



# Wheels *on* West Cliff

Dunlap kicks off cycling season, Sea Otter with win

*Bicycle races*  
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## SANTA CRUZ

**W**est Cliff Drive was transformed into a high-speed raceway for nearly seven hours Friday as 200 of the best professional and amateur mountain bikers in the world competed in the inaugural Santa Cruz Lighthouse Criterium, part of the 13th annual Sea Otter Classic.

The Sea Otter, the nation's largest festival of biking, is staged at Laguna Seca in Monterey through Sunday. For the first time, the event expanded to host races Wednesday in Redwood City and Friday in Santa Cruz.

Top names in mountain biking, including Canadian two-time world champion Roland Green and current national champion, American Alison Dunlap, turned out to race in the afternoon after four divisions of amateur racing.

For these elite professionals, the race was the second of a

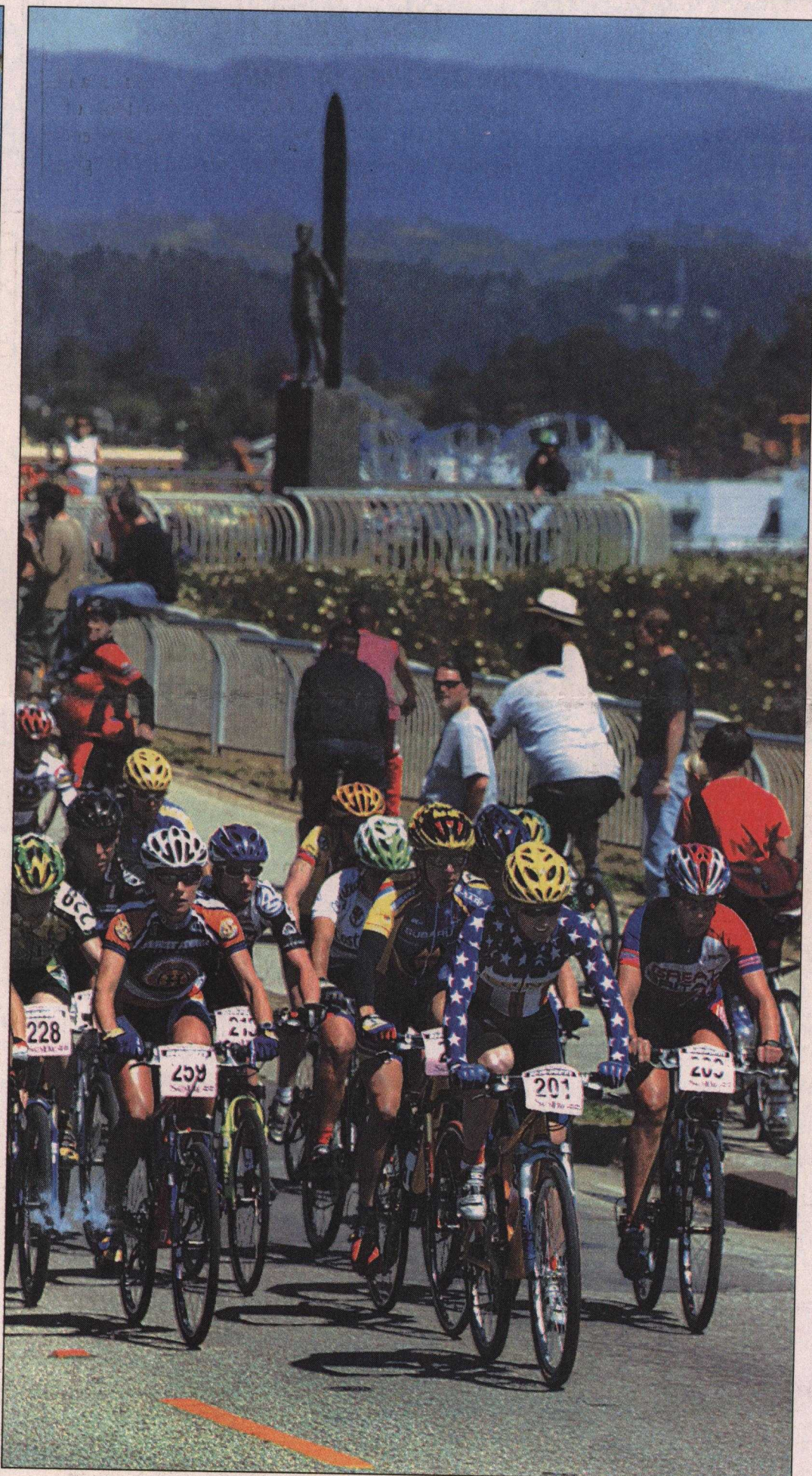
## If you go

- **WHAT:** Sea Otter Classic
- **WHERE:** Laguna Seca Recreation Area, Monterey
- **WHEN:** Today through Sunday. Opens every day at 6:30 a.m. Park closes at 9 p.m. (except to campers).
- **FEE:** \$10 per person (ages 13 and over), \$15 for three-day pass, free for kids 12-and-under.
- **DETAILS:** (530) 661-9500 or [www.seaotterclassic.com](http://www.seaotterclassic.com)

four-stage event which continues this weekend at Laguna Seca. While the amateurs raced on road bikes, the pros raced on their mountain bikes, but changed their tires from knobby ones to slicks.

Speeds were often in excess of 20 miles per hour as the peloton followed the flat, looping

See **SEA OTTER** on **PAGE D2**



**ABOVE, TOP:** National and reigning women's Sea Otter mountain bike stage race champion, Alison Dunlap (No. 201) of Colorado Springs, Colo., leads a pack of racers along West Cliff Drive Friday. Dunlap finished first in this year's race in Santa Cruz. Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

## Sea Otter

Continued from Page D1

course. The criterium started and finished on West Cliff Drive, and included tight turns onto Columbia and Pelton. Both pros and amateurs raced the same course, with a time limit of 50 minutes per race.

The first of four amateur race divisions (men only) kicked off at 8:30 a.m. Monty Worthington, 35, of Santa Cruz was happy with his results.

"This was my first criterium in seven years," said Worthington, who also registered for Sea Otter's cross country mountain bike race on a single speed for Sunday. "I had to do this hometown race."

It was an exciting day for the Santa Cruz Spokesman Team whose Steve Reaney won the Category 2 race. "We're just ecstatic," said Mike Moore of the Spokesman.

The majority of racers were from out of town.

"I am used to racing through farm lands. I like being here by the Pacific Ocean," Brian Hawley, 20, of Sacramento said, shortly before winning his age division.

Surfers, joggers and cyclists all blended into the crowd of spectators lining the course to cheer for the elite mountain bike pros at the 12:30 p.m. women's race and the 1:30 p.m. men's race.

"This is a blast," said Flo Queen Stover. "I am so glad they are having the races here in town."

Dunlap, of Colorado, won the women's stage, and Steve Tilford of Kansas, a 22-time winner of Sea Otter criteriums, won the men's race.

"Winning is the best," said Dunlap, "but it was a bittersweet victory since my teammate was hurt."

Shonny Vanlandingham, with a few laps to go, sustained the most serious injury of the day with a concussion and broken bones after crashing down with about six other racers on Pelton.

Sea Otter continues this weekend with both road bike races, the vendor expo, and — the biggest attraction — the downhill gravity events: dual slalom, mountain cross and big-air jumping.

It will be a busy week for many Santa Cruz sports enthusiasts, who are either watching or racing at Sea Otter, today's Corralitos Duathlon or Sunday's the Beach Hill Criterium.