

43RD ANNUAL SANTA CRUZ CLASSIC CRITERIUM

A spin through Beach Hill



Swiss cyclist Pascale Schnider, who now makes her home in Santa Cruz, swoops to victory in the Womens 1/2/3 elite race of the Santa Cruz Classic Criterium on Beach Hill Sunday. DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Longtime city road race draws crowd, more competitors

By CATHY KELLY

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SANTA CRUZ — About 300 cyclists whipped around an exhilarating Beach Hill bike race course Sunday in the Santa Cruz Classic Criterium, a popular road race that has been in town since the 1960s.

A criterium is a short race often held on city streets, where riders contend with pot holes, curves, hills and more as they race for the finish line. A few riders crashed on the 0.9-mile loop Sunday, and two were driven to the hospital, organizers said.

But none of the injuries were serious.

"This is one of the best races for Bay Area racers, it's really exciting," said Katie Behroozi of Menlo



Rebecca Werner, center, held onto the lead of the Womens 1/2/3 elite race until the later laps when eventual winner Pascal Schnider of Santa Cruz moved into the lead. DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

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RACE

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Park, a rider whose husband entered the race. "It's cool to do it in a town area like this versus an officer park somewhere, and it's great to have local people come out and watch."

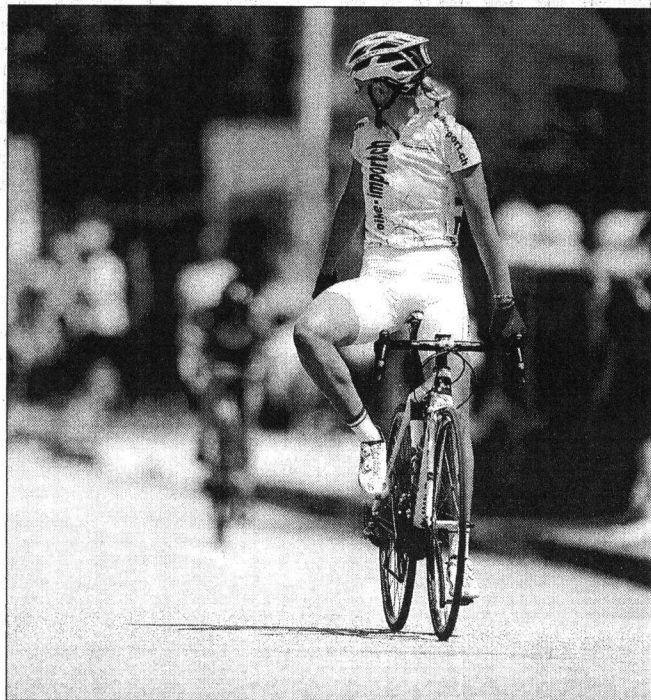
Behroozi said there were at least two tricky turns on the course, which started on Third and Main streets atop Beach Hill, went down for a sharp, hairpin turn at Front Street and traveled along the river on Laurel Street Extension before turning back up to Third Street.

Spectators gathered at the start/finish line, cheering cyclists who whizzed by in a blur of color, and atop the hill at Front Street, watching closely as the pack of racers seemed to bend around the hairpin turn.

David Gill, president of the Santa Cruz County Cycling Club, said the race drew more riders compared to last year and that a new category was added, a Masters Event for top riders age 45 and older.

The winner in that 20-lap race was Lawrence Nolan, a Team Specialized rider and former national champion in a track cycling type of race called "pursuit," Gill said.

Sunday's 43rd annual race



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Pascale Schnider crosses the finish line and has to turn around to catch a glimpse of her nearest competitor Sunday on Beach Hill at the Santa Cruz Classic Criterium.

included nine categories, all amateur except the last, 35-mile race.

Gill said the Santa Cruz club supplies most of the volunteers for race day. Some of the work includes getting people in and out of the driveways during the race, he said, adding that he was pleased not many cars had to be towed Sunday morning.

The club has more than 300 members, and just one who

entered the criterium, he said. That rider clipped a curb, though, and nearly crashed, Gill said.

Dennis Pedersen, 50, of Live Oak, who raced Sunday for Bicycle Trip, said he was just happy to finish in his Master's category.

"There's very little recovery time," he said. "There are gaps and curves and headwinds, kind of what we call a sucker fest."

CRITERIUM WINNERS

PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY

James Mattis of the California Giant Berry team
William Zellmer of Team Specialized
Brian Bosch of Sierra Pacific

OTHER WINNERS

Ryan Moore of Traction Bikes, men's level five
Dylan Schuyler of Echelon Santa Barbara, men's level four
Willie Myers of the Fremont Bank Cycling Club, men's level three
Pascale Schnider of Bike Imports, women's level one to three
Caitlin Scheder-Bieschin of Team Early Bird, women's level four
Craig Nunes of Art's Cyclery, 35 and older division, levels one to three
Ricky Lucero of San Jose Bike Club, 35 and older division, level four

Pedersen's wife, Margaret, and his sister and brother-in-law, Melissa and Steve Webber, were on hand to cheer him on.

"It's awesome. We're here every year," Melissa Webber said. "We love to support him. It's such a big part of his life."