

Hamilton Cycling Club

The Newsletter of
the Hamilton
Cycling Club,
Promoting Cycling
and an Active
Lifestyle Since 1889.

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Valley Park Cyclocross

by: Editor

Warm weather, dusty conditions, and fast racing were all served up at the cyclocross season opening Valley Park Cyclocross, presented by the Hamilton Cycling Club and Cooper tires. The popular event set in the heart of Hamilton saw a fantastic turnout of racers, some who were racing 'cross for the first time.

Being the first cyclocross race I have ever personally attended, I was very impressed with the athleticism and bike handling skills the riders possessed. Most popular were a few riders who bunny hopped the barriers through the start finish area. Equally impressive was the skill with which some riders could dismount at full speed, sprint over the barriers, and jump directly back on their bikes.



Elite men's winner Peter Morse giving a lesson in dismounting

The unusually warm and dry conditions presented a very different challenge for racers. Racers had to cope with the heat, dust, and loose dirt. The soft sand in the baseball diamond slowed down even the best bikehandlers. Riders who were patient were rewarded.



The most dominant ride of the day came from Peter Morse, who led the senior elite men's race from start to finish, winning with an almost 30 second gap. HCC was not absent from the podium, with member Mark Harvey taking second place in a competitive master 3 field; Phil Renaud finished in 15th position. Cadet member Jake St Pierre won the cadet category with a very dominating ride.

The race could of course not have taken place without the many dedicated volunteers. It takes a lot

of work to prepare for a 'cross race, pounding in endless numbers of stakes, flags and tape. A big thank-you goes out to all the student volunteers who gave of their time, and other club members, family and friends who made this event a success.

A special mention needs to go to the title sponsor of the event, Cooper Tires. This company has been a huge supporter of the club's races. They started at the 2006 Valley Park Cyclocross, were there for the club at Good Friday in April, and once again returned as the title sponsor of the 2007 Valley Park Cyclocross race. They provided the finish line arch, and a family fun center for the kids. To support this generous company, visit www.coopertire.com to find a dealer near you..

Good Friday Road Races - Passed...Not Forgotten...Anticipated

(Gas money offered to 2007 Caravan Drivers)

The cold weather has brought back images of last years Good Friday Road Races. Thoughts of the bitter cold day off set by the tremendous support and warmth of our volunteers. In case we missed anyone, we'll say it again. Thank you! With partners **Cooper Tires** and **The City of Hamilton**, our club executed a very successful event.

Many volunteers used their personal vehicles and drove in the race caravan for one or more of the races. Your executive recognizes that in those cases a financial cost was incurred over and above the time and energy provided by marshals, registration and stage crews. As such, we are offering a gas allowance at a rate of \$0.25 per kilometer to those who wish to claim the expense. Simply e-mail or call our treasurer, Ken Wilson kwilson216@cogeco.ca, 905 304-5265) and outline the races you drove for and the total distance driven.

Planning for the 2008 "Not the Good Friday RR's" is well under way. Why "Not the Good Friday"? Basically, the executive has decided to use the Westover-Strabane championship course on a safer date weather wise. So, the **2008 HCC Westover-Strabane Cycling Classic, O-Cup#1** is scheduled for **Sunday, April 13th, 2008**. Please mark this date on your calendars, and spread the word. If you were at the event last year, you may have suggestions based on your observations. The executive welcomes any input which may lead to a better event. If you are really keen, we invite you to volunteer as a member of the organizing committee. Simply contact any member of the executive and we will welcome you aboard. Once again, thanks everyone for your support. Please feel free to forward any suggestions you may have.

Chris Kiriakopoulos
HCC Race Director
2008 Westover-Strabane
Cycling Classic

HCC Youth Season Report

What a season! Spring Sprockids Programs, Tuesday / Thursday rides, Liberty 8X12 Wednesday Night Racing, a foray to an O-Cup and the Hardwood Hills / Buckwallow project. HCC Youth regulars have certainly been on their bikes. And not just the youth. Our adult leader support continues to grow allowing younger participants and larger numbers. This year, a clear single track could be seen connecting our Sprockids Programs and HCC Club activities (Tues/Thurs Fun Biking, Race Projects). As we head towards our fifth year of youth development, another Ontario Summer Games year, there is a sense that continued growth is inevitable. Those interested in leading / coaching within our club should not hesitate to get in touch. It is incredibly rewarding to share your passion for cycling with our young members.

