

An Uphill Grind:

Female Racers Struggle to Make Ends Meet

by Marty Caivano

As Georgia Gould thrust her arms in the air at the finish line of the North American Cyclocross Trophy (NACT) Boulder Cup cyclocross race last year, the Luna pro rider proved that years of effort were paying off. The hours of training, traveling and racing had brought her a win at the highest level of U.S. racing.

But at the end of the event, she got a check for the UCI minimum prize purse: \$266.

Men's winner Tim Johnson took home \$2,351.

Gould wasn't surprised; she'd seen this before. Still, she was frustrated.

"In 2007, when I realized the discrepancy (in prize money), specifically mandated by the UCI, I was like, 'Are you kidding me?'" Gould said. "I mean, the UCI charges me the same as the men for a license. It's not like I get a 90 percent discount because I have a uterus."

Nor does she get cheaper plane tickets or hotel rooms because she's a woman, she's quick to add.

"I hear these arguments like, 'Well, your race is shorter.' Oh, so we're getting paid by the minute now?" Gould said. "Then let's make the races longer."

Issues like these plague all disciplines of professional women's racing. Fewer women than men earn salaries at the pro level, and those salaries are lower than their male counterparts. Women sometimes receive lower levels of sponsorship for the same level of effort, and women often receive less for their wins than men.

And these problems persist at a time when American women are accomplishing more than ever on their bikes. Mara Abbott made history as the first American to win the women's Giro d'Italia last year; Katie Compton dominates the tough-as-nails European cyclocross circuit; and female mountain bikers are closer to the Olympic podium than the men are.

Getting paid to ride remains an elusive goal for all cyclists, but very few women make a living that way. There are many salaried men's pro road teams in the U.S., but Michael Engleman, founder of the U.S. Women's Cycling Development Program, estimates that only three women's teams offer salaries, and other teams pay some of their riders but not all.

RUNNING AT A LOSS

Although the UCI requires that registered riders hold contracts, not every contract is created equally. "There are still a lot of teams where the women race for no money," said Kristy Scrymgeour, head of marketing and communications for HTC-Highroad and the former manager of the HTC-Highroad women's team. "For the women,



Kenda/Felt rider Judy Freeman puts passion over payout and leaves it all on the racetrack. When the powers that be told her women's racing wasn't as marketable as men's, Freeman wasn't listening.



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