Changing Gears.

Phil Esempio, President

Every year, around the Labor Day holiday, my weekly schedule of rides begins to change. I find myself doing more 60 to 90 minute long, high-intensity rides, many (but not all) of them off-road. I drag myself out of bed at o’dark-thirty to do 15 to 20 minute long runs, despite the fact that I abhor running. My stationary trainer, unused since the last snowfall melted, gets pulled out of some dark corner of the basement and dusted off. Why all the change? One reason: cyclocross season is about to begin.

Cyclocross, as a sport, is unlike almost any other facet of cycling. While the origins of the sport are lost to the mist of time (around the 1920’s or so), and are often the subject of heated disputes among the sport’s practitioners (aided and abetted, on occasion, by the obligatory post-race refreshments), cyclocross (often shortened to just “cross”), has enjoyed explosive growth within the United States over the last 10 years. Until then, you had to travel to New England, the Pacific Northwest, or Europe (preferably Belgium!) to get a true taste of what cyclocross was all about, and to see just how deep the passion runs for the sport with both the racers and the spectators. And all off this, for a season that traditionally runs only from mid-September through to January, which is when most national championships for cyclocross are run, along with the worlds in February. Nowadays, however, there are local races to be found nearby every weekend, and the level of competition has reached a fever pitch that was unimaginable even 5 years ago. This weekend, in fact, you can see the first race of the premier East Coast cyclocross race series right here in the Lehigh Valley, as the Mid-Atlantic Cyclocross (MAC) series kicks off with the Nittany Lion Cross, held Saturday, September 19th, at the Valley Preferred Cycling Center in Breinigsville.

So what, exactly, is cyclocross? Without going into too much detail, picture a typical road bike with drop bars, that has been stretched out a few inches in order to accommodate wider, slightly knobby tires (typically 30 to 35 mm wide, compared to 19 to 25 mm for a typical road racing bicycle), and fitted with cantilever-type brakes, resembling those usually found on 1980s vintage mountain bikes. Races are typically 30 to 60 minutes long, and held over courses that are usually about 2 miles in length, consisting mostly of grass, dirt, and mud, with a smattering of pavement and sand to make things interesting. Add at least one set of man-made barriers – usually two planks set about 10 feet apart – which force the rider to dismount in order to clear them, and then top it off with the kind of weather typically seen in these parts in fall and early winter – anything from sunshine and 70 degrees, to snow and ice and below freezing temps – and you can easily see that cyclocross is a sport where pretty much anything can, and often does, happen.

The best part is, you don’t have to race to enjoy cyclocross. Cyclocross courses are very spectator friendly, with places to cross the course well marked (and usually marshaled), allowing one to wander about and observe all the different aspects of the sport. Stand by the barriers, and watch how gracefully some riders can dismount, run across the planks, then remount without losing any time; this is also where the most spectacular blunders and mishaps tend to occur as well, especially towards the end of the race as fatigue sets in. Bring your cowbell and cheer on the racers as they try, not always successfully, to power through the almost-obligatory sand pit. If the weather turns, as ‘cross racers like to say, “Belgian” (meaning cold rain and lots of mud), you’ll see certain racers known for being able to ride in such adverse conditions pull away from the field, carving through slick off-camber corners as if they were on rails, while...
Page 1 continued: Changing gears

others slide off into the course tape, or take out half the field with an unplanned dismount.  In addition, the action tends to be non-stop, since subsequent races start within 10 minutes after the prior one has ended.  This is just enough time to pick another good spot to watch from, or to run to the concession stand for a snack and a drink refill.  Since a typical event consists of 5 to 10 separate races, it can be a long day, especially if you’re waiting for the pros, who almost always run in the last races of the day.

Despite all this, many that come only to watch find themselves participating the next year.  Don’t say I didn’t warn you.....

Yours truly,
Phil

Business and Pleasure

Webmasters Corner
Terry Terfinko, Webmaster

Our website has had lots of activity this season.  Recently added are the meeting minutes from the clubs monthly meetings.  They can be found under the documents tab and are available to members only so you must be logged in to view.  New membership continues to grow.  Please encourage your friends to join and enjoy all the club benefits.  Membership is on an annual basis from the time you join so someone can join in October and they will be a member in good standing until the following October.  Memberships will automatically come up for renewal after 12 months.

Occasionally the need to cancel a ride arises.  The best way to manage this is to edit your ride and place CANCELED in the ride title.  Riders should always check the ride calendar prior to heading out for a ride.  This is especially true if the weather is questionable.

Terry Terfinko

Editor’s Letter
Sallie Urffer, Editor

Recently I went on an adventure.  I learned about humility, kindness, suffering, and joy – and of course it all began with a bike.  I’ve had a challenging year on the bike....I needed to relearn how to pedal due to a nerve injury in my right leg from my crash in the Gap Gallop last year.  Every week throughout the track season I got stronger.  I got gold in Pa and Regional Championships, hitting personal best times, so I decided I would train for the National Championships.  I got an email out of the blue from a teammate suggesting we drive out together, without hesitation I jumped.  I was up to the adventure.  I learned all I could about racing at altitude with asthma, but I wasn’t prepared for the reality of it.

