

A HAPPY HOMECOMING

Michigan natives John Tomac and Lisa Muhich motored to victory during round three of the Coors Light/NORBA National Point Series.

by JAMES F. SWASEY



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Jones, Overend, Thomasberg, Price, Rosasco (hidden) and Tomac briefly formed a group early in the race.

Times may be tough in Detroit's "motor city," thanks to slumping auto sales, but for two of Michigan's natives the homecoming was sweet as they dominated round three of the Coors Light/NORBA National Point Series.

John Tomac made his first NORBA appearance of 1990, dropping in between road rides for 7-Eleven at the Giro d'Italia and the U.S. Pro Cycling Championships in Philadelphia, and the 22-year-old star went right out and won the 35-mile cross-country race at Sugar Loaf Resort despite crashing on the final lap.

In the women's pro-elite event it was

Specialized's Lisa Muhich who led the five-lap, 29-mile race from start to finish. Muhich's win was worth 16 points in the national point standings; but Cindy Whitehead's fourth place kept the Klein/Campagnolo rider in the points leader's jersey, although her lead over Muhich shrank to a mere three points, 41 to 38, nearing the halfway point of the eight-race series.

Entering the Michigan race the pro men faced an equally competitive situation, with Tim Rutherford (Ritchey USA), Don Myrah (Fat Chance/Campagnolo), Max Jones (Mongoose) and Tinker Juarez (General) all within one point of each

other atop the standings. Close behind the points leaders were three riders tied with 33 points — Daryl Price (Specialized), David Wiens (Diamond Back) and Price's teammate and mentor, Ned Overend.

A beautiful day with blue skies and white clouds floating in from Lake Michigan greeted the mountain bike fans who congregated around the start/finish line in front of the Sugar Loaf Ski Lodge.

Tomac had already downed a plate of pancakes inside the ski lodge's restaurant when he rolled to the line on a steel Yeti equipped with drop bars and a kevlar and composite rear disc wheel made by





Muhich took the lead and was never headed.

Tioga. Tomac had a difficult decision early Saturday morning just trying to decide which of his two bikes to ride.

He had been scheduled to ride a new carbon-fiber Yeti decked out with Campy components but decided early Saturday morning to "stick with what was familiar to me," that being his heavier chromolly-steel Yeti bike with Shimano Deore XT components and a borrowed set of forks from Juarez.

The few extra pounds didn't seem to bother Tomac at the start. He charged off the line and shot to the front with Rutherford and Juarez while the back of the pack became nearly invisible in the ensuing cloud of dust.

The Michigan course was said to be less technical than Atlanta's, but that

didn't mean it was easy. The 5.8-mile loop was continuously rolling and riders had to concentrate on their downhill lines and work hard on the power uphills. Mud bogs and sand pits caused many spills, including a first-lap crash on the single track by Myrah, but they didn't hinder Jan Wiejak on the first lap as the red-jerseyed Polish rider emerged alone from the single-track about 15 seconds ahead of a large chase group.

Wiejak's solo flyer was short-lived, however, as he was caught by Overend, Tomac, Price and Jim Rosasco (Trimble/Cool Tool). Ten seconds later, points leader Rutherford appeared with his shadow, Juarez. Atlanta winner Jones was also chasing hard after pulling away from Paul Thomasberg (Giant), Rishi Grewal

(Coors/GT), Paul Watson (Marin) and former National Champion Joe Murray (Kona/TGB).

By the end of the third lap the lead group had been reduced to four as Rosasco dropped off the pace a bit and Rutherford and Juarez fell behind by nearly a minute. With both Overend and Price in the break, things appeared to be going Specialized's way. Overend and Price knew Wiejak was ineligible for points (only U.S. citizens can earn points in NORBA's races, although foreign riders can earn prize money). And with Tomac having missed Big Bear and Atlanta, the boys in neon pink and yellow decided to "work as hard as we could," according to Overend. His young teammate agreed. "Our strategy was to keep the pace high

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relatively orderly procession was soon to be shaken up.

