

1. There are no time outs except for injury or equipment problems except as noted in #2 below.

2. Before the game starts, the captains or tournament director may allow each team a predetermined number of strategic time outs per half. Only the player with the disc may call a strategic time out. He then drops the disc where the call was made and restarts play after the time-out.

3. Any player can call an injury or equipment time-out. The time-out call is in effect at the time of the injury/malfunction. In other words, the call is retroactive to the time that the injury/ malfunction occurred. If the disc was in the air during the injury/malfunction, the play is completed. If the disc is caught, the player who caught the disc scoops it when play resumes.

4. When play resumes after a time-out, the player who had possession of the disc when the stoppage occurred scoops the disc. If that player leaves the field due to injury or malfunction, the replacing player scoops it. The disc is put into play at the location where the disc was when the call was made.

## **XII. SUBS**

1. Substitutions may be made at any time and are performed without any stoppage of play, similar to ice hockey.

2. The player leaving the field should ride over to the sideline into proximity of the player waiting to enter the field. The new player may not enter the field until the player leaving is within proximity and may not gain additional positioning advantage on the defender as a result of the substitution. The defender should call a stoppage of play if the new player enters the field ahead of the player leaving the field.

### **XIII. ETIQUETTE/MISC**

1. Should a dispute or confusion arise on the field, it should be common practice to drop the disc, stop play, and resume with a scoop after the matter is resolved. If there is ever a failure to come to an agreement over any call, the disc reverts back to the thrower for a scoop.

2. In the case where a novice player commits a violation out of sincere ignorance of rules, it is common practice to stop play and explain the violation. This is especially important while new players are learning about positioning and steering off opposing players (or getting steered off).

3. If fouls are called by offensive and defensive players on the same play, the disc reverts back to the thrower for a scoop.

4. If the offensive and defensive players both catch the disc at the same time, possession goes to the offensive player.

5. Any bicycle may be used, as long as it is in good working order and has fully functional front and rear brakes. Bicycle helmets are strongly recommended. Bicycle gloves (padded palms) are discouraged though Ultimate gloves can be useful in wet and/or cold conditions. Bar-ends are illegal.

*Questions, comments and/or suggestions can be sent to The MBU Central Scrutinizer at [mbu \[at\] mbu-central \[dot\] com](mailto:mbu@mbu-central.com).*