

CYCLOCROSS MAGAZINE



LATE WINTER

U.S. Nationals
single speed worlds & how-to

exclusives: bart wellens, Christine Vardaros, Chris Jones,
Mo Bruno Roy, Sandbagger Auction dude, & Bikesnobnyc

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CYCLOGROSS MAGAZINE

John Stewart, host of The Daily Show, always starts his show with “We’ve got a great show for you tonight!” I’ve always thought to myself, “When is he gonna say that unfortunately the one on hand is crap?” After a while, his words lose a bit of credibility. Thankfully for us, this being only our second issue, we don’t have the same problem. We can say, “We’ve got an awesome issue for you today,” and it should still be believable. Hopefully after reading it, you’ll agree.

So Issue Two is finally here. Although it seems like we never even recovered from our Issue 1 madness, we know many of you have been anxious to get your hands on the follow-up. We’ve been overwhelmed by the excitement and passionate following our little mag has already generated, and we can’t wait to grow to the point where we’ll get you our mag a little more frequently. Thanks for your patience, sorry for the delay. We’ll get there.

Putting it together this issue has been quite a ride, and we’re thankful to all those that had a role in it. Folks who were just strangers a few months ago have offered up their writing skills, couches, connections, and riding time to help us out, and their generosity and new friendship have served as constant reminders to us of the true spirit of ‘cross.

So, back to that awesome issue we were talking about. If you told me we’d have an interview with Bart Wellens in our second issue, I wouldn’t have believed you! But as follow-ups to our well-received Page and Compton interviews in the premier issue, we’ve got some exclusive features and interviews on pro ‘cross racers Christine Vardaros, Maureen Bruno Roy, Chris Jones, and that little-known Belgian named Bart Wellens. ‘Cross culture is prominent in many different forms, and to highlight such diversity, we’ve highlighted a ‘cross club, a 60 mile ‘cross ride, and the first ever ‘cross singlespeed worlds. Want to go to the singlespeed worlds next year? We’ve got a how-to and tensioner reviews for you to get set up and start training. Winter is long, and we’ve tested some new gear to help make it bearable, and have some strengthening exercises to build a good base for next season. Sandbagging is always a fun subject, and our own Hector Finely got in some great bagger banter with eBay user racerwannabe, poster of the famous sandbagger points auction. And we’re unveiling our three winning essays from our “Spirit of ‘Cross” essay contest. The entries were awesome, and picking the final podium was extremely difficult. Hope you enjoy these as much as we do.

Lastly, we made the trip to CX nats in Kansas City and lived to tell about it. Lots to tell, actually—32 first-person accounts of what it takes to be the country’s best. It’s a different approach to covering a race for sure, but we figure that many of you have already read the blow-by-blow race reports of the main races on our website or someone else’s, and we wanted to give you something more. It was a mammoth project, chasing after each winner at the race, following the podium ceremony, or via phone or email, but since we’re more than just a magazine about elite racers, we needed to do it. We talked with every single winner, and hope you’ll find the compilation as fascinating as we did.

So sit back and get ready for our attempt to provide yet another dose of ‘cross fun. If you enjoy it, tell a friend. If it sucks more than riding the trainer, let us know. While your season may be over, we’re just getting started.

-CXM

ISSUE TWO

A black and white photograph of a cyclist in a white jersey with '125' on the sleeves, riding a road bike on a dirt path. The cyclist is wearing a helmet and sunglasses. The background shows a wooded area with a wooden post and rope barrier.

**20 YEARS OF SAVORY FRAME BUILDING
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A black and white photograph of a group of cyclists riding on a cobblestone road. The road is made of large, irregular stones. The cyclists are in the distance, and the scene is set in a rural or mountainous area.

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'GROSS NEWS

semi-recent news unearthed

U.S. Tackles Treviso World Championships:

Rachel Lloyd and Luke Keough highlighted the US team's performance at the '08 UCI World Championships in Treviso, Italy, with an 9th and 10th place in the Women's and Junior's races, respectively. Ryan Trebon did not race due to his injuries sustained at the national championships in Kansas City. Katie Compton started but withdrew after less than a lap due to ongoing leg muscle problems. Jonathan Page was the top American in the men's race at 23rd, and Jamey Driscoll was the top U23 at 34th.

U.S. Wins Rainbow Jersey: Kathy Sarvary of Lunenburg, MA won the 55+ Masters World Championships, in Mol, Belgium, and in the process beat the times of all the 45+ women. Should she win two jerseys?

The 'Cross season continues, with the US season extending through April with Larry Grossman's Cult Cross 3-race series in X Colorado (<http://cultcross.blogspot.com>).

No U.S. UCI World Cup in 2008? The plans for a UCI World Cup race in Rhode Island in 2008 appear to have fallen through again, with no U.S. races on the '08-'09 World Cup schedule. Six countries (BEL, NED, ITA, CZE, FRA, ESP) host nine events in the current schedule.

Cross Vegas returns, and is scheduled for September 24th, and through an attempt to bring more European riders, the race may be boast the country's most international field and will try to fill the void left behind the missing World Cup race.

Page and Compton planning their European campaigns for next season. Page plans to return to his one-man program he's used before with success, and is currently assembling sponsors for next season. Compton, despite reports of her committing to a US-based season next year, plans to be Europe-based as well, due to the better appearance fees and more UCI points available at European races.

Bruno Roy's Loses Jersey. Weeks after the national championship event, officials discovered Maureen Bruno Roy was ineligible to race in the Masters 30-34 race due to her participation in a UCI World Cup event earlier in the year. The title was subsequently awarded to Josie Jacques Mayne, of Capitola, CA. News of the change in the official winner broke close to press time, and our interviews of the winners still features Bruno Roy. We'll interview Josie in our next issue.

'GROSS TALK

the dirt and grime of CX

Heard at the races:

"The Kona's can run a 39x16 gear without a tensioner. We call it the magic gear. That's why I'm so fast. It's the magic ... and the Golden Speedo!" –Barry Wicks, after the SSCXWC

"Joining road races or crits always felt more like something I should do, like eating broccoli or whole wheat bread. Racing cross is like eating french fries and cheez doodles and cookies all at once (and that's a good thing)."
–Karin Turner, NEBC racer

"He wasn't pretty out there. He doesn't really pay his dues on a 'cross bike so he deserved every stressful thing he had going " –Steve Tilford, about his friend Ned Overend's win at KC Nats.

"Look at Overend. He has unlimited horsepower and he can't use it!" –Spectator at KC Nats.

"These Dugasts are great ... really supple! I can ride them as low as 40psi!" – Anonymous C racer

"I heard the announcers state that it was the ride of my life, but I was disappointed." –Rachel Lloyd, after her second place at KC Nats.

A few 'cross stars are born in late '07:

- Legendary seattle 'cross couple Anne and Dale Knapp gave birth to Kallan Isabella Knapp
- Not to be outdone, Oregon's own Rhonda Mazza and Eric Tonkin gave birth to Magnus Mason

The CX community dearly misses the beloved 'cross racers who have passed:

- Mike Janelle, 40, of Avon, Colorado
- Thomas (Jake) J. Bigham Jr., 50, of Portland, Oregon
- Brett Jarolimek, 31, of Portland, Oregon

*Got News? Heard something of interest? Send us a note:
news@cxmagazine.com*

real words from real cx'ers

read the winning essays from the first CXM contest

In our premier issue, we announced our first contest, “the spirit of ‘cross” essay contest. We received over two dozen essays, and are proud to print our top three. First place won a beautiful Redline Conquest Pro frame and fork, second place a pair of Hutchinson Bulldog tires, and third won some sweet Axley sunglasses. Jealous of their fame and swag? See details for our second contest elsewhere in this issue.

Why I Love Cyclocross 1

by Anne Rock

'Cross sucks.

It sucks the very life out of me.

It steals my money in entry fees, gas and tolls, and even parking at some venues. It robs me of my sleep. I wake up for races earlier than for my job. Unless the house is on fire, I'm not out of bed at these ungodly hours except for 'cross.

It purloins my time on the bike. Instead of a nice four-hour road or mountain bike ride, I spend 2 hours in a car, 1 hour on a trainer, and 40 minutes on the bike. 'Cross is a thief.

The start line robs me of my poise. Will I clip in? Will I be that person who creates a traffic jam? Will the one-legged girl wearing sweat pants and riding a single-speed mountain bike beat me?

The pistol fires. I hate the pistol. I live in Philly — I raise my hands to surrender. Then I remember: I'm at a 'cross race. Don't hand over your wallet. Start pedaling.

It kicks my dignity in the ass. Try being 5'1" and leaping gracefully over a barrier that's up to your bellybutton. Don't even get me started on the indignity of the skin suit. I look like a marsupial. 'Cross robs my body of heat. I scamper around in a skimpy skin suit in sub-freezing temperatures, releasing what's left of my body warmth into the atmosphere, teeth chattering, feet numb — what the hell am I doing here, for god's sake? Save me from myself!

'Cross is an evil bitch. So is the one-legged girl who passes me. I think she's blind, too. She wears sweat pants. I'll bet she's warm. Why didn't I train harder this week?

Racing hurts, but cannot begin to compare to the pain inflicted by cheering. I expend more energy running around the course ringing cowbells and hollering than I do at any point during my own race (except, of course, when the pistol fires and I think I'm being robbed). Pathetic, undignified, and why I am usually off the back

Yes, 'cross sucks.

But it's also beautiful.

Remember the first time you nailed your remount? Or dismounted with precision? Have you ever experienced the thrill of getting the hole shot? Or running across the barriers in a seamless motion? Clearing a sand pit without dabbing? Bridging a gap, grabbing a wheel, and riding back into the race?

When you're not freezing your ass off, take a look around you: sun pouring through dappled trees, exploding in reds, oranges, and yellows; friends you see only during 'cross season smiling because they're about to embark in the same craziness as you; and rolling green terrain under pristine blue skies full of migrating geese.

8

And then there's the cheering — going bat-shit crazy, screaming your lungs out for suffering friends and strangers alike, from the juniors to the killer Bs to the pros. 'Cross doesn't play favorites. Everyone deserves cheering and everyone cheers.

It's a brother and sisterhood. What it takes from me it gives back in immeasurable quantities.

I love 'cross.

Masochism and Shenanigans: The Spirit of Cyclocross

by Heidi Swift

2

Mud in my teeth. Fire in my legs. A vague aching coming from the depths of my right shoulder.

It must be cyclocross season.

My mother calls: “Are you doing that crazy sport again?”

Yes, mom. I'm doing that crazy sport again.

I blame Molly Cameron. A few years ago, I stumbled upon her blog while researching my upcoming move to Portland, Oregon. It was late summer, right at the beginning of cyclocross season, and I followed her entries religiously. What is this cyclocross that she speaks of? A few weeks later I brought it up with my roadie boyfriend over dinner.

“When we move to Oregon, I think you're going to have to race cyclocross,” I told him.

“Race what?”

“Cyclocross. These cyclists ... they ride road bikes around with skinny, knobby tires and slide in the mud. They have to get off their bikes and jump over things ... barriers and rocks and stuff.”

He was unconvinced.

“And there are run-ups: hills too steep to ride, forcing you to put your bike on your shoulder and huff it.”

He flinched.

Fast-forward one year and countless hours of goading — his first race. He comes across the finish line with a strange glaze in his eyes; he seems vaguely distant. Entranced.

Hooked.

Cyclocross is like that. It sneaks up on you. You think, “Oh what the hell — I'll give it a shot,” and the next thing you know your garage is full of muddy bikes, and you're posting on forums about the superiority of eggbeaters and the finer points of racing in a Speedo.

What's it all about? Why does it grip us this way? Why in god's name do we show up every weekend for a lung-searing, ass-kicking, ego-crushing 45 minutes of pain?

Because it's crazy.

Plenty of sports are hard, but not many are quite as crazy as cyclocross. Think about it. Any schmuck can run laps around a track in the freezing rain. Any yahoo can jump on a road bike, sit in for 45 miles, and then sprint for 2. That's hard, but it's not crazy.

Cyclocross is messy. It's unpredictable and out of control. It's a sloppy, unwieldy, wild, and borderline insane. It's fast and aggressive and ridiculous.

What? You don't think it's ridiculous? Were you at the USGP in Hillsboro, Oregon, in 2006?

When you are riding your bike through a mud puddle the size of a football field, carrying it over an industrial-sized pile of sawdust, and then taking a PBR beer hand-up from the guy in a red Speedo who is sitting in a wood-fired hot tub at the top of a run-up, just about the only thing that goes through your head is, "This is ridiculous!"

You don't say that, of course, because your heart rate is smashing into your eardrums and you're trying to keep your lungs from exploding straight out the front of your chest.

You take a swig of the PBR, relish the roar of the crowd as you do so, and then try to avoid stepping on the banana peels that someone has placed in the mud in front of you.

Like I said — madness.

But cyclocross is more than just shenanigans and masochism: It's about a community of people who actually bond over shenanigans and masochism.

We ride because we love it. We ride because it hurts so good. We ride for the cowbells. We ride for that slippery off-camber turn lined with spectators just waiting for us to carve the arc of a graceful endo into the rain-dampened air.

We blow up derailleurs, mash brake levers, destroy expensive wheels, and generally annihilate body and bike for the sheer love of the sport. And for each other.

As a sport, and particularly as a discipline of cycling, cyclocross is one of the most inclusive, welcoming, and accessible forms of racing around. Find a beater bike with some clearance, take a shot of whiskey, and hit the line. Somewhere along the way you're sure to figure out how to dismount, even if you eat it a few times in the process.

It's about getting it done, making it work, embracing the mud, and having fun. And there's always someone on hand to make sure you've got what you need.

As a community, we take care of each other. And I'm not just talking about the beer hand-ups.

We drag ourselves out of bed on some of the crappiest, most dismal days imaginable. In the midst of downpours and clouds and gray skies, we sip hot coffee together and listen to the music blaring out of a nearby van.

We get up in the morning because we're going to a party. In rubber boots, spandex, and rain gear, we're celebrating a spirit of adventure, insanity, and massive physical challenge.

Our heroes are hard men and women who eat up courses like ravenous, mud-driven, superhuman machines. Powering through lap after lap at blistering speeds, they are fueled by the cowbell. Amid the din, they crank out watts that most of us will only dream of. Watching them is fantastic and incredible.

Year after year, spectators are lured by the magnetism of these performances. Field sizes grow as the fever spreads. The cult gains numbers at an astounding rate.

Membership requires only a few things:

Love the pain.

Love the cowbell.

Love the madness.

(And ride your ass off.)

I sometimes wonder if our cyclocross forefathers, the old European cyclists who took off racing across fields and over fences to keep in shape during their off-season, had any idea that one day there would be a global community of similarly possessed lunatics eager to lug a bike through foot-deep mud just for the sheer challenge and joy.

We'll never know for sure, but there is one thing I do know.

The harder it gets, the better it is.

We're certifiable and inspiring. We are masochistic shenanigans on wheels, and proud of it.

The Spirit Is in the People **3**

by James McNeely

Cyclocross doesn't have a spirit. It's just a sport. But the people who ride 'cross have exceptional spirit. They need an abundance of spirit to cope with the harsh challenges of cyclocross.

Cyclocross is a thrown gauntlet, a stern challenge inviting riders to push to themselves past their perceived limits. It dares us to grow, to be better than who we were yesterday.

Like many competitions, it has two goals: helping us find the absolute truth about ourselves and our competitors; and helping us living life as it should be lived, wringing as much fun out of it as possible.

At a physical level, cyclocross tells us the truth about our training, our diet, our gear choices, and ultimately our innate talent. It also tells the truth about our commitment to riding well and winning. There is no disputing the truth it tells us in the results, and in our own knowledge of how hard we tried.

Sure, you can imagine excuses and rationalizations. Sometimes we flat or break in a race, but that often stems from poor equipment or line choices. Maybe the course didn't suit us — but everybody rode on the same course, so maybe we should get fitter. The truth is out there, especially when the question is: "Did you give your all?"

On that one day each season that you ride a great race, teetering on the ragged edge, you know the truth for 45 minutes.

What does the truth feel like? Ten minutes in, your arms go numb. Then your back knots up. After 25 minutes, you can't feel your lips — they are dry, cold, and numb, even though it's 75 degrees out. After 30 minutes, you start to hate yourself more than anything in the world because you are questioning why you race, and whether the pain is worth it. You despair over catching the three guys in front of you, whom you also hate. Then one guy crashes, another one blows up in the hill section, and only the guy in black remains in front of you.

After 35 minutes, you're in a zone. Your vision fades, you only see gray tones, and you hear cowbells — but it sounds like they are underwater in a pool, in the deep end. After 42 minutes, you get the bell. Damn! The leaders are probably 4 minutes in front of you. Somebody shouts, "31st!" Well, that's not too bad ... 60 or more riders are still behind you.

Suddenly, feeling like you are dying doesn't seem so bad. So in spite of your burning lungs and the dust in your mouth making it im-

possible to breathe or even lick your lips, you dig in just a little deeper. Halfway through that last lap, the guy in black (what's his name ... Joe?) passes you in a grass zigzag section — he just powers by you.

You feel like you just died, and in desperation make a short burst to try to hang on. A little further along, you conjecture that you may have one last hard effort left to give. So you hang back just a touch, soft-pedaling here and there. There's no way to get to the next bunch, but if you're smart, you can take the guy in black.

And at the barriers, you do it. He's a little slow remounting, and you're off. You can hear the whoosh of his Grifos behind you as you navigate through some trees and across more grass and onto the tarmac finishing stretch. You think about standing, but know that your legs just don't have it. You pull for all you're worth ...

And then you've done it. You're past the finish line. You've just killed yourself for 31st place. For once this season, you did everything right. You raced to your utmost limit. There was nothing more to give. You are proud.

And that was your 45-minute brush with the truth. That race told you everything you needed to know, everything you could know, about your fitness, your training, and most of all, your integrity: your ability to commit and to give your all. It doesn't happen every race — the races where you don't leave it all out there burn uncomfortably in your memory. But on a good day, even if your placing isn't the greatest, you are psychologically comfortable with the race because you know you couldn't have given more.

You know the truth, and it is good.

After you stow your bike atop the car and change into baggy pants and a sweater, it's time to watch the elite race. You sit where you can watch the run-up, and the guy in black (his name ... Joe-something) sits down next to you and offers you a Belgian beer. He pays you a compliment on your barrier skills, and you remind him that he killed you a couple weeks earlier on a long hill, and you have a laugh about it. It's the best kind of praise: honest compliments based on real accomplishment. You'll have to invite that guy to go riding with you in the off-season ...

As you sit back to watch the elite race, a local kid is in 4th ... excellent. Some friends with cowbells come over and share sandwiches. You're sitting there in the grass with friends, pleasantly zoned out, and see that the warm late-fall sun is low on the horizon. It's painting the hill a reddish-purple color. There's a bit of dust rising up off the course, giving it a mystical appearance, and suddenly you have an almost-religious experience. For a brief moment, you wonder whether life will ever be as good as this again. And then you realize that yes, it will be that good again. After all, there's a race next week, the series finale, and old Joe is going to want revenge. Better do some intervals on Tuesday, and tuck a bottle of Trappist ale into the kit bag. It's going to be a good one.



The advertisement features the Marcroft logo on the left, which consists of a stylized winged 'M' above the word 'MARCROFT' in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font. To the right is a white line drawing of a cyclist in a racing tuck, wearing a helmet and riding a road bike. The background is solid black.

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STARS AND STRIPES ON ICE

In 2000, Kansas City, Kansas, played host to the USA Cycling Cyclocross National Championships. At this inaugural event for the city, there were about 600 athletes racing on a snowy, icy course, with Alison Dunlap winning the women's race, first-year elite Tim Johnson taking the men's win, and a relatively-unknown Katie Compton winning the espoir women's race. In the seven years since this race, the sport has changed tremendously. Local events alone attract 600 riders. Dugast tubular tires are no longer tires reserved for the sport's top athletes but are widely available and even seen on bikes of C racers. Deep dish carbon wheelsets, costing more than many complete bikes, grace the bikes of everyday athletes. Coaching is now a cycling industry, and many athletes of all levels hire the services of a coach just for 'cross. Cyclocross-specific teams have popped up throughout the nation, and at the highest level, the U.S. boasts three reigning silver medalists from the 2007 world championships in the men's, women's and junior categories.

With such tremendous evolution and growth in 'cross since 2000, Kansas City's second hosting of the national championships promised to be an entirely different event from the inaugural one. The race moved venues, added two extra days of racing, and attracted a staggering 2045 registered racers from 45 different states. But at the end of the weekend, it was clear several things haven't changed at all. Kansas City still delivers challenging, snowy, icy December 'cross, and Tim Johnson and Katie Compton showed once again that they're the best in these nasty conditions.



Early Races Bring True Drama

Although there were fewer spectators and less recognizable names, the age group races rewarded spectators with some of the weekend's most dramatic racing. Catherine Walberg's (Team Kenda Tire) win in Friday's women's 45–49 race kicked off a string of last lap battles with come-from-behind victories. Midway through the race, the Topeka Kansas native was as much as 30 seconds down on Kris Walker (Kriegycling.com), and badly disappointing her hometown fans who came out with hopes to see her defend her title. Watching her repeat hopes disappearing up the road, Walberg found a new determination and faster lines, catching Walker with just a few hundred meters to go and sprinting to an emotional victory.

Bjorn Selander (espoir, Ridley Factory Team) and Andy Jacques Mayne (masters 30–34, California Giant Berry Farms) might have taken note from Walberg's Friday win that on such a treacherous course and in such adverse conditions, a late-race deficit can be overcome. Both riders closed down 10-second gaps late in the race, and used the final pavement section to sprint to their own emotional victories, instantly turning their seasons into successes. Brandon Dwight (masters 35+, Boulder Cycle Sport), and Lewis Rollins (masters 60–64, Contender Bicycle) had similar victories after chasing for the majority of their races and riding smartly to avoid crashes and mishaps. Dwight weaved through lapped traffic on the last lap's final dirt chicane, while just behind him, feared sprinter Mark McCormack (Clif Bar) collided with a lapped rider and went down, allowing Dwight to coast to victory. In Sunday's re-run men's 60–64 race, Frank Cauresma (California Giant Berry Farms) had a strong start and large lead early in the race, but a collision with the course fencing destroyed his right SRAM Force shifter, leaving him with only front shifting and a two-speed bike. With two speeds, Cauresma rode strongly but by the end of the race, he couldn't get into his big ring. Rollins crashed twice himself, but avoided mechanicals and stayed upright in the closing laps, taking back big chunks of time on Cauresma to catch him before the final pavement and sprint by for the win.

Friday's junior races proved to be inspirational, if not suspenseful. Each winner stretched out their leads to margins of at least 20 seconds by the end of the race.

The Elite Events

Compton (Spike Shooter) has never lost at 'cross nationals, and her return to Kansas City, where she raced her first nationals, left her with the same result—a stars and stripes jersey. However, this year—her fourth elite title and fifth championship—proved to be her most challenging. Suffering from a return of her leg cramps this season and bothered by a lingering cold, Compton was not her dominant self and faced stiff competition not from her expected challenger Georgia Gould (Luna), but from a first-time national championship battle with a highly-motivated Rachel Lloyd (Proman). Lloyd's last two attempts at the national championships resulted in second places, to Alison Dunlap in 2003 and Anne Grande in 2002. With both of these past winners no longer racing, Lloyd was determined to improve upon her past silver medals. In training, she was seen not only winning her local Bay Area women's races, but also following Compton's past recipe for success by crushing



ICE, SNOW, MUD, CHOOSE THREE

From left, Friday warmed up, creating ankle deep mud pools at the one set of barriers (later removed for Saturday and Sunday's races); Trebon leads Page in the after the first dirt section; snow and ice greeted races each weekend morning (photos: rosa, yee, yee)



almost everyone in men's B races. When asked about her goal for the national championships a week before the event, Lloyd replied confidently, "I want to win it! I've been knocking on the door for a long time, and I'm tired of being second."

The start of the race offered a long pavement climb before a right-hand turn onto the dirt. Georgia Gould was the first off the pavement, followed by Kerry Barnholt (Tokyo Joe's – Van Dessel) and then Lloyd. Usually a strong starter, Compton hit the dirt in sixth, but took the outside line and quickly surged past the field to take the lead, never to look back. Taking the inside line, Lloyd got caught behind riders, and had to work hard to catch back up to the leaders, eventually catching and passing Bruno Roy, who was riding strong in third, and then Gould. Compton stretched her lead out to 40 seconds halfway into the race, but in the closing laps, she made a few mistakes as Lloyd found her rhythm and started to gain time, closing within 22 seconds at the end. Gould faded to third, saying she "just rode really badly." Barnholt passed Bruno Roy (Independent Fabrication – Wheelworks) to take fourth, one place lower than her 2006 performance. Bruno Roy finished with her second podium in two days, after winning the masters 30–34 race on Friday.

In the men's race, most pre-race predictions had Jonathan Page, Ryan Trebon, and Tim Johnson as favorites, with Todd Wells and Barry Wicks with outside shots. Jonathan Page (Sunweb – Projob), with three wins and two second places in his last five national championships, was determined to jumpstart his season by bringing a new jersey and renewed confidence back to Belgium for the second half of the European season. Trebon (Kona – YourKey Mortgage) was motivated to repeat his '06 win and keep the stars and stripes jersey for another year. Johnson (Cannondale – Leer – Cyclocrossworld.com) had fond memories of Kansas City from his win in 2000 and always performs when the conditions are the worst.

Page pushed the pace from the beginning, leading Todd Wells (GT) and Jeremy Powers (Cyclocrossworld.com) up the pavement climb. Ryan Trebon took the lead early into the first dirt sections, but Page put in a major surge at the start of lap two to open up a 12-second gap on the rest of the field. Powers led the chase briefly, only to crash on a downhill turn, letting Wells go by. Meanwhile, Johnson, after a slow start, started to claw his way through the field after a relatively slow start, and had Trebon in his sights. Then disaster struck. Two riders already a few minutes down got caught by the icy ruts and were thrown off course, through the course tape lining the right side of the path. Unfortunately, this sent them directly into another section of the course with oncoming riders. The first rider's path took him straight into Trebon, spinning him around and slamming both riders into the ground. Trebon laid on the ground for several minutes and was eventually helped off the course and taken to the local hospital, where he was later diagnosed with a concussion and bruised ribs.

While Trebon was being helped up, Wells and Johnson brought back Page, and for a lap, it appeared to be anyone's race. But Page and Johnson took turns at the front, dropping Wells and quickly making it a two-man race. Johnson attacked with two laps to go to open a two-second gap, but a half lap later, Page got caught in the course tape and went down, derailing his chain, and forcing him to run the 40 feet to the pits for a bike change. That one mishap was all Johnson needed to win his second elite national championship, and although over the final lap and a half Page regained some of the ten seconds he lost, he ran out of real estate and finished second for the third year in a row. Unlike the previous second places, when he was either recovering from food poisoning or shoulder surgery, this year Page had higher expectations and the pressure of a European trade team on his shoulders. The second place was clearly a disappointment, in stark contrast to Johnson's elation of taking home the jersey.



THREE ALTERNATIVES TO BRAKES

From left, Trebon was taken out by another rider who lost control and crashed through the tape; bikes were clogged with a cocktail of frozen crud; four inch ruts posed a challenge and caused some riders to come crashing down (photos: yee)



The Good and the Bad

Charles Dickens once reasoned, “It was a good thing to have a couple of thousand people all rigid and frozen together, in the palm of one’s hand.” While he is believed to have been referring to public reading and not cyclocross, he might have just as well been reading promoter Bill Marshall’s mind. Marshall and his crew at KLM put on a great event, with record registered athletes, a well-received course, decent facilities, and an organized and very helpful staff. The 2007 event’s success bodes well for 2008, when the race returns to the same city and venue.

The weekend did not go by without a few hitches, however. Beyond Ryan Trebon’s infamous head-on collision, the biggest misfortune of the weekend was the handling of the men’s 60–64, 65–69, and 70+ races on Saturday. Run concurrently with the 50–54 and 55–59 races on Saturday, racers in the older fields were quickly caught by the leaders of the 50–54 group. Race officials, in the five-race confusion, started pulling riders who were still in contention for their own age group title. Some riders were furious when asked to leave the course, having only ridden a lap or two and still with a chance of finishing on the podium. Officials realized their mistake and decided to re-run the races the next morning, but the damage was done. The announcement was made after many racers were out of earshot, having gone to warm up in their cars or at their hotel, and some had travel plans to leave that evening or early the next morning. As a result, the next day’s fields were much smaller, with the 60–64 field starting with only 5 of 12 registered racers, and the 65–69 field starting with 6 of 11 registered racers.

Oatmeal, Tubulars, and Low Pressure

Someone once said, “Always imitate the behavior of the winners when you lose.”

If you’re like most of us, you might not have any hope of ever contending for an elite national championship title. At the highest level, the time, dedication, and genetics that are required to compete for the podium is a combination not many can put together. However, winning your local age group race or B race, if that’s your goal, is likely within your reach. And once that happens, who knows? A national title could be next. But what does it really take to make the leap from being competitive to winning? What’s the secret to winning a stars and stripes jersey? We wanted to find out these answers for our readers and ourselves, so we talked with all 31 jersey winners (plus the singlespeed winner) to see if we can reverse-engineer the magic formula of winning.

Our look at all the national champions from the Kansas City race reveals people of diverse experience, professions, bikes, and of course, age. Think you have to ride ‘cross for more than a year to win nats? Not true! Think you need a fancy bike? Sure, an \$8,000, 15-pound bike would be nice, but a borrowed bike or mail-order special can carry you to a national championship just fine. A dedication to training, a job in the bike industry, and a disciplined warm-up routine all seem to help, but the true secret to winning just might be found in simple things like your breakfast, tires, and tire pressure. But don’t take our word for it—sit back and enjoy getting to know these winners and draw your own conclusions. Hopefully you’ll enjoy getting to know these champions as much as we did.



KC: NOT FOR WIMPS

From top left, the conditions pushed athletes to the limit; who needs a bottle? a new way to carry hydration; the first turn off the pavement caused crashes in nearly every race; spectators can be wimps - watching Dwight and McCormack battle in the 35+ race from the warmth of a beer tent (photos: yee)





Interviews by Josh Patterson and Andrew Yee, most photography by Larry Rosa, Joe Sales, and Andrew Yee (as noted)



Andrea Casebolt – Junior Women 10–12

Hometown: Olympia, WA

Team: Rad Racing

Occupation: Student

Bike: Kona 2007 Rad Jake frame w/ Ritchey carbon fork.

FSA bar / stem / post. Shimano Dura-Ace & Ultegra

drivetrain, Ritchey 'cross cranks, single ring

Nats experience: First time, first victory.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: Six falls during the race but recovered quickly. No mechanical problems due to Dad's good wrenching!

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Had two sets of pit wheels but not needed. No pit bike this year.

Pre-race meal: Belgian waffle, oatmeal, orange juice, and yogurt. Luna bar prior to race.

Warm-up routine: Pre-rode the course day-of, 20 minutes on trainer, foot bed warmers, and hand warmers in gloves.

Tires & Pressure: Challenge Grifo tubulars. 20 psi. front tire, 24 psi. rear tire.

Do your own wrenching?: Dad is my wrench & bike builder.

Have a coach?: Dale Knapp, Chris McGovern, Jim Brown, Luke Brechwald, and Dad have been coaching me since late July of this year.

Thoughts on the course: Good course overall but the weather made for bad conditions. During my race, early morning, the ground was frozen as well as the ruts. This caused you to have to keep the front end light to prevent getting the front tire stuck and running off course. That happened to me once and I broke through barrier tape. Quickly learned to keep the front end light and float it over the ruts.

Race highlight besides winning: Passing a girl in the 13–14 age category who started 30 seconds before me. I think she later abandoned. Knew I was going well when I passed her with one lap to go.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Definitely my main goal but will be racing some road this year for skill and conditioning to help defend next year's title.

Training details: Dad would take me for hour-long road rides near our house 2-3 days a week up till late summer when we started organized weekly 'cross practices with the Olympia Rad Racers. We continued to practice at least once a week during 'cross season and I would spend some time after school on the trainer as well.

Notes & Quotes:

· Good decisions: "I made a good decision to ride along the bottom of the steep off-camber section after seeing numerous riders sliding down the hill into the gutter while attempting to ride along the ridge of the camber."

· 'Cross experience: "I decided to try 'cross after watching Dad racing for the past three years. It looked like fun so Dad built my first 'cross bike in April of this year. I had never used clipless pedals and couldn't even ride the bike until early summer."



photos: joe sales



Elizabeth ("Libby") White – Junior Women 13–14

Hometown: Bedford, NH

Team: NEBC/Cycle Loft/Devonshire

Occupation: Student

Bike: Empella Bonfire SL with Campy wheels and Time pedals

Nats experience: I won my very first cyclocross nats when my 'cross age was 12 (2005) in Providence, Rhode Island. It was the first year they had separated the 10–12 from the 13–14 girls.

I've raced in cyclocross nats for three years now. I have three cyclocross national championship jerseys. I've raced cyclocross since my 'cross age was 11, but I've done mountain biking since I was 5.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: There was this one little patch of ice not too far after the finish that I hit just the right way and went down on my left knee. It didn't hurt too bad then, but in the shower later it hurt a lot. Ouch!



photos: joe sales

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: We flew out my bike and my dad's bike (he raced in the 55–59 men). I raced on my dad's bike and I used mine as my pit bike.

Pre-race meal: The night before I had spaghetti with meatballs. The morning of I had a bagel and some fruit at the continental breakfast at the hotel we stayed at about three hours before the race. Between then and my race I pretty much drank my entire body weight in water.

Warm-up routine: Before my race I pre-ride the course then spin on the trainer 45 minutes. Ten to fifteen minutes before I go hard for 15 seconds or so.

Tires & Pressure: I used Tufo Flexus tubulars set to 26 psi. Pretty spiffy.

Do your own wrenching?: I don't really do any of my wrenching. My dad is my mechanic. He reads advice from magazines and bike books.

Have a coach?: My dad is my coach. He reads tons of bike training books and magazines. Most people say that it's hard to have your dad as your coach but we usually don't fight.

Thoughts on the course: I actually really liked this course. Just being a mountain biker from New England I'm used to really rough conditions.

Race highlight besides winning: My favorite part of the race was passing some of the girls from places that have much less severe conditions. My highlight of the entire day was just talking to some of the girls that are from all over on the start line.

Is 'cross your main focus?: My main focus in cycling would actually be mountain biking. I want to become a pro mountain biker some day. Alison Dunlap is one of my idols!

