

Local bicycle racing climate hits bumps

By **DAVE PHILIPPS**
THE GAZETTE

Colorado Springs should be a great place for mountain bike racing — miles of trails, great weather and no shortage of riders. But for two years, the Springs hasn't hosted a single mountain bike race.

"We have a lot of riders. We have a lot of racers. The fact that we don't have any races shows that something is going

wrong," said Andy Bohlmann, who, with the help of his wife and two sons, organized 62 mountain bike races in town from 1993 to 2002. At its height, his Sand Creek Series offered 11 races a year for riders of all levels.

The Bohlmanns stopped putting on races in 2003 because of family complications. The problem, he said, is that no one has stepped in to take over.

This spring, the Bohlmanns

tried to return to racing and organize an event in Black Forest, but at the last minute their only sponsor pulled its funding. So once again, in a town where about 25,000 bikes are purchased annually, local riders will continue to drive to races in other areas.

Bike racing has never been a mainstream sport, and the logistical speed bumps of finding a course, time and enough volunteers to throw a race together may keep it that way.

But bumps or not, many bikers agree that if any town should be able to put together a bike race, it's Colorado Springs. The city's fat tire inhabitants include several pros and a handful of world champs. It is also home to USA Cycling, an organization of 50,000 bikers that oversees



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most of the races in the country.

Gerard Bisceglia, who has been CEO of USA Cycling for two years, said there is little the organization can do.

"I want to give racing as much support as possible," he said, "but it really depends on

local organizers and volunteers."

Meanwhile, local riders are spinning their wheels.

"It's a frustrating situation that we have a strong riding community here and nowhere to race," said Bill Ramsay, director of a local team of about

Colorado Springs residents Kathleen and Andy Bohlmann organized dozens of local mountain bike races from 1993 to 2002. They hope to get enough support to resume in 2006.

30 riders called Cody Racing. "We have no sponsors. No one wants to pay for it."

On the road-racing side, things are better. The vibrant race scene at the velodrome in Memorial Park and the annual Ed Burke Memorial Criterium in July have been joined by a weekly criterium series running from May through August. Dirt riders who want to compete will have to look elsewhere. A calendar of scheduled road and dirt events is online at www.cyclingevents.com/RaceCalendars.

Or they can wait until next year. The Bohlmanns are seeking funding for a race in the summer of 2006. "We'll give it one more try," Bohlmann said.

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