Chris Kiriakopoulos
HCC Youth Development
Certified Sprockids Leader
NCCP L1 Road Cycling



HCC Members Tour Cuba

by: David Cohen (article has been edited to fit this format, originally written for a magazine ed.)

The relationship between the bicycle and Cuba is not the same as, say, the bicycle and Holland. But biking in Cuba is nevertheless the real thing— a popular way to get around, especially since the “special period” following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of its aid to Cuba in the early 1990s.

Visitors to Cuba quickly learn that the bicycle is a respected mode of transportation and thus a convenient and inexpensive way to see and experience an incredibly beautiful country. So, it’s not surprising that among the 600,000 Canadians who travel to Cuba each year you’ll find a fair sprinkling of cyclists.

CanBiCuba is the name of an annual bike tour organized by Peter Marshall, a 61-year-old former competitive cyclist (in the U.K. and northern Europe) from St. Catharines, Ontario.

This year’s eight-day tour, the group’s second, took place at the end of March. It began just east of Havana and then moved southeast to Cienfuegos, and wound up at a resort in the hills just west of the southern city of Trinidad, which was founded by Spaniards in 1514. The 27 cyclists on the tour stayed at three resorts along the way. An accompanying bus carried their luggage between stops and acted as a “sag wagon” for cyclists unable to complete a day’s ride.

Assisting Marshall in drawing up itineraries was Cuban Pedro Curbelo, a biologist turned professional guide (bike tours are his speciality) with an impressive store of information about Cuban history and its culture. He was assisted by Frank Perez-Maza and Juan Alberto Villa, a former competitive cyclist in Cuba. All are experienced bike mechanics.

In Havana and Cienfuegos the cyclists stashed their bikes in safe areas and went on walking tours – in Havana to the old city with its spectacular architecture and monuments (some dating back to the city’s founding in the early 16th Century) and in Cienfuegos, a more modern city dating from the 19th Century with a spectacular square lined with richly designed neoclassical buildings.

The tour wound up in the southern coastal city of Trinidad, as ancient as Havana if smaller. After dinner in the impressive dining room of a house once owned by a lawyer (his and his wife’s portraits peer down from a wall), the group went dancing to music provided by a splendid salsa band in a town square.

History enveloped the tour on its fourth day when riders pedaled along roads near the Bay of Pigs, in the province of Matanzas, just west of Cienfuegos. There, in April 1961, Cuban troops led by Fidel Castro repulsed a combined air and land invasion by Cuban exiles organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Plain stone memorials cropped up here and there along roadsides, memorializing Cuban troops who fell in the battles 46 years ago.

In this area a member of the tour, Dean Tebbutt, delivered medicines to a village doctor. The medicines were provided by a southern Ontario organization called Not Just Tourists which sends medicines to more than 60 countries worldwide, including Cuba.

But...to return cycling. How is it to cycle in Cuba?

Cuba is a poor country, but it nevertheless has an impressive network of roads. These include multi-lane expressways, two-lane highways, and quiet country roads. But its roads are different than most North American ones. They are calmer, cars travel at lower speeds generally, and they are *domesticated*. A typical Cuban highway – and this includes the expressways – has hitchhikers aplenty, who are often clustered at intersections and beneath bridges and underpasses. Buses ply many of the highways, and there are frequent stopping places for them. (The buses are always full, often it seems to the bursting point).

Cuban roads and their margins are also alive with animal life. Horse-drawn vehicles of all sorts are a common sight. One can also frequently see other animals – sheep, goats, horses, barnyard fowl – grazing along roadsides. Once this cyclist saw a tethered horse grazing on a highway median.

Also seen with fair frequency are racing cyclists training. In one instance, a *peloton* of about 15 cyclists were seen occupying a lane of an expressway! (Cuba has a rich bike racing culture. It has an annual *vuelta* – tour – on then scale of the famed European ones. This year's edition was won by Canadian Svein Tuft.)

All of this has an important – and beneficial – effect: it *calms* traffic.

More importantly, perhaps, the bicycle is a respected form of transportation in Cuba. Motorists give cyclists a wide berth. If there is no room to do so, they slow down and wait until there is.

