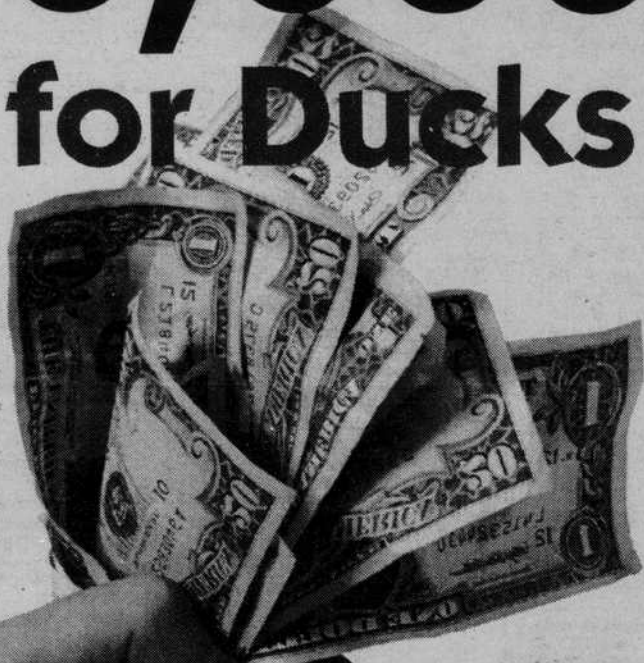


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UO cyclists endure harsh reality of Tour

■ Hampered by injuries and fatigue, the club cycling team have mixed results at the Tour of Willamette

By Inge Scheve for the Emerald

The Tour of Willamette, one of the toughest bicycle stage races in the country, ended Sunday in Cottage Grove with a mixed bag of results for those on the Oregon club cycling team lucky enough to participate.

Although first-timer Zach Winter, who raced in the category 3/4/5, did not place as well as he had hoped, he said the race was less strenuous than he expected.

"I kept getting stronger every day," Winter said, adding that he thought the stages would wear him down more. "I actually felt the best the last day."

Taking on four stages with a broken hand forced Winter to ride more carefully than he normally would.

"I'm good at climbing and was fifth on the top of the hill," Winter said of the last stage, which is rated the hardest. "I only got dropped on the downhills. It's so hard to sit back and watch people you race with do well."

Winter was impressed with the snow banks that he rode by, which were close enough to the road for the racers to feel them on both sides.

"It was epic the whole time," Winter said.

“ I only got dropped on the downhills. It's so hard to sit back and watch people you race with do well.”

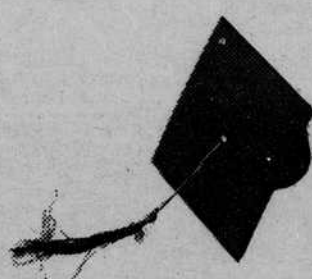
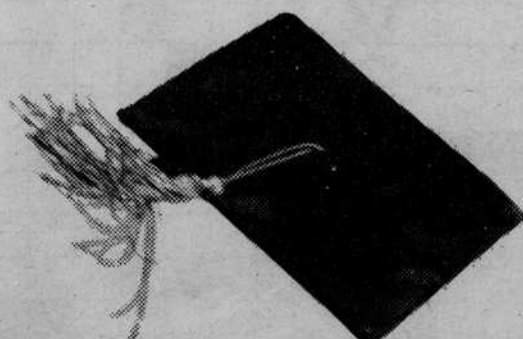
Zach Winters
Tour of Willamette racer

The two other Oregon cyclists, Tour of Willamette veterans Dameon Shanks and Dave Johnson, both dropped out of the race before completing all stages. Mother Nature brought on the best she had Thursday — hail, 100 mph winds and rain in sheets, providing the set-up for all that the Tour is so well-known for: slick roads, poor visibility and brutal climatic conditions.

About 40 top-notch racers dropped out during Thursday's challenging stage.

Scott Moninger, who races for the Mercury team, won the overall Tour of Willamette 2001 for the second straight year.

With a grab bag of freshly collected experiences, the Ducks are looking ahead to their upcoming school races this weekend. Saturday marks the first day of a two-day stage race known as the UO Weekend. While these races won't attract the same caliber of national professionals, they do draw local semi-professionals to create decent competition.



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