

SPORTS & OUTDOORS

Thursday, August 22, 2019

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SHELBY REARDON/STAFF

Primo, left, and Ron Famiglietti ride back towards the base of Howelsen Hill during the Town Challenge community ride on Wednesday.

Race series concludes

Local Town Challenge season wraps up with barbecue, awards

Shelby Reardon
Steamboat Pilot & Today

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Marissa Espy bought her first mountain bike last summer. This summer, she participated in the Town Challenge mountain bike series, and on Wednesday, she was named the winner of the women's expert division.

"I really just started mountain biking," she said. "I think I found my sport."

Competing in five of the six races, the 25-year-old accumulated 134 points for the win. The young cyclist said the Buff Pass Hill Climb on the Flash of Gold trail was her favorite course of the summer.

Espy and dozens of bikers and community members celebrated the end of another Town Challenge mountain bike series with a community ride and barbecue at Olympian Hall.

The numbers aren't officially in, but Steamboat Springs Marketing and Special Event Coordinator Emily Hines thinks the 2019 Town Challenge drew more people than last year.

"We were way ahead in terms of attendance for most of the races individually, so I think we're in a good spot this year," she said. "It felt a lot more lively. It felt like there was more participation this year. Going through and doing the end of season awards was cool because we fill out



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Mountain bikers and community members are treated to a barbecue at the base of Howelsen Hill to conclude the Town Challenge series.

this chart, and it shows there were a lot of categories that in the past we didn't have any winners."

The Town Challenge made a few changes this year, switching up some locations and start times to appeal to more riders. Another change, was not offering an afterparty at each race. Instead, just a few, including the brand new Buff Pass Hill Climb, had free food at the finish.

"We were a little nervous at first that people weren't going to be thrilled about not having parties after all of the races, but by doing more informal stuff when we were here at Howelsen and at Marabou,

folks really liked it," Hines said. "We've gotten a lot of good feedback so my hope is we do something similar next year."

Wednesday was the biggest party of the year with beer and burgers.

Thinking of a relish-covered hot dog was what motivated Nathan Reynolds' son, Isaac, to ride Wednesday night.

Reynolds rode with his 4-year-old son, while his wife, Kira, took their three daughters on a longer ride on Emerald Mountain. Nathan and Isaac rode the Bluffs 'lollipop' loop.

SPOKE TALK



The next generation

My 9-year-old did her first Town Challenge bike race. I am so excited — I have been waiting for her to choose this.

Recently, we went for a ride and saw the course marking arrows, and she said "I want to do the race!"



I try not to push too hard, to recognize that my passions may not be her passions.

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As a mountain biking mom and a coach for the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, I spend a lot of time bringing up the next generation of cyclists. My goal is not just to create the

next generation of bike racers. Beyond racing, cycling has so much to offer. It is something that can enrich your entire life. Starting at a young age can teach kids so much more than how to pedal a bike.

Heading out on my bike immerses me in nature. It gives me an appreciation for the natural beauty of this area and inspires me to be a good ambassador of the land. It works my body and keeps me healthy. It releases the stress in my brain — and sometimes pushes me further mentally than I thought I could go. It offers an opportunity to play with my friends. It is my happy place.

I want to give the next generation of cyclists the tools to have this same kind of experience. First and foremost, I want them to have fun, making biking a happy place for them. Beyond the fun, I hope that sharing my love of the great outdoors will inspire them to help take care of our local ecosystem and the planet in general.

I am teaching them to physically work hard, to be fit and healthy. A habit of exercise can make a huge impact throughout a lifetime. When a trail or situation gets difficult, I am encouraging mental toughness, hopefully creating grit, which is a characteristic associated with success in all facets of life. I am helping them improve their hand-eye coordination, which will help in any sport they choose to pursue. I am teaching them to obey the rules of the trail and respect other trail users.

Biking for me is a lifestyle. Hopefully, as a mom — and a coach — I can help my kids find their happy place, be it on or off the bike.

Jessica Lobeck is a board member for Routt County Riders and coaches for Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club.