

Calculation of time gaps for stages "expected to finish in bunch sprints"

Decision of the UCI Management Committee – 2 February 2018

Implementation Protocol

Introduction and description of the issue

The UCI Security and Technical Regulations Working Group, comprising representatives from the UCI's partner associations (AIGCP, AIOCC, CPA), has noted an increasing level of danger in bunch sprints in stage races, both for sprinters as well as for riders targeting the general classification. The advent of these dangerous situations can be partially explained as follows:

- Teams have become more professional and specialised; the standard of riders has become more homogenised and the number of sprinters and sprinters' teams able to contest the sprint has increased;
- Most teams form a "train" of riders dedicated to lead out their sprinter;
- Even teams that do not necessarily have a sprinter are increasingly inclined to use a train to assist their general classification leader, ensuring that they are not on the wrong side of a split at the finish which could cost some seconds.

It should be remembered that if a gap of over 1 second is noted between two riders, this represents a split. In this case a rider who is a "victim" of this split is allocated a different time, calculated between the winner of the stage and the rider in question.

In this way, the rider is not subject to the actual time gap between him and the rider just ahead, but rather the time gap to the winner of the stage. This means that two riders may have only 1 second between them when they cross the finish line but would be allocated a time gap of several seconds in the stage results when the split occurs in a strung-out peloton.

Consequently, the pressure in the final kilometres of stages ending in a bunch sprint has increased in recent years. The presence of so many riders (sprinters and general classification team leaders) and the jostling for position to get to the front of the peloton has increased the danger in certain stages that conclude with a bunch sprint.

In conclusion, it is agreed that the current philosophy of road cycling must be maintained in adapting regulations related to the race finish. Consequently, times must be taken at the finish line; the sprint must also be respected and preserved without being perceived as an exhibition without any sporting consequences. For this reason, several solutions that included the automatic neutralisation of time gaps have been discarded.

Expected effects of the proposed change of the regulations

The objective is to adapt the method of calculating time gaps at the finish in certain situations (bunch sprint) by increasing the time gap required for a split to 3 seconds (instead of 1 second).

This would mean that a rider who is distanced from the previous rider in front of him by less than 3 seconds would be given the same time. It is useful to translate these time gaps into distances to allow the rule to be clearly visualised.

Thus, in a sprint at 60 km/h the actual distance between riders represents:

- A 1-second gap = 17 metres
- A 3-second gap = 50 metres

Implementation Protocol

Provision 1 – Scope of application

This protocol is implemented by the UCI between 1st March 2018 and 31st December 2018 and made available to all stage races of the International Calendar.

Organisers may decide to use this protocol on their event, under the supervision of the Commissaires' Panel of each concerned event, especially considering:

- The profile of the stages and the format of the event;
- The level of the teams;
- The number of riders in the race and the number of riders per team;

The UCI may take part in any discussion involving the participants, teams and riders.

Provision 2 – Decision-making process

- The protocol was tested during the 2017 Tour de Suisse and the 2017 Tour de France,
- The Professional Cycling Council as well as the UCI Management Committee decided to expand the opportunity of using this protocol during the 2018 season to all organisers who wish so.

Provision 3 – Articles affected

Appendix 1 below makes this protocol concrete with a derogation from both Articles 1.2.107 and 2.3.040 of the UCI Regulations that describe the usual method of calculating time gaps for Road races.

Provision 4 – “3 last kilometer’s rule”

It is worth mentioning that this special method of calculating time gaps does not replace the “3 last kilometers’ rule” which still applies fully “in the case of a duly noted fall, puncture or mechanical incident in the last three kilometers of a road race stage” (art. 2.6.027).

Provision 5 - Arbitration

The implementation of this protocol will be conducted by the UCI; the President of the Commissaires' Panel will interpret situations as necessary and implement any exceptions.

Provision 6 – The choice of the organiser

- The organisers who wish to implement this protocol of calculation of time gaps shall act as follows:
 - o The organiser identifies the stages "expected to finish in bunch sprints";
 - o The organiser informs the President of the Commissaires' Panel appointed on its event;
 - o The organiser adds the following provision in the special regulations of its event:

Article XX – Stages expected to finish in bunch sprints

The following stages have been identified as « expected to finish in bunch sprint »

- Stage XX
- Stage XX
- Etc.

During these stages, the protocol of calculation of time gaps for stages “expected to finish in bunch sprints” published on the UCI website in the Regulations section will be applied.

Appendix 1

Current Regulations

Time-keeping

- 1.2.107** When several riders finish in a group, all riders in the same group shall be credited with the same time.

If there is a difference of one second or more between the back of the back wheel of the last rider in a group and the front of the front wheel of the first rider of the following group, the timekeeper-commissaires shall give a new time taken on the first rider of this group.

Any difference of one second or more (back wheel – front wheel) between riders implies a new time.

(text modified on 1.01.05; 1.01.09)

Finishes and timekeeping

- 2.3.040** All riders in a given bunch shall be credited with the same time when they cross the finishing line.

Timekeeper-commissaires shall continue to officiate until the broom wagon arrives. They shall also record the times of riders that finish after the set deadlines and shall hand the list of recorded times to the President of the Commissaires' Panel.

(text modified on 1.01.05).

Derogation from the Regulations

Timekeeping

The timekeeping of stage races shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions established for one-day races at Articles 1.2.107 and 2.3.040 with the exception of stages that fulfil the following conditions:

- The stage is clearly identified as “expected to finish in a bunch sprint” by the organiser in the special regulations of the event;
- The organiser has also identified the stage as eligible for the application of Article 2.6.027 in the special regulations of the event.

In this situation, the following procedures apply from the first rider of the main peloton to cross the line to the last rider of the main peloton to cross the line:

- if a difference of under 3 seconds is noted between the back of the back wheel of a rider and the front of the front wheel of the following rider, the riders are given the same time;
- If a difference of 3 seconds or more is noted between the back of the back wheel of a rider and the front of the front wheel of the following rider, then the timekeeper shall record a new time gap calculated from the front of the front wheel of the rider and the front of the front wheel of the winner of the stage.

The “main peloton” refers to the group containing the highest number of riders.

Decisions regarding the application of this article shall be issued by the Commissaires' Panel in an independent manner.

Example applications of the rule

Example no. 1 – Finish with compact peloton and bunch sprint

The rule applies to all riders:

- any rider who finishes behind the preceding rider with a gap of **less than 3 seconds** is given the **same time** as the preceding rider;
- any rider who finishes behind the preceding rider with a gap of **3 seconds or more** is given a **new time**.

Example no. 2 – A sole rider (or small group of riders) finishes ahead followed by the peloton in a bunch sprint

The rule applies to the main peloton only in the following manner:

- if the first rider of the peloton is less than 1 second behind the rider/group finishing ahead, the peloton is given the **same time** as the rider/group finishing ahead.
- if the first rider of the peloton is **more than 1 second** behind the rider/group finishing ahead, the peloton is given a **new time**.
- Within the main peloton, only time gaps **in excess of 3 seconds** will be considered.

Example no. 3 – Finish with the peloton divided into several groups (20 riders, then 60, then 80, then 30)

The rule applies to the main peloton only, in other words from the group of 80 riders, in the following manner:

- the time gaps between the group of 20 and the group of 60, as well as the group of 60 and the group of 80, are recorded **if in excess of 1 second**.
- the time gaps within the group of 80 are recorded **if in excess of 3 seconds**.
- the time gaps between the group of 80 and the group of 30 are recorded **if in excess of 1 second**.