After driving 26 hrs, it was exciting to reach Colorado...I documented the trip in Facebook.  Waking up the first morning there, I had full blown altitude sickness, numb hands and legs from the knees down, unable to breathe, lethargic with a nasty headache.  Excitement won me over, and I ignored it all, headed to the track.  I heard it was steeper than T-Town, but it didn’t look that bad.  At 33 degrees, riding the rail the first time scared me, it took at least 10 laps to feel comfortable.....but I forgot to try standing on the pedals in the sprinters lane through really tight corners....so needless to say I wasn’t prepared for competition.  First race day, I freaked out when I hit that first tight corner from a standing start, I blew the 500m...how humiliating - this is one of my favorites, I finished sixth.

Kind words from many helped me shake it off, I warmed up the next day prepared to stand through the tight corners...and finished 4th in the 2 kilometer pursuit and won my first medal...only to have an asthma attack that almost sent me to the hospital.  That’s where I found kindness in strangers, doing everything they could to help me while at the track.  I coughed all night, yet I didn’t hear one complaint from my room mate.  Next day I woke up still coughing, wiped out, calling my doc back in Pennsylvania for advice.  Unfortunately, going higher in thin air wasn’t good for me.....I didn’t sleep, was up coughing all night, woke up exhausted......Saturday was sprints and 200m, my absolute favorite.

I tried out all gear ratios and wheelsets....nothing felt right.  I blew my favorite race and came in last!  My injured leg gave out on the jump, I pedaled the 200 meters with only my left leg, then in the rep heat, I blew the match sprint...I shouldn't have been on the track.  To shake it off, we went to dinner with another team, it was awesome, they were happy and strategizing; it inspired me. I didn't sleep again, up all night coughing.  Sunday was team sprints and my sprint team partner had faith in me. I pulled through for us....when my pull came we were in 4th place about 2.5 seconds behind, I finished and we were .15 seconds ahead and scored 3rd place!  Finally, I did something right and it was all over!

We hit the road at 4pm that Sunday to drive back to PA.  We arrived at my house on Tuesday 5am.  As I’m typing this now, I have full blown bronchitis; have had chest x-rays looking for pneumonia.  What a way to finish an adventure.

I’ve included the results later in this issue.

Sallie Urffer
LWA Meetings
LWA meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month.

Next meeting is:

Tuesday, September 15, 2009
7:00 PM-8:00 PM

MEETING LOCATION:
Gerald Polachak’s home at:
123 clover hollow road
Easton, PA 18045
610-252-3422
cell 908-914-1134

Speed Racer Report
Pete Siegfried, VP Racing

Well, look how fast the summer is going! One day it’s cold and we are doing the March series races and then it’s time for Masters Nationals. We’ve run all the races that LWA/Bikeline runs and have just a few others left to race. I hope to do some more crits before the end of the season. I hope I get the opportunity. In any case I will finish out the remaining Masters races at the track.

Our races here at the Fitness Park are going very well. It’s amazing how many people do not like the short course. I did it most weeks while we had to use it and it was brutal!

A short overview of the races that we put on would be...
The March series, The Bethlehem/ Fitness Park Criterium Races, one of the RT 29 Time Trials, The Ed Peters Memorial Race at the Fitness Park, The Sports Fest Criterium, The Emerald Blvd. Criterium, and our friends the Cycledrome boys have taken over the De Sales Road Race. They did an outstanding job! Thanks guys!

Here is a story that Kip Jansen once sent me about a road race he did up north.

Monson, Ma 2002
We woke up on Sunday and it was 40 and raining. We got to registration and not many people checked in, the day before we rode in fields of 150. Even when you were in the middle you were so far back. Basically all we did was go down hill all day. Not really, but it felt like it. I use that one as a warm up for this race.

Well it was cold! I was expecting it to be 55 and raining not 40. So I put on everything I had. Tee shirt, long sleeve shirt, jersey, arm warmers, and wind breaker with number pinned on it, shorts, tights, shoe covers, booties, wool socks, and foot warmers. To top it off I had on a hat under my helmet that I taped over the front vents and I wore my gore-tex mittens. I conned Scott B. and Scott F. into riding by saying we’ll do one lap and see how it goes.

Three quarters into the first lap I was soaked and the front portions of my legs were getting a little numb and I was thinking to myself “what have I gotten into”, I’m going to freeze before I finish one lap. We climbed short steep hill then the long steady grade for about a mile and I felt a lot warmer, so I figured I’d do another lap then see. (We were doing 5 laps of an 8 mile course.) We went down the long hill and I didn’t seem to be freezing so I kept going and the group was actually moving along pretty good. A little group went off the front but most of us didn’t care because they were just in front of us and I didn’t really have any extra juice to shoot up the road.

Before the second or third time up the hill there was a discussion about hitting the showers. The pace was pretty good up the hill and it was getting harder for me because the rain was coming down and I was soaked. It was really weighing me down. I saw Chip at the school entrance and waved, it felt like I had wrist weights on because now my mittens were full of water. If I drained them the water ran down my arm and into sleeve so I just let them fill up, besides the water in there was warm.