Training details: Honestly, I really don't train that much during the week during 'cross season. Besides racing both Saturday and Sunday, I probably only train an hour or two. During the summer, on the other hand, I do so much riding for fun—mountain biking, road riding, and track riding. I also love to run, swim, and cross-country ski. After cyclocross nats I've been running three miles every day to try to get in shape for doing a triathlon at some point.

Notes & Quotes:

· Her favorite memory: "On Saturday, I believe, there were these guys that brought out a couch and tons of food (and beer) to the top of the second staircase. It was funny because later in the day there were a bunch of drunk/tipsy guys cheering for the riders."

· On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "I really want to get juniors, especially girls, into cycling. I've given some of my bikes that are too small for me to an organization that gives the bikes to juniors. I also want to start a group that takes bike clothing to young cyclists. I mean, I have all these bike clothes from when I was like five and old kits that I just don't wear anymore that are still in good condition."



Coryn Rivera – Junior Women 15–16

Hometown: Tustin, CA

Team: Team Redline

Occupation: Student

Bike: Redline Conquest Team, FSA components, full 10-speed Dura-Ace drivetrain, Shimano pedals, Dura-Ace wheelset and cassette, and Hutchinson Bulldog tires

Nats experience: This year was my second cyclocross title that I've won. I've participated in three cyclocross championships, my first being the first year at Rhode Island. So far I've won two cyclocross national championships in a row. This season will be my third year of cyclocross.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I crashed a good amount of times. Since the conditions were icy, it was hard to get traction. Luckily I had no mechanicals.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I absolutely had a B bike in the pit, but I didn't really have a chance to do a bike change since my race was only two laps long!

Pre-race meal: I had the traditional oatmeal for breakfast. Then I had a bagel about an hour before.

Warm-up routine: Fortunately, my parents drove out to Kansas in our new motor home and we parked in the team parking with Redline and I was able to warm up in a toasty heated motor home for about 45 minutes. Then I headed out for one lap to test the course conditions.

Tires & Pressure: I used tubeless Hutchinson Bulldogs on Dura-Ace clinchers which I



photos: joe sales



ran at about 25-30 psi. They were THE perfect tires for the conditions, I must say.

Do your own wrenching?: At home in Southern California I pretty much do my own wrenching, but at bigger events like nationals where the rest of Team Redline is there I have full support. At nationals, Joe "Smoking Joe" Sandshulte and Tim "TJ" Johns were the guys doing all the wrenching.

Have a coach?: I have a new coach for this year. So far it's working out pretty good.

Thoughts on the course: Although I wasn't used to the arctic cold conditions, I thought the course was well-made—very flowy with some good technical sections.

Race highlight besides winning: My race highlight probably has to be when I started to pass some of the 17- to 18-year-old racers that started before the 15–16 age group. Last year I was able to catch all of the 17 to 18 year olds, but this year, since the race was only two laps long, I was only able to catch all but two of the 17 to 18 year olds.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Honestly, I don't really have a main focus at the moment. I race road, track, and cyclocross, and out of the three, I think cyclocross is the most fun and road is my favorite.

Training details: I've been riding for about 17 hours a week. And I do a little running on two days of the week.

Notes & Quotes:

- On dealing with the conditions as a Californian: "The closest weather to Kansas was probably the first year of cyclocross nationals in Rhode Island. Seeing that terrible weather again was almost a nightmare."
- On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "I think the way to get more involved in 'cross is just to keep everything fun. The main reason why I love racing 'cross is because it's so much fun; I just can't get enough of it. I almost come to tears when I realize that the 'cross season is over. I have big plans for cycling in my future. Hopefully cycling will give me a ride through college. And hopefully when I become old enough I will race in world championships, race in Europe, and ultimately go to the Olympics."



Anna Young – Junior Women 17–18

Hometown: Madison, WI
Team: Regent Cycling
Occupation: Student, part-time sales at Williamson Bicycle and Fitness
Bike: Specialized TriCross Comp with SRAM Force and Bontrager Race X-Lite wheels
Nats experience: This is my first year racing. I started racing road in June and then a whole season of 'cross. I've moved up from a four to a two in one season. It's my first time at nationals and first time winning nationals!



photo: jammie young

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: Just one crash in the corner before the barriers on the first lap. I slid out on the ice mud, but it wasn't a big deal and I got right back up.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a pair of wheels in the pit but no bikes.

Pre-race meal: Almond raisin granola with organic vanilla yogurt and raspberry jam.

Warm-up routine: I need a long warm-up; I ride for at least twenty minutes if not more. If the course is tough, I ride it a couple of times. In Kansas I actually would get off the course and double back to make sure I had all of my lines figured out.

Tires & Pressure: Michelin Mud 2s Clinchers, but next year I would really like to get tubulars. I was running really low pressure, about 23 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: Nope, I'm mechanically challenged.

Have a coach?: Kind of. Paul Nilsen, a local rider, helps me right my training plan and coaches me a bit.

Thoughts on the course: It was really fun! But the conditions were pretty tough. The mud from the day before was frozen into very deep muddy ruts all over the course, and basically I had to ride right on the side of the course or zigzag across it. Otherwise I'd get stuck in the ruts. The "stairs" were fun, but I thought they'd be actual staircases so I'd been running up and down ski jump stairs to get ready. One of the hardest parts of the course was the off-camber bit across the hill; the good line changed every race, and if you didn't have a good line you could lose serious time.

Race highlight besides winning: Just being there, enjoying the course, and riding my bike (and only falling once).

Is 'cross your main focus?: No, I normally focus on road. I'll be riding for Team America's Dairyland next year and I'm really looking forward to that. Although 'cross is

going to be a much bigger focus for me next year.

Training details: I ride a lot less during cyclocross season cause of the weather and light and homework. I try to ride an hour to an hour and forty-five minutes about five to six days a week (usually on rollers because of lack of daylight). I don't run at all except for stairs because I injured my feet and ankles doing gymnastics when I was younger.

Notes & Quotes:

- On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "I think that making 'cross more accessible to all ages by promoting juniors fields at races and also promoting women's 4s and 3s races will really help the sport grow, but the main thing is just to get the word out about 'cross. The best advice I can give is just to go out there and give 'cross a try. It's a great sport and a great community."
- On her future plans: "I do have another year left as a junior and I'm planning on trying to make it to the majority of the bigger races next year. As for making a career out of cycling, it's very hard to do, but who knows, maybe it will happen. It'd be nice to have a junior worlds race!"



Kacey Manderfield – Collegiate Women

Hometown: Davisburg, MI
Team: Lees-Mcrae College
Occupation: Student
Bike: Blue CXc frame and fork, Bontrager Carbon Aero wheels, Bontrager crankset, Shimano Ultegra 9-speed drivetrain, Paul Neo Retro brakes
Nats experience: First individual cyclocross championship. Last year our team won the collegiate cyclocross overall.



photo: andrew yee

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: Yeah. I went into the first corner in first, took a bad line right at the start, and crashed hard. That put me back to third or fourth place. After that, when I tried to ride beyond my technical ability level with power, I got myself in trouble a couple of times. Luckily, I crash well, so I kept going.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I did have a pit bike. I was riding my carbon bike with carbon wheels and great tires. It was never caked enough to make sense to switch, and I didn't have any mechanical issues.

Pre-race meal: I had a bowl of oatmeal cereal and bananas.

Warm-up routine: When I'm warming up in conditions like this, I generally try to get in 45 minutes to an hour on the bike. I take it easy for 20 minutes or so and then put in some harder intervals, anywhere from one to three minutes each, to get the deeper muscles warmed up. Then I throw in some high cadence sprints just to get everything really working and try to stay warm on the line before the start of the race.

Tires & Pressure: I rode Tufo Flexus 32s and they were awesome! I have a habit of running my tires too high since I'm a road and a track rider. I'm always telling the guys, "No, I want 50 psi!" But they got me convinced that it's better to have them lower. So I was running them lower and they worked great.

Do your own wrenching?: Umm, I'm not completely clueless. I can do the general stuff. I can adjust my own brakes and things like that. But anything that is a serious issue I just let a mechanic do. I'm not real savvy with that stuff; I haven't been riding that long.

Have a coach?: I'm currently working with Colby Pearce (former USA Cycling endurance track coach and 2004 U.S. Olympic Team member). I just started working with him and I really like his attitude and his outlook on the sport. I think we'll be a good match.

Thoughts on the course: Well, I'm more of a power rider, so the course worked well for me as long as I realized where I could use my power and where I needed to back off and focus on technique. I pretty much let the front end of the bike bounce around where it wanted to. I relied on using a bigger gear than I would typically ride and just tried to power through stuff.

Race highlight besides winning: Probably sticking around and watching my teammates come across the line. It was great to see them all finish healthy and put in their best effort.

Is 'cross your main focus?: That's a good question! I haven't been riding for that



many years and I'm not exactly sure where I want to go. My first passion is on the track, but I'm falling in love with cyclocross as well. Unfortunately, the seasons overlap, so what I'll end up doing, I'm not sure.

Training details: By the time cyclocross comes around, I have already been on the road all season and then peaked again for track. So my 'cross training was really just trying to hang on to what I had after track nationals. I was doing easy lifting once a week, running for about 30 minutes once or twice a week, and on the other days riding no more than 1 1/2 to 2 hours and focusing more on technique than anything else. So maybe 8-10 hours of riding per week.

Notes & Quotes:

- Kacey Manderfield came back from a disappointing crash at the beginning of the collegiate women's race. Using her track background she powered through the ice and muck to regain the lead and then gap her competition.

- Manderfield began racing competitively on the track in 2004, picked up road racing in 2005, and by 2006 she was riding for the UCI women's team Verducci-Breakaway. In her second season of cyclocross Manderfield has managed to make a name for herself as one of the most promising young 'crossers. On the track, Manderfield won the collegiate points race and the U23 points race this year.



Amy Dombrowski – U23 Women

Hometown: Jericho, VT; **Residence:** Boulder, CO

Team: Velo Bella Kona

Occupation: Professional road cyclist for Webcor Builders Women's Professional Cycling Team

Bike: Kona Queen Ann, Easton EC90X fork, Easton Tempest II wheels, SRAM Force drivetrain, Rotor rings, Avid Shorty brakes, Eggbeater 3ti pedals.

Nats experience: I raced two national championships weekends and four races—2006: espoir and elite, 2007: espoir and elite. I also won the espoirs in 2006.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: Oh yes. I had a pretty awful crash in the ditch leading to the pavement before the stairs, just before the "No Tilly Zone." I went head over teacup and noticed that my knee kind of hurt. It was in the first lap, so of course I had all that adrenaline flowing and didn't think too much of it. It wasn't until after the race when I was sitting in the warming trailer that I looked down and saw that I had two knees on my right leg. There was a fist-sized contusion on the inside of the knee.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a pit bike and changed bikes a few times. It was so cold in that mystical tundra that the shifting would freeze up. I had an awesome pit crew, so changing bikes was more efficient than riding through the messy ruts outside of the pit.

Pre-race meal: I stayed at a hotel close to the course, but still had to wake up stupidly early for the 9 a.m. start. At 6 a.m., I didn't want the complimentary hotel waffles, so I opted for oatmeal and a cappuccino.

Warm-up routine: I like to get to the course with ample time because there are so many details in cyclocross. Preriding the course is important to really dial the tire pressure on both bikes and to check out various lines. I try for an hour and a half of riding, starting out just spinning, then moving into some tempo work, some high intensity efforts, then spinning it out. Clothing choice and staying warm prior to the start is critical. I generally give myself 15 minutes to change and get to the start. My Patagonia puffy jacket was what kept me alive in Kansas.

Tires & Pressure: Challenge Grifo tubulars with 20 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: I try to avoid it as much as possible. We had a great crew of mechanics in Kansas who took care of everything and paid attention to details.

Have a coach?: Yes, Missy Thompson.

Thoughts on the course: I did one lap on the course that morning prior to the race and couldn't believe I actually had to race on it. The hardest part for me was committing to racing in the frigid temperature on conditions that only 4-wheelers should attempt. Once I accepted that, and once the gun went off, it was all about remaining smooth and consistent. It was very much a skill course, and if you ever lost focus, you would be bouncing on your bum on frozen ruts.

Race highlight besides winning: I'm pretty confident in my start, so my plan was to



get a gap right in the beginning, which is exactly what happened. It's nice when things go according to plan.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Road racing is my main focus, although 'cross and road are in different seasons, so I suppose I have two main focuses.

Training details: A usual week is racing both days on the weekend, with recovery rides on Monday and Tuesday. Wednesday there is a cyclocross practice where everyone in Boulder with a bike meets up to ride around in circles in the parks and jump over barriers. Thursday is recovery, and Friday is recovery with openers for the weekend. I don't like running because I have terrible knees from ski racing injuries.

Notes & Quotes:

- On her weekend highlight: "I grew up in Jericho, VT, and all through the race there was a guy in yellow pants running around yelling, 'Go Jericho!!!' Nothing like a little hometown pride!!"

- On her elite race the next day: "I couldn't get out of my own way in my elite race. I had a good start, only to fumble right as we turned off the pavement. I made my way back to top 10, and then crashed in a mud puddle, caking my gloves with mud. I think I let the crashing get to me mentally - I was crashing about three to four times every lap. It was the most frustration I have ever felt in a race."



Katie Compton – Elite Women

Hometown: Colorado Springs, CO

Team: Spike Shooter / Primus Mootry

Occupation: Professional Bike Racer

Bike: Primus Mootry Scandium/Carbon Frame, Reynolds fork, Campagnolo Record 10 drivetrain, Rol wheels, Dugast Rhino tires, Gore Ride-On cables, TRP Carbon CR950 cantilevers, Rotor crank

Nats experience: Raced five nats, won five times: U23 in 2000 and elite women in 2004-2007.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: A couple crashes and no mechanicals.

It was hard to keep it upright and go fast the whole time.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Full pit bike and I took two bike changes during the race

Pre-race meal: Oatmeal with peanut butter, nuts and raisins, a banana, and coffee.

Warm-up routine: Warmed up at the hotel, normal ride, jumped in the car and went to the course, did a lap, and went to the line.

Tires & Pressure: Tubulars, Dugast Rhino, 21 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: Thankfully Mark does all that.

Have a coach?: Yes, Craig Griffin at CTS.

Thoughts on the course: The course was great—super fun and technical. It was very challenging and the lines changed from lap to lap so that made things interesting. The only problem was the course tape getting in the way.

Race highlight besides winning: Probably when I got a gap from Georgia sometime during the first or second lap. The race was pretty uneventful, which is sometimes better when racing for a national championship.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Yup!

Training details: About 10-15 hours/week depending on the periodization. I don't run since my legs don't do well with that.

Notes & Quotes:

- On whether this was the hardest win: "Yes, this is the first year I've traveled as much as I have, so I didn't get good training in once the season kicked off and I felt it towards the end of the season. I didn't have the power or the spunk I normally do so it was definitely harder to go fast. It was frustrating being sick for a few weeks, too. I was eager to start training hard again but knew I had to rest in order to get healthy and ride fast. I was just hoping I would come around in time to pull something out for nats. I was just glad it wasn't as cold as it was the last time nats was in KC. It could have been worse."





Maureen Bruno Roy – Masters Women 30–34

Hometown: Arlington, MA

Team: IF / Wheelworks / SRAM presented by General Catalyst

Occupation: Muscular Therapist (in private practice: Shanti Studio)

Bike: Custom IF Ti Planet X, Reynolds Ouzo Pro Cross fork, SRAM Red drivetrain, 44x38 double chainring, TRP Euro-X brakes, FSA carbon stem and handlebar, Stella Azzurra bar tape, Chris King headset, Shimano XTR pedals, Fizik Vitesse saddle, Mavic R-SYS wheels, Michelin Mud 2 tires.

Nats experience: This is my fifth nationals. I won the same masters 30–34 race in 2005.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: No mechanicals or crashes. Because the conditions this year at nationals went from bad to worse and back again, the key to a smooth race was to stay upright. It surely wasn't as simple as it sounds, but I'm happy to say that I didn't crash in either race and I think that allowed me to maintain position and ride as well as I did. And mechanically speaking, I'm so lucky to have my husband Matt Roy working on my bikes.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Yes. I have two identical bikes, so one serves as a pit bike when I need to swap. We also travel with an extra set of wheels. During the masters race I swapped bikes about 3 times because the mud collecting on the bike was getting very heavy and it paid to have a light bike slogging through the mud. I did not end up swapping in the race because the mud was not much of an issue that day.

Pre-race meal: I have a usual and it's the same thing I eat most days: a big bowl of yogurt, fruit, and granola about three to four hours before the race, and then second breakfast about two hours before the race: some sort of sweet bread/muffin or bagel and a small soy latte or coffee. When I warm up on the trainer the hour before the race start I have some Clif Bloks and a Gu and Gu20 in a water bottle.

Warm-up routine: We get to the races 2–2 ½ before the start in order to pick up numbers, unpack the car, use the bathroom, and pin numbers on the skinsuit. I usually get one or two laps in on the course about 1 ½ hours before my start and stay warm on the trainer for an hour before the start.

Tires & Pressure: Michelin Mud 2 tires. Clinchers are the only thing I have ridden to date, so I feel very confident on them. I will be trying some Dugast tubulars for the next season as well. As for tire pressure, it varies race to race between 26 and 30 psi. Most of it is done on feel because most pumps and gauges cannot accurately measure such low pressure.

Do your own wrenching?: Absolutely not! I'm proud to say that my husband Matt does all the bike work and am partly embarrassed to admit that I do very little to help him in that department.

Have a coach?: Not this season.

Thoughts on the course: I think that the course would have been much more difficult for me if it was dry and hard packed. It was pretty flat overall and had very few technical turns and only one running section (double stairs), so it would have been all-out dirt crit-style racing! The foul weather really slowed down the racing and made un-technical sections difficult to navigate. I love the mud and muck and ice and snow, so I couldn't have asked for better conditions regardless of the course design.

Race highlight besides winning: Staying upright! I imagine that very few of us managed to stay upright all weekend, so that makes me feel good about my technical riding abilities.

Is 'cross your main focus?: My work/job is really my main focus. I am lucky enough to love what I do for a living and actually be able to afford racing and living in the Boston area. I began racing for fun and soon found that I could be very competitive at 'cross. Over the past few years, it has become my focus as an athlete and I try to improve each year. I've also come back to some mountain bike racing in the summer and won the masters 30–34 Expert race at nationals this past year. I will upgrade this summer and try a few more competitive races

Training details: My background is that of a track runner, so luckily I really enjoy running and do it year-round. I usually run two times a week for about 30 minutes. During 'cross season I will do a track workout or hill sprints on grass (with and without the bike



photo: larry rosa

on the shoulder). I ride between 6 and 10 hours a week.

Notes & Quotes:

· On her start: "I got called up next to last and had to start at the back of the race for the masters race! The gentleman with the clipboard gave me no sympathy when I told him I had won the race in 2005 or that I was ranked second in the U.S. with UCI points. So you'll notice in all the start pictures that I am not there because I am trying to swing very far to my left to get around the pack before we get onto the dirt!"

· On whether the category makes sense: "Masters at age 30? Talk about feeling old before you need to! But I'll take it if I can win it, I guess. I actually think the masters category should begin at 40 or 45. Most of the elite riders are finding that they can be competitive well into their 30s. Many athletes also retire when they plan to start families, which is happening more often in their late 30s or early 40s. The true masters race is also supposed to be an amateur event."



Sue Butler – Masters Women 35–39

Hometown: Portland, OR

Team: River City Bicycles

Occupation: Former school counselor, mountain bike racer

Bike: Cannondale CAAD 9 Cyclocross, Easton EC90x fork, SRAM Force drivetrain, Paul brakes

Nats experience: This is my third year racing 'cross, second year at nationals. Last year I got a flat in my masters race and couldn't find my pit person, so I wanted to race it at least once! Wendy, my teammate, ran away with the win last year, so she opted out this year and it was mine for the taking.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I actually bent in my rear derailleur onto the spokes of my wheel just after the pits. I was about to walk off the course because I was not going to run that far. Wendy yelled for me to relax and fix it because I had plenty of time, so I pulled it out, set it on the cog, and rode a half of a lap gingerly, trying not to break it off. It worked. I just couldn't shift very well. No real crashes. I saved those all for the elite race.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I do have two bikes that are almost exactly the same. I did have to switch when I broke my derailleur and then it was last lap. We only did three, so that was my one bike change.

Pre-race meal: It varies. I eat a first breakfast early with coffee (a must), take an easy spin, and then eat more about three hours prior to race time. It can be cereal, oatmeal, French toast, or toast with peanut butter and jelly.

Warm-up routine: I try to ride tempo with a few openers. I haven't traveled with a trainer this year, so warm-ups have varied considerably depending on weather, terrain around the course, time, etc. I know I didn't get the best warm-up for that race, but oh well.

Tires & Pressure: This was my first year running tubulars. For the masters race I was on the Tufo Challengers that I have had on all season, but for the elite race I got to try my brand new Dugast Rhinos. My pit bike actually had my trusty Michelin Muds with Stans NoTubes strips in them, so tubeless.

Do your own wrenching?: Heck no. I depend on Brandon at River City Bicycles a lot, and they have been great at trying to get me a quick turn around! I really don't know what I would do without the shop being so close to my house. On the road, I suffer and do my best.

Have a coach?: I have been working with Kendra Wenzel for the past 2 years. She has done a great job making me faster and got me through knee surgery in '06 with a strong comeback. 2007 has definitely been a great year for me and I am looking forward to 2008 already!

Thoughts on the course: I love mud. Definitely an advantage for me. Pre-riding earlier when it was frozen was a bit scary, but it softened up enough to make it mucky and fun. I liked it.

Race highlight besides winning: It was pretty cool hearing the fans, and my parents showed up just before the race, driving from Minnesota that day, so that was cool. Plus, my husband's brother and his family live in Kansas City and his parents and sister came up from Wichita. It is good to have family there trying to comprehend this craziness and have a better understanding of the insanity. They were even patient in the freezing



photo: joe sales



cold to wait for the podium. But I did supply them with wine, beer, and strawberries! What awesome prizes!

Is 'cross your main focus?: Mountain biking has been my focus/goal. 2007 was my first pro season, but I am pretty addicted to 'cross, hence why I am in Europe right now still racing.

Training details: I avoid running. I probably ride 10 plus hours. I have never really added it up. I like riding my bike, so the more, the better. I just listen to my coach. Sometimes it is more, sometimes it is less.

Notes & Quotes:

· Her funny moment: "At one point one of the nice fans was cheering me on and saying, "You're in sixth, you can do it, catch that girl in front of you!" I smiled at him and told him I was in the older group. He replied, "I guess you're winning then."
 · Butler almost didn't enter the race, debating on whether to do it or focus on the elite race. "Wendy [Williams] opted out to focus on the elite race, and she had already won once and didn't think it was fair to do it again. Wendy called me a sandbagger for wanting to do the race, but I didn't get to finish the race last year and I wanted my chance at winning the jersey too! Plus, it was fun. I like racing and when you travel that far, I figure why not race as much as you can?"



Shannon Gibson – Masters Women 40–44

Hometown: El Paso, Texas

Team: Velo Bella Kona

Occupation: Bodywork, Practitioner of the Rolf Method of Structural Integration

Bike: Kona Jake the Snake, Velo Bella Queen Anne Edition: American Classic wheels, deep-dish carbon tubulars

Nats experience: Yeah, it was my fifth 'cross race. I've raced mountain bikes in the women's pro field for several years.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: None. I kept it upright, but with lots of slipping. The bike worked well.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a pit bike but didn't swap bikes. There was another rider right behind me and I didn't want to risk switching."

Pre-race meal: 3 hours before the race I ate a couple of eggs and some oatmeal.

Warm-up routine: The course changed everyday. It was really important to get on the course. I bagged my trainer warm-up for a couple laps on the course. I feel my bike handling gets better every lap, so I wanted to feel more comfortable in the conditions I'd be racing in. I was able to take my B bike out to practice and had my A bike for the race.

Tires & Pressure: Challenge Grifo 32s, 21 -22 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: I actually built both my bikes. We [VeloBella] are fully SRAM supported. The SRAM guys were awesome. When I got to the race in Kansas City my bikes were clean and ready to go, but I had the guys go over them. They had a special lube ritual: Pedro's Bike Lust on the frame and tires, chain lube with bearing grease over it the chain.

Have a coach?: I do. My coach is Rick Crawford. I also coach with him. It's a collaborative effort.

Thoughts on the course: I loved the course. I felt bad about how we trashed it. I hope they get their grass fixed.

Race highlight besides winning: Just getting out to ride in conditions I would not go out in if I didn't have a race.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Mountain biking is. I've raced as a pro for four seasons.

Training details: I was really challenged being down in El Paso—no 'cross in El Paso. I was able to get to Durango and Boulder. I did some running as well as swimming, lots of rest as well. I think next year if I am better prepared and don't break anything it will be different—more time on the bike.

Notes & Quotes:

· This was Shannon Gibson's first season racing cyclocross for Team Velo Bella, though she's been tearing up the women's pro mountain bike circuit for several seasons. At Cross Vegas she went down with a broken wrist and had to take some time off the bike but managed to come back strong. Next year Gibson plans to focus more on 'cross.



Catherine Walberg – Masters Women 45–49

Hometown: Topeka, KS

Team: Team Kenda Tire

Occupation: Attorney - General Counsel for KaMMCO, an insurance company.

Bike: Ridley Super Cross, Shimano Dura-Ace 10, Reynolds Carbon Wheels, Dugast Rhinos

Nats experience: I've done four masters 'cross nationals and four elite. I've made the podium in all the masters nationals and top 15 in two of the elite races. I won my first nationals last year in 2006 in Providence, Rhode Island. I've raced 'cross seriously for several years, but have been doing 'cross in the off-season for over a decade.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I rode a pretty clean race. No mechanicals, unlike the previous year. My "mechanical" was that I pretty much fell apart physically for about 1 ½ laps. The bike itself rode perfectly. No issues there. Luckily, I seemed to find myself on the last lap and do the Ridley proud.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Yes and no. I have a friend, Trudi Rebsamen, who's 5' 7" (I'm 5' 3") and lent me her bike as a backup. So I changed out the pedals, lowered the seat, and hoped like hell I wouldn't have to use it. (Her bike was a godsend last year. I flatted in the first 300 meters, hopped on her bike for half a lap, and won the race from behind.)

Pre-race meal: Oatmeal in the morning, then 3 hours before the race had an egg and English muffin that I brought from home. Always the same.

Warm-up routine: I try to get to the race early enough to do several laps on the course and a 30 minute pre-ride on the road. I've tried the trainer but it doesn't work for me. I need to get on the course and get used to the weather for the day.

Tires & Pressure: Dugast Rhino tubulars at about 24-25 psi. I've ridden them all season long. When they aren't correct for a course and I need to ride clinchers, I ride the Kenda tires. They work sweet, and I'm looking forward to their tubulars that will be out really soon.

Do your own wrenching?: No. Steve Tilford lives a couple of miles away. He does all the bike stuff. He's the best mechanic I know. I wouldn't let anyone else touch the bike. Plus, it's like a caddy—he thinks about the set up.

Have a coach?: I've never had a coach per se. Steve Tilford is the closest thing to a coach I've had. When he's in town, I ride with him almost every day. We don't really ever have a set plan but try to train for upcoming races. Steve has also been super helpful with strategy. We talk about how to win the race and what the lines are, etc.

Thoughts on the course: It was awesome! It had several technical areas, elevation changes, and power sections. I would have liked even more technical turns and steep uphill because they play to my hand, but all in all, the course was perfect for 'cross nationals. On the last lap, I finally nailed the off-camber U-turn thanks to a tip from a friend. He yelled, "take the low line!" I did and that move was one of the places I took big time back on Kris Walker who I was chasing most of the race.

Race highlight besides winning: The highlight was shifting gears mentally from resignation to desire. When Kris Walker passed me so easily early in the first lap, I fell apart pretty much. She looked good technically and powerful. She was up as much as 30 seconds. I had resigned myself to second but was so disappointed. I can't quite explain it but somewhere near the end of the second lap I couldn't stand the thought of losing. I started to ride better technically. I realized I was putting time on her in several places. Made a few good moves on some of the more technical areas, like riding better through some of the thick mud and the off-camber turn. The key, though, was the home town crowd. When I got it down to 15 seconds, I heard the desire in the voices of people cheering for me.

Is 'cross your main focus?: It's turned into a "season" for me. That's significant. I race the road season and that has been my focus, but I'd say this year and last, I put a ton of effort into 'cross. It might turn into the main focus and the road scene might be the training for 'cross soon! I like it—it's fast, you gotta be technical, you gotta be fit, you can't be stupid, you gotta think about your tires, and it hurts. It's hooked me.

Training details: I do core training two times a week year-round to keep all the supporting muscles strong. When 'cross starts, the days start to get shorter, and unfortunately I am limited to training inside during the week and the hours go down to





about seven to eight hours a week, plus the core training. I do a lot of interval work once 'cross starts and just assume the endurance from the road season will take care of that part. Run? Well, not really doing that yet. I have a lot of work to do in that area. I see the time gained and lost on that part. That's a motivator.

Notes & Quotes:

· On her love for the sport: "Cross will make me smile all year long: A group of people devoted to a sport that's muddy, messy, and cold most days and yet, there we all are: mud, sweat, and tears. Doesn't get any better than that."



Kathy Sarvary – Masters Women 50–54

Hometown: Lunenburg, Ma

Team: Gearworks/Stevens Bikes

Occupation: VP Sales, Sun Life Financial

Bike: Stevens Custom Frame, Shimano components, SRP Mr. Grumpy Cantilevers, inline levers, 3T bar

Nats experience: Four wins: 1995 (35–39), 2004 (45–49), 2006 (50–54), and this year.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I crashed once, 500 meters off the start, which put me in absolutely last place once I got up—not a great way to start. I also flatted the front wheel with half a lap to go. Slowed down progress a bit, but it stayed glued on the rim which made it possible to ride it.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: One pit bike and two spare sets of wheels. I changed a bike two times per lap.

Pre-race meal: We went to a brew pub. I had two pints of beer and a burger.

Warm-up routine: I pre-ride the course the day prior for one hour. I don't push it too hard, but I do want my heart to get into my race heart rate zone for about four to five minutes so the day of the race isn't too much of a shock to the system. The day of, I warm up for 45 minutes. Normally, I jump on the course and go one to two laps just below race pace to confirm the conditions, etc.

Tires & Pressure: This year I raced lower pressure than normal, and the same held true for nationals. I rode 25 psi in the front and 28 in the rear. I could feel the rims every time I hit a rut, but the lower pressure allowed me to stay on the wheels versus my ass for the large majority of the race. I also pushed the speed over the frozen ruts versus slowing down. That's counterintuitive and a fact that Tom drilled into my head the morning of the elite race. That's the only way to avoid having a wheel drop into a rut, and you know what happens when THAT happens.

Do your own wrenching?: Absolutely not. I'm terrible at it. The guys at Gearworks in Leominster, Massachusetts, are the MAN(s). I trust them completely with my equipment. They are very good to me.

Have a coach?: Tom Stevens.

Thoughts on the course: The course was changing all the time. The course was very similar to Portland (except the ice under the mud) when I won in 2004, so that gave me a certain level of comfort that I could do well in those conditions.

Race highlight besides winning: Because there were multiple fields on the course, I never actually realized I was in the lead until the second lap. The crash, which I caused when my front tire hit a rut and tossed me over the bars, threw me off balance a bit and I lost visual contact with the front of my field, so I just raced like a fiend until I got word from the pit on lap two that I had a lead. Then, I didn't want to let off the gas because I wasn't sure how much of a lead I had. So for me, the entire race was a highlight.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Yes. Due to the relatively short races, my age doesn't hold me back and I seem to do well regardless of the conditions, so I decided several years ago to focus 100% on this sport.

Training details: During the road season I train five to six days a week for about two hours after work. During 'cross, I race both days on the weekend, get in a really hard workout on Wednesday, and do a pre-race ride on Fridays.

Notes & Quotes:

· Sarvary raced in the elite race on Sunday and finished 23rd.

· A funny memory: "This is only funny in hindsight, but prior to the race I told Sue, "Trust me. Get on my wheel and we'll look for the hole." Well, not only did I crash, but I



took Sue out with me. I was so upset. It all worked out well in the end, but at the time, I was feeling like the jerk of the century."

· On getting more women racing 'cross: "I think the races for women have come a long way and I'm really thrilled to see the progress. My only big suggestion is that the promoters should try to make the elite women's prize purses equal to the elite men's purses (at least in the bigger races). Larger purses would draw the top talent to the races and that in turn would bring more of the local women to the races as well."



Diane Ostenso – Masters Women 55–59

Hometown: Cottage Grove, WI

Team: Planet Bike

Occupation:

Bike: Salsa Chili Con Crosso, Shimano drivetrain, FSA and Ritchey cockpit, Hed wheels

Nats experience: First attempt, first win.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: No major crashes. The last lap the chain was getting jammed due to the mud and muck building up in the boggy wheels.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: No pit bike, but extra wheels.

Pre-race meal: Sesame Ezekiel bread with cactus honey, crunchy soy butter, flax and wheat germ. Coffee.

Warm-up routine: It varies, but usually three to four one-minute hard efforts after about a 10 minute ride.

Tires & Pressure: Tufo Flexus tubulars, 30-35 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: Absolutely not.

Have a coach?: My husband, Gordon Paulson, is my coach and biggest fan

Thoughts on the course: Great course, especially the stairs. It reminded me of riding single track, picking the right line.

Race highlight besides winning: My husband and all my friends cheering me on. It was great.

Is 'cross your main focus?: It has been this year, along with improving my time trialing mental focus.

Training details: I only run about one month before 'cross starts. After that, not really at all. Depending on the weather, if it is good, I ride a couple of hours a day, four to five days a week. This year we had snow early, so I was snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Notes & Quotes:

· Most riders focus on their weaknesses, often technique or endurance. Ostenso has those elements of 'cross down, but still isn't content. She disclosed to us, "You can tell by the looks on my face that I am very focused and probably a little too serious when I race. I am working on smiling more."

· On getting older folks into 'cross: "Cyclocross is a kick. You will improve with every race. I totally sucked in the beginning, but I stuck with it because it did not come easy for me and I found it to be a challenge. Plus, the after race camaraderie cannot be beaten."

· Ostenso's victory was especially notable considering some personal events that impacted her training. In the spring, she spent five weeks in a nursing home caring for her mother as she recovered from spine surgery. Then, in the fall she donated stem cells to help treat her brother's bone marrow cancer.



Nancy Brown – Masters Women 60–64

Hometown: Bennet, NE

Team: No team, just started this fall.

