

# A World Class Show

## The Raleigh Technium Mountain Bike World Championships



All Sport/Mike Powell

by Bob Makela

**M**ike Craig stood motionless on the two pedals of his tricked-out trials bike. Not more than five feet in front of him sat a boulder, an imposing four-foot stone that he needed to somehow hop onto without touching his feet either on the ground or the rock. To the novice observed-trials spectator, it seemed impossible.

As Craig precariously balanced his bike, focusing his entire being on the rock ahead, a cameraman covering the event for ESPN held a bulky minicam not more than two inches from Craig's rear tire. A substantial crowd had gathered to see Craig's flying feat, but they were silent, respecting the rider's need for total concentration. Yet the camera crew inched closer still.

Then, just as the tension and anticipation had reached an unbearable level, Craig slowly looked back over his right shoulder to see the camera almost touching his rear tire. And do you know what he did? He just smiled. Thirty seconds later he was on top of the rock, incredibly, without so much as touching a foot to the

ground. The crowd that had gathered burst out cheering.

And so it went at the Raleigh Technium Mountain Bike World Championships. Moments of grace under pressure, incredible athletic prowess and unfailing co-operation and dignity abounded at the three-day event held August 21-23 at Mammoth Lakes, California. It was the first "world championship" for all-terrain bikes held on American soil (in fact, the other "world championships" anywhere had occurred the preceding weekend in France—see story in this issue), and the hundreds of riders seemed genuinely thrilled with the attention.

The event was the brainchild of NORBA, the National Off-Road Bicycle Association, which wanted to hold a "prestige" event that would grow as the sport itself grew. It found an ally in Dave McCoy, the entrepreneurial owner of the Mammoth and June Lakes ski resorts. The 72-year old McCoy, himself an avid outdoorsman and mountain biker, agreed to allow the event to be held on the ski slopes of Mammoth Mountain.

The selection of Mammoth as the race site proved to be ideal. Not only is it centrally located for riders from

*The Tomac Attack wilted against the Overend Onslaught.*

Southern and Northern California, Colorado and Canada, but the facilities and race courses were world-class. Mammoth's contract to hold the world championships extends through the next two years, which should make anyone who raced this year very happy. "This was one of the best, most challenging courses I've ever raced on," said Roy Rivers, a top pro, after the rugged 28-mile pro-am, cross-country race.

World Champions were crowned in four different events: the hill climb, cross country, observed trials and the downhill. In addition, there were races held in five other categories, from veteran to expert, master to beginner. The \$12,000 in prizes and cash was enough to attract the top racers in North America (Canada and the U.S. were represented), and the beautiful, challenging race venue attracted hordes of beginning bike racers. (Many riders had remained in town after the previous week's Mammoth Mountain Kamikaze races.)

Next year's championships promise to be even more popular and competitive, given the fact that the event

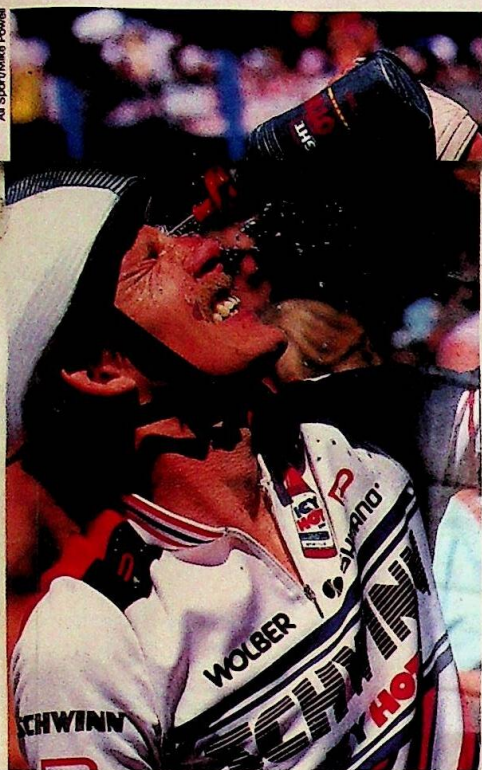
Publisher JEAN-CLAUDE GAROT Editorial Director HARALD JOHNSON Managing Editor BOB MAKELA Associate Editors TERRY MULGANNON, C.J. OLIVARES JR., RICHARD GRAHAM Art Director PATTI BENNER Chief Photographer DAVID EPPERSON/WILDPIC President MICHAEL GILMORE General Manager Wm. J. KLEIN Assistant General Manager KAREN BYDLON Finance Director TERRY GARNER Dealer Manager THERESE MERTZ Subscription Coordinator PATTI KECK Office Staff DENISE BUESGEN, NANCY BRENDLE, JANET FERRARI, FLORENCIO LOPEZ, ANN LEHET, BRAD SNYDER, DANIEL SAUCEDO, ALYCE STEIN Advertising Sales (213) 558-3321; KAREN COSGRAVE, DAEEMON FILSON (215) 821-6864; ANDREW BOLLINGER Marketing and Advertising Services NANCY TAMAYO Circulation and Promotions Manager ERICA RUBEN Editorial and Advertising Office 8461 Warner Drive, Culver City, CA 90232 (213) 558-3321 Circulation and Business Office 1127 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18102 (215) 821-6864.

