

Cycling is no one-man show

Victories a team effort

By Sara Seyyidin Journal Staff Writer



Michael Kirby/Auburn Journal

Team Type 1-Sanofi Aventis professional cyclists, Javier Meigaf-Leal and Valerey Kobzareno lead the peloton of Team Type 1 riders as they cycle on Folsom Lake Crossing in Folsom as part of a five-hour training loop from the Flower Farm in Loomis, through Folsom, Cool, Foresthill and Auburn. Team Type 1 will be one of the 19 teams vying for a championship in the Amgen Tour of California beginning Sunday in Lake Tahoe.

Julie Young of Auburn was a professional cyclist for 12 years and is now a coach for endurance athletes. She has raced with Team Saturn, Autotrader and Timex, in addition to being a U.S. National Team Rider. Young also knows what it is like to be in both the leading and supporting roles on a team.

"Winning — you get the glory. It's extremely exciting," Young said. "It's also very gratifying when the team plan is executed on the road and you were instrumental in that."

Young explained that the other riders take a sacrificial role to protect the leader.

"Once it's determined who the strong rider is, the team wants to do the most they can to save that person in terms of energy they are expending," Young said. "Different individual people are better under different circumstances. Some perform better in one day. Others are just arduous and can stick in there day after day."

One cyclist is responsible for kicking back to get food and water for the team, while others try to win individual sprints or King of the Mountains for points.

In stage races, leaders have to be great climbers and time trialists, according to Young. With all of the variables present in cycling, it also depends on who is feeling good on any given day.

Team Type 1

The Team Type 1-Sanofi Aventis Professional Cycling Team knows what it takes to come home with a winning jersey. Their first major win came May 1 when Alexander Efiman claimed the overall title at the Presidential Cycling Tour of Turkey. This week, Team Type 1, being hosted by Bicycle Emporium, has spent the week in the Auburn area training for Amgen.

Team Type 1 Assistant Director Sportif Michael Carter said that while they don't discuss race specifics until days before, he has been strategizing since the start of the season. The team is comprised with all of the necessary components in mind. He agrees with Young that a victory for one cyclist on the team is a victory for everyone.

Lance Armstrong has won the Tour de France seven times.

Each of those times George Hincapie served as his right-hand man — riding in front of him to block the wind, allowing him to conserve energy for the final surge.

Behind every decorated cyclist standing on the podium at a world-class stage race, there is a dedicated team. They have also earned the victory, but chosen to quietly defer the glory.

All for one, one for all

The dynamic of a cycling team is much like a football team. While quarterbacks and wide receivers may glimmer in the spotlight, a team's victory depends on a talented team, from linemen to ends, to perform at their peak.

Especially in stage races like the Amgen Tour of California, a win comes down to the strength of the entire team.

Like a coach going over plays, the director sportif maps out a strategy at the beginning of each race day. A few cyclists are zeroed in on as potential team leaders, while others are put in their respective positions based on their skill set.

"Even though one individual gets more glory, he doesn't do it by himself," Carter said. "They all share in the spoils."

Forward march

Cycling enthusiast and amateur racer, Mark Perry of Auburn said the strategizing is one of the most fascinating parts of racing.

"There is a lot of strategy in cycling," Perry said. "The world peloton (the main body of riders in a bicycle race) comes from the French word for platoon. There are a lot of military terms and concepts in cycling."

Bicycle Emporium owner Bill Marengo, said he has seen those strategies first-hand in the 25 years he has been selling Colnago bikes.

"There is a lot of bluffing that goes on inside the peloton to feel out who is feeling good and who isn't feeling good," Marengo said.

Often times one rider will take the pace up to 35 mph to wear out the other front-runners, drop back and have the real team leader surge to the front.

Marengo also explained that a pivotal part of winning lies in creating bonds within the team.

"Team strategy starts early in the day, but it actually starts way before that," Marengo said. "It's joking around with one another, riding on training days, sitting around the table at night talking about strategy over a glass of wine."

The next stage

Team Type 1 has been doing just that this week at the Flower Farm in Loomis in preparation for Amgen, which Carter said is the team's most important race. Marengo said Colnago, who provides the bicycles Team Type 1 rides, asked him to host the team as a special favor.

"Team Type 1 is here with us in Auburn. The team rides Colnago bicycles. Colnago is to the cycling world what Ferrari is the racing world," Marengo said. "Team Type 1's mission is to show that you can ride at the pro level and have diabetes."

Six out of 20 of Team Type 1's cyclists have Type 1 Diabetes.

Tuesday, the team took off on a five-hour ride from the Flower Farm Inn, down Auburn Folsom Road, through Folsom to Salmon Falls Road, passing through Cool, Foresthill and Auburn before arriving back in Loomis.

Team Type 1 cyclist Laszlo Bodrogi, of France was the winner of 10 Hungarian national time trial championships.

Bodrogi has competed in the Tour de France, but this will be his first Amgen Tour of California. He said he prefers to consider strategy one stage at a time.

"I'm a time trialist. Maybe I can play a role in winning a small stage if it's not too difficult. Stage by stage we can talk about strategy, but not before that," Bodrogi said. "I think California will be difficult. It is a very important race for us." Reach Sara Seyyidin at saras@goldcountrymedia.com.

What: The AEG 2011 Amgen Tour of California- Stage 3

When: May 17

Where: Starts at central square in Downtown Auburn, at the intersection of High Street and Lincoln Way

Highlights: This is Auburn's debut year as a host city and the tour features world-class cyclists

For More Information: Connect with Bike Auburn on Facebook or Twitter, or at bikeauburn.com or grab a copy of the Journal's special commemorative section in Friday's paper.