As Overend felt his strength going due to the never-ending power climbs and thick sand, he made the decision to help young Price get the win. "If I had the opportunity, I was going to try and block John," said Overend. "Daryl was definitely stronger, I blew on the last lap."

Tomac knew he was outnumbered. Following Overend into the final lap he pondered his strategy while reaching for his water bottle. Tomac later said he never saw the stump he hit; he just flew over his handlebars and crashed beside the trail. Overend and Price wouldn't need to block after all, it seemed, and they shot down the trail.

Tomac lay on the ground, the wind knocked out of him and his body hurting. Later, he reported thinking, "Oh man, I

hopes of catching the leaders and defending his 1989 win on this same course. Up ahead Overend and Price were having their own problems getting through a water crossing. After Overend fell, he decided to stay back and ward off any challengers. Price, meanwhile, rode on to what seemed like certain victory less than three miles away.

But the fates dealt a cruel hand to the young Specialized rider a mere two miles from the finish. While Tomac was catching and passing Overend, Price's rear tire blew going through the sand dunes.

"There wasn't any slight hissing, it went boom!" said Price. "I knew I had the race but [after I flatted] I just said 'I'm riding it in,' 'cause if I'd fixed it it would have been a two-minute delay and then Wiejak and maybe Rutherford would have caught me."



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so no one would catch us," said Price. "John [Tomac] wasn't pulling through because he thought we'd start working him over the last lap. We weren't really worried about him... we weren't interested in gapping Tomac off early on."

As the leaders were dropping Wiejak, Jones, who had started to find his rhythm and still had hopes of catching the leaders, broke a rear wheel spoke that promptly wrapped around the outside of his freewheel cog. He was forced to stop to untangle the spoke before he could continue.

The status quo up front remained for most of the fifth lap, with Tomac taking it easy on the downhills and in the corners while riding hard enough to keep contact with the two Specialized riders. But this

A flat would later cost Price the race.

blew it," as he regained his breath. After straightening his bars and aligning his brakes Tomac hopped aboard his bike and tried to regain his rhythm, telling himself he had 20 minutes to go all out.

Although he had lost nearly a minute, Tomac hammered through the woods in

With a mile to the finish Tomac passed Price, who was pushing his bike up a steep single track section. A few moments later Overend also passed Price.

An anxious crowd gathered at the top of a long climb to the finish watched an opening in the woods, expecting to see a

three-rider sprint for the finish. But only one rider emerged, and the crowd erupted when Tomac was identified. He crossed the line in 2:13:49 to a cheering throng that was clearly happy to have "Johnny T" back racing on the dirt. Overend finished second in 2:15:01 and took over the points leader's jersey from Rutherford, while Price rode in 31 seconds behind Overend and only 17 seconds ahead of Wiejak.

Rutherford finished fifth followed by Juarez, Rosasco, Jones, Wiens and Murray.

At the finish line a dirt-smudged Tomac sat atop his bike and generously signed autographs and answered questions. "It's good to be back [on dirt]. It's nice to win a race instead of being beaten up all the time," he said.

Overend was also pleased. "I feel real good about doing second here. I like to come on strong a little later in the year in the mountainous races. With a field this tough, it feels great to have the [leader's] jersey. There's always pressure on the guy with the jersey, so it's not a big deal if I lose it as long as I have it at the end of the year."

Price, who had come so close to glory, swallowed his disappointment. "Winning the NORBA points series is what we're out here to do," he said. "I feel bad for my

sponsor, but mostly I feel bad for myself missing out on the leader's jersey. He [Tomac] deserves some credit, though; he had a great race."

The women also put on a display of tough, competitive racing, with the turbo-charged Muhich leading the way right from the start. "I don't know why women don't start faster," she said. "I like being out in front alone although it gets mentally tiring. You don't know if you're going fast enough — are you slowing down?"

A mountain biker with a triathlete background, Muhich said she doesn't care much for "someone breathing over my shoulder and a group fighting for a line." That wasn't a problem during the race, although a last lap mechanical allowed Phelan to gain ground. Muhich finished in 2:13:31, 10 seconds ahead of Phelan (Wombats/Cunningham), who moved up a few notches also in the women's point series.

