

Schuler places 3d at nationals

By CHRISTINE WALDEN

Twenty-eight times around a 4.5-mile course. More than 100 bike racers sweating in the heat, some really tanning. Many didn't even make it half way through the first lap, blown off from the pack on the first tough hill which came too soon and was climbed too fast. Others made it to the end, their only reward a personal victory because the winners had passed the finish line four minutes ahead of them.

Somewhere around the 10th lap Tom Schuler from Birmingham and five other riders pulled away from the field. All were top riders, four including Schuler were U.S. Olympic team members.

Before the race would end 18 laps later only three of the original six men break away would remain and Schuler would be one of them, sprinting toward the United States Cycling Federation's National Road Racing Championship title for 1976.

THE USCF's title race was held this year in Louisville, Ky. on a tough winding and hilly course in the city's Cherokee Park.

It is a course designed to separate the men from the boys, the mad racers from the flat course retirement riders, the sprinters from the scrappies, enduring racers who pace themselves physically and mentally through 114 hot, pounding miles.

At 19 and only two years into senior competition Schuler proved himself to be one of the toughest as he placed third in the national competition.

If a cramp hadn't hampered him in the last 200 meters he might have been first, since he is considered to have the better spirit of the three men who remained.

It wasn't really hard until the sprint, said Schuler. "We kept going at an easy pace."

But in the last surge the cramp won and Wayne Stetina picked up the title leaving behind a disappointed Dave Hall and Schuler.

This weekend however Schuler will meet his match again as he Stetina and the country's best riders line up in Pontiac. The two-day event will not determine a national champion, that's over until next year. But there's a chance Schuler could have his party justice and beat Stetina close to home.

Whether that happens remains to be seen. However, the weekend will offer some exciting races for spectators and a chance for Birmingham residents to cheer their hometown boys.

Joining Schuler in the pack will be Jim Huff, a Bloomfield Hills teacher and Chris Ford, also of Birmingham.

They are all racers with style, guts and determination, willing to go out and work for a victory.

Huff for example, was among the few in the national championship race who attemped to catch the leaders.

Unlike Schuler, who broke away with the winners, Huff was an opportunity like that you're just got to go. Huff was too late and never did catch up.

He did however add to the excitement of the chase, and to the nervousness of Schuler's parents.

"There's still a long way to go," said Mrs. Schuler at 10 laps to go. Daughter Lucie clocked the distance between her brother and his closest competitor as another son. Fred, handed Tom water bottles and food.

Though Schuler did all the mad work it was something of a family effort and when it was over the Schulers were still proud, even if Tom seemed not to be.

Covered in his warm-ups and slouched in a chair, he didn't look at all like he placed a respectable third. Instead he shook his head and when asked if there would be a next year, simply replied, "I hope."

Pontiac plans cycling race

The general public has the opportunity to participate in a major cycling event to be held in the city of Pontiac, Aug. 28-29. Sponsored by the United States Cycling Federation (USCF), the event is sponsored by the Community National Bank, Coca Cola and Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.

In the major cycling competition for USCF registered riders only, a total of \$750 cash will be awarded to winners in individual and team categories. Cyclists from across the Midwest have returned.

Families and amateur cyclists can enter Sunday between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. Those participating will ride a 7.5 mile well patrolled course and will receive a free Coke and an official bike participants patch. This is not a speed race, no riders can go at their own pace.

The course for the main marathon begins at the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 North Telegraph, continues to the Community National Bank Building in downtown Pontiac and returns to the Courthouse.

In sanctioned races for the prize money, individual riders and teams will begin riding 4 p.m. Saturday with sprints and mass start races in women's and men's and women's categories. Competition begins at 10 a.m. Sunday and is highlighted by the 75-mile open road race through north Oakland County with police escort and support teams.

The sponsors are also conducting two bike rodeos for youngsters testing their bike riding skills and providing them with bike safety rules and demonstrations. The first was held Aug. 18 at the Columbus Boys Club of America. The second will be held Aug. 27 at the Wide Track Festival Grounds at 2:30 p.m. All youngsters who participate will receive safety patches, safety brochures, and an official "Bike 76" participants patch along with a free glass of Coca-Cola.

Women's softball tournament planned

Twenty-two women softball league champions will vie for the Michigan Recreation and Park Association Women's Class B Tournament of Champions crown Sept. 3 and 5 in the Farmington community.

The Farmington Area Recreation Commission will host this year's tournament with the women's team competing against other league champions from around the state.

Ye Old Cabbage House, the second place team in the Farmington Area Industrial A League, will represent the host community against the Troy area women's league winner in the first round.

Competition will begin Friday at 6:30 p.m. and will continue through Sunday with a 9 a.m. starting time both Saturday and Sunday.

Games will be played at three sites: City Park on Shawness in Farmington, Drake Park Field on Drake Road in Farmington Hills, and the Knights of Columbus Field on Middle Bell, between Nine Mile and Grand River, also in Farmington Hills.

Championship rounds will be played at Drake Park on Sept. 5 beginning at 11 a.m. while the finals will start around 2 p.m.

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