Occupation: Retired real estate agent, grandmother.

Bike: I raced my daughter's Rohloff internal hub-equipped Waterford. I have a Surly Crosscheck that I bought for myself, but it doesn't have as low of a gearing.

Nats experience: First nationals and third race of any kind.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: No, I slid around quite a bit but didn't



really crash. I think the Rohloff was a benefit considering the weather conditions—no troubles with the mud and slush.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: No, just the one.
Pre-race meal: Oatmeal.

Warm-up routine: I did as well as I could in the warm-up tent. I spend about an hour warming up.

Tires & Pressure: Not a clue. My daughter would know.

Do your own wrenching?: Well, the only thing I've done so far is change tires.

Have a coach?: Yes.

Thoughts on the course: I was there early, and I knew it was going to be awful. I knew it was going to be bad, but I didn't know it was going to be that bad.

Race highlight besides winning: Watching Sydney, my daughter, come in second in her race.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Primarily just 'cross.

Training details: I try to ride five to six times a week, for one to two hours, on the stationary bike or outside.

Notes & Quotes:

· Brown has only bicycled since March. Brown's daughter, Sydney, convinced her to give it a try. Sydney is an avid racer who placed second in women's 34-39 at nationals.
 · To prepare for cyclocross season Brown made a cyclocross course through the cornfields of her farm and held 'cross clinics to practice. The experienced racers all told Brown that it way tougher than any real 'cross race. "They were wrong!" said Brown, finding the icy, muddy conditions especially challenging.



Julie Lockhart – Masters Women 65+

Hometown: Dunstable, MA

Team: NEBC / Cycle Loft / Devonshire Dental

Occupation: Software QA Engineer

Bike: Redline Conquest Pro, SRAM Rival parts, Mavic Ksyrium ES wheels on one, SL on the other. Souhegan Cycles provided me with these Redline bikes.

Nats experience: Won in 2006 in Providence as well.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: No crashes or mechanicals.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I changed bikes every lap. My husband (also my soigneur) didn't realize I could change bikes twice a lap.

Pre-race meal: Peanut butter and jelly sandwich, yogurt, and pomegranate juice.

Warm-up routine: I typically ride the course for at least an hour before the first race. Easy pace, maybe try a couple things at race pace. But at nats, I warmed up in the hotel on my track bike on a trainer, even though trainers and I don't get along too well, and got to the line 15 minutes before the race.

Tires & Pressure: Clinchers, Michelin Mud 2, 28-30 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: I pretty much do my own wrenching, but will take it into the shop once a year for an overhaul.

Have a coach?: I don't have a coach but am looking for one. I do believe in bike fit, and Pedal Power in Acton has fitted me on my bikes.

Thoughts on the course: Had a ripping fun time. The ankle-deep soup on barriers was "interesting"—that was a challenge as it was icy after the barriers. Very technical because of the conditions. If it was dry and 40 degrees, it would have been a grass crit.

Race highlight besides winning: I raised my hands off the bar! Seems like nobody got the picture, but that was the first time I've done that. I've tried before, and the farthest I got was 12 inches off the handlebar on my son's bike.

Is 'cross your main focus?: Yes, but I also have won on the track and road. My loves are 'cross, followed by track and the crits.

Training details: Two days a week. One is a team category 3-4 women's 'cross workout, and the other is a road workout. I also try to ride the trainer for about an hour, so maybe four hours a week.



photo: nicole bogen

Notes & Quotes:

· Lockhart rode Thursday's B women's race as well, but got her numbers mixed up, adding to the pre-race stress but creating a funny moment in hindsight. She recalls, "I didn't realize it until late – I had to bike back to the car, strip off the number, and recruit a big guy in an orange jumpsuit to put my other number on. I got to the line with only two minutes to go and I missed my call-up."

· On her strategy of staying upright: "I was able to do some things that I didn't think I could. I "skied" the course by treating the ruts like railroad tracks. A couple times I got too close to the sideline, but I dropped an elbow and pushed tape out of the way."

· Lockhart says her dream is to go to the world championships to race if they have a race for her age group and she had sponsorship to go.



Austin Vincent – Junior Men 10-12

Hometown: Weatogue, CT

Team: Unattached. I'll be joining CLNoonan/Coast to Coast/KAM for 2008

Occupation: Student

Bike: 44cm S-Works Ruby road frame, Shimano 9-Speed drivetrain

Nats experience: First win at 'cross nationals. I raced last year for fun and placed eleventh in Rhode Island. This is the first nationals win. I have raced two seasons of 'cross.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I fell over two times, slid out a few times, and hit the tape three other times.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: We do not have a pit bike or pit wheels and did not switch bikes during the race.

Pre-race meal: Peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread with water.

Warm-up routine: Half-hour on trainer in warm tent.

Tires & Pressure: Tufo tubulars at 15 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: My dad does the wrenching.

Have a coach?: As of November 2007 my dad has hired a coach—Jake Keough. I think Jake will help me a lot to get prepared for the road and following 'cross season, especially with all of Jake's junior coaching experience.

Thoughts on the course: It was muddy and slow. It would have been a very fast course if the weather conditions weren't so bad.

Race highlight besides winning: Killing the hole-shot and being able to race into the older 13-14 group up to eleventh place.

Is 'cross your main focus?: We have only raced BMX. We raced 'cross last year for fun. For 2007 I raced BMX. However, in October I decided to take a break from BMX and focus on 'cross. In 2008 I am planning on racing road and 'cross only.

Training details: We only trained for BMX until October. We started to work on 'cross a little by riding once a week. I do not run at all.

Notes & Quotes:

· On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "Have race promoters include 10-12 and 13-14 into all the races. As an example, I finished sixth in our Verge series, and if they'd had a 10-12 class, I would have won."



Logan Owen – Junior Men 13-14

Hometown: Bremerton, WA

Team: Looking for sponsorship

Occupation: Student

Bike: Redline Conquest Pro, Shimano Ultegra 10-speed drivetrain, Shimano pedals, Avid Shorty brakes

Nats experience: I've raced four nationals, and won the last three. The previous two were the Junior 10-12 race in Providence. My first nationals and 'cross race ever was the 2004 nationals in Portland where I finished second.



photo: larry rosa



photo: larry rosa



photo: larry rosa



Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I crashed five times, but no mechanicals.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a pit bike, but we were lucky that everything went smoothly with the bike.

Pre-race meal: Oatmeal and a bagel and milk.

Warm-up routine: Warmed up in the warm-up tent for 20 minutes prior to starting.

Tires & Pressure: Michelin Mud, 44 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: My dad is the mechanic.

Have a coach?: Yes, my dad.

Thoughts on the course: Ha! Great course. I loved it! It had everything: mud, ice, and slippery conditions topped off with freezing temps.

Race highlight besides winning: I think when I crashed for the first time and was passed by the rider who ended up second. I knew I had to get up and get him into view, but it took a while because I ended up slipping out and crashing a total of five times by the time I caught the leader. When I passed him I could hear his breathing and I knew he had nothing left, so I gained about 20 seconds on him then shut it down and came across the finish with three fingers in the air giving it the three-peat sign.

Is 'cross your main focus?: I started out in BMX and took to that sport quick, ending up winning the ABA World Championships three times and winning the ABA national title and NBL national title as well. Then we tried some crit racing and I fell in love with the sport. Then I was asked by Gork (Craig Barrette at Redline) if I would race their Conquest 24 at the '04 Portland cyclocross nationals, which I did and podiumed with a second. After that I got hooked into the sport of 'cross and love it.

Training details: To be honest, I don't ride that much. I race inline speed skating for Federal Way Team Extreme (I'm also the current National Champion in my age division in speed skating) where Apolo Anton Ohno got his start in the sport, and so I train there three days a week and then race road bikes competing in the Lance Armstrong series in Washington state. Then we move over to the Seattle 'cross series to finish up the year for 'cross nationals. School is the number one priority for me and then sports.

Notes & Quotes:

· On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "Keep it fun and mix it up a bit so you don't reach burnout."



Jeff Bahnson – Junior Men 15–16

Hometown: Newark, DE

Team: C2S / Henry's Bikes

Occupation: Student

Bike: Van Dessel Gin and Trombones, Shimano Ultegra drivetrain, FSA cockpit

Nats experience: First win, but raced it once before.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I slipped a lot but only went down once.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I have a pit bike, no wheels. I didn't switch bikes in the race.

Pre-race meal: Pasta.

Warm-up routine: One hour to 40 minutes before the race I ride a trainer and do a couple hard efforts and spin.

Tires & Pressure: Most of the season I rode tubulars, but I rode Michelin Mud clinchers.

Do your own wrenching?: I do some, but not a lot, of my own wrenching. Most of my wrenching gets done at Henry's bikes.

Have a coach?: I do not have a real coach but my teammate and friend Tom McDaniel helps me out.

Thoughts on the course: It was a really fun course. All of the turned up mud from the day before froze, and there was some ice and a little snow left. This made the course really technical.

Race highlight besides winning: Once I caught up to the person in the lead I was able to pass him quickly and stay in the lead for the rest of the race.

Is 'cross your main focus?: 'Cross and mountain biking are my main focus.

Training details: I try to ride every day, but every week there are one or two days where I can't. Before and during the beginning of the cyclocross season, I ran cross country for my school and I was running about five days a week. After cross country season I stopped running and started biking.



photo: larryrosa

Notes & Quotes:

· Bahnson led the Under-29 B race on Thursday for two laps. He did the race to recon the course under race pace and then eased up, contrary to reports that fatigue got the best of him.

· On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "To get more youth involved in 'cross you have to make sure that they're having fun."



Luke Keough – Junior Men 17–18

Hometown: Sandwich, MA

Team: CLNoonan/Coast to Coast/KAM

Occupation: Bike Racer/Student

Bike: Independent Fabrications Planet X Titanium with stars and stripes paint job, Shimano Dura-Ace 9-speed drivetrain, single ring, Cane Creek brakes

Nats experience: I raced and won junior men 15–16 in 2006. I have raced road and 'cross for the past three years, but I have raced BMX for the past 12 years.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: No, I didn't have any mechanicals at nats this year.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Yes, I have a spare bike, and I took four changes during the race because of the mud build-up.

Pre-race meal: Apple juice and oatmeal.

Warm-up routine: That's a secret.

Tires & Pressure: Dugast Rhinos and Typhoons—pressure in the low 20s.

Do your own wrenching?: No, my older brother Jake works on my bikes for me during the 'cross season.

Have a coach?: Yes, Jake also does that.

Thoughts on the course: Basic course, but the conditions made it rough.

Race highlight besides winning: Umm ... winning.

Is 'cross your main focus?: I'm kind of too young to have pinpointed a focus, so only time will tell.

Training details: Between 7 and 20 hours of various training, but I don't really run very much during the 'cross season.

Notes & Quotes:

· On going to worlds: "Yes, I will be leaving for Treviso, Italy, on January 16, so I am really looking forward to that."

· On getting other youth involved in cyclocross: "Have fun and don't take it too seriously. Results will come when it continues to be fun."

· On plans for college or for making 'cross or cycling a career: "I plan to make cycling my career, it is what I love to do, and I cannot see myself doing anything else in the near future. I will most likely go to school to work at a degree so that I can do something when I am too old to race full time."



photo: larryrosa



Jamey Driscoll – Collegiate Men

Hometown: Jericho, VT

Team: University of Vermont

Occupation: Student

Bike: Cannondale CAAD 9 frame, Mavic R-sys wheels, Easton EC90x fork, SRAM Rival drivetrain

Nats experience: This is my third national championship win. I have raced seven different years in 10 races total—all age group plus two collegiate and one single-speed. I have one junior victory and two in the collegiate races.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I slid out on one corner getting too greedy early in the race, and after seeing Joey Thompson crash a bunch, I decided it was faster to be a little more conservative and stay upright.



photo: andrew yee



Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Yes, I had a pit bike, the exact same, so I don't have any reservations changing. After my crash, the bars were knocked to one side so I switched bikes and stayed on the second one the rest of the race.

Pre-race meal: Mom's granola. That's all I had time for with a 10 a.m. start.

Warm-up routine: I ride around a while on the course, then closer to the race go kinda hard for a few minutes, then go really hard for a few seconds.

Tires & Pressure: Michelin Muds of course, with a psi around 40 for the increased pinch flat potential.

Do your own wrenching?: Yes, I've been a wrench for about eight years at the local bike shop. For better or worse, this limits the amount of people who I will let work on my bikes past cleaning them.

Have a coach?: Mainly myself, but from time to time I get advice from people who know what they're talking about, like Jay Gump from Incline Training and Andy Bishop, local TDF veteran.

Thoughts on the course: The course was very different because there wasn't much pedaling involved compared to most other races. It relied heavily on a racer's handling skills and ability to adapt to the conditions. I noticed that I was lapping people much sooner this year than last year even on a longer course, not because I was faster, but because of the demand for more handling skills.

Race highlight besides winning: I'd have to say seeing my teammate get 17th, moving up from the 120s, which is quite a feat in those conditions. You can't pass just anywhere you want because of all the frozen ruts at random angles.

Is 'cross your main focus?: It has been for the last two years since they are my last years in the U23 category. In the summer I ride for Fiordifrutta on the road, and collegiate road of course.

Training details: I try to ride one to two hours a day, because that's all you need for 'cross, but some days get missed because of school.

Notes & Quotes:

· Driscoll recalled the first lap of the race filled with what he calls "the usual first lap shenanigans, like people having no choice but to run over downed riders in front of them."

· He also raced the espoir race, leading a good portion of it and finishing second to Bjorn Selander in a sprint finish.

· Driscoll will be attending the world championships in Treviso, Italy, and earned an automatic spot with his USGP series win.



Bjorn Selander – U23 Men

Hometown: Hudson, WI

Team: Ridley Factory Team

Occupation: Cyclist

Bike: Ridley X-Fire, Mavic Ksyrium wheels, Dura-Ace 10 drivetrain, single chainring, 4ZA brakes

Nats experience: I've raced 2003–2007. I also won in 2004 (Junior 17–18).

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?:

I crashed on the stairs and my bike hit me in the face on my nose. I thought I broke it, but it was so cold out I didn't feel much. Later I found out it was only bruised, and it swelled up quite a bit. I also crashed on the uphill in the loop after the finish line with two laps to go. No mechanicals! The bikes were running very well! Didn't even need to pit once.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a bike and wheels in the pit, and actually I think I had two bikes even, but no switches.

Pre-race meal: Oatmeal and Christmas Stollen bread.

Warm-up routine: I stayed warm in the RV as long as possible, then warmed up on the trainer for a little while.

Tires & Pressure: Challenge 34mm Grifo tubulars. Paul Schoening did the pressure and I rode them around and they felt good. It was a low pressure, I'm sure.

Do your own wrenching?: A little bit. Not at nationals, but every other weekend, my dad and I take care of the bikes. I always keep it clean. My Dad, Thor, and Paul worked on my bikes. Thanks guys!

Have a coach?: Pretty much my Papa.

Thoughts on the course: It was a fun course. It was changing by the minute, which made it very interesting.



Race highlight besides winning: When I caught Driscoll right before the stairs and made sure I was in front of him before I dismounted.

Is 'cross your main focus?: I focus on both road and cyclocross, but more on the road for now.

Training details: I ran a good amount at the beginning of the season and then only once in a while during the season. I probably rode about seven hours a week.

Notes & Quotes:

· The night of the race Bjorn's RV generator ran out of gas and it got so cold Bjorn woke up early and went out on a mission to find some gas. But it wasn't so smooth. He recalls, "When I was filling the tank I got gas all over my jacket. I was kind of wishing I had stayed in a hotel at that time! Maybe the gas started me up or something?"

· Bjorn's dad said his son had targeted this race all year and chose to do local races instead of traveling to a lot of the major ones.



Mark Lalonde – Singlespeed (non-championship event)

Hometown: Madison, WI

Team: Bob Brown Cycles/BKB

Occupation: Bike mechanic at the corporate-owned Trek Bicycle Store in Madison, WI

Bike: Bob Brown Cycles (lugged with Reynolds 953 tubing); White Industries crank; 44t ring; Mavic Ksyrium SL rear wheel (with spacers and single cog); front wheel: Dura-Ace

hub laced to Mavic tubular rim (I borrowed this to use a 34c tire); SRAM Force brake/shift levers with shift mechanisms removed; Surly Tugnuts; Eggbeater pedals; Paul Neo Retro brakes.

Nats experience: This was my first individual win at nationals.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I think I may have gone down once. I had a couple of bobbles but nothing that cost me much time.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: My pit bike is a Jericho (made my Josh Ogle) with Bontrager Xlite tubulars. It has the same exact geometry as my Bob Brown Cycles, but I didn't switch in the singlespeed race.

Pre-race meal: I've become pretty accustomed to not eating breakfast. The only things I ate before the singlespeed and elite races at nationals were a packet of Clif Bloks and two Clif Shots.

Warm-up routine: I generally tend to start my warm-up a little over an hour before start time. I got to the course a little late as the early start time of the singlespeed race threw me off a little. I did a few laps of the course about 45 minutes before the start and then rode around until staging. My warm-up usually isn't too fast, but I throw in a couple of hard efforts to get my legs ready.

Tires & Pressure: Front: Dugast Typhoon 34c, 27 psi. Rear: Tufo Elite LPS 32c, 32 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: I do most of my own wrenching as it's my job. When I'm lazy, my unofficial team mechanic Griff takes care of the bikes.

Have a coach?: I don't have a coach. I ran competitively through college and needed a break from a structured athletic routine. I've got some fast people to train with (my brother Jesse) and we just ride as much as we can.

Thoughts on the course: The course was great due to the conditions. If it was bone dry it might actually have been kind of boring. I did two races within 5 hours of each other, and they were two completely different courses.

Race highlight besides winning: My race highlight was probably getting it handed to me in the elite race. Getting pulled was a highlight, you ask? It keeps you humble. It just shows that there's that much work ahead. Granted, I didn't have the best race (in the elites), but you get the idea.

Is 'cross your main focus?: MTB is my focus. That's not to say I don't care about CX. I have a ton of fun racing 'cross.

Training details: Usually I start getting kind of lazy towards the end of the 'cross season. Besides the 16 mile commute for work, I really only did one actual ride a week for the last month of the season.





Notes & Quotes:

· Lalonde laughed about being misidentified during the first few laps of the singlespeed race. Announcers kept calling him Travis Brown, since they both donned all black. Lalonde recalls that his fans eventually fixed it, "The Madison locals had to yell that it was me to the announcer."

· On whether singlespeed should be a championship event: "I guess it's not really my place to say whether singlespeed should be an official championship event. I wish it was though. NORBA has it for MTB, perhaps cyclocross nationals will follow suit."

· Lalonde has been on the national champion 4-man pro team for the NORBA 24-hour nationals the last two years.



Tim Johnson – Elite Men

Hometown: Beverly, MA

Team:

Occupation: Pro 'cross and road bike racer

Bike: Cannondale XTJ, SRAM Red drivetrain, TRP Carbon CR950 brakes, FSA cockpit, Easton EC90x fork

Nats experience: Five titles in 10 attempts. Won as a junior in '95, espoir in '98 and '99, as an elite in 2000, then this one.

Crashes or mechanicals during the

race?: I stayed upright the whole way! I only dabbled a couple times around some of the sketchiest corners, and on the stairs I may as well have been using a cane and walker for as slow as I felt as I tip-toed around. I had one tough thing to deal with around the midway point—I hit the rough dip before the stairs section and had my bars slip down. I rolled for a lap with my bars facing the dirt and my hands slipping off. I got a quick bike change and I was all set after that.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I am so lucky to have the support from Stu at cyclocrossworld.com. I have three identical Cannondales with SRAM Red. I have one set up with a Cannondale SRM SI Hollowgram crankset that I use mainly during the week and keep as bike #3 on race day. I didn't even get to the wheels. My team also shares a quiver of Mavic wheels that include R-System tubular and clinchers, Cosmic Carbones, and the badass Ultimates with Dugast Typhoons on them. If the weather stayed icy and snowy in KC, we had a secret weapon of Dugast Pippistrellos mounted on the Carbones. I swapped bikes three times during the race, and probably could have swapped more, but I was in the midst of a battle with Page and didn't want to give up time on him.

Pre-race meal: Anything that Lyne whips up.

Warm-up routine: Varies depending on the weather. I like to spin in the morning outside and then get to the course a couple hours early to ride the course and dial stuff in.

Tires & Pressure: I rode Dugast Rhinos at about 25psi. I rode on Michelin Mud/Jets for years and loved them, although they paid my love back with a few poorly timed flats (nats '01, worlds '02). Now I run tubulars mostly.

Do your own wrenching?: Not a chance. I gave up that ghost a while ago. Stu, Marc, and the rest of the boys at the shop take care of most things, thankfully.

Have a coach?: I'm helped out by a friend of mine that I can turn to when I'm having doubts about my training or when I feel like I need someone to bounce ideas off of.

Thoughts on the course: I thought the course was done well. There was lots of variety in the terrain that would have been more obvious if the conditions were different. The off-cambers and sloppiest bits were my favorite for the fear factor, although the rutted downhill section by the tent was by far the sketchiest part.

Race highlight besides winning: Probably making it through Ryan's crash site unscathed. I saw the video and am very thankful that I was one second too late for the head to sternum crunch!

Is 'cross your main focus?: 'Cross is definitely the most fun I've had on a bike. It's always hard for me to say that I'd pick this over that. As each season passes I'm reminded of why I like them. With [my road team] Health Net, if I'm pulling on the front at Tour of California or Georgia, it's more about feeling like I'm a part of something that's successful, a team moment, rather than a "holy shit, did you see how I



photo:andrew yee

almost ate it in that rutted section" moment like I've had so many times on my 'cross bike.

Training details: I ride a bunch, but don't really run all that much. I try and walk more than anything. After a season on the road where it's literally 'on the bike and then off to bed' for a few months, just the action of walking really helps with keeping the body ready to run and jump. I do feel better running and leaping as the 'cross season goes on.

Notes & Quotes:

· Johnson's revealed his pre-race secrets to winning. He described his Saturday night race prep to us as "eating ice cream and ripping donut after donut in a rental car in the Cabela's parking lot."

· On whether U.S. racers will be able to make a living just focusing on 'cross: "The sport needs to be managed properly from the top down—federation, promoters, racers, and sponsors all need to take a look at what we have and what we could have. 'Cross is an amazing participation AND spectator sport. As it's shown to more and more people it will expand in volume, making it easier to market to a broader audience. Even though it's generally a grass roots style of promotion that's happening...as a few more promoters of current events make a move past just the basic nuts-and-bolts running of an event, more people will be hooked on the spectacle of the sport and support it on the industry level as well as on mass level. 'Cross in the U.S. is still very immature and until we make it through adolescence, it will be difficult for riders to race cyclocross exclusively."



Andy Jacques Mayne – Masters Men, 30–34

Hometown: Capitola, CA

Team: California Giant Berry Farms/Specialized

Occupation: Pro bike racer

Bike: Specialized S-Works TriCross Az1 Carbon, S-Works FACT carbon integrated crankset with single rotor ring, S-Works Barmac carbon stem/bar combo, SRAM Force drivetrain, TRP carbon CR950 brakes, Roval Rapide SL wheels, Specialized BG Phenom saddle. 15.4 lbs!

Nats experience: This was my first-ever cyclocross nationals win! I've raced cyclocross nats in San Francisco, Kansas City, Baltimore, Napa, Portland (twice), Providence (twice), and now in KC again for a total of nine times. Out of those times, I've been on the podium six times, but only won one race! Even so, I was announced as a previous winner in U23 and also collegiate—maybe they confused me with my twin brother. This happens often.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I had caught the leader about halfway through, but as soon as I pulled alongside him, his front wheel caught a rut and sent him careening into me. He stayed up, but I hit the deck and got wrapped up in a bunch of course tape. It was all tangled up in my bike. Once I got going again, he had about 30 seconds on me, and I basically gave up then. I was pretty demoralized.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a complete second bike in the pit that was actually my A bike for the elite race. I rode the whole 30+ race on my B bike. They are so close that I can't really tell the difference. I never switched bikes for the race because the ground was so frozen that the bike never really got dirty or messed up. There was no need to swap.

Pre-race meal: I always eat a lot of oatmeal before a race, so that day was no different. Three hours before the race I mow down as much food as I can fit in. The waiter at the restaurant flipped out: AJM: How big is your bowl of oatmeal? Waiter: It's pretty big. (Simulates a large bowl with his hands.) AJM: Perfect. I'll have two.

Warm-up routine: It was so cold out that I tried to "warm up" as little as possible. I stayed indoors until the last minute (I left the hotel only 40 minutes before the start), and I rode only one short section of the course to get my tire pressure dialed. I got on the trainer to ride for only about 10 or 15 minutes. There were a lot of guys totally drilling themselves on the trainer in the warm-up tent. You could see the steam pouring off them. They were also wet and freezing as soon as they stepped outside into 18-degree weather! I wanted to avoid that so I did the minimum amount of warm-up I thought I could get away with. I also kept my jacket on until the last second and I



photo:andrew yee



overdressed slightly, which was good for this California boy!

Tires & Pressure: I had some 32c Challenge Grifo tubulars. I've raced in the snow and ice before, so I knew the pressure would be much, much lower than normal. I ended up running 23 psi in the front and 27 psi in the back.

Do your own wrenching?: My team has a whole crew in the pits to help me, so I have to say a huge thanks to Rich Sangalli, Eric Zimmer, Rob Evans, Jordi Cortes, Frank Cauresma, Norm Kreiss, and Anthony Gallino. Those guys were awesome!

Have a coach?: I coach myself, which is good and bad. Sometimes I need a slave-driver (which I'm bad at), but sometimes I need to ease off to find that balance point so I don't get sick or overtrained (I'm good at listening to my own body).

Thoughts on the course: I really liked the venue and the layout of the course. There were sections that favored different kinds of riders, like paved climbs, or off-camber sections. But the whole course layout favored nobody, so it was a very fair and balanced course. It had tricky sections, but it just set the stage for the racers to make the race: I never felt like I was riding against the course, just against other racers. I rode the day before, and it was sloppy. Then all the ruts froze hard overnight, which made for a treacherous course. Then it snowed so you couldn't see all the ruts, so there were these big booby-traps all over the course. It made for very tense riding, because you had to be ready for your bike to turn left at any moment, whether you wanted it to or not!

Race highlight besides winning: The conditions! It was so amazing to be out there (willingly!) in 18 degrees and snow and wanting to race. The scenery of the snow and the iced trees was very pretty, and the whole venue looked really cool. It was almost a surreal experience to race in those conditions, and it made the whole weekend very memorable.

Is 'cross your main focus?: I'll be racing on the road all this next year, doing NRC events and bringing up my fitness for next year's 'cross season. Then it's on for real!

Training details: For riding my training varies between 12 and 25 hours weekly during the season. It's all about timing your rest, and I've done enough trial and error over the years with mountain biking, cyclocross, and road that I know exactly how my body will react to training stress and rest.

Notes & Quotes:

· On his win: "All the people watching were so amped up and excited by the end of my race, but they didn't realize that those of us in the race were also gripped by the action. The last two laps for me were totally, "What's going to happen?!" and to see it come off in the end was just a thrill. Actually, the hardest part of the whole race was not getting too excited by the drama unfolding. If I had...I would have crashed out in a corner and it would have been all over."

· On whether a 30-34 category makes sense: "It's a weird class to have, since nationals is the ONLY event that offers it. I will never get a chance to wear the jersey at any race, because it's a nonexistent category. Most of the top guys in the 30+ category are top-end elite racers anyway: I placed sixth in the elite race, and three of the five guys in front of me are older than me! So I'm only the fourth-fastest."



Brandon Dwight – Masters Men 35-39

Hometown: Boulder, CO

Team: Boulder Cycle Sport

Occupation: Co-owner of Boulder Cycle Sport.

Bike: Time Cross Pro Team, Ritchey WCS bar and 4-Axis stem, SRAM Force drivetrain with a single ring setup 42T, FSA carbon guards, Crank Brothers Candy 4Ti pedals, Zipp 404 Cross tubular wheels

Nats experience: Yes, this was my first win at U.S. nationals. I have raced in eleven U.S. nationals. My first one took place in 1997 in Lakewood, Colorado, which funny enough, was won by Mark McCormack. I think this was my sixth masters nationals event.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I didn't crash once throughout the entire race. I definitely slipped out and bobbed quite a bit,

but as far as I can remember, I kept it upright throughout the entire race. No



photo: andrew yee

mechanicals at all. Not even a missed shift or skipping of gears.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I didn't bring spare wheels, but I did bring a spare bike. It's an exact copy of my race bike, but I didn't need it at all. My race bike worked perfectly throughout the entire race.

Pre-race meal: I try not to get caught up in needing to eat the same thing before every race. It just sets you up for problems if you can't get or make what you want to. For this race I had a waffle and some yogurt and cereal from the hotel lobby breakfast buffet. If I could have anything I wanted before a 'cross race, it would be my girlfriend's pancakes.

Warm-up routine: The hour before this race was so chaotic because I didn't even have my race bikes. They were still in a minivan that was transporting them to the race from Colorado. I spent the hour before the race finding a potential race bike, setting it up, and getting two or three laps on it. Luckily, my race bike showed up fifteen minutes before the start and I was able to race it.

Tires & Pressure: Challenge Grifo 32 tubulars. I don't know the exact tire pressure because I generally go off feel. My guess is they were around 29 psi in the front and 31 psi in the rear.

Do your own wrenching?: Absolutely not. I am a horrible mechanic. I can do most things, but I trust the pro mechanics at my shop (Boulder Cycle Sport) to fine tune everything. I do glue on my own tires because if they come off I have no one to blame but myself.

Have a coach?: I work loosely with John Verhuel of JVB Coaching. He is a long time friend and I have been doing this so long that I know what works well for me. John is a great resource and he helps me set the foundation for the upcoming season. He is there to offer help and feedback as the season progresses.

Thoughts on the course: It's tough to say if it was a really great course design because the slick and muddy conditions were such a major factor. I do think had it been dry you would have seen a lot more group racing because it seemed as though it flowed well and wasn't too technical. Overall, I liked it.

Race highlight besides winning: Besides winning, the highlight for me was hearing so many of my friends cheering for me throughout the race. It really kept me motivated

Is 'cross your main focus?: Yes, I don't race any other discipline. I used to race mountain and road bikes but lost interest when I realized I was just too dang slow! This past year I did jump into a couple mountain or road races for fun, but nothing else.

Training details: It varies. My preseason training weeks aren't more than 15 hours, which includes off-the-bike training, too. During the season I only ride 8 to 10 hours a week. Sometimes less depending on how busy things are at work.

Notes & Quotes:

· On the funniest part of the weekend "That was not knowing whether or not my bikes were going to make it in time for the race. When my bikes showed up fifteen minutes before the start, it was pandemonium. We were pulling bikes and wheels out of the back of my friend's van, slapping bikes together, checking brakes and tire pressure as fast as we could. It was stressful at the time, but we all laughed about it afterwards."

· Brandon is also the founder of Dopers Suck (doperssuck.com)



James Alan Coats – Masters Men 40-44

Hometown: Campbell, CA

Team: Morgan Stanley/Specialized

Occupation: Fatigue test engineer, Specialized Bicycles

Bike: Specialized S-Works TriCross Az1 Carbon, Dura-ace 10-speed drivetrain, old XTR cantilevers

Nats experience: I've raced every nationals since 2000. Of those eight, I won in 2001 and 2003 in the 35-39, and then this year.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?:

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I have two identical S-Works TriCross Carbon bikes and two sets of extra wheels in the pit with different tires. I started taking bikes on lap three because the conditions of the course were changing. I was taking two changes a lap until the finish.

Pre-race meal: I had a huge breakfast: waffles, eggs, potatoes, and coffee. I have a



photo: andrew yee



weird stomach and have to eat f4 ½ hours before the race.

Warm-up routine: I warmed up on the trainer for one hour and ten minutes.

Tires & Pressure: I was riding the Dugast Rhino tubulars. I forget what pressure. (It's a secret ... ha ha.)

Do your own wrenching?: Yep, I work on all of my own bikes.

Have a coach?: No coach.

Thoughts on the course: I thought the course was awesome. The venue was awesome. In a way I am thankful that it was as rideable as it was. I was a bit worried about the conditions the day before with the mud and all as I am not a good runner. I honestly think there would have been a different winner that day.

Race highlight besides winning: I guess the highlight for me was how fast I arrived at the front of the race. I still can't recall how it all happened, but I went from 12 rows deep to fifth by the time we hit the first pit on the first lap. Crazy! Oh, another highlight was the look on my lovely lady's face as I crossed the line into the crowd ... priceless!

Is 'cross your main focus?: Uhhh, it is definitely my favorite type of racing to do on a bike. Mountain biking is number two.

Training details: During 'cross season it is only 6–10 hours total. Not much running. Pretty much hate it. But, running is incorporated into my rides.

Notes & Quotes:

- On the weekend's highlight, besides winning: "One fun part was the party on Sunday at Dave and Busters—and then downstairs to the bar with a mechanical bull. Hilarious!"

- On going to masters worlds: "No worlds for me, but some day I would like to go. I hear it is awesome."

- As a fatigue testing engineer of Specialized products, Coats can modify parts and ensure their safety. His bike sported a Specialized stem with a hole drilled through the middle of it to serve as a cable hanger.



Steve Tilford – Masters Men 45–49

Hometown: Topeka, KS

Team: KCCX/Verge/Eriksen Cycles

Occupation: Pro bike racer

Bike: Eriksen Titanium, Reynolds Ouzo Pro Cross fork, Dura-Ace 10 drivetrain, Shimano cantilevers, Shimano XTR pedals, Shimano carbon tubular wheels

Nats experience: I won '83, '84, '91, and '92, and masters titles in '04, '05, and '06, in addition to this year. I raced my first nationals in '81 in Pacifica, CA, but skipped a few years from '85-'90 because I was racing full-time professionally on the road. I also missed '93-'98. I've been racing 'cross since the late 70s. I have an old *Bicycling Magazine* from the mid 70s featuring a race with my brother, Kris, and a bunch of guys from my original cycling team—Mt. Oread—doing 'cross. That kind of got me hooked.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: During the masters race I went down three times. The only line was right on the banner. You had to be eight inches from the banner because everything else was frozen ruts. Ninety percent of the time it was good, but the wind would blow the ribbon under your bars. Nineteen out of twenty times I could just push the ribbon back, but then when the ribbon was stuck there, you'd hit the post and your bike would stop and it'd twist you. I went down twice like that. And then the first time going towards the stairs, I dismounted like normal, but the meter before as I was stepping through with my right foot, my front wheel sank into a hole up to the front hub, and I slammed my bar on my thighs.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: Yeah, I had a pit bike that was pretty much the same as my A bike but had Challenge Grifos on it.