Martha Kennedy also rode a strong race after suffering from an early season virus that limited her training. The Klein/Campagnolo rider said she "hurt the whole way" on the tough course as she battled with Phelan throughout, including "some elbowing on the single track that was fun."

Women's point leader Whitehead saw her unbroken string snapped at the Sleep-

ing Bear Mountain Bike Classic. She finished in 2:19:30, a full six minutes behind Muhich. **W**

Coors Light/NORBA National Points Series

June 9-10, 1990

Traverse City, Mich.

Pro/Elite Men (34.8 miles)

1. John Tomac, <i>Tioga/7-Eleven</i>	2:13:49
2. Ned Overend, <i>Specialized</i>	2:15:01
3. Daryl Price, <i>Specialized</i>	2:15:32
4. Jan Wiejak, <i>Polska/Scott</i>	2:15:49
5. Tim Rutherford, <i>Ritchey USA</i>	2:16:46
6. Tinker Juarez, <i>General</i>	2:17:29
7. Jim Rosasco, <i>Trimble/Cool Tool</i>	2:18:10
8. Max Jones, <i>Mongoose</i>	2:19:02
9. David Wiens, <i>Diamond Back</i>	2:20:11
10. Joe Murray, <i>Kona-TGB</i>	2:21:20

Pro/Elite Women (29 miles)

1. Lisa Muhich, <i>Specialized</i>	2:13:31
2. Jacquie Phelan, <i>Wombats/Cunningham</i>	2:13:41
3. Martha Kennedy, <i>Klein/Campagnolo</i>	2:15:16
4. Cindy Whitehead, <i>Klein/Campagnolo</i>	2:19:30
5. Phyllis Hines, <i>Giordana</i>	2:19:45
6. Darcy Wright Dangremont, <i>Cannondale</i>	2:20:12
7. Julia Ingersoll, <i>KHS</i>	2:22:22
8. Susan DiBiase, <i>GT</i>	2:23:44
9. Kathleen Fitzsimmons, <i>Trimble/Cool Tool</i>	2:26:27
10. Cindy DeVine, <i>Klein/Campagnolo</i>	2:27:21

WINNING BIKE TOMAC'S YETI

John Tomac decided to imitate his road bike position when he raced on the dirt at Michigan's Sleeping Bear Mountain Bike Classic. Tomac used drop bars on his Yeti mountain bike so his seat and handlebar positions would not differ greatly from his position aboard his 7-Eleven Eddy Merckx. "Road racing uses such specific muscle groups, and with all the training I do I decided it would be best not to have to change positions a lot when I switch from road bikes to mountain bikes," Tomac explained. "There may be a slight difference in the positioning, but it's really pretty close."

Make: Yeti

Frame: 19-inch

Tubeset: certified aircraft 4130 chromolly steel

Head Tube Angle: 72

Seat Tube Angle: 73

Cranks: Shimano Deore XT — 175 mm

Chainwheels: Shimano Deore XT

Derailleurs: Shimano Deore XT

Shift Levers: Dura-Ace bar ends

Brakes: Shimano XT's



Brake Levers: Shimano 105

Hubs: Shimano Deore XT (front), Shimano Deore XT with 8-speed hyperglide (back) 12,13,15,17,19,21,24,28.

Chain: Shimano XT

Spokes: DT's double butted 15

Rims: Front — Mavic with 32 spokes — presta valves

Rear — Mavic rims on Tioga disc with Kevlar strings in a geodesic pattern, carbon fiber and mylar composite disc.

Tires: Front — Farmer John's Cousin

Rear — Farmer John's Mud Dawg

Headset: Campagnolo Steel

Stem: Tioga T-Bone 120 with internal cable routing

Bars: Cinelli dropped bars

Seat: Avocet with Yeti seat-stay clamp

Seatpost: Campagnolo

Pedals: 1988 Shimano Deore XT with custom-made cages by Tomac and Yeti's John Parker

Tap: Inside — cork ribbon

Outside — Off The Front

Bottles: Exceed

Weight: 26.75 pounds