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Beth Keyser

Aptos Cyclist Wins National Championship

When Elizabeth Keyser of Aptos left for the National Cycling Championships two weeks ago, she apologized to her father in advance for missing his Aug. 6 birthday.

"That's alright," he said, "just bring me a Stars and Stripes jersey from the Nationals." Beth headed off for Bear

Mountain, N.Y., with added determination to win the Nationals and bring home the coveted winner's jersey.

And that's just what she did, capturing the Intermediate Girls title for competitors aged 12 to 14 at the United States Cycling Federation's 60th annual National Bicycling Championships.

The race began on a 8-mile loop of hilly roads at Bear Mountain, and there were nearly fifty starters on the line. As the race got under way, Beth's brother Grant watched in horror as she locked handlebars with another rider in the densely packed field and went down as the pack sped away up the road.

Her determination to never give up in any race put her back on her bike and she set out chasing the field with a 100-yard deficit. After a solo chase effort for three miles, Beth was back in the pack, a bit tired, but no less ready for the remaining 21 miles of racing.

During the following two laps she moved up in the pack and took her turn at the front as the blistering pace thinned the slower riders from the back of the group.

Coming into the final sprint, Beth was in the proper position, just behind a few strong riders with less than 100 feet to go. She came around the group and rode away with the gold medal, just a scant bike length ahead of second place.

Though an extremely strong rider, Keyser's win was no sure thing. During the week previous to the race, she had been the victim of a mysterious virus that had kept her from proper training, so important just before a major race.

Coupled with the crash and the fact that no Californian had ever won the Nationals in her class, Beth had done more than 'just' win the national championships.

Keyser has been representing the Scarborough Lumber sponsor Santa Cruz County Cycling Club Team throughout the year, not only in intermediate races, but also in a large number of senior women's races.

Against the seniors, Keyser has done admirably, with high places in such events as the Camelia Festival in Sacramento and many others.

Keyser, 14, started racing in 1978 and her first race was the Cat's Hill Criterium in Los Gatos. Placing fifth in the Midgets field (ages 7-11), Keyser began serious riding and training and is today planning to go a lot farther.

A shot at a second Stars and Stripes jersey awaits Keyser this week at the U.S. Cycling Federation's SunTour National Track Cycling Championships on the banked Velodrome in Trexlertown, Pa. A combination of three events determine the Intermediate Girls Track Champion, a half mile, one mile, and two mile races.