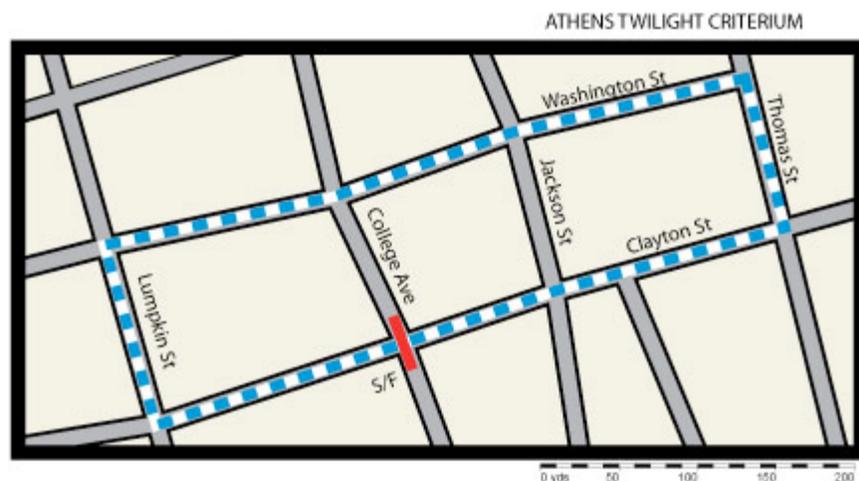




Historic Athens, Georgia hosts 30th Annual Athens Twilight Criterium & Festival Kicks Off 2009 USA CRITS Speed Week & National Series

Some of the best professional male and female sprint cyclists in the world will race in the 30th Annual Athens Twilight Criterium on April 25. As is customary, the riders will compete in separate events that customarily draw an estimated 30,000 spectators to historic, downtown Athens, Ga., every April.

The races are hotly contested on a closed, 1-kilometer course near the University of Georgia, and the men's race is the main event. Racers compete for 80 kilometers and ride so fast that the air they push literally bends trees lining the course. The pro women are formidable competitors too, and their 40-kilometer race generates lots of heated action as team tacticians try to gain dominance over the entire field.



The Athens Twilight Criterium headlines the 2009 USA CRITS Speed Week, which features seven races, in seven cities, in seven days. At stake is an \$80,000 purse for the men's match-up and \$35,000 for the women's. That puts the overall total for the Twilight and Speed Week at \$115,000—a \$15,000 increase over last year's prize money. The Twilight also kicks off the 2009 USA CRITS National Series, which features 10 races across the USA, including the finals in September, in Las Vegas.



Athens Twilight: Quick Facts

- An estimated one-million residents, competitors, and visitors have descended on Athens, over the past 30 years ago to see what has become a legendary racing event.
- Athens, the “Classic City”, is noted as the one of two primary homes for professional cycling in the USA. Boulder, Colo., is the other.
- This year, *Outside* magazine—a national publication with more than one million readers—voted the Athens Twilight the “**best road race in America.**”
- *Blue Ridge Outdoor* has also voted the Twilight as the “**best cycling event in the country.**”
- In previous years, *VeloNews* named the Twilight “America’s Criterium Not to Miss” and, this year, featured the Twilight in the *VeloNews* “**Race and Ride Guide to America’s Best.**”
- Originally staged during the summer, the main races were scheduled at night to beat the heat and to be entertainment events. Even though it is now held in the spring, the nighttime atmosphere is still one of its most appealing features.
- The night-time atmosphere of the Twilight is unparalleled at any venue across the country, and offers unique challenges to competitors who dare to face the 90-degree turns that make the Twilight a perennial favorite among the world’s best cyclists.
- The Twilight is not an official UGA “Town and Gown” event, but the crowd seems to get younger as the evening progresses. There are no events specifically for students, although many participate.
- When the Athens Twilight started in 1980, there were a couple of restaurants but no bars along the course. Now there are approximately 40 bars and 20 restaurants, and they provide outdoor space from which to view the races.
- In newly added Start Grid Qualifiers, fans can watch the pros up close as they compete on a stationary CompuTrainer for their starting position, not to mention a separate \$2,000 in prize money. Fans will get to see how hard the pros work during a race and a chance to talk to athletes or get an autograph or two before the big race on Saturday night.
- Since the first Twilight Criterium in 1980, festivities around the main event have grown to include two, full days of amateur cycling and handcycling races, a 5k run, a kids criterium, a jazz festival, and much more.
- World-Class Handcycle Racing - The first handcycle criterium was held on the Twilight course right after the creation of these high tech light weight machines driven by arm power. This year will see the world’s best descend on Athens as the Twilight caps off a week of international racing bringing the best Paralympic athletes to Athens.



2009 USA CRITS Race Schedules

Speed Week 2009

Date	Race	Location
April 25	Athens Twilight	Athens, GA
April 26	Historic Roswell Criterium	Roswell, GA
April 28	Beaufort Memorial Criterium	Beaufort, SC
April 29	Downtown Walterboro Criterium	Walterboro, SC
May 1	Spartanburg Regional Criterium	Spartanburg, SC
May 2	Dilworth Criterium	Dilworth, SC
May 3	Global BMW Sandy Springs Criterium	Sandy Springs, GA

National Series 2009

Date	Race	Location
April 25	Athens Twilight	Athens, GA
June 21	Harlem Skyscraper Classic (Men Only)	New York, NY
June 28	AT & T Austin Criterium	Austin, TX
July 11	Iron Hill Twilight Criterium	West Chester PA
August 8	Presbyterian Hospital Inv. Criterium	Charlotte NC
August 23	Capital Criterium	Washington, DC
August 30	Chris Thater Memorial	Binghamton, NY
September 5	San Francisco Twilight Criterium	San Francisco, CA
September 17	TX TOUGH GRAND PRIX (Men Only)	Dallas, TX
September 24	USA CRITS Finals	Las Vegas, NV