*Adventure Bike* is published quarterly by WPI, Inc., 8461 Warner Drive, Culver City, CA 90232 (213) 558-3321. The entire contents of *Adventure Bike* are copyright © 1987, all rights reserved, and may not be reproduced, either in whole or part, without written permission of the publisher. Submission of material must carry the author's/photographer's guarantees that the material may be published without additional approval, and that it does not infringe upon the rights of others. No responsibility is assumed for loss or damage to unsolicited manuscripts, art work or photographs. All editorial contributions should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Additional copies of *Adventure Bike* are available for \$1.00 plus \$1.50 postage. Send payment to *Adventure Bike*, 1127 Hamilton St., Allentown, PA 18102.

Cover photography of Ned Overend by All Sport's Mike Powell.



All Sport/Mike Powell



Harold Johnson



The start of the pro-am women's two-lap cross-country race. Winner Sara Ballantyne is at the far right.

The hill climb had them walking and gasping for the most precious commodity at Mammoth: oxygen.

The best mountain bike racer in the world today: Ned Overend after winning the cross country.

ther of two from the high altitude at Durango, Colorado, who had flown in from France a few days before, pedaled past the finish line a full minute-and-a-half before John Tomac, the NORBA series point leader and one of the pre-race favorites.

"I wanted to get out fast and try to avoid the traffic," a relaxed Overend revealed afterwards. His post-race casualness and effortless breathing was a testimony to Overend's fitness, as he easily gave interviews to reporters who were having trouble merely breathing at the summit.

Once the mountain-bike wunderkind Tomac reached the peak, a crowd gathered to find out the weekend's first burning question: What happened to the Tomac Attack?

"My chain came off at the bottom of the hill," said the 19-year-old native of Chatsworth, California. "I lost about 30 seconds when that happened, and he [Overend] just took off. I tried to reel him in but I was just too out of touch."

Tomac would later find out that Overend would be virtually unreleable all weekend long.

## OBSERVED TRIALS

Saturday, August 22, 1987

Andy Grayson is like a lot of kids his age. A 15-year-old, Andy is thin and lanky, a few years from acquiring the body that'll be with him the rest of his life. He doesn't shave yet (or doesn't need to, anyway), and he likes to ride his bike.

But when Andy returned to his home in Santa Rosa, California, after his weekend in Mammoth, Andy had something to brag about to his high-school buddies—he came home the world trials champ. And he won the hearts of the hundreds of onlookers who watched him dominate a trials course that looked, at some spots, impossible.

If you've never seen observed trials, you're missing something special. Expert trials riders like Grayson and Mike Craig routinely jump onto four-foot-high boulders and logs like you and I jump onto curbs. They hop up and down on their bikes like they're hopping up and down on a pogo stick. They balance, they bend, they turn, they twist.

The carnival-like event—which one took place Saturday morning in a grassy area between the Mammoth Mountain Inn and the Main Lodge—which is a cross between golf and gymnastics on a bicycle, takes the riders through a number of sections (in this case, seven). The cyclist must ride his bike through the section, filled with obstacles like rocks, water and logs, without touching his feet to the ground. A point, or dab, is scored each time the rider's foot comes off his pedals and touches down. The winner is the rider who finishes with the least number of points. Novices ride

Tracy Franke







Riding over a four-foot boulder? No problem.

