

SPORTS CORNER

by Garde Wells

Interview with a Bicycle Ace

Brad Gebhard is a bicycle rider. At 23 years old, he's perhaps the most successful rider in the state. In the state track championships at the Alpenrose Velodrome in Portland recently he won the gold medal in the 200-meter sprints, qualifying for this month's National Championships in Truxelton, Pennsylvania.

At his home in Southeast Eugene, *What's Happening* asked Brad a few questions about the sport of bicycle racing, about his team, and about himself.

W.H.: How many miles do you ride in an average week?

B.G.: Three to four hundred.

W.H.: What's your longest ride?

B.G.: In the 1984 Willamette Flyway Century, I rode 130 miles.

W.H.: But that race is only 100 miles.

B.G.: That's because I went out and rode McKenzie View Drive (course) afterwards.

W.H.: Do you have any special diet?

B.G.: Lots of meat.

W.H.: What is your best race to date?

B.G.: The 1980 Junior State Road Race Championships. I was 16 years old (most other competitors were 18). I rolled a tire (tubular racing tires can sometimes dismount from rims) on the second lap... it took five minutes to get a wheel change. I chased the pack for 50 miles, caught up, and then won the finishing sprint.

W.H.: How did you start bicycle racing?

B.G.: In 1979 I was BMX racing. I

was bored after a while because there was no competition for me. The coach of my BMX team was a 10-speed racer, and he encouraged me [to try it].

W.H.: You won the first and third stages of the Tour Willamette Race here in town (in April of this year). How did you manage those two victories?

B.G.: Well, in stage one (a 66-mile race that lapped around Dexter Reservoir), it was pure teamwork. Todd and Mike (Todd Shock and Mike Sheppard, two of Brad's Cycles Eugene teammates) gave me a lead out, about 1/4 mile from the finish. They just got out in front of me and gave it all they had. In stage three (an 84-mile race that ended in Brownsville), it was an incredibly fast sprint at the end... riders were crashing all over the road (after 83 miles, there was a single pack of 60 riders battling it out). I'm just good at working my way through the field at the end of a race.

W.H.: What's the biggest sacrifice you make to be a racer?

B.G.: Time. There's a minimum of 20-40 hours a week just training. All of my weekends are shot due to traveling and racing.

W.H.: Have you ever injured yourself?

B.G.: Never [laughter]. In the 1985 Wheat Thins Criterium Race in Portland, I hit a parking meter at about 35 miles an hour. I was chasing Eric Heiden for a Prime [lap], and the nets along the course [to hold back spectators] hooked my rear derailleur

as I was taking a corner. I flipped off my bike and fell back—first into the parking meter. I honestly thought I was paralyzed.

W.H.: What's your best event?

B.G.: Criterium racing. It takes a good combination of speed and endurance. I'm not that competitive nationally in the sprints, but my sprinting speed is much better than average for road racing.

Brad Gebhard competes with teammates Todd Shock, Mike Sheppard and Dan Watrud. Watrud won the 5th Street Bicycle Race on June 6, and dropped the entire Tour Willamette field 25 miles from the end to win stage five of that race. Among them, Brad and his Cycles Eugene team members have won more races this year than any other team in the Northwest.

DID YOU KNOW...? that city officials are considering the possibility of building an extensive multi-use velodrome facility in Alton Baker Park? A velodrome is a bicycle racing track, with grandstands and a 333-meter surface with high banks on the turns. Sources say that major corporate funding is a probability. More on this as details develop.

Brad Gebhard comments on the Velodrome outside of Seattle: "They sell out their season passes. People pay money to be spectators, even though it's way out of town. Bicycle racing is immensely popular. If people here saw how exciting velodrome racing is, they would really dig on it." It could very well be that bicycle rac-



PHOTO BY DOUG NEWMAN

Brad Gebhard (1.) is one of Oregon's finest bicycle racers. He's riding here in Eugene's 5th Street Criterium on June 6.

ing will become more popular than track and field.

If you're going to be out La Pine way this weekend, there's the Newberry Crater Classic 10K run, as part of the La Pine Lost Creek Frontier Days Celebration. It begins at 9 am on the 27th. Call 536-1783.

All levels of gymnastics are offered

at River Road Park by the River Road Gymnastics Club. That's at 1400 Lake Drive. Classes start June 29. Call 688-4052.

If you're one of several thousand people who are thinking of running or walking in the Butte-to-Butte, but you don't want to, then you *can* volunteer and be a Race Official! Simply contact Rich Gray at 343-6440.

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