It was either that lap or the next but when I finally turned around to see who was left, 2/3 of the field had abandoned. I usually got near to the front at the hill and stayed there until the downhill and I kept my focus on what was in front of me so I guess riders were popping off all of the time and I had no idea. I got down to 2 laps to go and I started to get tired and cold, but I felt if I could get over the hill with the group this time I would go until the end. I was very surprised at this point, I didn’t think I would have lasted this long. My legs didn’t feel like lead but it felt like I was carrying lead (all of that water), and my body temp seemed to have leveled off I was cold but not getting any colder or freezing. Our group stayed together until the finish line climb and after 5 pedal strokes I was toasted, I put it in first gear and rode up to the line. My goal this year was at least top 20 and I did better than that (15th to 18th) but I didn’t quite predict this scenario. We were all thinking (at least I was) Wow! What an epic adventure in racing, as we hit the showers. This is what makes it fun you never know what to expect.

Kip
Thanks Kip! That’s a great story. Never give up. You can’t predict what might happen. Ok. Now, I have not been able to find the time to send out all the race results. Life has been difficult with my mother in law in the home and the hospital on any given day. I promise that I will publish them. Even if I have to do it all at once at the end of the season, all of those who have been sending them in will get credit for their results. Please, Please send me stories about your races. I will use them in my news letter.

Thanks, See you on the road.

Pete Siegfried,

Classified Ads

ARTICLES FOR SALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<td>Eric Loch 610-967-3479</td>
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<td>White, Mavic Cosmic Wheelset, Ultegra</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:bderby@ptd.net">bderby@ptd.net</a></td>
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2 HARD-SIDED BICYCLE TRAVEL CASES, Club owned, for rent to members for up to 4 weeks. $25 for 1 or 2 weeks, $50 for 3 or 4 weeks. Plus $25 security deposit required for any rental. Contact Bill Derby 610-395-2546 or bderby@ptd.net.

WANTED

Cross-country help wanted for the summer of 2010. My 17 year old son will most likely be going along as well. If anyone is willing to share stories, advice, warnings, etc please contact me. Right now I just beginning to look at options that range from supported charity rides (like the American Lung Association’s ‘Big Ride’) to camping on my own. Please contact me if you have advice to share. Andrew Dordal, adordal@hotmail.com, 610-965-7044. Thanks!

Looking for a used/second hand road bike 58cm. Something that has been in your garage for awhile. Contact Joe Beal 610-390-2447.

FREE ADS FOR MEMBERS

Ads must be private (non-commercial) buy/sell/wanted/etc. having to do with bicycling and/or other sports. Ads must be submitted by the 10th of the month to appear in the following month’s newsletter. Send ads to Sallie sjurffer@rcn.com.
HIGHLIGHTS of Masters Track Nationals 2009 – Colorado Springs, CO

Several Bikeline/LWA and other local racers participated in the USA Cycling Masters Track Nationals in Colorado Springs August 18-23. WA racers reaped three National Championships and one Best Overall Rider. Pictures can be found at usacycling.org. Team members attending: Chip Berezny, Andy Buck, Scott Butler, David Gulick, Scott Farmer and Sallie Urffer.

Here are the highlights:

2009 Masters Track National Championships - Colorado Springs, August 18-23

MASTERS MEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Winner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men's 55-59 - 500m tt</td>
<td>Chip Berezny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 50-54 - Pursuit</td>
<td>Robert Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 55-59 - Pursuit</td>
<td>Chip Berezny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 45-49 - Pursuit</td>
<td>Don Saroff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 55-59 - Sprints</td>
<td>Chip Berezny - 1st place (National Champion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 55-59 - Points Race</td>
<td>Andy Buck, Chip Berezny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 45-49 - Sprints</td>
<td>Matthew Diefenbach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 40 - Team Sprint</td>
<td>Scott Butler, Aron Seiken, Bill Zeigler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 40 - Team Pursuit</td>
<td>Matthew Diefenbach, Nelson Li, Stephen Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 40 - Madison</td>
<td>Matthew Diefenbach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 45 - Madison</td>
<td>Scott Butler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 45 - Madison</td>
<td>Scott Butler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 50+ - 4k Team Pursuit</td>
<td>Chip Berezny, Andrew Buck, Christopher Regan, Robert Black – National Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 55-59 Best Overall Riders</td>
<td>Chip Berezny, Andrew Buck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's 50-55 Best Overall Riders</td>
<td>Scott Butler</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

MASTERS WOMEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Winner</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's 50-55 - 500m tt</td>
<td>Pat Marzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's 45-49 - Pursuit</td>
<td>Sallie Urffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Women's 35-39 - Points Race</td>
<td>Brooke O'Conner - 1st place (National Champion)</td>
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<td>Pat Marzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's 45 - Team Sprint</td>
<td>Sallie Urffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's 50-54 – Best Overall Riders</td>
<td>Pat Marzi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women's 45-49 – Best Overall Riders</td>
<td>Sallie Urffer</td>
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