All Sport/Mike Powell

## OBSERVED TRIALS

### Open Expert

- 1 Andy Grayson . 16
- 2 Mike Craig . . . 20
- 3 Peter Delaney . 23

### Open Advanced

- 1 Elias Elias . . . 10
- 2 Gregg Betonte . 26
- 3 Russ Weber . . . 26

### Open Intermediate

- 1 Tony Sanchez . . 2
- 2 Pete Schoerner . 4
- 3 Gary Bell . . . . 5

### Open Women

- 1 Hannah North . 23
- 2 Maureen Buford 31
- 3 Amy Robinson . 39

### Novice

- 1 Andrew Patterson 5
- 2 Dave Sherwood . 12
- 3 Jimmy Knight . 12

### Stock Men

- 1 Greg Herbold . . 0
- 2 K. McLaughlin . 1
- 3 Rich Cast . . . . 2



Fifteen-year-old Andy Grayson makes it look easy in winning the observed trials.

All Sport/Mike Powell



alternate—and easier—routes in the same section as the experts.

Grayson found himself entangled in a two-man battle with Craig, who took up the sport just six months before the World Championships. The baby-faced 15-year-old finished his three rounds much sooner than Craig, so Grayson followed the challenger as he tackled each of the seven sections one more time.

Grayson watched as Craig studied his line onto a rock at section seven. A silence blanketed the area as the six-month trials veteran tried to stay in the hunt for the title. Then—boom—without warning Craig jumped onto the section seven rock—then back down it, forcing him to dab his feet a couple times to the ground. The race was over; Grayson was the champion.

## CROSS COUNTRY

Saturday, August 22, 1987

If trials riding is likened to gymnastics, then the cross-country race would surely have to be the marathon of mountain biking. And Mammoth Mountain certainly did its part in supplying a challenging, rugged course that never seemed to let up. "There was nowhere to rest out there," said Michael Kloser, who finished second to men's winner Ned Overend in the 28.4-mile men's pro-am race.

The course began behind the Main Lodge at 9,000 feet, the site of the previous day's uphill start, but headed in the opposite direction. The first three-quarters-of-a-mile was virtually all uphill, with an especially difficult 200-yard grade up hard-packed pumice that had the riders wheezing early into lap one. "Are we having fun yet?" yelled one rider who obviously wasn't as he reached the top of killer hill #1. This was truly a death march with no end to the lung-busting oxygen debt.

The four-lap men's pro-am race (two laps for pro-am women and one for beginners) took the riders up the side of the mountain and back down a series of fast, sandy switchbacks. The uphill sections were as slow and plodding—thanks to the soft dirt and abundance of rocks—as the downhills were steep and dangerous, because of the omnipresent rocks and hidden, sandy ruts. "It was, by far, the hardest course I've ever raced on," said eighth-place finisher Hans Mortensen after the race.

Overend, who appeared to be at ease, smoothly climbing in the saddle while others were weaving and walking, cemented his claim as the world's top mountain bike racer by winning the event in 3:02:16. A week prior to his convincing Mammoth victory, he won the world championship race in Villard-de-Lans, France, on a cross-country course that was very different from the U.S. course.

"This one's at 11,000 feet. France was at 3,000 feet. Plus, there were a lot more unrideable spots in France. I probably had to run with my bike 15 times," said the now-undisputed world champ.

Coupled with Overend's cross-country win, Sara Ballantyne added a sense of déjà vu to the day's proceedings with a dominating win in the women's pro

(continued)

Poised for the downhill descent is expert men's winner Bradley Peatross.





Cindy Whitehead finally wins one—the downhill. She celebrates with Margaret Day (left) and Linda Perez.

All Sport/Mike Powell



Getting air at the bottom of the downhill simply meant that the finish line was only a few yards away. The problem was: How do you stop?

race. After winning the uphill the day before, as Overend did, Ballantyne came back Saturday to win the 14.2-mile cross country by four minutes over Margaret Day.