Pre-race meal: I usually eat homemade sourdough pancakes with pure maple syrup before big 'cross races. And a ton of coffee.

Warm-up routine: Nothing special. I try to ride the course to get the lines down. It was super important in Kansas City. I try to make sure that I'm ready to start fast.

Tires & Pressure: Dugast Rhinos on one bike and Challenge Grifos on another at about 26 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: Absolutely. It's important to know your bike inside and out.

Have a coach?: No. I'm not a big believer in coaching, unless it's hands-on. There is way too much coaching going on via the internet. I've been asked to coach by a bunch of people. And, there are some people that I could coach. But, I'd have to be riding and

observing the riders on a constant basis.

Thoughts on the course: I think the course was pretty good considering the crazy weather conditions. I'm not sure there is much you can do with a course when it is changing up so much on an hourly basis. I thought they should have extended the pavement higher to get rid of the dip that everyone was having so much trouble with.

Race highlight besides winning: My race highlights are mainly personal observations. Things I learn still. Lots of really small things that make me ride my bike faster.

Is 'cross your main focus?: In the winter, for sure. During the summer, it's in the back of my mind always. But, now that nationals are in KC for another year, I'm going to put a bunch more effort into proper preparation earlier in the season.

Training details: I ride a fair amount on a weekly basis. Kind of depends on what I'm doing in the near term. On average, I ride around 350 miles a week, usually racing at least two days a week. I don't really run much at all. I have, historically, run some during 'cross season, but this year, I did virtually nothing.

Notes & Quotes:

- Tilford shared one of his best memories of the weekend. He recalls sitting in the heated tent after the elite race: "It was just Jonathan Page and myself. We weren't saying anything. I think we both felt pretty much the same, but for different reasons. Finally, I just said, mainly to myself, 'Man, that was pretty anticlimactic.' Jonathan didn't say anything for a little while, and finally he said, 'Yeah, pretty anticlimactic.'"

- Tilford had terrible luck in the elite race, double flatting his Dugast Rhinos and then double flatting his Michelin clinchers. It was a first for Tilford. "I haven't flattened that many times adding up every 'cross race I've entered. Pretty weird!" he said.

- Tilford, with nearly thirty years of 'cross racing under his belt, says he's going to keep going for a while. He says he'll never hang up a bike, but might stop racing on a professional level sometime, and might even stop racing completely someday. Racers his age (and many much younger as well) can only hope that time comes sooner rather than later.



Ned Overend – Masters Men 50–54

Hometown: Durango, CO

Team: Specialized

Occupation: Product development and marketing for Specialized Bicycles

Bike: Specialized S-Works TriCross Az1 Carbon, SRAM Force drivetrain, Tektro V-brakes, Roval Alpiniste tubular wheels

Nats experience: I won the same race in '06 in Providence. Previous to '06 my last nationals was '86 in Nutley, New Jersey, where I was second to Paul Curley. We are in the same age class. It's too bad he wasn't in KC. He is a great technical rider. I have six national MTB XC (pro) titles and a couple XTERRA triathlon national titles.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: My first crash was at the beginning of the first lap, a pretty fast section where I hit the steel fencing. That's what caused the buckle on my shoe to pop open. With my frozen hands and bulky gloves, I couldn't tighten it back up, so I stopped, took my gloves off, and tightened it back up. I lost the front wheel in several turns but managed to get my foot out in time to save it.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had a spare bike in the pits but never needed it.

Pre-race meal: I raced at 3 pm, so I had some cereal and toast for breakfast at 10 a.m. and topped off the carbs with a couple bananas at 1 p.m. Five minutes before the start I had a gel.

Warm-up routine: I was on the trainer for about 20 minutes, then about 15 minutes with some surges through a slow, snowy field before the start. I kept my thermal warm-ups on until three minutes before the start.

Tires & Pressure: I borrowed a pair of 32c Dugast Rhinos from Don Langley, another Specialized employee/racer. I ran them at 30 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: For the most part I do my own wrenching, but I get some help from Ryan Barthel who is a mechanic at Mtn Bike Specialists.

Have a coach?: I coach myself. I am an avid reader of coaching information; I try to learn from guys like Joe Friel, Fred Matheny, and Chris Carmichael. I absorb as much info as I can and then use it to tweak my program for the next year.

Thoughts on the course: It was changing dramatically over the course of the weekend. Ideal for me is a course with less risk of mechanicals or crashing. I have good fitness, so if I can transfer it to the ground I have a good chance of doing well. It's not



photo: andrew yee



photo: andrew yee



that I'm bad at technical courses, but when there's a national title on the line, I prefer fewer variables. On Friday afternoon there was a lot of mud, and running was becoming a major factor. But then it froze and snowed a few inches over the frozen ruts, and in my race on Saturday, guys were going down right and left. It was fitting 'cross conditions to select the national champs.

Race highlight besides winning: Crashing at a pretty high speed into a steel fence, standing up, and realizing I wasn't hurt.

Is 'cross your main focus?: No, mountain bike and road racing are my main focus, but every year I look forward to incorporating more 'cross racing into my schedule. I love bike racing because it's exciting and 'cross has a lot of the most exciting elements. Intense racing in a pack on tight courses, the constant risk of throwing yourself on the ground, and the variety of conditions. But mountain biking with the long climbs and descents is my favorite.

Training details: We had unseasonably warm weather in Durango through November so I was getting out on the trails more than usual. I ride about 8–10 hours a week, with two half-hour runs per week and a couple sessions in the gym. The crux of my 'cross training is a 30-minute race simulation with a group on Wednesday morning and a local 'cross race on the weekend.

Notes & Quotes:

· On going to masters worlds: "I like to cross-country ski in the winter. It's an important part of my yearly fitness plan so I don't get burned out on cycling. To try and stay fit through 'cross worlds would be pretty hard."



Fred Wittwer – Masters Men 55–59

Hometown: Charlottesville, VA

Team: Van Dessel Factory Team/ Charlottesville Racing Club

Occupation: Registered Nurse, Operating Room, Orthopedics

Bike: Salsa Chili Con Crosso, Shimano Ultegra/Dura-Ace 9-speed drivetrain, FSA compact crank (36/46)

Nats experience: Won the last two nationals. I've raced nationals six times

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?:

About two minutes before the start, on the line, I had a flat front tire. Fortunately my son had the pit bike there, so I got the front wheel from that. I crashed about five times. Of course, three of those times were in the last quarter of the race.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: I had my son's bike in the pits, but did not pit.

Pre-race meal: Ultrafuel three hours before race, then sipped Heed and took a gel 15 minutes before the start.

Warm-up routine: I do some tempo, steady states, and power intervals. It takes about 30 minutes.

Tires & Pressure: I ride tubulars for the bigger races, either Challenge or Dugast, as low as 19 psi and up to 30 psi. During nats, I had a Challenge Grifo tubular with 25 psi on the rear, and a Michelin Mud2 clincher with 28 psi on the front.

Do your own wrenching?: Yup!

Have a coach?: Yes, Katie Compton. She's the best!

Thoughts on the course: Awesome course. I think it would be fun in all weather conditions

Race highlight besides winning: I thought the course in those conditions was going to be too dangerous, but once I got going it was a blast.

Is 'cross your main focus?: 'Cross is my main focus, but I also do road and mountain bike racing. I enjoy the diversity.

Training details: I ride about five to seven hours during 'cross season and run about 30 minutes.

Notes & Quotes:

· On handling the icy conditions: "Racing out there in those conditions was crazy! Why can't we have nationals in a part of the country with a better climate?"



Lewis Rollins – Masters Men 60–64

Hometown: Salt Lake City, UT



Team: Contender Bicycle

Occupation: Retired marine after 35 years of service. Currently has two part-time jobs: REI sales person in the action sports department (pays for the toys) and one day a week washing dogs at his wife's pet grooming salon.

Bike: Giant TCX, Dura-Ace 9-speed shifters, Ultegra crankset with single chainring, XTR Rapid-Rise rear derailleur, Paul Neo-Retro brakes, Reynolds carbon tubular wheels.

Nats experience: This was my first national championship race.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I crashed twice Saturday and crashed twice Sunday. [The 60+, 65+, and 75+ races were nullified on Saturday and re-run on Sunday.]

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: No, I just have a single bike—a Giant TCX.

Pre-race meal: I had the same thing I've had all week, three small waffles, apple juice, and a little coffee.

Warm-up routine: I rode a trainer in the warm-up tent for 30–45 minutes, popped a GU, drank some Accelerade, and then I rode.

Tires & Pressure: I ran Tufo Flexus 32s. I ran the rear at 25 psi and the front at 20 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: I do depend on my local bike shop, Contenders, the team I race for. I had them go through and overhaul the whole bike before I came.

Have a coach?: No, I have a degree in exercise and sports science. I set up my own training. I'm sure if I had someone to push me a little harder I might be better, but I work at it.

Thoughts on the course: I came in Thursday and rode the course while it was the muddiest course I'd ever been on. Then it got icy. I was a little concerned if the tires I had would be any good but they worked great Saturday and Sunday they were even better."

Race highlight besides winning: You know, cyclocross has a great group of people. They're willing to help you out. You need something, they'll bend over backwards.

Is 'cross your main focus?: 'Cross is because it entails a little bit of running and I've been a runner, and then I mountain bike to work on my handling skills.

Training details: I probably ride around 10–12 hours a week, and sometimes as little as eight. Once a week I also go to the local high school and run bleachers. Also, at REI we have to carry bikes up and down a big set of 20+ stairs, so that's good training too.

Notes & Quotes:

· His funny moment: "On the last lap I got distracted by trying to listen to the announcers calling my own race. When they were screaming about a bobble by the current leader, I looked up to see if I could see it, but then ended up bobbling myself!"

· Lew Rollins has been commuting by bicycle for the better part of four decades. He started racing road in 2001 with endurance racing, and then got the itch to try racing 'cross four years ago.

· Rollins flew to Sacramento, CA, for races three and four of the "Cross in the Capitol City" series—he wanted to race defending 60+ national champion John Elgart to see how he measured up. They did not battle, however, as Elgart missed race three and raced singlespeed in race four.



Lee Willmore – Masters Men 65+

Hometown: Seal Beach, CA

Team: Celso Pacific

Occupation: Artist. Taught in the art department at CSULB for 20 years before retiring. He has been teaching surfing at CSULB since then.

Bike: Vantuyt VT340 aluminum, Campy Chorus 10 drivetrain

Nats experience: This is my fifth national championship, but first win. Last year in the 65+ I bonked, the year before that I did good enough (7th in the 60+), in 2004 in Portland I got 6th in the 60+, and before that I bonked.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: I had about 10 crashes, a couple of them hard ones. These old bodies don't like it. It hurts! I don't really have a bicycle background, and a lot of these guys really do. The background of these guys is very athletic, they've participated



for years and years, and it's really neat. I'm a surfer. There is a real disadvantage to that because I'm too willing to bail and go splash, but then I'm like, wait a minute, that's not a splash. It's more like "splat."

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: My attitude is, if it breaks, it's over. Don't worry about it.

Pre-race meal: Leftover muffins from some restaurant. Mush in the morning – hot cereal and an egg. I have bonked in a couple races. I get hungry, my arms get tired, my legs get tired, my brain is saying "keep going," and my legs are like, "Huh?" We're all different – we gotta figure out what works for us.

Warm-up routine: I do what I can to get this old body moving.

Tires & Pressure: Tufo Elite LPS, 40 psi.

Do your own wrenching?: I know some mechanic stuff, but I go to Richard's Cyclery in Garden Grove and they do the hard stuff.

Have a coach?: All my friends tell me things to do, but then I do what I think I should. I really get good advice from my friends. If I'd follow it, I'd really be better off.

Thoughts on the course: I had problems with the frozen ruts, quick change of direction, and the bike taken out from under me. It was not that hard to cross over the tape to oncoming riders (i.e. what happened to Ryan Trebon). A four-foot buffer space between opposing directions would help.

Race highlight besides winning: Rolling in and hearing them say, "You won." I really thought there were five or six people ahead of me.

Is 'cross your main focus?: I have a road bike, time trial bike, mountain bike, track bike, and a single-speed cyclocross bike. I do not race on them, but I use all of them in trying to be stronger for cyclocross.

Training details: Sunday, race 55+ and single-speed. Monday, easy two hours on the time trial bike. Tuesday, a morning surf and in the afternoon two hard hours on the 'cross bike. Wednesday, train with friends two easy hours on the road or the cyclocross bike. Thursday, two brisk hours with friends on road bikes. Friday/Saturday, easy riding and working on cyclocross/handling skills.

Notes & Quotes:

· On his singlespeed race earlier in the day: "I did three laps in single-speed before I was pulled out of the race. This look at the course, before the 65+ race, gave me a good idea of the best lines to ride. That plus amazing luck put me in front at the finish of this year's race. I did not realize that I was leading. I was just trying to stay in front of Bob Lamas who had lost his chain and catch those other riders who were in front of me."

· On his new jersey: "I have such a big smile when I look at the gold medal and national jersey. I will make a lot of racers happy when they pass me during next year's races."

· On defending titles: "I believe I took last place in single-speed at the cyclocross nationals in Portland both years, so I had a record to protect and I was hoping to be last in Kansas. Well, things do not always work out."



Walt Axthelm – Masters Men 70+

Hometown: Durango, CO

Team: Durango Wheel Club

Occupation: Retired. Former engineer for Boeing and worked projects including the B2 bomber, 737, and 777.

Bike: Motobecane Fantom Cross, Shimano 105/Tiagra 9-speed drivetrain, Dura-Ace crankset with 38t single ring, Easton wheels, Tektro Oryx brakes, Shimano pedals.

Nats experience: This is my first national championship, and first win other than the Senior Games. I've won some nationals there.

Crashes or mechanicals during the race?: Yesterday I had a lot of crashes on the course. I was trying some different pedals and I couldn't get out. I switched them out again this morning and didn't have any problems.

Brought a pit bike or spare wheels?: No pit bike.

Pre-race meal: I had some cereal, granola, and a GU before the start.

Warm-up routine: I was in the Fort Lewis tent on a trainer for a half-hour before I came out.

Tires & Pressure: I was running the tires that came with the bike, Kenda Kwick Cross.

Do your own wrenching?: I have 30 years working on motorcycles. I do all my own wrenching.

Have a coach?: No. I don't think a lot of people understand older people.

Thoughts on the course: It was a lot better than Saturday. I've never gone down so many times. [Pointing to his eye] I got this shiner and have some separated ribs. It hurts to cough.

Race highlight besides winning: Being able to finish without falling off!

Is 'cross your main focus?: Road and time trials are my focus. I like time trials because it's just you against the clock.

Training details: I ride the Fort Lewis CX series, and put in 1700 miles on my CycleOps during the year in addition to road and TT training.

Notes & Quotes:

· Axthelm had only ridden a 'cross bike four times before coming to Kansas City for nationals. Axthelm won Sunday's masters 70+ race despite injuries he sustained racing Saturday—injuries that would have stopped many younger riders from racing.

· Walt Axthelm is a veteran of two-wheeled racing, motorized and human-powered. A 2001 inductee of the Motorcycle Hall of Fame and frequent participant in the Senior Games, Axthelm holds several national championship titles in road and time trials.

· Axthelm was just one of 32 racers from the small but bike-crazy town of Durango.



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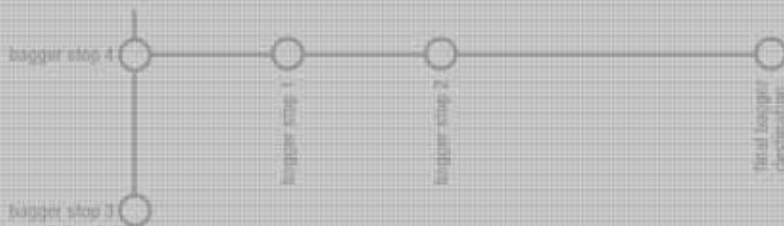
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Upgrade Points for Auction!

Intro by Andrew Yee

Q: Do the bags of sand come with points, too, or will they be sold separately? And if I upgrade from cat four to cat two, does this mean I'll be missing two cats when I get home after the race?

A: We do not take responsibility for animals that go missing as a result of your sudden leap to stardom and disappearance from home due to your newly required appearance at World Cup events.

Sandbagging is a hot topic in most amateur sports, and 'cross is no different. However, discussions of this hot-button issue in the 'cross community took a new form and hit a new high in the last few months, thanks in part to an eBay auction titled, "Cyclocross Cross Upgrade Points from Verge Sandbaggers" posted in early December:

Auction: Cyclocross cross upgrade points from Verge sandbaggers

Item Number: 330193492270

End Time: Dec 04, 2007 11:47:29 PST



We, the top tier New England cross racers in the 2/3 category have decided to come together to auction off our unused and no longer wanted upgrade points. We know many people spend all season chasing these coveted points in hopes of upgrading from a category 4 to a 3 and then from a 3 to a 2. Well, instead of accepting our upgrades, the four of us have decided to continue racing at the 2/3 events and sometimes even at the 3/4 events. We asked, we are doing this only so we can win the lame prizes awarded to top finishers and to inflate our egos a bit but is that really so wrong?

events and sometimes even in the 3/4 events. We admit, we are doing this only so we can win the lame prizes awarded to top finishers and to inflate our egos a bit but is that really so wrong.

Word of the auction, posted by eBay user "racerwannabe", generated national attention among 'crossers. Bidding was active, and even the suits at CXM (Lycra suits of course) got into the action in hopes of giving them away to lucky readers. Within a few days, it racked up 6,700 hits and provided entertainment for many just through the growing list of published questions and answers.

Q: I've got a friend in D.C. who is riding Cat 3 cross and getting his ass handed to him every week. I was hoping to give him these for Christmas as a gift. If I pay a bit extra, can you gift wrap them for me?

A: these points don't make you win, they just make you upgrade, but I guess for an extra \$20 I could gift-wrap them for you.

Q: I live in New Orleans and spent plenty of time sandbagging due to Hurricane Katrina flooding. I never got any points or prizes for sandbagging though.

A: Now we feel bad. At least you were sandbagging for a good cause.

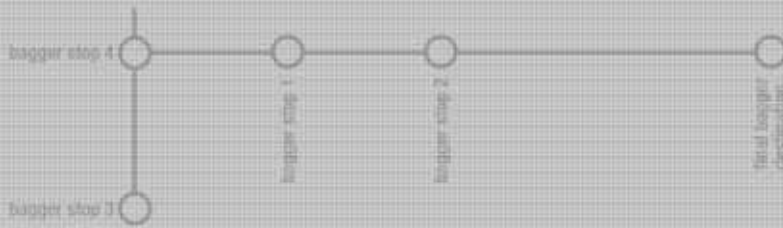
Q: Hi. Do the points come with instructions on how to celebrate properly? I've found that the biggest sandbaggers often have the best victory celebrations. Can't be certain, but it often seems that these types of racers work with choreographers and really know how to pump their fists after crossing the line after pummeling the lesser fields. Will professional assistance be available as a throw in with the points?

A: We'd be more than happy to show you the proper technique for a wheelie victory salute or a no handed fist pump. We're working with Terrell Owens for some original material to debut at the last few races of the season but that will be trademarked and auctioned separately.

Q: I'm only a cat. 4 racer right now, but it seems like it would be really cool to be a cat. 1 racer. Would I be able to use all of the points on myself to upgrade all the way up to cat 1?

A: I don't see why not. It would be nice to see someone make use of all of these since we are not.

Who really was behind the auction? Why was it cancelled? How did it become so popular? To get the full story, we put expert sandbagger columnist Hector Finely on the case to learn about the folk(s) behind the auction.



From One Bagger to Another

by Hector Finely

Sandbagging is an issue near and dear to my heart (see my “Confessions of a Sandbagger” story in CXM’s premier issue), and because I’m the undisputed #1 columnist on ‘cross sandbagging in small independent magazines under one year old, I was caught off guard by this auction. I thought, “Who the hell is threatening my title as a top ‘cross bagger and expert on sandbagging?” I had to find out. So I secured an exclusive interview with *racerwannabe* to learn more about the person or people behind the auction, but more importantly, to keep the man down, put him in his place, and make sure he doesn’t have any chance at glory.

I have seven years experience writing professional eBay auctions. My auctions usually get 7,500 hits and 55 questions. With only 6,700 hits, your auction kinda sucked. But did you expect the attention yours got?

I really had no idea. I thought it would be fun if it spread around the New England crowd since everyone was grumbling about the sandbagging but no one was doing anything about it.

Oh, snap! So you weren’t really one of those baggers listed in the auction, but instead trying to prevent bagging by calling folks out? So what’s your racing background?

I’ve been racing ‘cross since 2004. I got hooked while working in the bike industry and have only grown more obsessed since that point. If I could, I would be on my bike six hours a day. I love long rides, group rides, and making myself suffer. I’ve never been great about strict training because I just want to ride as much as possible and will do so whenever the opportunity presents itself. I raced two seasons as a C and managed to win one small race my first year and then a larger race in my second year. After my win in the larger race, I made the jump to the Bs and have never looked back. I finished in the back third during my first few B races until my mental upgrade caught up to my Cat upgrade. I’m now a front third B racer but usually 1–1½ minutes off the leaders of Verge races.

Wow, so I guess you’re a little better racer than me. You’re clearly a bagger then, because I train hard, almost 30 minutes once a week, and finish bottom half of masters Bs. But if you don’t consider yourself a bagger, in your eyes, where’s the line when someone becomes a bagger?

These four guys are perfect examples of sandbaggers. Anyone who

lines up in the non-elite category and is one of four to five favorites for victory out of a field of 60+ is a sandbagger in my mind. I applaud the guys who race at the elite level and have never won a race, even as an amateur. My post was calling out people who dominated as amateurs for the whole season, some of them for the second year in a row.

How did word of the auction spread so quickly?

I emailed three of my fellow B racers who had the same complaints throughout the season. Within a day the auction was linked to three blogs I read regularly and probably a half dozen others. There was a lengthy thread on RBR forums about sandbagging as a result. I guess there was enough sticky mud on the side of the hill because once I rolled that pebble from the top, it turned into an unstoppable boulder in no time. It was really funny to hear friends and fellow racers talking about the auction right next to me and not even know I was the creator. I even heard folks at the USGP in Portland talking about it.

Did the guys respond? Figure you out?

I got a couple of emails from one of the featured riders. First he was kind enough to let me know that there will always be someone faster than I am and to stop complaining because of it. Then he was pissed that I joked dope might be involved (since at his level he’d actually be tested in road events) but other than that he thought it was funny. I think a little detective work would have allowed anyone familiar with the Verge Men’s B field to figure out who I am.

So if one of these guys was your teammate, what would you do?

If one of them was my teammate, I’d make him tow my ass around for a race or two to see if I could win one. Then I’d tell him to quit sandbagging and upgrade. Isn’t that one of the biggest thrills for a team, to see its members race at the highest level? Seriously, I would have been able to tell them straight to their face to quit kickin’ our asses and go get their own ass kicked in the elites.

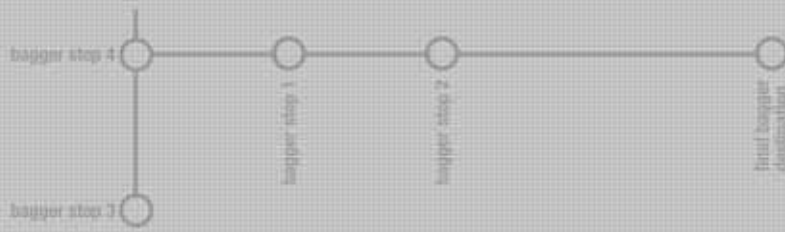
And if next year they’re racing the same category?

I’d think the apoca’cross is here and I would cry. I’d then do my damndest to beat them, using the ol’ stick in the Zipps if necessary.

Rumor has it even the CXM guys were getting into the bidding and were bummed when the auction was cancelled. Why pull it down? Sounds like an easy way to make some money!

To be honest, I was more concerned with the price that the auction was reaching. Most of the people bidding were friends, but there were

SANDBAGGER CENTRAL



WTF

some unknown bidders as well. I didn't want to pay the auction fee if it got really high and I didn't expect to get paid by the winner. I also thought one of the baggers might try to win in hopes of giving me negative feedback. eBay feedback is priceless!

So, you don't think anyone could ever call you a sandbagger?

My big C category victory was questionably a bagging effort. If I hadn't finished the Cs with that victory though, my mental upgrade would have taken much longer to catch my Cat upgrade. I think everyone deserves a single victory at some point in their cycling career—just don't target the New England Verge men's B series because it'll be a while before anyone else gets a turn to win.

Ah, winning. That's an important point. Some say there's a big difference between finishing top five and putting it all together and winning a race, i.e., you have to "learn to win." Would you be more forgiving if someone finished a lot of second and third places, but wanted to get at least one elusive win?

I experienced the mental boost that a win gives you. I know it's important for future success so that could be understood. Going 5-0 though, that's bullshit.

So how would you prevent that?

Race promoters need to stop offering prizes for winners of amateur races. I like what they do at Cross Crusade in Portland by giving prizes to random participants. Also, prizes for series victories seem even worse. I read a post where someone wanted to know if it was acceptable to continue sandbagging since there was a custom frame up for grabs to the winner of the B series he raced in. Are you kidding me? How about awarding that to the middle of the pack guy who showed up to every event, cheered on the C racers, women, and elites? Those are the folks who put money into the event and deserve swag, not the douche who keeps racing down to win \$100 so they can upgrade their pit bike with carbon bars. I also really like the forced upgrades that some officials adhere to. Seriously, why should a top level New England B racer even be allowed to line up in the 3/4 field of a smaller race? He didn't even need a UCI license to join the 1/2/3 field. The officials need to help prevent that kind of stuff.

People were hating on me because I used to dominate the Cs and won a fancy bike. And now that I've seen the light and come clean, they're hating on me as a writer because I landed this phat gig with the sport's premier magazine. Is hating

on sandbaggers really similar to hating Kobe Bryant, or the Patriots, or in my case, world-famous columnist Hector Finely? It comes from a place or mindset of disenfranchisement, of coveting that which you do not have. Who amongst us would not continue to do the same if in those Sidis?

To some degree, yes, it is coveting that which you don't have, but winning amateur bike races is a big step away from dominating the elites. Kobe, the Patriots, even Sven Nys have nowhere more competitive to go within the arena they dominate. Look at Nys. He wants a challenge so he is talking of going back to Paris Roubaix and trying to qualify for the Olympics in mountain biking. Hating on guys who can or should upgrade to the next level is not the same as disliking someone or some team who is the best in the world and cannot upgrade. And in your case, nobody should hate you just because you made the big time, because it's not like you can go to a better 'cross magazine, right?

On that note, through your auction and this interview, you've now made the big time too! Congrats on your debut in CXM, and thanks for sharing all your sandbagging insight. Hopefully more promoters, officials, and sandbaggers will be inspired to make a change next season.

I hope so too. It's been my pleasure.

Got an opinion or story to share on sandbagging? Have a question for Hector or Racerwannabe? Drop us a line at baggers@cxmagazine.com

Crossresults.com:

A Tool for Both 'Bagger and Hecklers

New England 'cross racer Colin Reuter was frustrated by USA Cycling's incomplete tracking of his race results and those of others, and so he created crossresults.com to accurately aggregate 'cross results throughout the nation. His goal has already been partially accomplished, as it was an essential tool in racerwannabe.com's sandbagger research. He hopes his tool will be used by race promoters, especially for series points calculations and to determine who should be encouraged to upgrade. While he wants the sport to grow and frowns upon sandbagging, Colin encourages hecklers to hold their tongue before calling folks out, and check out a racer's past results (his site may be able to help) before heckling. CXM, Reuter, and racerwannabe.com all agree that any racer should have a chance to learn how to win and be allowed at least one victory. For more info, visit [this crossresults.com](http://crossresults.com), click "results" then "detect sandbaggers."

kerry litka interviews CHRISTINE VARDAROS

The name Christine Vardaros should be synonymous with elite women's U.S. cyclocross since the 38-year-old pro has been a mainstay on the scene since the late 90s. However, this seasoned rider has spent a better part of her cycling career toiling in relative obscurity, often overshadowed by the sport's more popular domestic superstars.

Christine is currently living the dream, racing as a pro with the French professional road cycling team Pruneaux d'Agen and living in the cycling mecca known as Belgium. She began the 2007 'cross season with a new sponsor, Vanderkiten, purveyor of hot, trendy women's apparel.

I first raced against Christine in 2002 when she stole the show and kicked my ass repeatedly in various mid-Atlantic area 'cross races. What sets Christine apart from other riders is her tenacity and dedication to a sport that is anything but consistently rewarding to its participants. I recently spent some time conversing with Christine about her entry into the sport. She revealed in a very candid interview that her path to success was indeed unique, which gives her a very different perspective towards racing.

Before cycling, what was your passion, your "thing"?

Growing up, I had your typical childhood aspirations of being a neurologist, lawyer, publicist, stockbroker, Pulitzer prize winner, or rifle twirler. If you had told me back then that I'd spend my adult years dressed in a one-piece Lycra suit covered in kitten heads that peek out from a layer of mud accumulated from riding a bike around in circles in the dead of Belgian winter, I would have laughed my ass off! Instead, I arrived to this line of work through a slow, steady progression.

From the age of 14 through 22, I spent most of my time fencing competitively. After university, I morphed into a bar fly/aerobics bunny—the normal protocol for a post-college Manhattanite.



How did you get into cycling?

My introduction to the bicycle occurred by mere dumb luck. While I was living in Manhattan, I met a guy at a Polish-speaking party—he was the only English speaker so we got on great! The next day he showed up at my apartment on St. Mark's Place in the East Village with a Breezer mountain bike in hand. I was instantly in love...with the bike! I had never seen a mountain bike before. With its suspension fork and beefy tires, it looked like something straight out of Schwarzenegger's "Terminator" movie.

Shortly after my first encounter with the bike, it was mine. I bought the bike and ditched the guy (well, actually we are still friends). After three rides on the bike, I was ready to start racing. My first team was Team PMS. Yeah, yeah, it's not what you think. It actually stands for Pedaling Mud Sisters. After a year with them, I upgraded to the big leagues—Team Breezer—a women's pro mountain bike team, except I was the only amateur. With grand designs of becoming a pro cyclist traveling the country to contest the national championship series, I

packed up my desk on the trading floor at Morgan Stanley and moved to San Francisco.

My first few races in California were humbling, to say the least. I joined a group ride that starts in San Francisco and crosses the Golden Gate Bridge into Marin County. I noticed there were other gals on the ride, so I figured, "No sweat. I'm a stud-muffin mtb racer from NYC. I'll be just fine." Well, I lasted until about twenty seconds up the first hill we came to before getting dropped from the whole entire group, never to see them again.

Luckily, I came across a guy who specializes in taking aspiring athletes like me who are clueless as to how to become better at the sport. His name was Elmo, and by the way, he is still my coach. Within six months of working with me, he turned me from an off-the-back expert mountain bike racer to the proud owner of an official, professional racing license.

kerry litka interviews **CHRISTINE VARDAROS**

When did you start racing 'cross?

I started racing 'cross with my Breezer mountain bike back in 1998 at the Team DFL Outlaw events in San Francisco. Those races felt like 40 minutes of bushwhacking—running down into ditches, crawling over humongous fallen trees with bike in tow, and accumulating no fewer than twelve scrapes and gashes by race end.

I first saw you at a race in Lancaster, Pa., in 2002. You won that day and rode away from everyone easily. You repeated your effort the next day at the Highland Park race in New Jersey. How did you go from winning local UCI races to getting on a European pro team?

Wow, that's a heavy question. I think my progression is similar to most. Every time I learned that there was something bigger than what I was doing, I wanted to do it. I first learned that there was a national cyclocross series called the Super Cup. With two lessons from my coach, Elmo, and a tiny borrowed 'cross bike, I was on my way traveling around the country to participate in these events. Then, when I heard there was a World Cup circuit for women, naturally I wanted to participate in that too. After a successful trip to Europe for a handful of World Cups and other top UCI events in Europe, people started to notice me. Towards the end of the 2005-2006 cyclocross season, I got a call from one of the owners of Lotto-Belisol Ladies team asking me if I had interest in racing for them. It was an offer I couldn't refuse—the opportunity to realize my dream of being a European bike racer.

What made you decide to go across the pond to race, and what sort of obstacles have you had to overcome to make it over there?

It's always tough to travel to a foreign land even if you think you're prepared. You never know what can happen—even in MY wildest dreams! A prime example of this was my first trip to Europe in 2002. I went to Belgium to compete in two World Cups and to be on hand for the world championships (as first alternate on the U.S. National Team) just in case my services were needed. The original plan was to rent a room from a Boston guy who was spending the month overseas to watch the 'cross races. A day after arriving, we drove to Switzerland together. But on the drive back, he told me his mother was coming to visit so I had one day to find alternate housing. With limited funds, limited Dutch speaking ability, and being in Europe for the first time, I felt pretty much screwed. Luckily, I was able to get help from a professor at the University of Leuven who I had emailed regard-



ing group rides previous to my trip. Within a few hours of contacting him, he hooked me up with dormitory housing at the University of Leuven for the remainder of the trip. Luck also had it that the Boston guy's insincere gesture of housing didn't seriously affect my race results as I placed top ten in both World Cups.

How is the racing scene in Europe different than in the States?

Up until a couple of years ago, I would have said that the competition is much stiffer here in Europe, but that seems no

longer to be the case with quite a few emerging superstars such as Katie Compton, Georgia Gould, Rachel Lloyd, the powerhouse Canadian contingent such as Lyne Bessette, Wendy Simms, Alison Dunlap, and about a dozen more USA riders who have really taken the race pace up a few notches!

The courses are still quite different, though. Those in the USA tend to be fast, even when they are hilly. The events in and around Belgium are often heavy—deep sand stretches, sappy leg-zapping mud. Even their grassy patches pull your wheels in so that you feel like both your brakes are jammed against the wheels. And of course the crowds in Belgium cannot be compared to anywhere else in the world. For any given local race, you can expect in upwards of 30,000 spectators.

You are a vegan. How do you manage your protein intake with the volume of training?

In order to NOT get enough protein, I'd have to live in a third world country AND be starving. Protein is in absolutely everything you eat.

