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SUZUKI 24 Hour National Point Series Gallops South Husband and Wife team Aim for Wins at MTB Olympic Debut Venue

CONYERS, Georgia--**Eddie O'Dea** and his wife, **Namrita**, are aiming for the top spots on the podium when the **Suzuki 24 Hour National Points Series**-a nationwide series of 24-hour endurance mountain bike races contested by teams and individuals-heads for round two on May 17 and 18 at the **Georgia International Horse Park** at Conyers: the venue used for the 1996 Olympic Games mountain bike events; the debut of mountain biking as an Olympic sport.

The six-race series, sponsored by **Suzuki Automotive**, includes a full complement of destination venues for serious mountain bikers who want to be able to say "I've experienced the best courses out there," when they finally hang up their racing shoes.

The O'Deas are on the fast track, competing in four of the six races this year, and the Conyers race is right on their doorstep.

For **Eddie**, the finish line is still a long way away. "You always feel a little extra pressure racing on your home course. I set this out as the race I wanted to win at the start of my 24 career, and I haven't done that yet. This is actually my fifth time racing at Conyers-some with success, others with spectacular failure. Last year I had a series of mechanicals, I lost my rear derailleur on lap one, then chasing back onto the front I lost too much energy. The first race I did here, back in 2004, was the best I've done, completing 23 or 24 laps. It's pretty much the same course as back then."



Eddie and Namrita O'Dea at Vail Lake

Namrita O'Dea tells us about the family aspect:

"I really like racing with Eddie. I'd much rather both of us be racing than only one of us," explains **Namrita**. "We're on the course at the same time, and he's faster than me so we see each other out there. It's great seeing him out there- I know we're both going through the same thing. We talk briefly when he passes me, but we're both focused on our own race, and we talk ALL the time off the bike" Last year at nationals I had a flat and he stopped to help me, that was very sweet," she adds.

As for her aspirations of victory, "That's my goal, that's what I'm going there for. But there's always a few strong women that show up for the **Conyers** race, so we'll just have to see," says **Namrita**.

In the Solo Men's category, **Eddie O'Dea** is looking to take the series lead away from the 2007 champion, **Rob Lichtenwalner**, who finished one place ahead of him at the opener in Temecula, Calif. April 26-27. **Namrita O'Dea** already has a win to her credit and is looking to post a second. This will give her a commanding lead in the series, which is a selection of the three best results, with the final round, the **Galactic Championship** at The **Suzuki 24 Hours of Moab**, in Utah, October 11/12.

This round-the-clock format, created by **Laird Knight** of **Granny Gear Productions**, is one of the great showcases of Mountain Bike endurance anywhere on the planet. Yet, as Dutchman **Bart Brentjens** and Italian **Paola Pezzo** proved in the Olympic debut race back in 1996, speed is a prerequisite of the Conyers course.

The course may lack lung-searing climbs at altitude, but with fast doubletrack interspersed with rolling, technical singletrack sections, **Conyers** is far from a stroll through the park for the racers. "It's a surprisingly challenging course", says promoter **Laird Knight** of **Granny Gear Productions**. "The climbs are few, but over on the granite at the back end of the course, they're short and steep. You're always on the gas and the course keeps your heart rate pegged, it definitely favors sprinters but they'll have to keep it up lap after lap."

While the composition of the course is essentially the same as that used at the Olympics, improvements have been made over the years by the **Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA)** to make the course more fun and more sustainable and with the cooperation of the normally temperate springtime Georgia weather, this year's race could see the blazing fast course lap record of 42 minutes fall.

"There's a reason we hold races at all our series venues when we do," says **Knight** about Conyers' mid-May time slot. "It's a great time to be in Georgia, and we've always had nearly ideal racing conditions."

The **Suzuki 24-Hours of Conyers** begins at Noon Saturday, May 17, and concludes at Noon on Sunday. For complete details on the course, registration information, outdoor expo and events for spectators and the whole family, visit **Granny Gear Production's** website at www.grannygear.com.

After Conyers, the Suzuki 24 Hour National Point Series moves to the following premium mountain bike destinations: **Big Bear, WVa.**, June 7/8; **Killington, Vt.**, July 26/27; **Landahl, Mo.**, September 20/21; and concludes at **Moab, Ut.** on Oct. 11 with an event considered by many as the greatest mountain biking race in the world.

About Granny Gear Productions

Granny Gear Productions, a sports marketing and event production company, has earned a reputation as mountain biking's most innovative and successful event organizer. With more than 26 years as a mountain bike race promoter, **Granny Gear** President and CEO, **Laird Knight**, created the 24-hour racing format in 1991. In 2001, **Knight** became West Virginia Tourism's Person-of-the-Year and in 2002, **Knight** was inducted into The Mountain Bike Hall of Fame.

In 2000, **GGP** created its unprecedented and unrivaled **RealTime™ Scoring System**, that tracks every rider and every lap, posting results for every team in real-time on the web. www.grannygear.com

About Suzuki

The Brea, Calif.-based Automotive Operations of American Suzuki Motor Corporation was founded in 1985 by parent company Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC) and currently markets its vehicles in the United States through a network of approximately 500 automotive dealerships in 49 states. Based in Hamamatsu, Japan, SMC is a diversified worldwide automobile, motorcycle and outboard motor manufacturer with sales of more than two million new automobiles annually. Founded in 1909 and incorporated in 1920, SMC has operations in 187 countries. For more information, visit www.media.suzukiauto.com.

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