

Area cyclists tackle world

Larsen, Young ride for U.S. in prestigious event

By JAMES RAIA

SPECIAL TO THE UNION

STUTTGART, Germany — In cycling's often peculiar ways, Steve Larsen is completing a comeback at age 21 and Julie Young, four years older, is just emerging.

Regardless, the road racing pair from Davis (Larsen) and Sacramento have found themselves in southwest Germany this week for the World Cycling Championships.

Considered the sport's second-most prestigious competition following the Tour de France, the road racing portion of the 13-day event begins today with the amateur men's and women's team time trial.

Four riders per team compete in single-form formation, alternating turns at the front. Men will race 100 kilometers (62 miles) and women 50 kilometers (31 miles) on a route which begins in front of a massive grandstand area at Neckar Stadium and progresses through area suburbs.

Young's appearance in the women's road race will mark the culmination of her quick ascension in the sport.

A graduate of UCLA, which she attend on a golf scholarship, Young has only three years of cycling experience. In late

June, she finished ninth in the Ore-Ida Women's Challenge, the country's largest women's multi-day race. On Father's Day, she placed second in the Nevada City Classic.

"I changed my diet last year," said Young, "because I realized I had to shed some pounds. I am really disciplined

and I knew what I wanted to do this year, and I am lucky because I think I am a gifted athlete.

Young's teammate, Ruthie Matthes of Boulder, Colo., finished second in the world road race last year, and Young's role Saturday will likely be in support of Matthes' efforts.