In any case, the protein godhead is a nutritional myth—pseudobiology, none of it supported by contemporary research—that kind of lingers from World War 2 era ideas. Besides which, every time I have felt intimidated enough by anti-vegan doomsayers to actually count my complete protein intake, the numbers were in fact excessive, worrisome so. Cardiologists and oncologists are not getting rich from vegans. GlaxoSmithKline and Merck are not making billions off of people who restrict their protein intake.

The real problem that athletes almost always have is ingesting too much protein, which really does a lot of damage on the body and can be detrimental to an athlete's performance.

Describe a typical training day in the life of C.

kerry litka interviews **CHRISTINE VARDAROS**

I wake up whenever I cannot force myself to sleep any longer. After breakfast, I answer emails and do a bit of writing. Then I grab a little bite to eat, such as a ProBar (vegan energy bar) or a PBG (as they say here in Belgium) and head out the door to train. When I return, I clean the bike, shower, elevate the legs, eat some more, and then spend the rest of the day either unpacking from the last race or packing for the next.

What are your favorite types of 'cross conditions to race in?

I used to think I liked hilly courses, then I thought I liked muddy courses, after that I fell in love with sand, and next it was fast, flat terrain. Now I just don't know anymore. I guess I most prefer courses where I can ride my bike fast. If I am named to the U.S. national team for the world championships in Treviso this January, I'm certain it will be an excellent course for my skills since it is like a crit course with a few short pitches thrown in.

What's Vanderkitten?

Vanderkitten makes clothing for women who kick ass! But more importantly, Vanderkitten is the first USA-based sponsor to support a European-based American cyclocross racer, helping to promote USA cyclocross in Belgium, the heartland of the sport. As a woman in a male-dominated sport, it is especially exciting for me to represent Vanderkitten because of what it stands for—permission for women to be athletic while retaining their femininity. The name, Vanderkitten, has gotten a lot of attention in Belgium in particular since it is a Dutch-sounding name. Spectators who don't know that I'm American are often surprised when I start talking in a very American accent! On a side note, many folks have come up to me at the races to tell me how they find the Vanderkitten name perfectly appropriate for a female cyclocross racer from USA—the name combines the tough and rugged image of a Belgian with an elegant, feminine kitten. What they don't realize is that the Vanderkitten is actually a rough-and-tumble

kitty. If you look closely, you'll see the feral cat marking on the ear and a spot of blood on its tooth!

If you weren't racing bikes, what would you be doing for a career?

What I'm now doing part-time: I'm a writer, journalist, columnist, and publicist.



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The first time I met Belgian cyclocross star Bart Wellens was at breakfast in a hotel before the World Cup in Hoogerheide, Holland, January, '07. He turned to my friend, Serge Vansteenkiste, and said in Flemish, “Is she the one who ...” Immediately I’m thinking that I’m so famous that even one of the largest celebrities in Belgium knows who I am. But then he finished his sentence. “. . . missed the start at the Treviso World Cup?” Damn. That was the only time I wished I hadn’t understood some Flemish. I was infamous because my car broken down on the way to that race. But thanks to that incident, I was able to score an interview with him.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BART WELLENS

by Christine Vardaros

After November’s Asper-Gavere Superprestige race in Belgium, I headed over to Bart’s mobile home. But upon approaching his trailer, I realized it was not going to be easy to take some of his time since his trailer was completely engulfed by dozens of folks waiting for him to come out so they could vie for his attention. In a state of desperation, I asked one of the Fidea staff if he could run inside and tell Bart that “the gal who missed Treviso” wanted to see him. Within moments, he and his fiancé Lentel emerged.

As I watched them step out, I realized I had no idea what to expect considering my only interaction with Bart was that breakfast encounter a year ago. With his highly impressive palmares that spans twenty years to include multiple world championship titles and Belgian national titles, it was easy to imagine that he’d have a “dikkenek,” a thick neck, as they say in Flemish. But within a few moments, Bart was able to ease my concerns. His warm smile and friendly, humble attitude instantly won me over!

I read that you have been racing for 15 years, since the age of 15. It only took you one year to become Belgian champion, and another five years to become world champion as a Beloften [Under 23 category] at the age of 21. Over the years, you’ve continued to dominate in the races, collecting a few more world champion and Belgian national titles among many other prestigious accomplishments! Fifteen years after you’ve grabbed your first Belgian national title, you are national champion again and still finishing on the podium at major events. How do you keep your motivation going strong all these years?

My motivation? I really love cyclocross. And it is now longer than 15 years. I’ve actually started racing at 9 years old and was national champion for the first time when I was 10. It was also my first interview on television. Cyclocross is in my heart!

You are known by many as the toughest guy in cyclocross because of your willingness to fight the whole race - straight to the finish line! What is going through your mind that gets you back to the front of the race when something happens to cause you to lose contact with the leaders?

I think nothing. Only, “Go! Go! Go!” and get so soon as possible to the finish.

Do you feel pain during the race? Are there ever moments in a race when you think, “This is so much fun,” or is every minute



of the sixty minutes you're out there, even on special days when you can't feel the pedals, pure agony?

I feel pain, but when you have a good day it's less than in bad days. But we train for that one-hour race so I can mostly ride with pain one hour long.

Describe a typical day in the life of Bart Wellens

Every day is different! Mostly I call in the morning to my trainer/friend and speak about the feeling, also about the training the day(s) before. Running, track, cyclocross training, road training – we will fill the whole day with it, including rest. That's the most important: after hard training is resting - watching tv or sleep in the day.

Are there ever days when the weather is so bad you just say to hell with that and stay inside?

Yeah, in Belgium the weather is often bad!

Then how do you change your workout?

I will train on the track in Gent [Belgium] or on my trainer inside with television. I have a Cyclus 2 trainer for putting my own bike on it and I can train three hours on it without problems.

What are your typical meals on race day and how soon before a race do you eat your last meal?

Breakfast is mostly pancakes. Lunch before a race is pasta – spaghetti - with sugar and sometimes tomato sauce. That's at least three hours before the start.

When you are not focusing on racing, what other hobbies do you have?

Resting! [laughs] The rest of the time is for my girlfriend Lentel and my doggie.

What is your dog's name and age and what kind of dog is he? (I'm a huge animal lover as well!)

His name is Dike, and he is now 1 ½ years old. And just bought a American cocker for Lentel, but sssshhh.. Lentel don't know it ... she gets him with New Year's Day!

Are you at all superstitious? Do you keep to the same exact routine — coffee at nine, breakfast at 9:30, massage at eleven, or whatever?

On the day of the race it's routine: breakfast, warm up at home on taxc [stationary trainer], train on track from race, warm up for the race, the race. But on other days it's so different. Mostly I will awake between 7 and 8, eat breakfast and read a newspaper, and then training. But when I'm tired I sleep longer!

What is your average tire pressure? Do you ride mostly 30s, 32s, 34s?

Average tire pressure is every race different . Races like Koksijde [World Cup which is sand-heavy] I rode with 34 slick and 1.4 pressure . But on fast races with not too much cobbles then we ride with 30 or 32 Grifo and 2 to 2.3 pressure.

Speaking of Grifo, I heard you switched to Challenge last year . How are they working out for you?



Wellens racing to third in Antwerpen, photo: Nancy Van Peer



2007 World Championships, photo: Joe Sales

The Challenge tubes are very good. They listen good to us. When we need something to be changed, they will change the preferred thing.

Often in the races we watch Sven Nys ride away from up to four Fidea riders on his wheel. Does that get frustrating? In Asper-Gavere Superprestige, I saw you repeatedly attack Sven. Is that the only way to beat him?

The only way to beat Sven is riding faster than him. But that is not easy. I'm always gonna try that, every race again!

How would you describe your relationship with Sven Nys?

We are good colleagues.

Gotta ask—drugs in veldrijden [cyclocross]—a big problem?

I think it's no problem. We need to go every week to anti-doping control.

What are your goals for the rest of the season?

Winning races and the most important race is Treviso!

What are your thoughts about the Treviso course? And what is your prediction? Which riders do you think it favors?

It's gonna be very fast over there! It's possible that the best rider is not the winner that day because it will be a tactical race. The favorites are [Lars] Boom [NL - Rabobank] and [Francis] Mourey [FR- Française des Jeux] and also Sven Nys who is the best of this generation!

How do you think U.S. cyclocross is different from Europe?



don't know, I never raced [cyclocross] in the U.S. The thing I know is that here cyclocross is very professional - same like road.

Yeah, I see your point. At the local cyclocross events in the USA it is not uncommon to spot some racers wearing creative outfits like a tiny Speedo or cross-dressing in women's clothes. But the UCI races are more similar to those in Europe, but with much fewer spectators! There is a chance there will be a World Cup in the USA in 2008. What do you think of that? Will you be there?

It's good there will be a WC in the USA.. I will come if everything is arranged good!

Have you ever been to the U.S.?

I was already in the U.S. for road racing a few years ago. It was in Boston in Tim Johnson's place. It was great over there.

When was this? Do you remember the road races you attended?

It was the summer after the worlds in Slovakije were Tim Johnson was third in category U23. It was more the survival for me. It was my first time that I was one month from home, but it was great.

Any road races planned anywhere for 2008?

Maybe again in China - Qinghai Lake - and some stage races in Spain and France.

Following the 2007 Cyclocross World Championships at Hooglede-Gits, where you had tough luck, you had some strong words about Franzoi and Page's result. Do you still feel the same way?

I never said strong words about Franzoi and Page. I read it also last year and I was wondering who said that. The only thing that I said is what everybody can see now. Page had one good day last year and it was in Hooglede. Where was he this year? Not so good but we don't know why ... only Jonathan he [knows]. About Franzoi, was great for him. But I think Treviso is more important for him!

Did you hear about the Single-Speed World Cyclocross Championships we had in Portland in the USA recently? The racers competed on cyclocross bikes equipped with one gear. Top prize was golden Speedo underwear and a tattoo. We all want to know if you will compete in it next year.

First time I hear from it. U.S. has sometimes strange things. [chuckles] Next year, I will think about it!

Any additional words for your fans in the U.S.?

It's great to have fans in the U.S. Thank you very much!

Any advice for 'cross racers wanting to be you?

Train hard and have fun in racing and training!

Any advice for 'cross racers wanting to BEAT you?

No! No! Eat lots of cake!! [laughs]

Is there anything you can share with your fans that they'd be surprised to find out about you?

Nothing special I think.

You think?!

What are you thinking? [chuckles]

What was your first bike ever?

My first 'cross bike was a road bike. Really! With very small tubes on the wheels. I was 9 years old. It was my first big bike.

Do you remember your first bike ride ever?

Yes, I was 9 and the other guys were 13 and 14. I won my first race.

Funniest or most embarrassing cyclocross stories?

It's nothing special. Everything the last few years were so professional and serious - there is nothing funny that happened during the season. But after the season, first party is great. Lots of beer and music, dancing. Riders have no rhythm for dancing. [laughs]

I just read that cyclocross is no longer the most important part

of your life. Lentel has taken over that role! Then how is it that you are still on top at the races?

Because private life is everything. Now I enjoy riding and I love also cyclocross!

You didn't enjoy riding before you met her? Were you getting burnt out?

No, but when you're alone and you have troubles and come home after a race, you can't speak with anybody about the problems. Now I can talk a lot if there are problems.

I heard the wedding is August 2. Did you pick the spot? Will you cycle to the church? What about the honeymoon? What about the threshold - when you traditionally carry your bride through the doorway of your home after the wedding? Will you just lift your bride and jump over, or throw her onto your shoulder and run? And am I invited? No, not to the honeymoon!

It will be a very traditional honeymoon. That day NO cycling. Only enjoy the party and have fun. Love each other.

Do you have any nicknames? What does Lentel call you?

Schatteke and schattenolleke. ["little honey" and "little honey pie" – both based on a loose translation for words that have no English equivalents]

Oh, and what did Lentel think of her Vanderkitten gift package – the tee, bottle, stickers, tattoos?

She was very happy and she liked it!

What kind of music do you listen to? Favorite bands?

On my iPod is everything, but no classic - no Beethoven.

By the way, I haven't missed a single race start since the Treviso World Cup last year - obviously for fear that you will continue to remember me for that one incident!

Okay, well done!

Thanks so much for your time! Best of luck for the remainder of the season. I'll be the one cheering for you with a huge American accent!

Thank you!



Bart Wellens and his fiancée Lentel, photo: Christine Vardaros



Bart Wellens' two loves beyond cycling, Lentel and Duke, photo courtesy of Bart Wellens

Bart Wellens Palmares

Born: August 8, 1978

Racing since: 1987, 9 years old

Pro since: 2000

First National Championship: 1988 (10 years old)

Team: Fidea

Website: bartwellens.be

Team website: fideacyclingteam.be

1993–94 Nieuwelingen (beginner) category

Belgian Champion

Provinciaal Champion

1994–95

Wins: 6

Belgian Champion

Provinciaal Champion

1995–96 Junior Category

Wins: 9

Belgian Champion

Provinciaal Champion

1996–97 Junior/Beloften(U23) Category

Wins: 9

Belgian Champion

Won all junior-only races

1997–98 Beloften Category

Wins: 4

Belgian Champion

2e World Championships

1998–99 Beloften Category

Wins: 6

World Champion - Poprad

Belgian Champion

1999–2000 Beloften Category

Wins: 5 (incl. Kalmthout World Cup)

World Champion - St. Michielsgestel

Belgian Champion

Provinciaal Champion

2000–01 - 1st year Pro with Spaar Select

Wins: 10 to include Tabor World Cup

2001–02

Wins: 7

2002–03

Wins: 10 to include 2 World Cups and 2 superprestige events

World Champion - elite - Monopoli

2003–04

Wins: 21 (overall winner SP & GVA Trofee)

World Champion (Pont-Chateau)

Belgian Champion

2004–05 Fidea

injury (wrist)

Wins: 1

2005–06

Wins: 10

2006–07

Wins: 7

Belgian Champion

Like most American cyclocross racers, my only thoughts on Belgian 'cross events prior to firsthand experience were limited to what I saw on world championship videos sold at my local bike shop. The level of spectacle shown on those videos was so intense that I privately questioned their veracity. It seemed implausible that 10,000-40,000 people would line the course of a cyclocross race, most of whom don't even know any of the participants personally. This is in stark contrast to a U.S. 'cross event where the sparse 500-800 spectators consist of fellow racers (if they haven't already headed home immediately after their own event), family and friends.

But once I figured out that Belgians view 'cross events similar to the way we view baseball, it all made sense. A 'cross race in Belgium is much more than just watching sinewy Lycra-clad specimens ride around in circles. It is just as much about socializing with their friends while enjoying frites, sausage, beer and jenever shots. This is why event organizers can regularly charge 8 to 15 euros without deterring potential spectators.

While the videos did prepare me for the ambience and magnitude of the events, the unique experiences specific to an American athlete participating in a race in Belgium took some getting used to.

Race day adventure starts the moment you reach the town where the event is held. Immediately you are greeted by a collection of event signs that point to no fewer than twelve various locations such as inschrijving (registration), rennersparking (racers parking), pers (press), douches/kleedkamers (showers/changing rooms), dopingcontrole, media, and toeschouwersparking (spectator parking). Compared to the sole sign written on a paper plate common at many U.S. 'cross races, the multitudes—even if requiring some deciphering—are most welcome. And if it rains (generally a safe bet in the land of rain and betting) there will be a higher probability the sign won't disintegrate as with the paper plate.

After navigating the foreign signs and getting to the parking lot, finding a spot to fit a mobile home is a whole other task that oftentimes requires some ingenuity. It could be worse if I had to find a spot with the spectators. With a turnout of tens of thousands of spectators for an average local race, many of them must park far away and take the event-supplied shuttle bus to the venue. The parking situation would be even more precarious if it weren't for the multitude of athlete supporter clubs who organize event buses, saving valuable parking space. The members of these clubs arrange to meet at the official supporter club café or club headquarters and bus it in. They don't see it as carpooling, but rather as a traveling tailgate party with a designated driver so they can partake in



Christine VARADOS tells us like it is

a bit of Stella Artois and jenever from the moment they step onto the bus.

Their party continues straight onto the course where they relocate to one of the many beer gardens equipped with a big screen TV. When the riders are about to pass, they all spill out of the tent to line the course and cheer for their favorites. Then it's immediately back inside for a bit of warmth and a refill.

The second you emerge from the mobile home and hop onto the trainer, you and your equipment are immediately on display. The fans walk right up to your bike, analyze every part and take photos. Then their attention turns to you. They often look you up and down as if checking out a race horse to determine its odds before betting. They will even talk about you as if you weren't right in front of them. Now that I understand a bit more Flemish, I have periodically responded to their sentiments which turned out to be a bad mistake. When you engage them, you actually startle them: Evidently racers aren't expected to talk

Belgium CX racing from the saddle of an american pro



any more than horses are.

Before the fans depart the mobile home, they typically request a trading card. In Belgium, these cards are highly sought after—and periodically traded or auctioned off—in the way baseball cards are prized in the USA. The number of card-collecting hobbyists in Belgium is quite impressive. I've seen extensive collections of some of these hobbyists - their cards are neatly organized in photo albums.

In America I'd have to beg, plead, force or bribe someone to take a card from me, so obviously I am extremely flattered any time anyone asks for one. I'd have to say the biggest compliment I've received was when I found a collection of MY trading cards up for eBay auction. Even more flattering was that it actually sold! I now know my value in the professional ranks—1 euro, 50 cents. In Belgium, bike racing is so big that near-obscure is a fungible commodity.

Apparently trading cards increase in value if they are signed, so I try to pre-sign a stack before each event so that Vanderkitten Manager Jonas Bruffaerts can handle their distribution along with all other promo materials such as the Vanderkitten tattoos and stickers, and Ahrens Bicycles trading cards. But given that an average of 100-200 trading cards are distributed per event, that's a lot of hand work so I don't always get to signing them all. Inevitably I am asked for an autograph while I'm warming up on the trainer in front of the mobile home.

When I'm just riding at a piano pace, it's no problem. But signing it in the middle of a hard effort can be trying. Of course it is incredibly flattering for someone like me who is nowhere near the celebrity status of a Bart Wellens or a Daphny van den Brand to be asked for an autograph. But if I don't focus completely on my warm-up, I may soon find myself with nobody left to request autographs!

Apparently many racers avoid this situation by wearing an iPod while keeping their gaze low when they wish not to be disturbed. Even though it goes against my normally social nature, I've given it a try. When combined with a normal fan's respectful nature of an athlete's preparation, it works like a charm! Although I wish I could say otherwise, this is one dilemma I've never had to deal with in America.

Upon quick glance around the race venue, it's always easy to match the fans with a specific racer or team since almost every fan will don an article of clothing identifying his or her loyalty. The most popular articles are Sven Nys caps, hats, and jackets, Fidea caps and jackets, and Sunweb-Projob caps. For fun I sometimes squint while I scan the race venue; the pockets of fans become even more obvious—to the left may be a blur of Fidea Blue, to the right may be that Sven Nys tan color common in his clothing line, and straight ahead may be the bright yellow of Sunweb-Projob. Of all supporter-wear, Sven Nys is by far the most popular! It makes sense considering he is undeniably the most successful of all the racers. And surely the fact that he has his own clothing line helps to get his supporter-wear presence up. If you forget your loyalty gear at home, there are always booths on hand to sell you stuff.

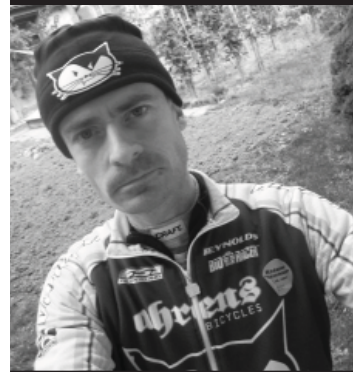
The start of a typical race in Belgium is a bit more aggressive than what I've experienced in the States. Even before the gun sounds, racers are elbowing each other to gain a few centimeters forward on the starting grid. It wouldn't be such a detrimental thing if the courses weren't much heavier here (excessive sand, mud, power hills with only one rideable line), making the first thirty seconds of the race even more valuable in determining your final placing. One bad start and you can kiss your race goodbye.

The past couple of months have made this sentiment even more clearly defined for me. Shortly after I arrived in Belgium for a season of racing, I got a really bad concussion from hitting my head so hard against a lowered wooden beam on the ceiling that everything went dark. Unfortunately, the perpetual splitting headache was accompanied by blurred vision, imbalance, and ear and eye pain that are all exasperated during hard efforts. Although I continued racing (stupidly, against the advice of my neurologist and coach) I wasn't able to get in any hard efforts in my warm-ups before the races. Without the adaptations that you get from these hard efforts, my starts were disastrous. While everyone went ballistic, I could only go at moderate tempo because my body wasn't ready for the shock. Within twenty seconds of the start, I'd find myself in last position. It is very hard to win a race from behind. For that to happen, you have to ride faster than the fastest gals in the race.



Another noticeable difference between racing in Belgium versus in America is the politeness of the rider—or lack thereof. In America, save for an exceptional few, most of the gals are very kind to each other. If they make any untoward maneuvers, they will immediately apologize. Not so in Belgium. If someone pushes you into a fence, you can be sure it will not be followed by a “sorry.” I am still working on making the attitude transition. My first step in the right direction is to phase out my typical quip of “that wasn’t nice” when someone cuts me off and replace it with “uit de weg” which means “out of the way!”

Luckily my pit mechanic is Belgian, so he is well prepared for the battle that often occurs in the pit while I’m out fighting my own battles on the course. During the recent Pijnacker World Cup in Holland, tension in the pit was exceptionally high. Due to the mud-intensive terrain, we gals were entering the pits twice per lap, instantly transforming the sparse high pressure hoses into highly coveted treasures. Unfortunately, rare treasures bring out the desperate side of otherwise mild-mannered individuals, turning gentle mechanics into crazed maniacs. Midway through the race, Jonas encountered one such maniac while trying to wash my bike. After a failed attempt at blocking the guy from sneaking ahead in the hose queue,



using my bike as a barrier, Jonas turned to him and said, “Don’t be fooled by the pussy on my head (Vanderkitten logo on his hat). The red spot on its tooth is BLOOD!” I wish I could have been there to see the look on that guy’s face when he backed down to a man dressed in pink plaid and covered in kitten heads. Better yet, I wish I had Jonas’s courage with me out there on the course.

After bitterly cold, muddy days at the races, the thought of a simple shower is enough to put a smile on my face. Unfortunately it’s almost always a bittersweet experience when I have to use the event-supplied shower facilities. Oftentimes the showers are located one to two kilometers away, which makes the bike ride there seemingly the coldest journey in my life. But once there, I’m thankful for the sauna-like temperature they keep the shower and changing rooms. It especially helps when you are in line behind a few racers with only a towel for warmth while waiting for a sliver of a spot in the communal shower to open up.

The event doesn’t necessarily end upon leaving the parking lot. Aside from spending the next few days removing mud pies from your hair, under your nails, and in your eyes and ears, you can watch the highlights on television that evening. Or you can relive the event at breakfast the following day while reading the morning paper that is sure to include a handful of articles and photos from the race. You may even see pictures of yourself. Near-obscurity, it seems, is relative.

Christine “Peanut” Vardaros is a pro cyclist for Team Vanderkitten based in Belgium to pursue her passion for cyclocross racing. Her first trip across the pond was made in 2003. Since then, she has participated in over fifteen World Cups and three world championships. When not slinging the bike over her shoulder, she is hard at work pursuing her other careers as a columnist, journalist, freelance writer, publicist and public speaker. Her areas of expertise include sports, health, fitness, nutrition, alternative transportation and animal rights.



Christine’s Flemish Translation Guide to Cyclocross

After attending a few of these events, you inevitably learn a few Flemish words. Some are just to find your way around while others come in handy before, during the races, and after the races. Most helpful of all are:

Veldrijden - **cyclocross (literal translation is field riding)**

godverdomme – **goddamnit**

dikkop - **big head**

dikkenek - **big neck – conceited**

moe - **tired**

Bart Wellens – **cycling god**

Sven Nys – **cycling god**

Tom Boonen – **famous off-season specialist**

hup - **go**

allez - **go**

kom op - **come on**

vertrek - **start – as in start line**

aankomst - **arrival – as in finish line**

ja - **yes**

nee - **no**

alstublieft - **please**

dank u - **thank you**

dag - **hello and goodbye**

pannekoek - **two meanings. First is a pancake for eating, second is an insult. A friend of mine was once called a pannekoek during a race as a form of insult – the Belgians are not nearly as vulgar as us Americans!**

inschrijving - **registration**

dopingcontrole - **doping control**

prijzengeld - **prize money**

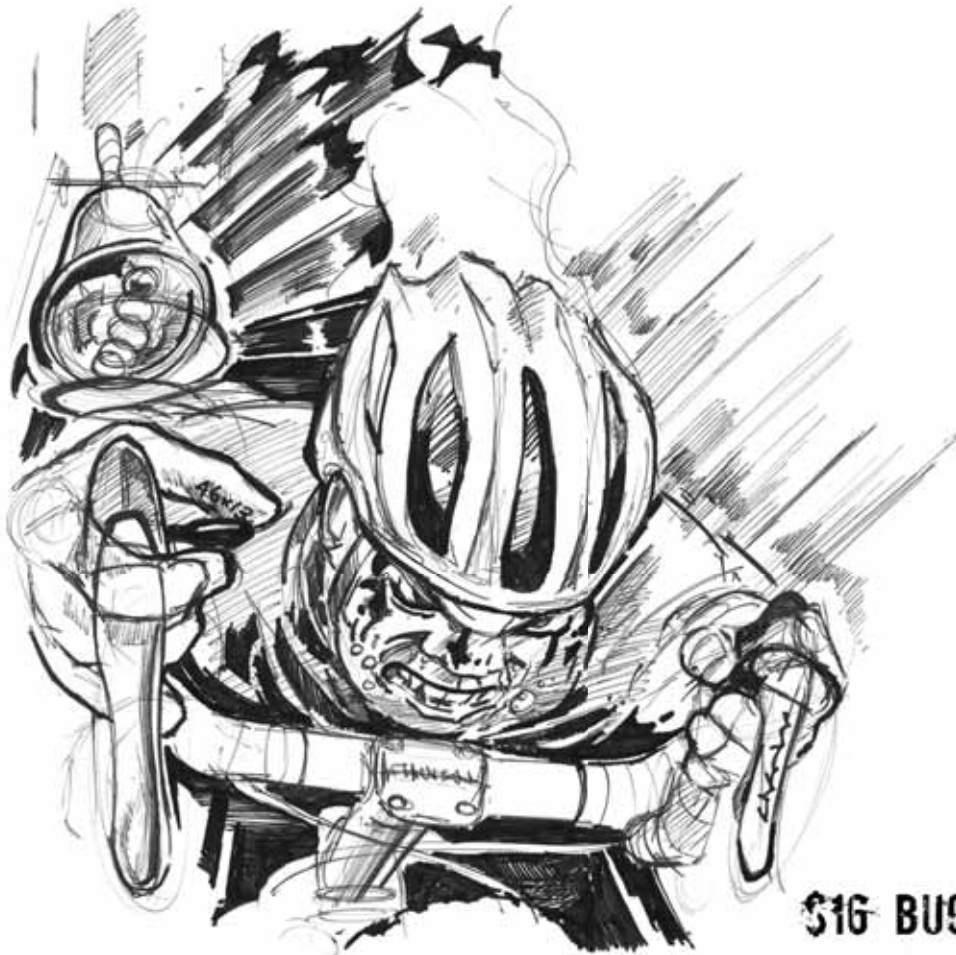
links - **left**

rechts - **right**

rechtdoor - **straight ahead**

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Riding to 5th in the Elite Women's race in KCC. Photo by Andrew Lee

Get to Know Maureen Bruno Roy

by kerry litka

This is what I hope will be the first in a series of candid interviews with elite U.S. cyclocross racers. First up is Maureen Bruno Roy, who happens to be an elementary school classmate of mine.

Maureen Bruno Roy, the 32-year-old Independent Fabrication rider, is perhaps best known for her meteoric rise to the top of the sport following her brilliant third place finish in the Providence “Frozen Mud Ruts” national championship race in 2005. In only her third full season of racing ‘cross, she demonstrated flawless technical riding in what were arguably the toughest conditions imaginable for a ‘cross race. Bruno Roy raced over frozen ruts and slippery mud covered with several inches of snow to an upset performance that landed her not only on the podium, but a spot on the U.S. World Championship team. [Editor’s Note: She won the Masters 30-34 and finished fifthth in the Elite Women at the 2007 National Championships in Kansas City in similar conditions.] Unlike many of her competitors, Bruno Roy does not enjoy the life of a full-time pro cyclist. Instead, she quietly makes a living in Arlington, Massachusetts, as a massage therapist, a career she began while working as a soigneur with the Saturn Cycling team in the late 1990s.

Now in her fifth season of ‘cross (her third with title sponsor Independent Fabrication), and fresh off a win in the 30-34 Expert division at the NORBA Nationals at Mt. Snow, Bruno Roy is enjoying tackling another season of racing in the heat, dust, mud, and snow that make up ‘cross in the U.S. I sat down with Maureen to discuss her career, her goals for ‘cross, and her thoughts about her interesting and unusual path to success in the sport.

Describe your athletic background — I know you were a track runner in high school and college, but can you give details on your early years? Your progression?

When my twin sister and I got on our Blue Angel banana-seat bikes and tried to build a jump in our driveway with a cinder block and a plank, my mom quickly ended our BMX dreams. We later moved to “the country” and started games like “tree to tree,” where we would climb up



Bruno Roy finds joy in the ice and mud, photo: Kerry Ross

30-foot pine trees, crawl out to the end of the branch, and jump to the next tree, and the next tree, etc. We played outdoors all the time, and then started running in a local kids club. My sister and I began friendly track competitions when we were eight or nine. She kicked my butt at distance stuff and I beat her at the sprints. In high school, I played field hockey, indoor track, and track and field. I ran the 400 hurdles at UMass Dartmouth, where I still have the record before leaving college for a while.

When did you start riding, and how were you introduced to it?

When I was getting ready to leave for college, I was introduced to mountain biking by Tim Johnson. He raced locally and I had been to his races, and thought it looked like fun and was a nice alternative to years and years of shin splints.

So what was your first “real” bike once you started mountain biking?

Cannondale Killer V 900. It was a shiny purple bike with clipless pedals and I thought it was all that!

What made you decide to try ‘cross?

I tried ‘cross for the first time in 1998 and thought it was really fun, but I had three jobs at the time and was in school for massage therapy, so I wasn’t ready to train for bike races and didn’t try it again until 2003. In 2003, I was feeling very fit from competitive Ultimate Frisbee and headed up to Maine for a muddy race, looking for a new try at cycling.

What was your first impression of that first ‘cross race?

It was WAY harder than I had remembered and I realized very quickly that I would need to train quite a bit to keep up with these fast women kicking my butt!

I remember at the Verge NE #1 race in Maine in 2003, you showed up, raced, and in the first turn into the woods, you wiped out in front of me. I passed you and went on to finish sixth, my best result ever. That was the only time I ever beat you. Why is it you got faster and I just got slower?

I think the key here is the wiping out. I think it’s fun to skid and slop and wipe

out and get up and keep trying. You hate the wet, cold, muddy, and I’m pretty sure that wiping out isn’t way up there on your “fun” list. [Editor’s Note: She’s right. Kerry hates being cold, wet, muddy, and uncomfortable.]

How did working for Saturn change your perspective on cycling?

Working as a soigneur allowed me to have the inside view of the pro cycling life. It also de-mystifies the athletes into regular people like you and me, except that they work full-time as athletes. I never once wished for the life of the cyclist over the work of the soigneur. It takes a lot of discipline and dedication to devote oneself solely to training, rest, eat, and repeat. It honestly seemed a bit boring to me, and yet there is so much energy and fire in the actual races that it’s totally inspiring.

It seems like one of your strengths is your memory. For example, when we were hanging out a few years ago, you remembered that I had a Boy George T-shirt in third grade. — .how on earth did you remember that?

I thought Boy George was so cool, and couldn’t wait to be a teenager so I could dress like a punk or rock out to ‘80s new wave. Plus, you were the smallest little blonde, talkative girl in second grade. It was hard not to notice you!

If you could afford to not work at all during ‘cross season, how would you change your training?

I can imagine that I would actually be recovering a bit better with more rest. I would take another yoga or stretching class, and I would definitely go to bed before 12. Maybe ride twice a day to break up the interval workouts, and I would probably be able to put in more training hours each week overall.

When you first started racing, did you ever think you would rise to the top of the elite level of the sport?

Nope. I think I’ve always been competitive and knew I would try my best, but I thought all of my big wins were behind me in track meets. It’s

been a real shock to line up with women that I've worked for as a soigneur and women who are full-time pros and be able to fight it out with them.

Describe your reaction to your third place at Nationals in '05.

I still feel like I'm going to be "found out" for being a massage therapist that plays bike-racer on the weekends! It was a serious shocker and a real honor just to be on the same start line with all of the U.S. women.

You race best in the sloppiest conditions. At the Gloucester SnowCross of 2005, you were riding through the mud like you were on pavement. Is it just instinctual to you, or do you spend a lot of time working on riding in adverse conditions?

I train in whatever weather New England brings, but I think riding in the really sloppy stuff must be instinctual. I really love that the sloppy weather brings so much more to the racing than pure fitness. You need to be so alert and aware of what is around you. It's less about racing tactics, which is a real weakness for me. It also makes the sport even more ridiculous than it already is, and makes it more playful at the same time.

How do you approach setting goals for each season, seeing as your rise to the top was meteoric (to say the least)? In your third season of racing — podiumed at Nationals and made the World's team. Where do you go from there?

That's the question, isn't it? Getting third at Nationals and winning the Masters race and going to Worlds is what people spend years working up to, and it seemed to happen so suddenly for me that it's still very surreal. The following season was the toughest for me after Worlds, because of the "now what?" factor. There was more pressure to perform at the high level, and I was still feeling like an impostor next to the full-time pros. Each season I try to stay very grounded and remind myself that I do this for fun and competition, it's not my career or job, and I find balance in my life by working and racing, and having a home and pets, etc. I train as much as I can and try to improve a little each year with hopes that it's enough to continue to race at the elite level with another shot at the Worlds team.



photo: Larry Rosa

Parents usually have a role in making champions. Do you remember in second grade, when we performed "It's a Small World" for the spring concert? Our class was Austria, and the boys had to wear those funny hats that your mom painstakingly made. Am I remembering this right, or am I just making stuff up at this point?

My mom has always been an amazing seamstress, and she actually made all those hats from green felt, if I remember correctly. You're not making it up — you just have a really, really weird, random memory of second grade!

