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Sports



Photo by Andy Cripe

Even though the season doesn't officially begin until March, members of the club sports cycling team are already on the road preparing for the competition ahead.

Cycling team pedals into season

By Michael Egan
Emerald Contributor

Although the season doesn't start until March, the University Club Sports cycling team will be riding into its new schedule with one of the largest teams in recent history.

The team has 30 "active people" for the season, according to first-year head coach John Ridington, who is pleased with the turnout; last year the program couldn't field a five-man team for the NCAA national meet.

Along with the large turnout, Ridington also inherited a lot of inexperience, which he and assistant coach Dirk Vinlove are dealing with during preseason training.

"We've got 10 riders with experience in USCF (United States Cycling Federation) races, and then the rest of them have ridden a bike a little bit and want to start doing USCF racing," Vinlove, a three-year team member, said.

The USCF is the governing body of amateur cycling in the United States and has four levels of competition. The first category is national team status; the fourth category is beginner level. The Ducks will compete

in categories two through four.

Most USCF clubs are either college teams or sponsored by businesses. The competition is intense.

"The level of competition is very tough," Vinlove said. "You can't expect to just go into a USCF Category Four race and do anything."

"There's a big gap between

bike and getting them into the pattern of training," Ridington said. "Generally we go out for two-hour rides during the week, and three to three and a half on weekends."

Number of hours on the bike is more important for younger riders than total miles because they must learn how to ride in a bunch and develop an aerobic base, Ridington explained. This base enables racers to push themselves, for brief times, into an aerobic riding when breathing is difficult.

Once in shape, a rider must still master the techniques of bike racing, which may take years.

Racing strategy is hard to describe. It takes experienced riders who know each other's strengths and weaknesses to form a competitive team. "It's like a chess game," Ridington said.

"What you're basically trying to have is one or two of your teammates try to win," Vinlove said. "So the strategy is your other three or four members are trying to go really fast and fake the competition out. Then, close to the end, your key riders

Turn to Cycling, Page 12A



one and two, but they can all race together. You have to dedicate everything to it at level two," first-year Duck racer Kelly Wieber said. Wieber raced for three years in category two for Portland's Raindance Velo Club.

To prepare for the upcoming season, the team is pedalling about 300 miles a week.

"We're trying to break in younger riders, teaching them how to be really smooth on the

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