Would-be touring cyclists in Cuba, however, should be aware of two realities of Cuban biking: potholes and the wind. Potholes can be frequent on some secondary roads. Caution and slower speeds are called for.

The famous trade winds that powered Christopher Columbus's ships to the New World unsurprisingly continue to blow over Cuba. To be riding with the wind at your back is to have a little motor assisting your pedaling. The tour's first ride west to Havana was such a ride. Unfortunately, most of the riding thereafter was *into* the wind.

But it was mostly a gentle wind, just enough to challenge, but not discourage, the riders. Combined with temperatures that averaged about 27-28 C., these were excellent cycling conditions.

The CanBiCuba tour, although it includes some former racers, is not a race. In fact the overall pace was quite leisurely, with time out for long lunches and sunning and swims at Cuba's abundant and beautiful (and free) beaches.

CanBiCuba 2007 was a unique blend of cultural, history, and cycling. In fact, it was a great way to see a part of Cuba for a period that was all too brief.

CanBiCuba also serves as a conduit for used bikes and cycling equipment to aid young riders in Cuba.

Participants in the tour are encouraged to carry spare equipment (tubes, tires, tools, etc.) and, if possible, a spare bike, when they travel to Cuba. This year, Martin Reid, a tour participant, left his bike (an '85 Gios) in Cuba. Others left equipment.

All of it was given to Peter Penman, a former outstanding Hamilton racer, who immigrated to Cuba several years ago and married a Cuban woman. They and their three-year-old daughter live in the western city of Las Tunas.

In Las Tunas Peter has started up a training program for young riders. Recently one of his riders, 15-year-old Adrian Ruiz, graduated from this program and is now training in Cuba's National Racing Academy in Havana. Adrian had been given an old Marinoni racing bike (manufactured in Montreal, by the way) by Peter. Marshall.

Club Time-Trialists

by: Editor

The Hamilton Cycling Club has never had a shortage of strong time trialists, this season being no exception. On August 7, Mirek Mazur bettered the course record on White Swan Road, lowering it to 19:40 (note: since then Darko Ficko has lowered the record further to 19:14, though not at a club event). Mirek picked the perfect night to break the record, one when the road was wet. It had stopped raining shortly before his time trial. Time trials are faster when the road is wet because there is less rolling resistance between tires and road.

Another young rider who has showed his ability to to time trial this year is Mike Hruska. Mike won the Junior Provincial Time Trial Championship in early September. Look for more great results from this young rider as he races as a 2nd year junior next season.



Sloan Wins Etape Caledonia!!

Donald Sloan of the Hamilton Cycling Club, Canada, was first in his age group in the inaugural Etape Caledonia on the 24 June, 2007, in Perthshire Scotland.

The Etape Caledonia, a fantastic event, was a 135 kilometer cyclo-sportive over a stunning and demanding course, scaling an advertised 2078 metres on a big loop skirting the three lochs of Tummel, Rannoch and Tay. Schiehallion, at 1038 metres high, is the major climb of the course. This was an historic event in the U.K., being the first to have the roads closed for a massed bike ride and sets a new benchmark.

It was advertised in 'Cycling Weekly', a U.K. publication, and Martin Reid and the author decided to enter and relive our 'glory days'. After flying onto Glasgow, Scotland with our bikes we drove to Dunkeld, a little town 20 kilometres south of Pitlochry, where the Etape starts and finishes, and settled in a few days before the big event. We also managed to get a couple of 50 kilometres rides in during this time to get the feel of the area.

Pitlochry is a tourist town with 3000 inhabitants that regularly sleeps 10,000 people, and was closed to all traffic on race day. The roads were lined with pedestrian barriers and gantries with checkered flags and recorders, for the timing chips mounted on everyone's bike, were at the start and finish areas. The 1500 entrants were grouped in lots of 100 and started at four minutes intervals between eight and nine o'clock in the morning. The field was made up of club teams (men and women), tri-athletes and individual cyclists like Martin and the writer, mostly from the U.K.

For two days before the start we had torrential rain with flooded streets and in the early hours of the morning of race day it abated to just rain. However, by start the race the rain had stopped, but the streets were still very wet. It's summer in Scotland!