Kerry Litka has been racing 'cross since 2000 and competes in the Elite Women category. She's often labeled as one of the smallest adults racing 'cross. Despite the UCI barriers being nearly 1/3 of her height, she transitions on and off the bike with the grace and fluidity of Baryshnikov. She is currently taking this season off to train for a marathon, but will continue her search for small 'cross bikes.

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CORE STRENGTH

Build your core strength with these quick easy exercises.
An article by David Perez PT, DPT, CSCS

The off-season is the time when athletes reflect and identify their strengths and weakness of the previous racing season. As you move into the off-season, make it a priority to improve your weaknesses (e.g., strength, flexibility, diet, etc.) and to become injury-free — you shouldn't have to carry injuries into and through the off-season.

Undoubtedly, off-season strength training occurs during the initial 2–3 training phases, and then tapers as more race-specific training increases. Athletes should take 2–4 weeks off completely following the racing season, and then begin some sort of informal training. The theory is if you completely stop exercising for 2–3 months, it will take much greater effort to regain your previous level of fitness than if you had maintained some form of exercise. The purpose of this article is to shed some light on exercises specific to cyclocross training (and riding in general) that you may want to consider

including in your routine. These particular exercises were picked because they don't require the use of a gym and are appropriate for the phase of training most of you are currently in.

Consider the amount of time you spend riding as you and/or your coach devise your routine, and think about any nagging injuries that hinder your performance throughout the year. Most exercises should be sport specific and address muscular or postural imbalances you have. Cyclocross racers (and cyclists in general) are prone to rounded shoulders, a stiff upper back, and a forward head posture (upper 'cross syndrome). Lower back pain is also a very common complaint. There are many factors that play a role in causing some of these injuries — most importantly, bike fit (which will be next issue's topic). These exercises help combat the injuries that 'cross racers are predisposed to.

As with any workout, a proper warm-up must be performed prior to performing any actual exercise. This should include an active warm-up and stretching.

-Foam-Roll Upper Back Mobilization-

Lie down with your upper back in contact with the foam roll, as shown. Place your hands behind your head to provide support. Tighten your core and lift your hips. Remember to breathe. Roll back and forth from the top of your shoulder blades to your mid-back. This can provide a massage effect, but more importantly, it encourages the joints in your back into extension, helping you achieve a more neutral posture and maintain joint mobility. Continue this exercise for up to 5 minutes.

-Foam-Roll Stretch (TYIs)-

Lie down on the foam roll with your head supported. Lay your arms straight out at your sides so your body is in the shape of a T (fig A). You can perform this exercise as either 10 repetitions of lifting your arms toward the midline of the body until your hands touch (fig B), or over a period of time, keeping your arms slightly lifted at your sides for 30 seconds to 1 minute. This exercise should also be performed to stretch your lower pectorals and latissimi by lifting your arms into the shape of a Y (fig C) and I (straight overhead). Perform 3 sets of 10 in each direction.

Core strength greatly improves power transfer from your legs into the cranks by increasing stability, minimizing energy lost when maintaining balance, and decreasing the amount of body sway.



-Plank-

This exercise helps to strengthen your overall core and integrates upper and lower body stabilization. Lift your body as shown, keeping your elbows in line with your shoulders, and your head in line with your body. Begin with 3–5 sets and progress to 10. Be consistent in the amount of time you hold each repetition. For example, start with 5 reps of about 15 seconds each. The key to this exercise is to breathe — don't hold your breath.

-Swiss Ball Balance-

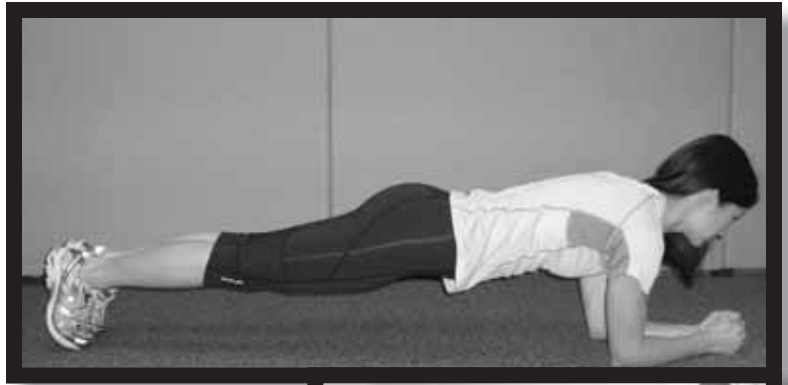
Another overall core-strengthening exercise, but one that focuses more on stability, is balancing on the Swiss ball. Perform this exercise in a safe area and have something nearby to help balance yourself. Carefully kneel onto the ball and try to maintain this position for up to 1 minute. This will take some work. If this is too difficult, try balancing on your hands and knees first. Be sure to perform this in a safe area.

Progress in this exercise by performing any sort of upper-body exercise, such as bicep curls while kneeling. A harder progression would be to perform this exercise while standing on the ball — yes, very difficult. Please don't try this unless you can balance safely on your knees for over 1 minute, and use a spotter. Perform 3 sets of 1 minute each.

-Swiss Ball Back Extension-

The focus of this exercise is the erector spinae muscles, the two thick bands of muscle that run down your back. Kneel down in front of a wall with your back to the wall. Lie on the Swiss ball with the soles of your feet against the wall. Place your hands behind your neck and extend your back. Squeeze your gluts and make sure you're lifting from your hips rather than bending from your back. Perform 3 sets of 15 repetitions.

Follow any strengthening by stretching afterwards. Weakness and muscle imbalance can be caused by a lack of stretching. If you are taking the time to properly strengthen, you should also take the time to properly stretch before and after. Remember, the off-season is the time to alleviate any muscular tightness as well as imbalances.



In a future issue, I will discuss exercises for developing racing speed and power. Consider adding these upcoming exercises as you continue to develop and refine your strengthening and stretching routine.

David Perez, PT, DPT, CSCS is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and co-owner of Peak Orthopedic Physical Therapy in Northern California's Bay Area. He is a USA Cycling and USA Triathlon Certified Coach, as well as an NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. He spends much of his time recovering from his own injuries and helping athletes return to sport.



Six years ago, a tall, lean cyclist rolled up for a local road ride. The group boasted doctors and lawyers with the latest carbon-fiber rigs and team kits, but the unfamiliar cyclist donned mountain-bike shoes and a triple chainring setup on his road bike. Pre-ride chatter commenced, and other cyclists began teasing him about the triple-ring setup on his bike. The rider, unfazed by their comments, gave no reply.

The ride began with a vicious pace that intensified and shelled riders off the back. The remaining cyclists were at their limit when the newcomer tore out of his saddle and rode away, shattering any hope of drafting off his wheel, his actions responding to the earlier remarks. Subsequently, the cyclists would never forget the name Chris Jones.

Jones hails from the small town of Redding, California. This Northern California community has miles and miles of pavement and dirt for cycling, yet contains a very small cycling community. In an area better known for rodeos, fishing, and houseboating, it was a miracle Jones found cycling. It began when his uncle, an ex-football player, wanted to lose some weight and started training for triathlons. Jones trained with his uncle and participated in several events. Although he did well in triathlons, it was not his calling. "I don't like to run, and swimming was okay," he recalls. But he excelled at riding his bike, and continued cycling. He began racing on the road where he would develop into one of the best cyclists in the country.

Jones' rise into the Pro ranks did not happen overnight. He didn't have the fairy-tale story of magically transforming from a Cat 5 racer to Pro in one season. He rode with a triple chainring until he was a Category 2 rider, which earned him the nickname "Triple" in the San Diego area where he moved. "I didn't know it was even considered dorky to ride with a triple ring," admits Jones. In his sixth year of racing, Jones has come a long way. He put his time in, slowly moving up the ranks. He trained in the 33-degree rainy days of winter straight

through to the 115-degree hot summers in Redding, the seemingly perfect climate of San Diego, and the frigid winters of Connecticut, where he and his wife Cassie now reside.

Jones' road racing resumé for 2007 boasts impressive results: multiple top 10 finishes in NRC races, third overall at the Tour of Virginia while riding with the U.S. National team, and ninth place at the USPRO Road Race Championships (won by Levi Leipheimer). His ninth-place finish at the USPRO Championships could have been better had it not been for a broken wheel at the bottom of the largest climb. Jones rode to the top with his damaged wheel, switched it out, and called upon his Nerac team to initiate a massive effort to put him back in the race. "The team really came through for me, and it was great to honor them with a good result," he remembers.

While Jones has talent as an all-around racer, his coach Max Testa directed him to try 'cross to improve his time-trialing abilities on the road. Jones always trained on the road and lacked the technical skills necessary to compete with the Nations best 'crossers. Luckily, Jones' teammate, Adam Meyerson, was a seasoned veteran of the sport and helped with the technical aspects of racing. "Adam would pre-ride the courses with me and help show me which lines to take," Jones recounts. With his engine from road racing and his progressing technical-handling skills, Jones was ready to take on 'cross.

In only two seasons of cyclocross, Jones has risen in the ranks. In the fall of 2005, he and his wife went to watch the Chainbiter Cyclocross UCI Race and see what 'cross was all about. His first year consisted of six 'cross races, including the Connecticut State Championships, which he won. In 2007, he raced a full season of 'cross, including the Crank Brothers US Gran Prix of Cyclocross Series, The Verge New England Championship Series, and a brief stint overseas. Jones earned several podium appearances, sharing it with the likes of the infallible Tim Johnson, Jeremy Powers, and Jonathan Page. Two years after watching that first 'cross race, Jones

returned to the Chainbiter UCI race, which was third round of the Verge New England Series, and took the win — his first UCI win.

A reconnaissance trip overseas found him competing at Niel Jaarmarkt Cross and Pinjnacker World Cup with the world's best racers. The weekend promised deep mud. "I was hoping it would be dry, but it was really wet," remembers Jones. "It was the first time I ever rode in mud, and it wasn't just a little muddy — it was six-inch-deep, nasty mud. My technical skills just weren't there."

Adding to the difficulties of wet conditions were last-row starting positions, a broken rear derailleur,

and a flat tire, all of which put a damper on his actual ability. Despite these obstacles, he finished a respectable 38th place at Niels and 40th at Pinjnacker. The muddy races continued for Jones when he arrived in Portland, for the final round of the USGP, only to find wet conditions once again. "I was hoping to finish in the top 20, and if I finished in the top 10 it would have been a great day," he recalls. "I felt more comfortable riding in the mud in Portland than I did at Niels, [although I knew it would] take a little more time to get the technical skill down for riding in the mud." His developing confidence in riding in sloppy conditions earned him 10th place overall in the USGP.

Finishing up the Verge New England Championships Series in second overall, Jones made this season his final preparation for the U.S. National Cyclocross Championships in Kansas City. Initially, his goal was to head to Europe after Nationals and race through the World Championships, but racing takes a toll on the body and one's personal life. 'Cross racing draws Jones away from home three to four days a week. All the traveling and racing doesn't allow for much recovery or time with his wife. In addition, his new team for 2008 will most likely be headed to the Tour of California, where he wants to perform well. "If I went to Worlds, I would probably be cooked for California," he reasons. After the Tour of California, Jones will race on the road through the season and transition back to 'cross in the fall.

Jones is just one of the increasing numbers of participants seen at 'cross races around the country. The Verge New England Series and Oregon Cross Crusade Series boast approximately 1,000 racers at every event. There is no doubt that 'cross is on the rise, and future champions are starting younger. To promote cycling, Jones' Nerac Professional Cycling Team visited schools on the days leading up to the races. He and his teammates shared with



students their stories of racing, in hopes of sparking their interest in cycling. Jones aspires to continue the outreach next year with his new team. "It was a good way to get kids interested and involved in the sport, because we would tell them about racing on Friday, and during the weekend their parents would take them to watch the races," he explains. "In the future, we could even put on demonstrations at the schools, set up a small 'cross course with downsized barriers, and have the young ones ride around and give it a try."

It has been a long road for Jones as he finishes his sixth year as a competitive cyclist. He is adamant about giving back and growing the sport that has supported him. His race results reflect hours of hard training and dedication. It will be only a matter of time until he masters his technical handling skills on the 'cross bike — and when he does, there will be a lot more cyclists who will remember the name Chris Jones.

Steve Tam got a 'cross bike six years ago and has not owned a road bike since. When not busy managing or racing for the Visenka Cycling Team he enjoys reading bicycle-related material to his wife and six-month old daughter.



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Hup Hup Hup!

HUP UNITED

BY SEAN HORITA



Perhaps you've seen their distinctive blue jerseys with Belgian-colored stripes at your local race. Maybe you've seen the new black jerseys with a prominent Hup logo and thought, "What the hell does that mean?" Or perhaps you've been lucky enough to travel to races across the country and can't seem to get away from them. Hup United is one of a growing number of cyclocross-only clubs, but this isn't your standard, regional 'cross team. With a presence in most major 'cross areas in the country, no sponsors, and an emphasis on 'cross culture, the club has a tight-knit network spread throughout the country and a loyal following. I sat down with Zac Daab, the club's Seattle founder, to finally get to the bottom of the mysterious club. Little did I know, I had a small role in inspiring the club's creation.

What does HUP mean?

I founded Hup United in 2003. I was working for Seven Cycles at the time and living in Somerville, MA. Hup was quickly a team of three as two welders at Seven, Mikey Pants and Max Swell, joined in. There are a lot of great clubs in Boston, but for whatever reason, I never hooked up with a team. Yet, I still raced a fair amount. I wanted a kit and wanted a crew. So, me, Mikey, and Max started racing under this name.

I had been to 'cross races in the late 90s and definitely picked up on the repetitive chant that people would yell on the running sections, but it was unclear to me just exactly how you would spell that word which sounded like "hop," "up," or "hup." This cheer seemed universal; it seemed generically ubiquitous. I distinctly remember hanging out at 99 nats in the Presidio watching Tim Johnson have a spectacular race and I thought, "Man, what if you could form a team around this cheer word—this 'hop' 'up' 'hup' thing. You would have a guaranteed bi-partisan cheering section at every race you attend!" Scrambling through the woods in Putney, VT: Hup Hup! Sprinting up the run-up at Gloucester, MA: Hup Hup Hup! Huffing through all ninety meters of the insanely stupid Dale Knapp Run in Seattle, WA: Well, you get the idea.

My brother Luke designed the logo and I developed the kit. Our first kit was green and blue, but it quickly transitioned to the current iteration: Hup Blue.

What are the goals of the team, or club?

We do not have a stated mission, per se. Or maybe we do, and I've forgotten it. Our tag started as "Cyclocross Culture." Recently, Portland, Oregon, Hupster James Selman coined the phrase "One Hup finds another," and that in many ways sums up the lifestyle that is Hup United.



HUP HUP HUP!

Our focus has never been on results or being the biggest team with the most members.

Over the years, Hup United has also turned into the unofficial “host” of members who seek Hup out in other cities. When I moved from Boston to Seattle in 2005, I traveled across the entire country and stayed with Hup folk along the way. I remember stop #1 was in Canada and the lone Canadian Hupster, whom I’d never met, graciously cooked a meal and gave me a place to crash. I literally had never met Phil.

I read an article in the *New York Times* a while back about a community of sofa surfers. In some ways, Hup is partially about cyclocross sofa surfing. This weekend at the GP races, Brothers Roth of PDX Hup are hosting Hupsters coming in from all over the country. The same happens every year at Gloucester: Mike Z. and Rebecca host 20+ Hupsters and FOHU (Friends of Hup United).

Also, on a professional level, I know that Hup has helped connect people for day job benefits. Is this a modern day good ‘ol boys network? I hope not. But there is no denying Hup hooks shit up.

“Cyclocross culture.” What does that mean to you? Is there such a thing as “Seattle cyclocross culture”?

I can tell you one thing that Hup United is not about: It is certainly not about rainbows, acorns, and karate clubs. That is for damn sure.

I would say one of the team models—and really cultures—that I really admired was the now-defunct lifestyle known as Boston Cross. Mark Abramson and his buddies were one of the first Boston-area groups that really seemed to get the team thing dialed; the team was way more about hosting races, throwing trophy-making parties, having race-day barbecues, and racing hard than just caring about results. I liked this vibe and wanted to form a team—almost an anti-team—in a very minimal way that captured the culture of Boston Cross. So, I formed a team around a word.

Mark did a great job doing free Tuesday night practice sessions. Lots of the Boston Cross regulars would meet in Davis Square and roll to Lexington or Belmont and rip it up. But it wasn’t all racers or fast guys. There were regular beginners, dudes on mountain bikes, etc. And no one was told to go away. BC didn’t need to advertise.

I would later be invited to join an underground BC practice at an undisclosed location on a specific night each week during the season, and we would have some really good hot lap sessions in the dark and then eat burritos. That was *it* for me. And again, the best part about those secret sessions was that it was made up of really, really, random people, nice people, who LOVED ‘cross. Many of those people based their entire season around the weekly night sessions. [Note: I was one of the early Boston Cross folk, and to my surprise, we later figured out he was referring to the training/burrito session I cofounded in ‘97 with Forest Reid and the editor of this magazine, Andrew Yee.]



How long have you been racing cyclocross?

I’ve been racing ‘cross for about eight full seasons. I did my first race in Seattle in 2000 at North Sea-Tac Park. I moved that fall to Boston, and Gloucester was my first race. Since then, I’ve raced nationals nearly every year and series races in New England, Washington, and Oregon. Last year I raced masters worlds in Mol, Belgium.



My favorite CX race is probably Gloucester. Essex County Velo, the club that puts on the race, does a phenomenal job putting on Gloucester and it’s just a ton of fun. I believe a Hup member actually coined the phrase New England Worlds, which is the affectionate name locals give the weekend of racing at Gloucester.

How would you describe the Hup Team? Is there an application or hazing process? Can anyone join? What are the qualifications, if any, for riding for Hup?

Right now Hup is made up of 58 members, plus or minus a few. Mike and Max were the two core members right away. That said, Hup early on was comprised of some of my best friends around the country: Mike C. in Michigan, Radio Freddie

in ORD, etc. 2007 was the first year where things started to get a bit more formal. We had member dues and pretty defined regions and froze membership for the year.

Joining the club is a bit random. As mentioned above, the phrase “One Hup finds another” seems appropriate. What it really comes down to is this: If you live in a region where Hup is established, you meet the dudes, go on rides, and it works or it doesn’t. If you live in an area of un-Hupness, well then, you’re a privateer.

I love the concept that we have a national team, an international team, where most members have never met. At the same time, there is such good opportunity to make really good friends. There are two New England Hup guys—Pierre and Yash—who met each other a few years back, and now they are super good friends. All because of a word, really. To me, that’s the best.

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We have a very rigorous application process and all the riders must meet with our team doctor here in Seattle. After a battery of physical and psychological tests, we have data and spreadsheets which allow for us to make a more informed decision on the rider. With the data, we contact Ghent, and they in turn inform betting agencies and supporter's clubs to see if another rider can be, well, supported. Other than that, it's pretty simple.

How is cyclocross going to evolve or grow or change over the next few years? (How does Hup help this?)

I think 'cross in the states will continue to grow in regional areas. It's a great time for 'cross right now—not quite the NORBA days of mountain biking, but there's good regional growth as well as a consistent national series. Hup helps this out as we are really a national team with regional pockets.

I've been working on an event idea that would be scored like a cross country running event, where it's team vs. team and the top five to seven riders are scored from each team. Having regional pockets of teams coming together would be very cool. Stay tuned.



What kind of bikes do Hupsters ride?

I would say most Hupsters are riding dedicated 'cross bikes. I can think of at least 10 people with Sevens. Two Seattle Hup guys—Burn Hard and Max Swell—are starting their own company called 333 Fabrication. They will build steel and titanium 'cross bikes. Additionally, quite a few folks in the East have been riding Zanconato's bikes. Also, Mikey Pants welds bikes for Seven, and Mattison C. does sales for Seven, and Mike C. sells Seven at his shop in Michigan. I worked at Seven Cycles for five years as the Senior Fit Specialist and I helped design and recommend over 7,000 frame specifications during that period. We are unique in that sense: multiple members on the team are frame builders and have a depth of frame building experience.

I personally own a small bicycle studio called Cascade Bicycle Studio. I sell Seven Cycles, BMC, Time, and Sycip. My main focus is working with clients one-on-one for new bicycle purchases, and while the majority of my clients are not bike racers, or 'cross racers, I have sold quite a few multi-use 'cross bikes for commuting, winter riding, and the occasional 'cross ride.

As 'cross grows, it seems like the number of 'cross-only clubs is growing. What are the benefits of a 'cross-only club? Do you want to distance yourself from roadies and mtb-ers? Do they dilute the culture?

While Hup specializes in 'cross, I wouldn't say we hate on road or mountain. Most people on the team will race the odd race in the off-season, but I think most of us "save it for 'cross." Personally, I do some training races in Seattle during the week and like to do special event races like the Mt. Baker hill climb and the Test of Metal ATB race in BC. Last year a bunch of us did the Eugene Roubaix, and I know some East Coast dudes did the Battenkill Roubaix in NY. James S. in Oregon and Bob K. in Georgia are big mountain bike racers. All the West Michigan Hupsters raced the Iceman race in Michigan this month. California Hupster Fred W. did the prestigious 11.4 km Dipsea trail running race in Marin. We are a pretty diverse group, but we are primarily a 'cross team with love for the CX machine.

The advantages to this shared interest are probably obvious: like-minded people getting together to have sub-culture 'cross love sessions. Wait, that sounded weird. We have a forum where people have bounced bike set-up ideas off each other. We have experience building and designing 'cross bikes. I think we serve as a good resource for other members as it relates to 'cross.

Would you welcome sponsors that want to sponsor the 'cross lifestyle instead of results?

We have had very, very, limited sponsors. Early on, we received some support from my friends at Mill Valley Cycleworks. We had their logo on the jersey and they helped sell extra kits and purchased kits for themselves. Mike Z.'s logo has been on the kit in years past because he was a friend. This year, I believe our kit is exclusively Hup United. I like it this way, personally. Hup has never been about, "What do I get?" or

HUP HUP HUP!

“Is it ok if I ride ‘X’ brand bike?” Sponsor-free has always felt right, but I am not ruling anything out. For a sponsor to appear on the kit, the question becomes: What does it really do for Hup? I don’t want the team to turn into a method to obtain bike parts. We order kits twice a year, and starting last year, we had a special team-issue thermal hat, which Belgium affectionately dubs the “MUTT”, that was included with the dues. I am working on that “special thing” for 2008 right now.

We’ve heard you focus on Bs. Is it because you want to focus on the average guy, and that a club of As is too elitist? Are there any women?

That’s an interesting observation. Until last season, I was the eternal B, looking to do well in the Verge Series in New England. It took about four seasons to start placing ok. When I moved to the Northwest, I had a very good season in 2006 and then moved up. Nearly all of Hup PDX and New England races B. It has been really cool to see those guys every weekend hanging together, racing together. It actually makes me really jealous.

We have a handful of elite racers and Hup has a host of female Hupsters racing beginner through elite. At Portland nationals #2, Celeste Drumm was on the podium for Hup—that was pretty cool. This weekend in Portland, I believe Hup United is about 10 riders strong for the B race at Portland International Raceway. We have discussed team strategy and if the cards are played fairly by the Gods of Oregon, we could see a Hup! Hup! Hup! podium.

What is your opinion on sandbagging? Would you rather have a lapped B rider or a top C rider? Or sandbagging backwards, a lapped A rider? When is it time to upgrade?

Last year I won two races in a row and was called out on the OBRA message board. The heckling was mainly for fun, I think, but I was definitely targeted as a sandbagger. I liked what Mark A. did at Northeast nats two years in a row: He made a sandbagger jersey and delivered it to the B race winner, on the podium. It was, by definition, priceless.

It’s funny; in New England, there was a string of B national champs. Mark Abramson won in Baltimore, my friend Matt Kraus took Napa, and then Stan Jurga was poised to be the next sandbagger at the first Providence nats. Everyone had fun with it and I think that heckling, in the end, works best.

What makes upgrading tough from B to A is the UCI factor. Once you go up from B to A, it’s easy to race local races, but when the big series races come around, you have to have a UCI license. And, as I’ve found out this year, there is a HUGE difference between local B races and a big domestic UCI elite race.

Note to USA Cycling: To see ‘cross grow at the elite end, subsidize a UCI license for first-time B members who are moving up to As. This will foster more growth at the elite level (Mark McCormack isn’t getting younger) as well as create a more level playing field in the 2/3 fields as would-be As don’t have the excuse that the license is too much money.

Do you think the proliferation of UCI races and rules is good or bad for the sport?

It’s been interesting watching the sport grow in the U.S. in conjunction with the UCI. In some ways, I think that America is still not ready for the UCI, or for that matter, really even cares. I don’t know the details as to why the World Cup was finally cancelled on the East Coast this year, but I thought that was an indicator that the UCI is—at the very least—taking U.S. ‘cross seriously. But the U.S., for good or bad reasons, was not ready to deliver.

For the elite racer, the abundance of UCI races makes for more racing choice, and more choice always seems like a good idea. For the non-elite racer—the heart and soul of U.S. ‘cross—the UCI can sometimes mean higher entry fees, more rules, and less fun. I think this weekend’s racing in Portland at the GPs is a good example of how a UCI race can still cater to the non-elite racer. The excitement and buzz of ‘cross is definitely aided by a stacked elite start list, but I don’t think it’s the only element important to ‘cross, as some racers may not even care.



Hup United founder Zae Daab races the 2007 masters worlds.. photo: Jon Suzuki

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Cross to Bear: Why Cyclocross Will Never Jump the Shark

by BikeSnobNYC

Anybody who's been racing cyclocross for a while knows it's more popular than ever, and with that popularity can come problems. Fields are huge and pre-registration is essential. Sandbagging is rampant. And so many riders were expected to converge on Kansas City for nationals that the city contemplated adding a second traffic light.

But as popular as cyclocross is, I don't think it's in danger of getting too popular. "Too popular" is difficult to quantify, but you know it when it happens. It's when you suddenly start feeling self-conscious about doing something you've been doing for years, or when you find yourself getting angry at others for not really "getting it," or when blowhards start whiny blogs about how trendy it's become. (Ahem.) Fortunately, though, I don't see that happening with cyclocross. Here's why.

It's Hard

If you're reading this magazine you already know this, but cyclocross is hard. Sure, all bike racing is hard, but not like 'cross.

In a road race, all you really need to be able to do is hang with the group, cross the line, and unfurl the excuses. "He was sitting on my wheel and wouldn't pull through." "I was boxed in." "I had a gu-related mishap and my hands slipped off the bars in the sprint."

In mountain bike racing you don't have a pack to hide in, but you do have the woods, and unlike lycra-clad roadies, trees don't talk.

Track races are short and confusing—almost nobody comes to watch—and those who do can't really figure out what's going on anyway. What the hell is a "Devil Take the Hindmost"?

But in cyclocross, there's beer, so people actually show up. On top of that, it's not hard to figure out—first person to cross the finish line wins. And if they pick a good spot they can see you flailing away and losing pretty much the whole time. This dovetails neatly into the second reason cyclocross is safe from getting too popular.

It's Embarrassing

Cyclocross is embarrassing. And I'm not just talking about having to wriggle into a skinsuit in the back seat of your friend's car. I'm talking about things like getting hopelessly ensnared in the course tape, or getting ridden over by another rider, or falling off a fly-over, or pulling your foot out of your shoe while dismounting for some barriers. (Clipping back into a pedal is easy—slipping your foot back into a shoe that's already in the pedal is hard.) And that's just the warm-up lap.

Your embarrassment is compounded by the fact that there are often announcers at 'cross races. Sure, it's great to get a mention when you're leading the race, but when you're lying face down in a mud puddle with your bike on your back, it's just demoralizing. And it's completely dehumanizing when your name is mispronounced—you know your race is over when you're spitting out mouthfuls of sand and simultaneously crying and wondering whether you should start using umlauts in your name.

Cantis

For all the gimmickry and marketing we're subject to as cyclists, bicycle components have come a long way. Except for cantilever brakes. Cantis squeal and chatter like teenage girls when there's a cute boy around. Finding the right combination of brake arm, rim, pad, fork, cable hanger, and straddle cable height is a project that can take all summer and eventually starts eating into your personal and professional life.

Somewhere in the world, on the top of a tall mountain, there is a hairy-legged, SPD sandal-and-wool-sock-wearing, touring-bike riding canti guru who holds the secret to perfect canti setup—kind of a cross between Sheldon Brown and Buddha. But until he starts appearing in your house in a tutu like some kind of canti fairy, every time a fork shudders violently another rider gives up on 'cross.

It's Not Urban

Trends start in cities. This has been true throughout history. Plumbing, the plague, subways, bagels, crack—all of these things started in urban centers. Cyclocross, on the other hand, is a pastoral sport.

Sure, some of the bigger races take place in "cities" like Baltimore, Providence, Trenton, and Gloucester. But for the most part, if you're racing 'cross, you're riding through some muddy pasture the cows have had the good sense to abandon in favor of the barn. This is very discouraging for the kinds of urban tastemakers who made things like track bikes trendy. They generally lack the fortitude for this sort of thing and grow very uneasy when they're forced to leave their neighborhoods, since they know their fey, wan appearance does not travel well and looks pretty ridiculous out of context.

So, while this means you probably won't be able to sell your pit bike for three times what you paid for it in two years, it does mean that despite its increasing popularity, your beloved sport is not in imminent danger of losing its dignity.

Bike Snob NYC lives in Brooklyn. He writes a popular cycling blog at bikesnobnyc.blogspot.com. He does not own a pit bike because he's not good enough.



Katie Compton - Spike Shooter Rides *Primus Mootry*

"I ride Primus Mootry because the fine details of a handcrafted frame make a difference at the highest level."

Primus Mootry custom built frames made for the highest demands of cyclocross. For your handmade custom masterpiece contact Joe DePaemelaere, framebuilder. joed@primusmootry.com <http://www.primusmootry.com>

Winter Jersey: Pearl Izumi Gavia

by Josh Patterson

Winter Wear Woes...

My biggest complaint about winter riding is not the cold, but the gear. Attempting to stay warm while remaining nimble enough to move with the bike can be as hard as getting motivated to ride in freezing temperatures. Preparing for a winter ride does not mean you must encumber yourself with thick, bulky layers. A few well-chosen pieces can keep you warm while allowing you to ride as if it isn't a frozen wasteland outside. Here are two pieces that will keep you warm without adding too much bulk.

If you want to keep the blood flowing to your extremities—and keep those pedals turning—you need to ensure you're keeping the engine comfortable. Enter the Pearl Izumi Gavia Jacket. This cold-weather jersey is designed to keep the rider warm while maintaining that all-important svelte look that's so hot these days.

Not one to rustle and flop around while you fight the wind, the Gavia's form-fit construction stretches and moves with the rider. Wind-resistant AmFIB® fabric panels on the front and back provide protection from wind and water. The brushed lining insulates, while non-wind-resistant panels on the sides and back allow for breathability. When worn over a base layer, this piece provides plenty of protection from the elements.

If you've got an Adam's apple (I'm guesstimating about 50 percent of the population falls into this category), an insulated jersey with a high, stiff collar and a zipper that runs straight up the center (like on the Gavia) can be quite uncomfortable when hunched over the handlebars. I found myself unzipping the collar, sacrificing warmth for comfort. An offset or asymmetrical zipper would do wonders for this jacket.

Size tested: Small

MSRP: \$159.99 (test product provided by Pearl Izumi)

Hard on gear? Or a gear head? Apply to review stuff! Email: reviews@cxmagazine.com



Winter Gloves: Specialized Deflect

by Josh Patterson



The Deflects proved to be great medium-condition winter gloves. The upper portion of the glove is covered in a neoprene fabric that retains some heat while keeping the wind at bay. The lower is constructed like a standard glove: leather palm with padding. The Deflects worked well throughout a wide temperature range: 30°F–50°F. These gloves did their job of blocking the wind and providing just a bit of insulation without adding significant bulk.

The lack of bulk was appreciated; I was able to maintain the same degree of dexterity as with standard gloves, while keeping my digits warm enough to man the controls. The palm padding was a nice feature—something absent on winter gloves from many other manufacturers.

There's a difference between windproof and wind-resistant. No, the Specialized Deflects are not windproof. On rides into a bitter headwind, I could feel winter creeping in through the stitching. When I ventured out on colder, longer rides, the inability of these gloves to retain heat in conditions below 30° was apparent. Gloves with added insulation and taped/welded seams are better suited for sub-zero adventures.

My only gripe with the Deflects: Since these are winter gloves, and the human body is adept at making mucus when exerting itself in the cold, it would be nice to have a larger nose-wipe area than just the top of the thumb. That's prime real estate, and it fills up fast!

Overall, the Deflect's wind-resistance combined with their moderately insulated upper make these gloves a great choice for cold-weather rides and late-season racing.

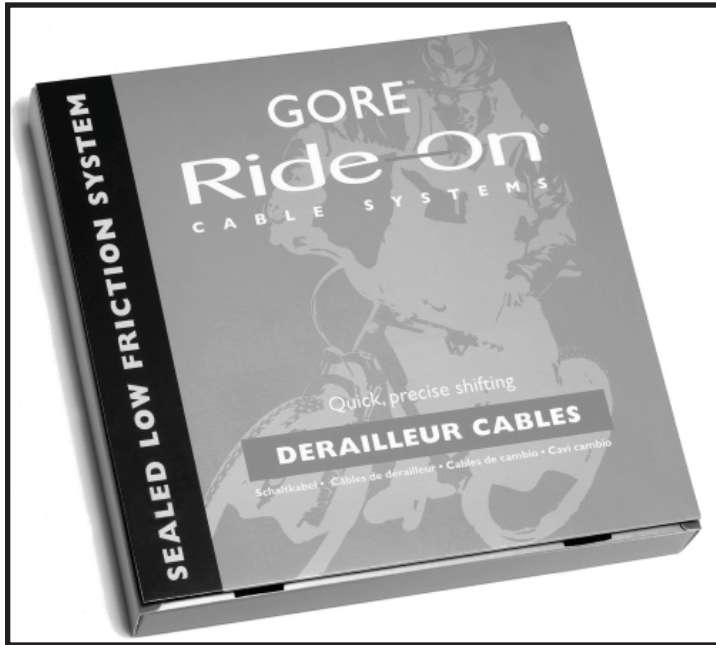
Size tested: Medium

MSRP: \$40.00 (test product provided by Specialized)



Bicycle Cables Gore RideOn Cables v2.0

by Andrew Yee



Cyclocross can be brutal on equipment, given the adverse weather conditions and difficult terrain many of us ride in. Mud, rain, sand, and snow take their toll on a bike's components, and shift and brake cable systems are no exception. Pro teams often replace cables and housing after every race to ensure flawless shifting and braking for their riders, as a missed shift or unpredictable braking could mean the difference between a win and second, or worse, a crash. Most of us don't have the time to do such regular (and time-consuming) maintenance on our bikes, and even though our regular paychecks don't rely on perfect shifting or braking, we can appreciate a perfectly working bike just as much as any pro. With a completely sealed system that keeps the entire length of the cable protected from the elements, Gore's Ride-On cables promise to be a great time-saving and performance-enhancing upgrade to your 'cross bike.

