

BUSY WEEKEND OF BIKING EVENTS

WHEELS ARE TURNING

TWO POPULAR BIKING EVENTS ACROSS COUNTY GET RIDERS BACK INTO THE SADDLE

Bicycle Races

4/6/12

Young racers ramp up crit competition

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SANTA CRUZ — For young Aptos cyclist Matt Schaupp, Sunday's 44th annual Santa Cruz Classic Criterium bicycle race was one more step on the way to his goal of becoming a professional cyclist.

SANTA CRUZ CLASSIC CRITERIUM

Schaupp, 17, is a junior at Pacific Collegiate School and has already been racing for three years. This year he began to race in the Category 2 division, which put him pedal to pedal with the pros in Sunday's race around Beach Hill.

Schaupp wasn't intimidated. The Watsonville rider says he always goes into a race believing he can win, but he isn't disappointed with how he places as long as he feels he rode a good race.

SEE CRITERIUM ON B7



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

A Beach Hill resident watches from his front porch as Masters 35+ race leaders negotiate the hairpin turn Sunday during the Santa Cruz Classic Criterium.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Back on his bike after recent shoulder surgery, professional freerider Cam McCaul of Aptos competes in the Jump Jam at Aptos Village Sunday as part of the Santa Cruz Mountain Bike Festival.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAIN BIKE FESTIVAL

ON THE NET

VIDEO: Watch world-reknown pros Cam and Tyler McCaul of Aptos, as well as others, defy gravity Sunday over the Post Office jumps at the Santa Cruz Mountain Bike Festival in Aptos at: www.satacruzsentinel.com/video

MORE INSIDE

RESULTS: Saturday's top three finishers in all competitive categories, **B7**. Check Tuesday's paper for more results.

CRITERIUM

Continued from B6

On Sunday, Napa's James LeBerge, riding for Team Mike's Bikes, burst out from the pack for the sprint finish and won the men's pro race. LeBerge was followed by teammate Rainier Schaefer of San Francisco in third and Sacramento's Charles Hutcheson of Team Marc Pro-Strava in second after 39 laps around the course that started on Third and Main streets, then headed downhill to the first hairpin turn at Front Street and traveled along the San Lorenzo River on Laurel Street Extension before turning back up to Third Street.

Schaupp rode well enough to finish 12 — and as the top local — and he'll take that.

"Each race has its own importance," Schaupp said, "and this is all training for June's Nationals."

Performing well at Junior Nationals in Augusta, Ga., in the criterium and road race could qualifying Schaupp for a spot on the Junior National Cycling Team.

Schaupp got his start in bike racing by following the footsteps of his father, John Schaupp, who also races. His coach is Bissel Pro Cycling rider, Ben Jaques-Maynes of Watsonville. Schaupp is a member of the Elite Development Team Ritte (pronounced Rit-ah), directed by Stu Bones.

Team Ritte supports young cyclists like Schaupp with



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

One cyclist warms up on a Beach Hill sidewalk as the Masters 35+ racers fly by in a blur Sunday morning during the Santa Cruz Classic Criterium.

mentoring, bicycles and entry fees for races the team attends. Bones says the team currently has nine junior men ages 16-19 and is recruiting for junior girls to develop a women's team. Sunday's Criterium was not a scheduled team race, so only one other Ritte Team member, Alex Howard, 18, of Mill Valley, raced with Schaupp and placed 20th.

Schaupp held a strong position toward the front of the pack for the duration of the race.

"I should have been more conservative," Schaupp said, "but I got really excited each time a rider broke away from the pack and I burned up energy trying to chase them."

The men's category Pro-1-2 race ended with a dramatic finish after a breakaway group of four riders that had led by 20 seconds for at least half of the race was caught with only one

lap to go. With the exhausted lead group absorbed back into the pack, the win came down to a finish-line sprint.

LeBerge said his team's original plan wasn't to put him forward to win. As the race progressed, however, he was advised by his team director to conserve his energy and just ride with the pack until the finish. There, with the efforts of his teammates — who blocked the wind and other riders — he was in perfect position to lead the sprint.

LeBerge, 19, said he has competed in this race four times. This year one of his main goals was to win it.

In the women's category Pro-1-2-3 race, Australian rider Loren Rowney sprinted off the front and built a gap that no one in the pack of 30 riders could bridge. Her lead grew over the course of the 20-lap race and the Team Special-

ized-Lululemon rider won with a lead of more than 30 seconds.

Rowney said she wasn't expecting the win, especially with the strong presence of the Vanderkitten-Focus team and a few pro riders in the pack.

Lessons learned on Sunday will be taken with him to next weekend's Sea Otter Classic where many of the teams will square off again. Team Ritte will compete in both road and mountain bike races.

"The chance for burnout at this age is high, so we opened the team up for road and mountain bike racing because we want them to have fun," Team Ritte director Bones said.

Neither the weather — which began the day with clouds and ended with a steady wind, with sunshine in between — nor the challenging 0.9-mile loop course deterred the 395 athletes who raced in nine categories Sunday.

"This race is a classic, it's one of the toughest courses with technical corners and hills," said Master's category racer Max Mack from Sacramento.

Nor did it deter the fans. Race director Robert Leibold estimated about 1,000 spectators cheered on the cyclists as they careened around the course.

Leibold said he couldn't have been happier with Sunday's race.

"It's the 44th year, there were no major injuries," he said, "and, it was fun!"