The route headed north towards Blair Atholl but soon turned west to the 'Queen's View' at Loch Tummel. There were some short twisty climbs in this section which stretched the field out and possibly prevented bottlenecks further along the route. The next section was undulating as it ran along the loch-side before a wet twisting decent to the shores of Loch Rannoch and the first feed station, at thirty-five kilometers. From here, on a clear day, you get a distant view of the mountains around Glencoe in the west of Scotland.

The road around Loch Rannoch was particularly fast and had some minor flooding in sections which everyone just rode through. At the end of the loch there was a time check at seventy-five kilometers followed by a sharp right hand turn onto a single track road through a three kilometers glen leading to Shiehallion. This mountain is a towering conical piece of rock that you can see all the way up the valley. Today it was shrouded in mist. Its name, roughly translated from Gaelic, means the Fairy Hill of the Caledonians and its summit is thought by many to be the exact centre of Scotland. This is a mini Tour de France climb and the total ascent is around seven and a half kilometers long with most of the height gained in the first three kilometers which is very steep (15-20%) and the upper stretches about six percent, with increasingly spectacular views, to the very welcome feed station at the summit (87 km). The descent is long and fairly straight and fortunately the wind had blown the roads dry, but we had to look out for sheep nibbling grass at the road side. At the bottom of the descent there was another loop around Loch Tay and the final thirty-five kilometers run-in, past Castle Menzies and the town of Aberfeldy, to the finish alongside the river Tay and Tummel. This section was undulating and I found myself fairly strong and managed to pass quite a few riders.

However, the final twelve kilometers caught everyone off guard as we made a sharp left turn onto a switchback road of very short steep climbs all the way in. On this stretch of road you could see Pitlochry in the distance across the valley and it was a great source of encouragement to get to the end. The final few kilometers crossed the river then a short climb up to the finish line.

The Etape Caledonia is organized by the Quintas Group, which also stages the London Marathon, and the proceeds go to Action Medical Research, a U.K. charity. The whole event was overseen by U.C.I. commissaire Colin Clews who said the route will be an unforgettable experience, especially the climb over Schiehallion.

‘Cycling Weekly’ printed that this will become a ‘must ride’ Classic event in the U.K. as it’s a brilliant area for bikes. The climbs are not as long as those in the Pyrenees and the Alps, but the area has the same kind of feel. There are also lots of hotels, B&B’s and hostels in the surrounding area.

The organization of the event was unbelievable. Several meetings had been held with the small communities on the course explaining what would happen if there were emergencies (there were doctors and four ambulances around the course). This removed the few objections that had arisen. Also there was only one police service to deal with, and the area is really remote. Everywhere on the route people were out cheering the riders on, it was a great feeling. The roads had been swept the day before, but unfortunately the continuous rain washed more debris onto the road and there seemed to be an abnormal amount of punctures throughout the day. Every driveway on the course had two large orange pylons in it and the intersections were blocked with barriers and road closed signs. Of course, there were event officials and police in cars and on motor cycles all round the circuit. It was great descending through hairpin bends knowing that a car wasn’t coming up the other way! All the competitors and everybody associated with the event were very friendly and there were lots of good wishes from the locals. Nothing was too much trouble, and even the rain couldn’t dampen the spirits of the riders.

Every rider in the event got a finish time and several photographs which were posted in the Etape web site the following day. However, Martin and I did not see this until we returned home to Canada when I discovered an e-mail advising me I had placed first in my age group and would receive a special Etape racing jersey as a reward for my efforts, and an invitation to return next year and defend my title! This was a very pleasant surprise for me as I only intended to ride over the roads of my boyhood and view some great scenery, and complete the ride in a reasonable time. To be first was like the icing on the cake!

Looking ahead to cycling in the U.K. and Europe, sportive events are fast becoming more and more popular and I think will eventually replace road racing with all its inherent problems with the police. At present, most sportives are filled to capacity and this can only be good for cycling. You can now buy bikes specially built for these events.

Martin and I finished our visit to Scotland the following week by a final ride over Sma’ Glen (about 65 kilometres), after having Monday off as a rest day and visiting the city of Perth, where Martin was born. We returned to Glasgow on the Wednesday and flew home the next day.

Donald Menzies Sloan