Gore launched its first incarnation of the Ride-On Cables in 1993, and the innovative cable system had a loyal following, but was not without its problems. The cable coating would degrade and then bunch up and jam in the outer sheath, and the housing would become brittle and crack. Gore stopped selling that version of cables in 2003, but the continued customer demand and improved technology inspired Gore to re-engineer the product with a thinner cable coating, improved liner, and better seals, and re-launched it this past fall.

Two models of cable sets are offered in both shift and brake con-

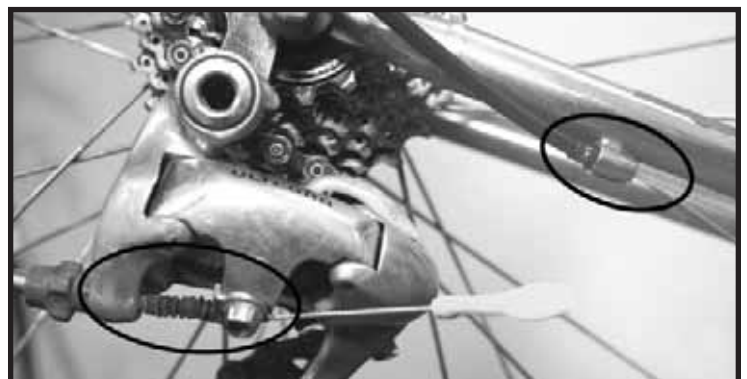
figurations. The Low-Friction model consists of a Gore-coated cable and housing, while the Sealed Low-Friction model has the coated cable, a continuous liner covering the entire cable, housing that fits over the liner, and grub seals to prevent moisture and dirt from getting inside the liner and housing. For 'cross, the obvious choice would appear to be the sealed version.

Installation:

My first impression was that Gore had put a lot of thought into the new system. The Sealed Low-Friction systems include more than enough length of cable and housing, all the ferrules you need, grub seals to seal off the end of the liner, cable end crimps, and even bright red crimp caps (to distinguish their branded cables). Brake cables have ends for both mountain bike and road brake levers, while shift cables have a Shimano/SRAM cable end (4.4 mm in diameter), as well as the slightly smaller Campagnolo size (4 mm).

Installation of the sealed system was a little more complex than a normal cable and housing, but following the clear instructions and taking a few extra minutes to install the liner into the housing sections, cut the liner to length, and install the seal was all it took. Sounds easy, right? Installing the shift and brake cables went smoothly on a bike without inline brake levers. The hardest part was finding a razor blade to cut the liner.

However, like many 'cross folk, I like using inline brake levers, and these levers add significant complexity to the installation of the sealed brake cable set. Because the cable liner is larger in diameter than a cable, it's a tight fit without modifying the cable holes in the brake lever. As a result, friction is actually greatly increased without some modifications. Gore acknowledges in the instructions that you may have to drill out some barrel adjusters with a 3/32-in or 2-mm drill to accommodate the liner, but does not address potential problems for inline brake lever users. These users may have to drill several spots on the brake levers to accommodate the liner. Another alternative would



Bicycle Cables Gore RideOn Cables v2.0



be to cut the liner and resume the liner on the other side of the lever, but the liner has one flanged end to prevent it from sliding inside the housing, and without another flanged end you'd have to get creative to keep the liner in place. Obviously, this also makes the system only partially sealed, which presents more opportunity for contaminants to enter the liner.

One other potential problem during installation can occur with front cable hangers that use noodles with sharp bends or have holes for the cable. The cable liner handles bends well inside of the housing. But outside of the housing, it's susceptible to kinking. Narrow cable openings in the hanger may also need to be enlarged. The Low-Friction cable system without the liner would remove all of these installation challenges with hangers or inline levers.

Riding RideOn

Once installed, the cables performed flawlessly. Through a few months of training and racing in conditions varying from dusty, wet, sandy, and muddy, the cables remained fully sealed, and their performance many rides later was as smooth as when first installed. Although I can't say my shifting always remained flawless, since my



chain, cassette, and rear derailleur were still subject to the elements, I was good to go after cleaning those up and didn't need to lube or replace any of the cables regardless of the conditions. That benefit alone was a godsend. For braking, the benefits were noticeable but less obvious. Smooth braking was nice, but a little extra friction doesn't both me as much as a missed shift.

The bottom line: Less time spent maintaining my bikes means more time to ride. At around \$65 per set for the sealed model, they're

not cheap, but the time savings and reliable performance are worth the extra cost, and may make a bigger difference over time than the difference in shifting performance between, say Ultegra and Dura Ace, for example. And if they last for more than a season, they could potentially save you money if you find yourself replacing cables and housing frequently, especially if you pay someone else to do it. If you can afford only one, buy the shift cable set, in the Sealed Low-Friction version.

Vital Bike-Geek Stats:

Options: Brake or Shift cable sets, in either Low-Friction or Sealed Low-Friction models

Color(s): Black (Sealed Low Friction) or Gray (Low-Friction)

Price: \$50 for the Low-Friction model, \$65 for Sealed Low-Friction model (test products provided by Gore)

Go get them if:

You ride your bike in typical 'cross conditions, and the bike has more than one gear, indexed shifting, and cable-actuated brakes.

You get tired of lubing and replacing your cables several times a year.

You pay folks to replace your cables and housing, and it's not cheap.

You are someone's pit crew.

You commute by bike throughout the year, in all conditions.

Think twice if:

Your pit crew takes care of everything anyway.

You have inline levers and don't want to drill your parts (applies to sealed brake system only).

You need your housing to match your bike, and it's not black or gray.

Muddy cyclocross is only something you see in a magazine.



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C A B L E S Y S T E M S

Entry Level 'Cross Bike: The Redline Conquest

by Amy Holzer

'Cross riders have a plethora of entry-level 'cross bikes to choose from nowadays, as almost every bike manufacturer has entered the market in the last few years. Redline, however, has offered production 'cross bikes since 1997 in the form of its Conquest models. For 2008, Redline offers four Conquest adult models, starting from the entry-level Conquest Sport, and including the Conquest, Conquest Pro, and the Conquest Team.

Redline's Conquest, 'cross bike, is affordable – MSRP \$999 – and offers a wide range of frame sizes – 44cm—60cm. Being that I am short, reluctant to part with cash, and have been looking to upgrade my ride for my second season of 'cross, this bike captured my interest. Luckily, I had the opportunity to try one out for the last two months of the season, and I gotta say, I really like this bike.

With its lengthy involvement in the sport dating back to 1994, Redline has had enough time to figure out what works well on 'cross bikes. Some of the best features are actually the little touches. Out of the box, it's ready to go, with inline brake levers, a chain guide, and a 36/46t crankset. No modifications or upgrades are necessary, as it's set up to handle the varying needs of 'cross courses and riders of all abilities.



Braking performance and cable routing are smartly configured, with a built-in rear brake cable hanger and a fork-mounted front brake cable hanger.

The component choices were smart, as Redline has picked the right combo to deliver results without excessive cost: Shimano Tiagra 9-speed shifters and front derailleur with a 105 derailleur in the rear. The components worked well, and shifting on this bike was smooth and quick, with fluid downshifting on the steep uphill and fast responses when shifting up through the flats. I didn't really have to pay much attention to the drivetrain, and that is a good thing, even if it's not the sexiest parts group.

As for the other components? The saddle is a basic Redline model, but is pleasantly surprising in terms of comfort – at least for this rider. The wire bead Maxxis Raze tires also aren't a high-end specialty offering, but they did get the job done without too much sliding about.



When it comes to handling, the Conquest is responsive and sturdy. It feels predictable in tricky off-camber sections and descents, allowing for deeper turns and more aggressive lines. Mud also doesn't seem to faze the bike much, with its ample clearance and parts choice. Real mudders can still rejoice – disc brake tabs are still featured and are legal in all but UCI-sanctioned races.

Shouldering went just as well as riding. The top tube is wider than the one on the steel frame I'm used to riding, and I could feel the difference during the race and see the difference in my lack of bruising afterward. It also was impressively easy to shoulder, which is a big bonus on a smaller frame.

What are some areas for improvement? Well, small people usually have small hands, and the reach for the brake levers was a bit much for me. I could definitely make it work, but it took some extra effort to get a good solid grip for the steeper descents. Also, in terms of gearing, the 36/46 chainrings are great, but the 12-25T 9-speed Shimano HG-50 cassette still left me wanting a little more on the low end. It's not going to leave a beginning rider stranded, but it might make for some harder work on the hills.

For the shorter riders out there wondering about toe overlap, the Conquest is no better or worse in this department. I experienced it some on slow ninety-degree turns, but it didn't cause any problems.

Finally, if I could choose to add something to the Conquest, it would probably be a carbon fork. 'Cross does me enough damage, and the less I need to use my arms for shock absorption and picking up the bike, the better. A more shock-absorbing and lighter carbon 'cross fork would really top this bike. Of course, this would undoubtedly add to the price of the bike, and perhaps push it out of reach for the target crowd. While I'm not saying Redline should include this change and raise the price of this model, as an owner, it'd be the first major upgrade I'd make to this bike.

In the end, the Conquest delivers a complete package that is race-ready and will be as effective as you want it to be. In our few months together, it survived some poor decision making by me, including a run-in with some trees and a low-speed endo, without so much as the chain coming off. It's got my vote for sure. Reliable, affordable, responsive, well-equipped, and well-designed, Redline's Conquest is a compelling offering that's hard to resist. .

Bike Geek Vital Stats:

Size Tested: 44cm

Bike Specs: Shimano 105 rear derailleur, Tiagra STI shifters, FSA 46 x 36t crankset, 9 speed 12x25 cassette, and Ritchey Comp wheel set with Maxxis Raze tires.

Bike Weight (As Tested): 21.58 lbs (including Shimano 959 pedals)

MSRP: \$999.99 (Test bike provided by Redline)

BIKE GEEK

Your "A" Bike Lynskey Pro-cross

by Mike Holzer

I've got to be that guy.

That guy that whose bike creates a bit of envy in everyone.

That guy whose equipment is far more impressive than his racing.

I often felt guilty, borderline ridiculous. Lets be honest here; should a cat-C racer be bobbling a pristine titanium ride all over the course?

Yes. Yes, they absolutely should.

In the words of Ferris Bueller; "If you have the means, I highly recommend picking one up".

Here's why:



It's light

It's not like I had been racing Joe Breeze's first mountain bike. I have some decent rides. But nothing compared. Every time I had to shoulder the Pro Cross I appreciated it. I literally took note during my races.

It's soft

I started off on aluminum because I wanted something cheap to try out. I then picked up a mid range steel frame because I thought something a bit more forgiving might help me power through the rough spots. Having now ridden the coveted metal, I can truly say that titanium is the sweet spot. It's lighter than most aluminum frames, without the bone-jarring stiffness that most of us with normal legs don't need.

It's quick

It was responsive coming out of the corners and stiff when I tried to put the pedal to the metal. The steering was balanced, stable on the down-hills and without any sluggishness in the hairpins.

It's built for 'cross.

With good mud clearance, shaped and ovalized tubes, top tube cable routing, built-in rear cable stop and front derailleur cable adjuster, Lynskey did their homework in building this frame.

It's gorgeous

Have you seen it? 'Tis a beauty. While I do like to pick colors for my rides, the color of titanium does have a nice sheen don't it? The etched logo is just plain sick; eff stickers, do it like you mean it and etch the name in there. Nice work Lynskey. The head badge has a slick retro feel



to it. I dig it, really dig it. It even smells good Even after a couple races it held onto its new bike smell, you know, that metallic, rubberized rose smell.

I had the pleasure of riding one of their house blends which come in the following sizes: S, M, ML, L, and XL, which equate to 54, 55, 56, 57.5, and 58.9 effective top tubes. It's a pretty nice spread of sizes unless you are shopping for something small. I can't even imagine what the ride would be like if I had the time and the means to go with the custom-fitted frame option. The custom frame building experience from Lynskey is rumored to be top notch. The process includes a personal interview with the master frame builder himself, David Lynskey, and gives owners a chance to see computer renderings of their future custom frames. The process is then topped off with a limitless set of paint options, so that Nightrider frame you've always dreamed about can finally be yours.

I must also admit that part of the riding pleasure was because my test bike came with an excellent build kit—straight from the homies at Bike Mine, distributors of Lynskey frames. I ran a full SRAM Rival kit, Ksyrium ES wheels, and enough carbon bits to make me a bit nervous. Now you can see why I was that guy. I don't own an entire bike that costs as much as those wheels and I wasn't doing Lynskey any favors by not winning any races on their bike, but I was probably the only racer with a smile that big on my face.

Who should buy a pro-cross for next season?

- "That Guy"
- Anyone who can afford one
- People who hate rust, chiropractors, stickers, or are trying to reduce their carbon footprint
- Racers looking for a custom-built frame to last a lifetime

Who shouldn't?

- Keebler Elves

Bike Geek Vital Stats:

Size Tested: 54cm (med)

Bike Specs: SRAM Rival derailleurs, Cranks, Shifters, Chain, and Cassette, Chris King headset, Avid Shorty 6 brakes, BBB Fiber Race handlebar, BBB Fiber Force 100mm Stem, Geax Tires (but I swapped em' for my beloved Michelin Muds), Vittoria Tubes, BBB carbon seat post, Mavic Ksyrium ES wheelset, Alpha Q CX-10, and a SSM Caymano saddle.

Frame Weight: <waiting>

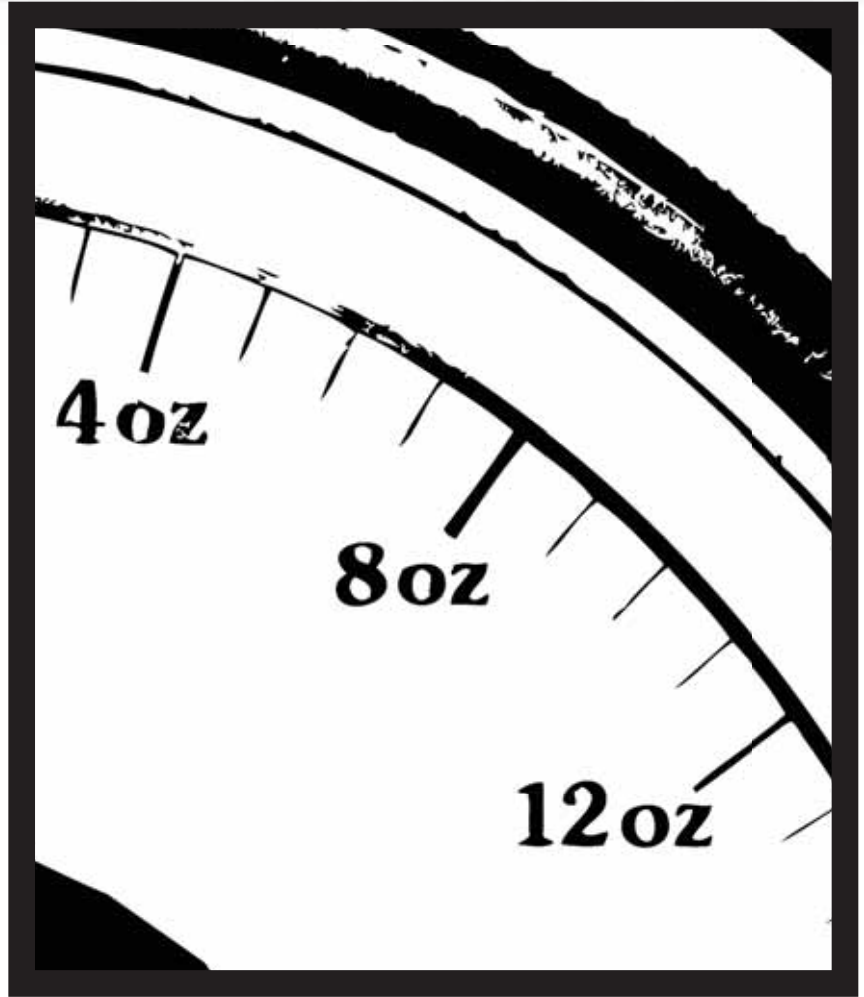
Bike Weight (As Tested): 19.51 lbs (including Shimano 858 pedals)

MSRP: Frame Only: \$2,795

MSRP: Bike As Tested: \$6389.00 (Provided by Lynskey Performance Designs)

**Got an opinion on your latest impulse buy?
Drop us a line at reviews@cxmagazine.com**

In the first installment of the “Cutting the Fat” series, I discussed the basics of dropping weight from your cyclocross bike. I also gave you the homework assignment of tearing down your entire bike and weighing each part in order to determine which parts weigh the most. I still recommend you do that, but understand most of you rather ride than spending more time in front of a computer. With that in mind, this article will provide you with the results of what you would have found had you actually done it. That is, the areas on your bike where you have the most weight to lose are most likely the frame, fork, and wheels.



Frame:

Let's start with the most controversial of the three, the frame. In an era when custom steel cyclocross bikes are all the rage, the truth is aluminum frames win in the lightness department. This means that if you prioritize a lightweight bike above all else, begin looking for bikes that are made of aluminum, or if your budget allows, titanium or carbon fiber. You can still build a light bike with a steel frame, but it will never be as light as an aluminum bike of similar price or quality. I won't get into the debate about aluminum versus steel versus carbon fiber. That is a topic deserving of an article in and of itself, and I am not the authority on the subject. That said, all materials have a variety of qualities that warrant their place in the cyclocross world, and low weight is never a reason why someone chooses a steel bike.

So, if you do decide to pursue low weight by choosing an aluminum frame, keep in mind that not all aluminum frames weigh the same, and just because a frame is aluminum, that doesn't mean it's light. The following frames illustrate some of the weight variations that exist between different aluminum frames:

- Lapierre FDJ X-Lite Scandium, 51cm – 1,190g
- 2000 Specialized M4 CX year: 56cm – 1,640g
- 2005 Specialized Tricross Sworks, 56cm – 1,413g
- 2004 Trek X01, 56cm – 1,550g

In comparison, the 54cm steel Gunnar Crosshairs made from lightweight Reynolds 853 tubing I have sitting beside me weighs 1,850 grams. That's 300 grams (2/3 pound) more than an “average” 56cm 2004 Trek X01.



Fork:

Next up, the fork. Many stock bikes come with aluminum forks with aluminum steerer tubes, and some even come with steel steerer tubes. The lightest forks out there are carbon with carbon steerer tubes. The following cyclocross fork weights are off the Plus One Lap Weight Wiki and offer some comparisons of weight variations in forks:

- 2005 Aerus CX uncut carbon – 650g
- 2005 Alpha Q 1 1/8" (208mm) – 550g
- 2006 Nashbar carbon full steerer 1 1/8" (aluminum) – 719g
- 2006 Ritchey WCS full carbon uncut with compression plug – 480g
- 2005 Specialized carbon off of Tricross CX 229 mm steer tube – 732g
- Steelman steel 200mm steerer – 769g
- Trek CX aluminum with steel steerer 8.25" (209mm) – 852g
- 2005 Winwood Muddy 1 1/8" (268mm) steerer – 691g
- Woundup CX 9.25 steerer with starnut – 590g
- 2006 4ZA "Python" full carbon steerer – 397g

What you can see here is that the 4ZA all-carbon fork weighs 455 grams (one full pound) less than the Trek aluminum fork with a steel steerer that came stock on the 2003 Trek XO 'cross bike. One pound! That's a lot of weight.

Wheels:

Lastly, let's talk wheels. Look at any of the pros out there and they're running tubular wheels. Why? For multiple reasons: lower weight, more supple tires, and the ability to run lower tire pressures which results in better grip and higher speeds in sketchy conditions. Tubular wheels are one of the easiest and cheapest ways to get a big upgrade in performance with your current bike. Everyone has concerns with the gluing process at first, but once you figure it out, it really isn't THAT hard to do.

So how much weight do you really stand to lose if you go to tubular wheels? My Mavic CXP 22 clincher wheels with Ultegra hubs and Michelin Sprint tires and tubes weigh in at 2,780 grams. Alternatively, my tubular wheelset weighs 2,215 grams with Tufo tubular tires mounted. This is 565 grams lighter than a typical clincher cyclocross wheelset that comes stock on many bikes. 565 grams=1.25 pounds, and a good portion of this is

rotational weight savings is the weight you're going to feel coming out of the corners and accelerating after a tight turn. My wheelset is built up with:

- Front Rim: Matrix ISO – 404g
- Rear Rim: Sun M19aII – 383g
- Front Hub: Hershey Naked – 80g
- Rear Hub: American Classic – 235g
- Spokes: DT Swiss 2.0/1.8
- Tires: Tufo Elite 32mm – 320g each

I'm not saying this is the set of wheels you should necessarily build, and I realize about 200 grams of the savings come from the ultralight hubs. However, it is an example of the kind of wheelset that has lasted many 'cross seasons for me.

In conclusion, you can see that by making upgrades to your frame, fork, and wheels, it's possible to lose 2.5 pounds or so, depending on what you started out with. Like I said last time, you might not go from the back of the pack to the top of the podium because of this bike diet, but you might notice your bike accelerates a little faster and your shoulder is a little less sore.

Jeremy Burlingame is the Editor and Creator of Plus One Lap (www.plusonelap.com), an online cyclocross website dedicated to lightweight cyclocross bikes. Plus One Lap also has the Plus One Lap lightweight bike gallery featuring cross bikes under 18 pounds and handmade cyclocross bikes from local framebuilders.

Hup United...continued from page 53

It's my hope that 'cross races still have a local feel to them, no matter how big they get. Gloucester will always have a New England feel. Cross Crusade crowds can be simulated in no other place on earth. Racing in the Bay Area and So Cal is also totally unique. If we are heading toward a 'cross future where the local races go away, and a national series genericizes the vibe, then I think we've gone backwards. To date, I think the USGP series is still keeping the races feeling like there is a regional flavor. I hope the USGP staff continues to respect and realize that a national series absolutely cannot happen without regional support.

Sean Horita has been racing 'cross on and off for 12 years, in New England, Northern California, and Seattle. When not playing with bikes, he's an industrial designer, and has designed bike frames, helmets, and indoor fitness equipment.



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it's pure cycling. just pedal.

Plato once said, "Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity."

Ah, simplicity. My garage is not simple. It's cluttered with bike crap of all sorts, projects in disarray, and a number of things that should be fixed, maintained, sold or given away. My life is really not much different. When a rare quiet moment appears, my mind still races through the list of life things I haven't done, need to do, and need to fix.

Ironically, racing 'cross is a rare escape from my racing mind—the one coveted moment during a hectic week when I have a singular focus and goal. It demands my full attention to both stay upright and ride as fast as possible. Over the years, I've found the easiest way to maintain and enjoy this singular focus is through racing a singlespeed.

Why singlespeed? Isn't 'cross hard enough? Sure, steep hills with one gear get a little harder, but you'd be surprised how much you can do with just one gear. Also, there's less friction with a straight chainline and no derailleur pulleys. Singlespeed bikes end up being lighter without shifters, cassettes and derailleurs, and more reliable without the risk of those parts getting gunked up. But perhaps the most appealing benefit is the mental state of riding a one-speed. You're one with your bike, focused on the course and maintaining your speed. This Zen-like focus becomes addicting and is a refreshing change from fighting the bike and forcing it to adapt to every change in terrain in attempt to find the perfect gear.

Not convinced yet? Then you're in luck. We've highlighted a few options for you to see why a growing number of folks are converting to the religion of one. Not sure you can purge yourself of the sins of eight, nine, ten, or even sixteen, eighteen, and twenty? Get ready to repent and study the ten easy steps to convert your sinful bike. Can't figure out how to get to that better place? Your prayers have been answered with our in-depth reviews of six top tensioners. Can't figure out why singlespeeders are so devout? Get baptized by our pilgrimage to the singlespeed world championships, and come join over a hundred others in their worship of the holy Speedo.

A Simplified Recipe to Convert Your Multi-gear Sinner into a Singlespeed

Ingredients for the simplest conversion:

1. Double chainring crankset (non-compact) and single chainring bolts or chainring bolt spacers (you can substitute a single chainring crank of course)
2. Rear wheel with cassette freehub
3. A BMX or single freehub-compatible cog, without ramps or missing teeth, and cassette spacers
4. A chain tensioner (see our reviews) OR frame with horizontal dropouts or track forks, OR a bunch of cogs, chainrings, chains, a tape measure, and a lot of patience
5. A new 8-speed chain

Optional:

1. One or two chainring guards or bash guards, or chain watcher
2. Brake levers without shifters

Directions:

1. Repeat to yourself five times, "I need a straight chainline!" Then ride your current bike around to determine what gear you'd like to try. A common gear is 39x17, or about 62 inches.
2. Unless you have horizontal drops, read our tensioner review article first and then get what you think best fits your needs.
3. Remove the shift cables, housing, front derailleur, rear cassette, brake/shift levers if you've got replacement brake levers, and then the rear derailleur.
4. Install your tensioner on the derailleur hanger. Most tensioners work better with chainrings in the outer position, but you should check, especially if the tensioner does not offer much lateral adjustment of the pulley or roller. Stand behind and in front of the bike, and sight the two to determine whether it aligns better with the inner or the outer chainring.

5. Remove both chainrings and install the smaller chainring (likely a 38, 39 or 42) in the appropriate spot using the single chainring bolts or spacers. If you're moving an inner ring to the outer position, you'll likely need to reverse it to still accept the chainring bolts. (If you have a compact crank, your smaller chainring is probably a better bet as it might be hard to find an appropriate cog to match your outer 48t or 50t chainring, but more teeth results in more teeth engaged and longer wear.) Chainring guards, especially when used two at a time, may require a longer bottom bracket spindle and/or longer chainring bolts.
6. Install your spacers (you can take apart old worn-out cassettes and reuse the spacers) and cog on the freehub, taking great care to make sure they line up with the tensioner and chainring. Note, avoid using the older plastic Shimano spacers ones as they typically have nubs that prevent stacking and would have to be filed off.
7. Read the instructions that came with your tensioner. Then install the appropriate-length chain, often the shortest amount of chain that can adequately wrap the cog and chainring without the tensioner.
8. Adjust the tensioner to take up the slack. Use the push-up position if it's an option to get better chain wrap on the rear cog, but some fatter chainstays may not allow this.
9. Spin the cranks backwards. Do they spin freely? Are there tight spots? If there are tight spots, try loosening the chainring bolts to see if the chainring is bolted slightly off-center. Chainrings usually aren't perfectly round but this minor adjustment may eliminate uneven chain tension.
10. Check to make sure everything is tight, aligned, and go ride! Try some light pedaling first before pushing hard and going into bumpy sections. If you've set it up correctly the cranks should

spin effortlessly, and the chain should never derail. Now start training for that golden Speedo!

Notes:

You can use a wheel with a threaded hub and a BMX freewheel, but getting the chainline right may be difficult without respacing and redishing the wheel. Also, many older hubs are spaced at 126mm, while modern 'cross bikes are either 130 or 135mm.

- It is possible to avoid a tensioner altogether by finding the "magic gear" that works both with your legs and with your bike. We've used this method on some bikes with mixed success. There are calculators to help you determine what gear combination will work with your bike. Our favorite is: <http://www.eehouse.org/fixin/>. It takes into account chainstay length, chain stretch, and gives you more options if you use a half-link. But because there are so many variables, the calculator and charts only speed up the trial and error process. You'll likely have to try several combos before finding the perfect one, and not many folks have a slew of rings and cogs to experiment with. You may also have to replace your chain frequently to avoid stretch from adding too much slack. But this offers the lightest, simplest, and most aesthetically-pleasing option for those who have the patience.
- If you really start to get into singlespeeding, you may find yourself spending more money on your "simple" bike than your geared one. Purpose-built singlespeed wheels can be as expensive as fancy road wheels, but can offer options such as White Industries' ENO hub with an eccentric rear axle to eliminate the need for a tensioner.
- Despite the many dedicated singlespeed options, Mark Lalonde, winner of the singlespeed race at 'cross nats, used a Mavic Ksyrium rear wheel with spacers and a single cog on his Bob Brown singlespeed frame.



SSCXCX

SingleSpeed World Championships in Portland OR

ONE LOVE...

...One heart. Let's get together and feel all right. –Bob Marley

Portland, Oregon hosted the inaugural Single Speed Cyclocross World Championships (SSCXWC) on November 10-11, 2007. CXM lackeys Steve Ransom and Andrew Yee made the trip to the soggy Northwest to attend and participate in this unique event. This is the story of the trip and event. (words and unmarked photos by Andrew Yee)

Perfect. The weather called for rain throughout the weekend, and we were psyched. After several hot, dry, dusty Norcal 'cross weekends, our lungs were ready for a break from weeks of coughing. Plus, we heard so much about the epic Portland mud, we had to experience it ourselves.

Getting off the plane, we glanced around. The terminal was quiet. I laughed, thinking to myself, "Where were all the racers flying in for the big event? Were we late? What about the throngs of Belgians and Dutch fans?"

"They must have arrived days ago," Steve reasoned, obviously pondering the same thoughts. "The serious contenders have been practicing on the course for days. They are in their hotel rooms, their feet are up, their mechanics are fine-tuning their bikes, and they're probably getting massages. The fans must have gotten in even earlier to find just the right spot to pitch their tent on the course. They're probably all drinking beer and making waffles by the campfire as we speak."

"Well, at least we got in our pre-race effort and opened up our legs" I reasoned, recalling our mad sprint in the Oakland terminal a few hours earlier, as we desperately raced to make our flight. But I knew sprinting all out for a good 5 minutes with a suitcase in tow was probably not the ideal lead-in to such an esteemed championship

event. After sitting at the wrong gate for a half hour and only noticing our error moments before our flight was to leave, it became evident that we were up against the odds in our quest to become world champs. Champions or soon-to-be champions shouldn't have to deal with such stress. But considering we only booked our tickets a week before, we were pretty lucky just to be making the trip.

Nevertheless, without soigneurs, mechanics, and coaches, we made it to Portland. After grabbing our bikes, securing a rental car, hitting a grocery store, and finding our host family's house, we built our bikes, and settled in for the night, hoping our legs and brain could quickly recover from the unbearably long flight and inevitable jet lag from the Bay Area. Ah, the challenges of traveling to race a world championship event in a foreign place.

The race details remained a mystery, the conditions and terrain unpredictable. On the way to the venue the next morning, we anxiously anticipated what awaited us at Day 1 of the event.

Driving for miles along the Clackamas Highway, we followed a river into a deep gorge and up big mountains, ominous signs for any singlespeeder. What a cruel joke to host a championship in such rugged, unridable country! Oh wait, we're lost? Phew! I've never been so happy to be lost in my life.

When we finally arrived at the race course, we were welcomed by



SingleSpeed World Championships in Portland OR



photo: david roth

mild weather, a semi-dry course, and thin crowds. After such extreme expectations of rain, mud, and thick crowds of drunken, 'cross-crazy fans, it was a mild letdown to say the least. But we arrived at the office and still had jobs to do.

The day's first event was a one-lap time trial to qualify for Sunday's world championship event. Unfortunately for us, poor equipment choices left us on the outside looking in. In the mad rush of packing for the event, I had overlooked some of the essential equipment options for such an event, leaving my aerobars and aero helmet behind.



Swerving through the course, banging against the barriers, with my ponytail flying in the wind, I missed the cutoff time by eight seconds! Eight seconds!

Laurent Fignon, I feel your pain!

Ryan Trebon and Barry Wicks didn't feel any pain. The Kona boys flew through their one lap time trials with times of 7: 52 and 7:

53, respectively. Wicks unveiled a special helmet with minimal vents and a jersey with built in fairings for superior aerodynamics. Ah, the advantages of being a pro! The closest, semi-mortal was Shannon Skerritt, a good 17 seconds behind.

The disappointment of coming so far only to fail so quickly led us to the beer tent and PBR rehydration (our soigneurs and recovery drinks were nowhere to be found.) After soaking it all in, not riding any more suddenly didn't seem so bad, and somehow we forgot about the time-bonus options and rumored second-chance race. When it was finally announced the second-chance race was about to start, I was largely indifferent about making another effort. I was warm, a little over-hydrated, and had already come to terms with my near miss (Fignon, give me a call, I'll tell you my secret). But somehow, at the last minute, mostly due to Steve's encouragement, I jumped back on my bike, squeezed out another two laps, and squeaked into the top 15 finishers – just enough to get in.



photo: steve ransom

We left day 1 with mixed emotions. It seemed like the adventure we had envisioned wasn't going to be realized this weekend. What happened to racing in mud through throngs of fans with a title on the line? Little did we know...

The next morning we pulled into the park, not sure what happened. Where was the 'cross race? It seemed like the park was doubled-booked, and a county fair had taken over. Karaoke. Dodgeball. Giant Big Wheel Rides. Free Coffee, Hot Cider and Beer. Frankenstein bikes. Crepes. Dogs, dogs, and more dogs. And more little kids than dogs. Foesball. Tequila Shots. A bikini and Speedo

★ SingleSpeed World Championships in Portland OR



contest. Oh yeah, and a few bike racers – almost one thousand of them, for some reason almost all riding Vanilla frames.

Group after group took to the course, creating an endless stream of riders that reminded me of the Rose Bowl Parade. “And now here

comes the Master B 35-36 Clinchers Group, all 132 riders! Following them are the Multi-gear Unicycle A’s!”

It didn’t feel like a championship event, but rather a festival, with something for everyone. There weren’t many wind trainers in sight. Warm-up routines largely consisted of riding around slowly and heckling racers, or racing an earlier race, often in



photo: joe sales

costume. Funny bikes, mini bikes, beer bikes were seen throughout the park. Yet compared to the many races I’ve done in New England or Norcal, the level of racing was just as high.

The idea for a singlespeed world champs was originally conceived by Rich Maile over two years ago. Maile, a bike mechanic, race promoter, and Norcal singlespeed legend living in Sacramento, brought his idea to his friend Dani Dance, recognizing Portland’s large and crazy ‘cross community would be the ideal city to launch and embrace such an event. Dance loved the idea, and formed the Portland Singlespeed Collective to start planning.