Men's runner-up Kloser was somewhat of a surprise in second place. He had chased Tomac, who many had felt was incapable of being caught during the first three laps, getting progressively closer. Indeed, Tomac even led Kloser going into the second half of the final lap. But Kloser proved that the mighty Tomac was attackable and reliable. Afterwards, Kloser said the course favored the rider with brute leg strength. "It was an unbelievably tough race," said the runner-up. "It was definitely a climbers course, more so than a technical course."

A few feet away at the finish line, the king climber, Ned Overend, was asked if he would compete in the

final event of the World Championships, the downhill. "I don't think so. I'm a family man. That race is a little dangerous for me."

## THE DOWNHILL

Sunday, August 23, 1987

Perfection greeted the racers on day three. The sun shone hot and bright on the Sierras, just as it had the previous two days. Conditions couldn't have been better for what was to be the fastest day of racing.

The mountain bike downhill, like the downhill ski, isn't an event for weak-kneed cowards. Speed is ever-present, even to the novice who cranks on both brakes all the way down the hill. Let up for just one second and you feel like you've been shot out of a cannon as

## DOWNHILL

<b>Pro-Am Men</b>	
1 Joe Sloup .....	5:38
2 Casey Kunsleman ..	5:41
3 Mike Bell .....	5:46
<b>Pro-Am/Expert Women</b>	
1 Cindy Whitehead ..	6:32
2 Margaret Day .....	7:09
3 Linda Perez .....	7:10
<b>Expert Men</b>	
1 Bradley Peatross ...	5:52
<b>Veterans (35-44)</b>	
1 Eric Stirling .....	6:40
<b>Masters (44+)</b>	
1 Tom Picket .....	6:16
<b>Sport Men</b>	
1 Ron McCoy .....	6:18
<b>Sport/Beginner Women</b>	
1 Anna Strathman ...	8:19
<b>Beginner Men</b>	
1 Kerry Day .....	6:21

Mammoth offered many fine opportunities to crash and burn.

the fingers of gravity grab you and your beloved bike. As one rider put it as he prepared to begin his run, "You go as fast as your guts will let you go."

The riders rode Mammoth's famed gondola with their bikes to get to the top of the hill, where a bike and fashion show was underway. There were riders who were determined to tackle the monster in only the thinnest Lycra cycling shorts and T-shirts; and then there were those prepared for the worst in leathers, pads, motorcycle helmets, jackets, you name it. And the bikes they rode down the hill included everything from rusty one-speed beach cruisers to custom-made, high-tech (and high-priced) dream machines.

After walking down the mountain and seeing wild-eyed riders buzzing by at obscene speeds, a suit of armor seemed to be the most appropriate downhill wear.

Going into the race, the favorite was Mike Bell, an over-size, ex-motocross champion, who, at about six-foot-four and perfectly tanned, looked like an untamed bronco ready to bust out of his pen—the perfect disposition for a successful downhill rider.

The race started with the riders with the lowest bib numbers going first; since Ned "The Family Man" Overend decided to bypass the event, the first rider down to start would be #2, John Tomac. The large crowd that had gathered around the hay bales at the finish area waited eagerly for Tomac to come jetting down the last downhill area, over a final mini-jump and across the finish line.

But the crowd would have to wait a bit. Word came from up on the mountain that Tomac had flatted. The guy everyone was gunning for on Friday finished his weekend like he began it—coping with an annoying mechanical malfunction that was essentially unavoidable.

Michael Kloser was the first rider across the line at five minutes, 48 seconds. The endless procession of wide-eyed daredevils continued for more than two-and-a-half hours. And when it was over, the most casual, subdued guy on Mammoth Mountain had knocked more than 15 seconds off the course record.

Asked to explain his amazing performance, winner Joe Sloup, looking a bit uncomfortable with his new celebrity, said, "I dunno, I guess everyone was pretty hyper for the world's. I knew I had a tough time to beat [Casey Kunselman's 5:41] so I just went for it." Bell, who finished third at 5:46, later revealed that he lost his chain coming down the mountain, costing him about five seconds.

In the women's race, Southern California's Cindy Whitehead, the favorite coming into the weekend, vindicated herself by winning the downhill. Whitehead had finished a disappointing seventh in the cross country.

There were no losers in the frighteningly fast downhill; just surviving is winning. Or, as one proud finisher told his buddy who had just crossed the finish line, "You made it to the bottom of the hill, man—a victory in itself!"

Harold Johnson