“Everyone was super excited about it and all agreed it was a great idea,” Dance recalls. But she quickly realized liking an idea and executing it are two vastly different things. “We came up with our

name Portland Single Speed Collective and I was hoping someone would take it over and spearhead the whole thing. But no one really took it on, so the following year I decided if I wanted this to happen I would need to do the planning.”

Plan she did. Having never even ridden a singlespeed, she picked up not one but two, and embraced the culture. “Our goal was to make it a competitive event while keeping the singlespeed spirit alive and to have a really good time,” says Dance.

Looking around at the registered athletes and the scene, it appeared that she and the Collective were successful. Racers from Utah, California, Colorado, Minnesota, and of course Washington and Oregon made the trip, and big name ‘cross stars including Ryan Trebon, Barry Wicks, Adam Craig, Carl Decker, Wendy Williams and Sue Butler all signed up. Wicks, who lives in Santa Cruz, California, was attracted to the “have a really good time” goal. “I went to Portland for fun. There were no other big races that weekend that I was interested in doing, and I like to get back and race in Portland whenever I can since that is where my cross career began,” he explained.

Like most of the 87 men and 25 women in the championship race, I had no clue of the surprises the Collective and the Cross Crusade folks had planned. With a call-up just ten places from the end, I assumed my normal back-of-the-pack start position,



★ SingleSpeed World Championships in Portland OR



photo: steve raisom

one row from the back, focused on the ambitious goal of making it into the top half and not getting lapped more than once. But suddenly, Brad Ross, promoter of the Cross Crusade series, yells in his already-hoarse voice that he has a special announcement. The crowd quiets, and he tells the racers to turn their bikes around. The crowd goes nuts. Huh? We're going backwards? I'm starting in the second row? Finally, social services have arrived to help the disadvantaged 'cross racers!

According to Dance, both Matthew Slaven and Erik Tonkin came up with the idea of reverse call-ups. But the idea got leaked, upsetting Dance who wanted to keep such race elements a surprise. So she decided to do call-ups the normal way, and then surprise folks just before the start by getting them to turn around and ride in reverse. The finish line camera prevented them from riding the whole race in reverse, so riders were eventually merged back onto the course in the normal direction, but the top seeds had the added challenge of making it through traffic.

Ryan Trebon had little trouble making it past all eighty six other racers, and was the first of the "biggs" to pass me, just one-third into the first lap. Barry Wicks came by shortly after, but I expected a train of the top riders to go by, and never saw them. Being my third race in two days on the course, I was starting to really get a handle for the course, and started to choose better lines and felt pretty good, yet I knew I wasn't strong enough to hold them off for more than a lap. Only later did I realize that most of them were taking the Tequila Shortcut, where a shot of tequila earned you the privilege of cutting an extra hundred yards of the course. Like most 'cross races, the top guys used the pits the most often, only here the pit was staffed with bartenders instead of bike mechanics. Barry Wicks enjoyed the



diversion, even after the pit went dry. "I think I had about 5 shots during the course of the race," Wicks said. "After they ran out of Tequila we were still using the shortcut, but the consequences became dodge balls to the head." Maybe that's why he wore a thicker helmet?

While Wicks, Trebon, Craig and Decker were seen riding together, chatting, and seemingly just out to have a good time, the women's race was a bit more serious. Starting behind the men, the women had the challenge of weaving through a bunch of slower, already-drunk men. Wendy Williams, riding her first singlespeed 'cross race ever, was motivated to become the first singlespeed world champ (as well as by the Ahearne singlespeed 'cross frame awaiting the women's winner), and skipped the shortcut. "I had to drop my teammates' asses," she explained, opting to reserve the refreshments for a last-lap celebration. "I was saving it for the last lap, but they ran out of tequila. I heard Adam Craig drank it all."

Despite the pain of the hour-long one-gear sufferfest, I didn't want it to end. I was riding in the top half, hadn't been lapped, and had survived and stayed upright despite the dodgeballs, downhill jumps, beer handups, and the distraction of barely-clothed spectators. Apparently, Wicks, Trebon, and Craig weren't that anxious to finish either, as they soft-pedaled their last lap, engaged in a heated conversation. Just like a Tour de France stage,



★ SingleSpeed World Championships in Portland OR

the breakaway companions were discussing the final sprint and their jersey hopes. But here, as only fitting for a single speed 'cross race in Portland, the difference was that nobody wanted the win.

"While nothing was really prearranged, we were talking about it during the race, but couldn't really come to a conclusion," Wicks admitted. "No one really wanted to get the tattoo, and Adam had already won the SSWCMTB race so he was pretty much out of the running. In the end it just sort of came down to the last few meters and we were all sort of looking at each other and I just decided to take one for the team and keep the title for an Oregon original."

Always the teammate, after passing drug control (to make sure his shots were actually tequila and not water), Wicks was rewarded with the rainbow-striped Golden Speedo, and a Vanilla singlespeed frame. In a memorable, free-for-all podium ceremony, Wicks and Williams, flanked by supporters in underwear, costumes, and face paint, showed off their new golden threads and were captured for posterity by more photographers than they would have liked.

If you could travel to just one domestic race, which one would it be? As a spectator to watch country's best race at the country's highest stage, in (often) epic conditions for a title that matters, I'd go to the national championships. But as a participant and spectator looking for a weekend packed full of 'cross fun, the choice for me is clear. I'd go to the SSCXWC. For just \$40, we got to do three races, enjoy non-stop entertainment and free refreshments, and meet some really fun people. The weekend went by way too fast.

Planning for next year's event is already underway and is likely to be in Portland again. Dance's explains her goal is to "make sure it continues to grow and gain a following first." She feels Portland is a

logical home initially, but perhaps it may travel after that. "It helps that we already have such a huge single speed turnout during our regular season races. If after next year someone really wants to host it we will be very open to that idea. Maybe it should stay in one location for 2 or 3 years similar to how they do Nationals. I'd be open to ideas."

Both Wicks and Williams have already gotten accustomed to their new kit. Wicks, despite not exactly having a swimsuit-model body, isn't afraid to show it off. "I wear the Speedo when 'entertaining', so pretty much every night. It chafes a little bit, but I can ride in it OK so it will probably make a few surprise appearances this year on the MTB circuit," he warns us. Williams enjoys her eye-catching outfit a bit more modestly, shyly admitting, "I use the bikini with rubber boots while vacuuming. It makes me feel like I'm the best vacuumer in the world!"

With Europeans already inquiring about next year's event, and riders like Bart Wellens saying "Next year, I will think about it!", Wicks and Williams may have stiffer competition in their attempt to keep their precious threads. But they're not afraid, and have some words of advice to their potential competitors.

Wicks welcomes the challenge. "Wellens is a pretty cool guy, but I don't know if he could hang with the tequila-shooting Americans when it comes down to it. He needs to practice his drinking and riding beforehand if he wants to have a shot at victory," he warns.

Williams agrees. When told Katie Compton or Hanka Kupfernagel might want to steal her golden bikini, she had some advice for them. "They better practice their tequila shooters. The Tequila Shortcut is key. And they won't run out next year!"

Wellens, Compton, Kupfernagel and the rest of us have been warned. Start your training now. We'll see you there.



photo: carson blume

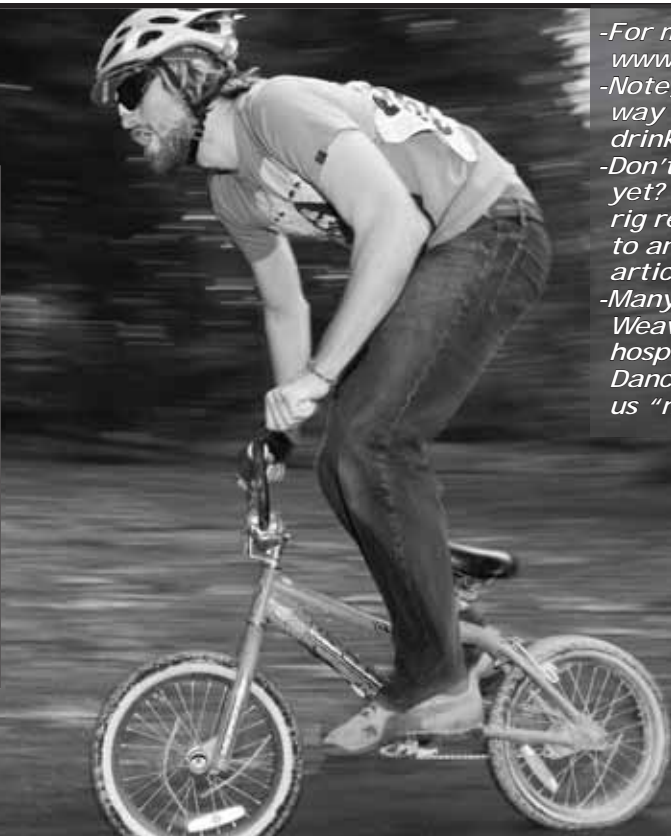


photo: polara studios

*-For more info, visit www.sscxwc.com.
-Note, CXM does not in any way condone cycling while drinking.
-Don't own a singlespeed yet? Get your singlespeed rig ready with our how-to and tensioner review articles.
-Many thanks to the Weavers for their generous hospitality, and for Dani Dance's warm welcome of us "media" folk.*

SINGLE SPEED CONVERSIONS

Tension headaches and **miracle cures**

So you wanna convert to singlespeed, eh? Congrats! But first, let's make sure you avoid the all-too-common tension headaches of young disciples. Bad chain tension or a bad chainline could cause you to hurt yourself and quit before you've even enjoyed multi-gear relief. But don't stress. We've tested five miracle cures and one home-brewed solution to see what's most effective, what side effects you should watch out for, and what sounds too good to be true.

Rennen Design Group's Rollenlager, Spacer Kit, and Singlespeed Cog

MSRP: \$50 tensioner only, \$70 tensioner with spacer kit, \$33 singlespeed cog (provided by Rennen)

Weight: 112 grams (tensioner only)

Tester: Andrew Yee

More info: rennendesigngroup.com



The Rollenlager is a curious-looking unit, with its curved, aluminum-plate construction, huge roller, and two mounting holes. The unit mounts to both the rear wheel axle or quick release and the derailleur hanger. The unit doesn't have any spring—instead, chain tension is adjusted by rotating the unit around the axle mount and then tightening the derailleur hanger bolt in place.

The two-position mount has its advantages and disadvantages. The major benefit is that the unit protects and braces the often-fragile derailleur hanger from impacts that could bend or break it. While many aluminum frames have replaceable hangers, high-end titanium or steel bikes often do not. Repairs are expensive and a hassle—and downtime means no 'cross—so we appreciate the insurance here. The

downside is that wheel removal is more tedious and time-consuming. If you need to remove your rear wheel often or bring pit wheels, this inconvenience could get to you. Also, you may need to have a 15mm wrench on hand to loosen the mount and rotate the tensioner to remove a wheel.

Another potential downside of this design is that it requires a pretty "normal" distance between the center of the derailleur hanger bolt and the center of the rear wheel's axle. Unfortunately, the Rollenlager didn't quite fit a Bianchi Cross Concept or Steelman Eurocross, because these distances tend to vary a bit from frame to frame. George at Rennen Design Group said the Rollenlager fits the vast majority of bikes, and in case it doesn't you can remove the step washer to allow quick-release wheels a bit more adjustment within the axle hole. I tried that, and it worked fine despite not being the most elegant setup.

Rennen Design Group also offers singlespeed cogs, along with a set of cassette spacers that are pure genius. Two couplers on each side of the cog offer almost infinite adjustability of cog positioning by simply expanding one side and tightening the other. The aluminum cassette cog, with longer, singlespeed-specific teeth, is breathtakingly light. While aluminum seems to be an odd choice of material for the one cog that receives all your abuse, it has held up fine after a month of use and shows little sign of wear.

Out on the course, the Rollenlager works great. The wide roller, spinning on cartridge bearings, is smooth and quiet. The design allows you to push up the chain, giving more chain wrap for a more secure engagement. And most importantly, the lack of a spring keeps chain tension constant, so your chain stays on your cog and you keep moving forward—even in the rough stuff.

If you don't remove your wheel often, appreciate the derailleur hanger protection, and want to enjoy the smooth, quiet ride of a singlespeed, the Rollenlager is a great value and deserves serious consideration. Just make sure it fits.

Forte Singlespeed Conversion Kit

MSRP: \$21.95-\$29.95 (purchased by CXM for 21.95)

Weight: 111 grams (tensioner only)

Includes tensioner; 16, 18, 20 tooth cogs; spacers; and lockring. Nashbar, owned by Performance Bike, offers a similar kit with 14, 15, and 16 tooth cogs.

Tester: Steve Ransom

More info: performancebike.com

After 15 years of sporadic 'cross racing, it was time to move on. It was time to try something new. Yes, it was time—time to try a singlespeed. And what better way to try it out than with a last-minute trip to compete at the sport's highest level—Portland's now-famous Singlespeed Cyclocross World Championships! Yes, I was going to debut my singlespeed career in the nation's cyclocross Promised Land, competing against the best in the world.

But first, I had to shed a good nine gears off my current 'cross bike. Even though I had a tensioner awaiting me in Portland, my rush (or impatience?) to get my bike up and running before I left town drove me to stop by my local Performance Bike store and pick up their prepackaged Singlespeed Conversion Kit. With Performance Bike's constantly recurring 2-day-only, lowest-price-of-the-season sales, you can buy this conversion kit for a song. But that doesn't mean you should. Sure, it's a cheap way to try singlespeeding, but this tensioner won't get you any closer to singlespeed nirvana. In fact, it might even land you in the hospital.



Initial installation seemed very straightforward: Simply remove your derailleur, bolt on the tensioner, and adjust the pulley to align with the cog (done by simply loosening an allen bolt and sliding the pulley in or out, perpendicular to the frame's centerline). However, to move the pulley to the proper location for my chainline, I had to fully extend the pulley away from the tensioner body, and this precarious placement seemed vulnerable to breaking.

The challenge with this whole setup was adjusting the chain length. Following the instructions, I first picked a chain length that allowed the spring-loaded tensioner to put what should have been adequate tension on the chain. Under this tension, the cranks spun freely, but chain wrap and tension were inadequate. If I stomped on the pedals it would slip, and if I hit any bumpy stuff with speed and I'd risk losing my chain. In singlespeed terms, this is not to be confused with "Holy crap, I'm so strong it feels like I've got no chain!" What it really means is your soft bits slam into your handlebar, or your head pounds the ground—no fun! So to avoid this problem I shortened the chain, and ended up with such high tension the cranks didn't spin very well, and I still wasn't enjoying the "no chain" feeling a nice singlespeed drivetrain can offer.

The problem with the Forte unit lies in its one-pulley design and geometry, as well as its weak spring. Without a "push-up" mode, the single pulley pulls the chain away from the cog, reducing the number of teeth engaged. And because the arm that holds the pulley extends

semi-horizontally, big bumps will jolt the pulley up, effectively detensioning the chain and greatly increasing the chances of derailing.

The instructions claim that you can adjust the spring tension by using a cone wrench on the swing arm of the tensioner, but this unit had no place to do this. Is this another case of Performance products being revised faster than their instructions? Or are the instructions alluding to future features of the product? Either way, I could not adjust the spring tension.

Despite all these problems, this kit is a decent deal for the parts alone—for those that need spacers and want to try a variety of gear combinations. Just don't use the tensioner. Put it on a townie (and only ride smooth roads), use it as a paperweight, or give it to your nemesis. (Actually, don't do that—nobody deserves such punishment.)

Rohloff Chain Tensioner

MSRP: \$69.95 (Provided by Rohloff)

Weight: 110 grams

Tester: Steve Ransom

More info: rohloff.de/en/products/speedhub/index.html

Not excited to race a world championship with the Forte tensioner



and its high chain tension, I was rescued by the Rohloff Chain Tensioner. The Rohloff unit is a spring-loaded, two-pulley tensioner that works with a singlespeed cog or its Speedhub and vertical dropouts. The design isn't much different from a derailleur, with a spring-loaded pivoting cage that houses two pulleys riding on bushings. The top pulley, which sits just below the cog, ensures ample chain wrap, and the tensioner swings out of the way to allow removal of the rear wheel. Spacers are included to offer some lateral adjustment to accommodate different chainlines.

Installation and operation of the Rohloff tensioner was a snap. Bolt it on with the right spacers for your chainline, thread the chain through the cage, cut the chain to the length that provides the right pulley angle as specified in the instructions, and you're ready to go. Riding it was equally brainless. Its strong spring and dual pulleys held the chain in place, and during three events at the Singlespeed Cyclocross World Champs, the Rohloff didn't slow me down once.

The Rohloff works fine for cyclocross, and is great if you often change your rear wheel or rear cog for different courses but don't want to change your chain length. Rohloff reports its device has a tensioning capacity of up to 10 links, so you could really play with chainrings and cogs and conceivably not need to make any adjustments to your chain length. This is also a major benefit for full-suspension design bikes, due to the suspension's effect on chain length. The downsides are that you still have two pulleys to gunk up when conditions get messy, and the bushings don't offer any friction-reducing or noise-reducing benefits over a rear derailleur. Also, this tensioner did not accept my SRAM singlespeed chain, forcing me to quickly find an 8-speed replacement.

Paul Component's Melvin

MSRP: \$82 (provided by Paul Components)

Weight: 101 grams

Tester: Eric Lowe

More info: paulcomp.com



In operation, the Melvin performed like other Paul components I've tried: reliably and without fuss. It allows quick wheel changes and can tolerate different cog sizes without requiring tools or a change in chain length. Even though my final gear left me with probably one link too long, the Melvin sucked it up and didn't let me down. Being relatively

new to singlespeed 'cross, I appreciated the flexibility of being able to swap cogs, but now that I've settled into a 38x17, I'm not sure how often I'll take advantage of it. Still, it's nice to know if I mysteriously get stronger or find an all-downhill course, I could make a quick swap. With its spring tension and floating top pulley, the Melvin can accommodate even a 2-chainring setup with up to a 20-tooth difference, but I didn't test this myself.

What makes the Melvin design better than other spring-loaded tensioners (and derailleurs used as tensioners) is that the pulley cage rotates around a point between the two pulleys. When the Melvin is set up as recommended so that the two pulleys are vertically aligned, a bump's vertical force has no impact on rotating the cage, so chain tension remains constant.

There is room for improvement, however. It'd be a lot nicer if the pulleys were rolling on sealed bearings (although the little extra friction and noise gives me an internal excuse for not being very fast). The other bummer is due to my vanity: The vertical pulley cage on the Melvin makes your bike look like it has a derailleur to the quick passerby. And since nowadays my races seem to be filled only with passersby, I'd much rather have them all think the only reason they're lapping me is because I've got only one gear. Guess I better get a singlespeed tattoo!

Soulcraft Cycles Convert

MSRP: \$88 (provided by Soulcraft Cycles)

Weight: 127 grams

Tester: Andrew Yee

More info: soulcraftbikes.com



You may not have realized how many variables there are in tensioners: spring or no spring, one or two pulleys or rollers, lateral adjustability, ease of wheel removal, and mounting options. From our tests, it's pretty clear that tensioners without springs and pulleys

have clear advantages for a 'cross bike. Constant chain tension and smooth wide rollers provide a smoother drivetrain, lessen the chance for derailing your chain, and have fewer parts to get clogged in nasty conditions. The Convert offers all these benefits while providing easy adjustability for diverse chainlines with a generous set of washers, and easy wheel removal via a nifty tension lock.

Installation of the Convert was simple, and instructions were comprehensive with a decent attempt at humor. After getting the right chain length, I bolted the Convert to the derailleur hanger, rotated it to apply the appropriate tension, and then tightened it all into place. A 6 allen wrench was all that I needed. Like the Rollenlager, the Convert allows you to push up or pull down on the chain to add tension. Fat, aluminum chainstays may get in the way of the chain and tensioner in push-up mode, a problem I experienced with my bike. In push-down mode, I still had decent chain wrap on the cog.

Riding a bike with a Convert felt like a singlespeed should—almost frictionless, and quiet. After a messy race, there was nothing to clean. The pulley didn't retain mud or grass, and the bearings remained smooth and sealed. But the best feature isn't revealed until you need to remove the rear wheel. The Convert has a little push rod to release the tensioner or lock it in place. Release it to swing the Convert out of the way to remove the wheel. Replace the wheel, then just lock it in place (the push rod is quite stiff initially). Swapping a wheel mid-race should be quick, as long as the wheel has the same size cog. Adjustments to accommodate different cogs require just a common allen wrench, making mid-ride adjustments a cinch.

For a 'crosser, there's nothing dislike about the Convert, except perhaps the price. At \$88 it's more expensive than a lot of decent rear derailleurs, and quite a bit more than the Rollenlager, which offers similar performance. But its ease of installation, universal mount, and push-rod release make it our favorite.

Your old rear derailleur

MSRP: You decide

Weight: 200+ grams

Tester: Bike Hacker

After reading about and seeing the Rohloff chain tensioner and the Paul Components' Melvin, you may be thinking, "Why pay \$70 or more on something that looks a lot like a rear derailleur?" You've probably got a few derailleurs already, including the one already on your bike. The truth is, you don't need buy a tensioner, and likely can use one of those spare derailleurs just fine. We recommend using a short-cage derailleur with strong springs that are still in good shape.

Depending on your chainline and rear derailleur, you may be able to use the high-gear limit screw to align the rear derailleur with your cog. But if this isn't enough, just grab a short piece of cable with a cable end still in place, insert the cut end into the barrel adjuster, hold the derailleur roughly in alignment with your cog, and clamp it to the normal cable clamp. Turn the barrel adjuster to fine-tune the alignment so that the chainline is correct. Select a chain length so that the rear derailleur cage is nearly fully extended. If it's too loose, you'll risk derailing when the course gets bumpy.

I used an old Campagnolo Croce D'Aune rear derailleur with this



setup and made it through four races this season (including the SSCX-WC), and it held up great—certainly a lot better than my legs or ego. I obviously didn't reduce the drivetrain noise or friction by removing the derailleur, but I did add some Italian flair to my Bianchi and saved some money for burritos—nice. The two-pulley system provided sufficient chain wrap on the rear cog, wheel removal was familiar, and the adjustability was great. We highly recommend this option for those wanting to try singlespeeding on a budget.

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bodies had taken from the off-road portion, this was a welcome break. We continued heading north to Kent Trails in Byron Center, but as I attempted to get out of the saddle to make the climb to Byron, both of my quads knotted up at the same time and forced me off my bike. But the end was in sight, with nothing but a leisurely ride left. To the walkers and casual riders on the trails, it must have been quite a sight to see a bunch of people on "road" bikes covered in mud, barreling down the trails.

I had almost made it the entire trip without incident, when finally my chain broke a few miles from the end. Luckily I had brought some spare parts, anticipating something like this would happen, and quickly repaired my chain. The other riders in the group struck up a conversation with some Boy Scouts selling popcorn, who were blown away when they heard where we had rode from that day. Hopefully we've converted a few new 'cross riders!

With the sun slowly falling over the horizon, we sprinted through the streets of downtown Grand Rapids to our final destination. As we walked through the door, we received a warm welcome from the riders who had made it earlier. What a feeling of accomplishment! Having only this year rediscovered cycling after too many years away from the bike, I found this to be the longest and most grueling ride I had ever done in my life, but it was worth every bit of pain that I had endured, and I'm sure everyone on the ride would agree.

When all was said and done, the computer on my bike read 58.8 miles, with just over 5 hours of pedaling time. The course was very well mapped out, and our group ended up getting lost only once, adding just about a quarter mile to the journey. Although our finishing town was only 14 feet higher than the start, the soft, rolling terrain made it feel like we had just spent the whole day climbing the Alps. So, whether this was "the coolest thing ever, or the grandfather of bad ideas" — does it have to be one or the other? One thing's for sure, we all had one hell of a time. It just goes to show that we cyclocross racers are a strange breed of cyclists that seem to enjoy inflicting pain on ourselves.



Jeremy Anderson rediscovered the joys of cycling this year when he started regularly mountain biking with a group of people from work. A few months ago Jeremy decided to check out his local 'cross series (www.krisscross.com) and was instantly addicted. He was recently elected Secretary for the Western Chapter of the MMBA.

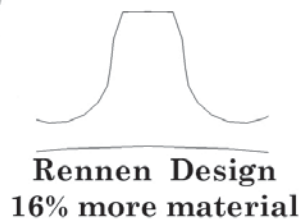
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Kansas City, KS

Race Distance: 13.4K
Lap Distance: 3.08K
PROVISIONAL

RACE DATE: 12/20/2007
PERMIT: 2007-43

Result	RaceNumber	LastName	FirstName	City	State	TeamName	Time
1	890	COATS	James	Campbell	CA	Morgan Stanley/Specialized	00:37:42.00
2	902	MYALL	Gannon	Lafayette	CA	California Giant Berry Farms	00:38:12.00
3	931	WEINERT	Jeff	Lake Orion	MI	Giant	00:38:17.00
4	901	HOEFER	Todd	Watsonville	CA	California Giant Berry Farms	00:38:21.00
5	900	BLACK	Will	Houston	TX	Kccx / Verge	00:38:45.00
6	1048	REID	Doug	Leavenworth	WA	Veloce Cycles Portland	00:39:17.00
7	904	KIMBALL	Troy	Guilford	NJ	Westwood Velo	00:39:32.00
8	1008	CARIVEAU	Jon	Steamboat Springs	CO	Moots	00:39:51.00
9	905	O'CONNOR	Art	Salt Lake City	UT	Fkr/Sbo	00:40:05.00
10	908	PRENZLOW	Brent	Carlsbad	CA	Alan North America Cycling	00:40:07.00
11	964	STEPNIOWSKI	Waldak	Littleton	CO	Luna Women's Mtb Team	00:41:28.00
12	934	WARMUTH	Ralf	Highland Park	NJ	Westwood Velo	00:42:01.00
13	906	MORRISSEY	Patrick	Albuquerque	NM	Nm Team Cross	00:42:32.00
14	916	PFLUG	Gerald	Mount Pleasant	PA	Speedgoat/Kona	00:42:39.00
15	966	MCCLUNG	Richard	Kirkland	WA	Hagens-Berman Lip Cycling	00:43:01.00
16	914	FERGUSON	Greg	Glassboro	NJ	Fort Factory Team	00:43:05.00
17	969	GRAVER	Doug	Snohomish	WA	Ragnarok Racing	00:43:09.00
18	998	HOGAN	Mike	Louisville	CO	Chipotle - Titus	00:43:14.00
19	1024	FOGHAG	Robert	Monroe	MI	Saturn Of Toledo	00:43:22.00
20	952	MCNALLY	Daniel	San Francisco	CA	Dfl	00:43:37.00
21	1050	ROLTGEN	Troy	Cottage Grove	WI	Brazen Dropouts	00:44:05.00
22	920	KRALISE	Paul	Lincoln	NE	Lincoln Industries/Lemond	00:44:22.00
23	1054	HOPKIN	Tim	Flat Rock	NC	Abro	00:44:22.00
24	949	BUTLER	Timothy	Portland	OR	River City Bicycles	00:44:35.00
25	926	MCSHANE	Michael	Louisville	KY	Papa John's Racing Team	00:44:35.00
26	943	EVANS	Brent	Chesterland	OH	Color Me Safe Racing	00:45:24.00
27	965	GORBELL	Greg	Conifer	CO	Feedback Sports	00:45:32.00
28	1022	BELL	David	Madison	WI	Na	00:45:38.00
29	970	CLINE	Jeff	Glenade	PA	Wissahickon	00:45:56.00
30	985	WINKLER	Paul	Blue Springs	MO	Ridley Factory Team	00:46:01.00
31	972	SCHOENING	Paul	Plymouth	MN	Ridley Factory Team	00:46:07.00

DATE: 12/19/2007 @ 3:26 PM

CATEGORY: Master 40-44 Male

PAGE: 1 OF 8

Like to race 'cross, do you? Get some enjoyment out of it (in a sick way)? Well, we have our local race promoters to thank for the fun. Now's our chance to return the favor. Let's promote the promoter!

You choose the format. Complete an interview, write a true story or bio, snap some portraits, or do a mash-up of the three...we're looking for your best attempt to put the spotlight on your favorite cx promoter.

We've got some great prizes for the best entries:

1. TRP's national championship-winning carbon CR950 brakes *and* Gore's national championship-winning Sealed Low-Friction Ride-On brake and shifter cablesets (total value \$330!)
2. Vittoria's EVO XG Cyclocross Clincher or Tubular Tires and custom Hector Finely Timbuk2 Messenger bag (total value \$180!)
3. Twofish's removable stainless waterbottle cage, a 1x9 t-shirt, and a Clif Bar. (invaluable!)

Important stuff:

Email entries to contests@cxmagazine.com. Contact us first if you have large image attachments. Entries must be original and unpublished. Void where prohibited. You're giving us permisisoning to print whatever you send us, on our website or in our print mag. Deadline is 3/30/08, 11:59 PM PST.

see www.cxmagazine.com/contest for complete details

CROSS-EYED GALLERY



Photo Credits:
(clockwise from top left):

1. Hanging on for the home stretch. Astoria, OR. By Bob Libby
[CXM costume 'cross photo contest winner]
Canon EOS 1D, f2.8, 1/400.
2. Sumo 'Cross. Santa Cruz, CA. By Andrew Yee
Canon EOS 350D, f16, 1/60.
3. Red Dragon. Astoria, OR. By Jeff Morrell
[CXM costume 'cross photo contest 3rd place]
Canon Powershot SD600, f4.9, 1/1250.
4. What's on my head? Astoria, OR. By Bob Libby.
Canon EOS 1D, f2.8, 1/400.
5. East beats west astoria. OR. by david anderson
[CXM costume 'cross photo contest 2nd place]
Nikon D50, f3.3, 1/60.





Photo Credits:

(clockwise from top left):

1. Synchronized Serra Teammates. Fresno, CA. By markhaymond. smugmug.com. Canon EOS 400D, f6.3, 1/1600.
2. Shoes, Post-KC Nats. Kansas City, KS. By Larry Rosa. EOS 1D, f5.7, 1/32.
3. Non-racers Find Beauty in the Conditions. Kansas City, KS. By Larry Rosa. EOS 1D, f14, 1/500.
4. No Bicycles? Watsonville, CA. By Andrew Yee. Olympus 5060, f8, 1/30.





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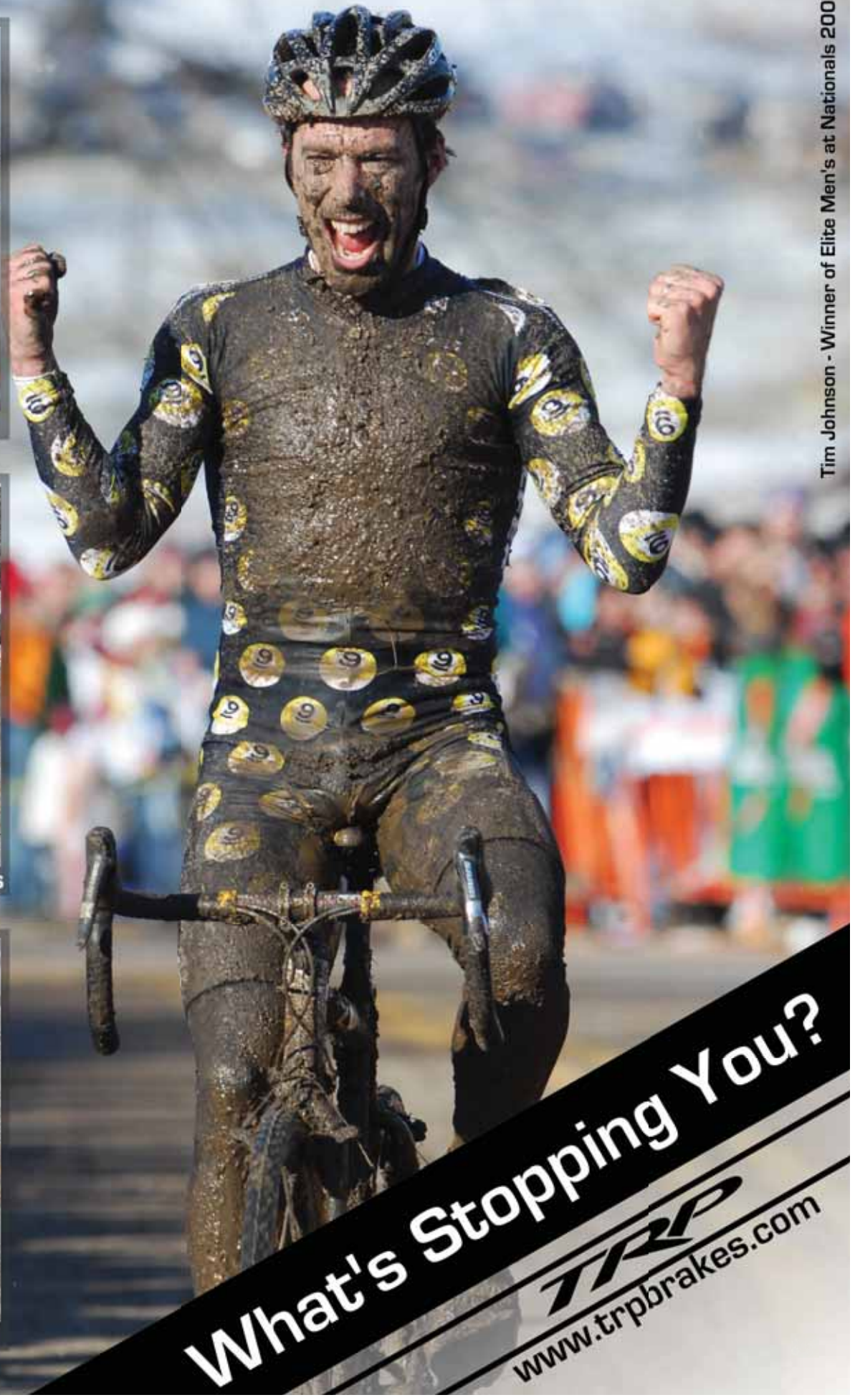
Katie Compton



Andy Jacques-Maynes



Brandon Dwight



Tim Johnson - Winner of Elite Men's at Nationals 2007

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Double butted aluminum frame with disc tabs, S-bend seatstays for great mud clearance, and a replaceable derailleur hanger. Responsive U6 aluminum fork with disc tabs. Shimano 105 rear derailleur with Tiagra STI shifters matched up with a FSA 46 x 36t crankset, and a 9 speed 12x25 cassette, for 18 gear choices. Ritchey Comp wheel set with Maxxis Raze tires are ready to give you a great ride over any terrain. Available in 7 sizes (44cm-60cm) measured center to top.