

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release
5/18/2008



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Olympic Course Chooses its Champions

Local couple and team survive endurance battle at '96 Summer Games venue

CONYERS, Georgia--Pre-race favorites and Atlanta residents **Eddie and Namrita O'Dea** won the Men's and Women's Solo classes at the **Suzuki 24 Hours of Conyers** on May 17 and 18 at **Georgia International Horse Park**, the venue used for the 1996 Olympic Games mountain bike events.

The His and Hers titles were expected for the local couple, who also shone in the series opener at **Vail Lake**, near San Diego, last month. These two now have comfortable leads in the six-race series.

The rolling, wooded, nine-mile single-track course was an extended version of the Olympic loop, which was closer to six miles, but it still included large sections of the legendary granite outcrops, which made for a feast of unusual climbing and descending challenges.

Georgia-based riders and teams dominated the results, lending credibility to the concept of "home-field" advantage.

The Five-Man **Faster Mustache** team took both class and overall titles, riding 30 laps in 24 hours, 7 minutes and 48 seconds. The team with the tongue-in-cheek name, whose shtick includes having members ride while wearing fake mustaches, is composed of Atlanta-area residents.

All joking aside, Faster Mustache were pushed hard into the 24th hour of racing by the **Naval Special Warfare Flyin' Frogs** team from San Diego. This rival team of Navy SEALs finished just 10 minutes back, after 24 hours and 270 miles of grueling off-road racing. Team member **Nathan Sibly** also broke the record for fastest lap with a 39:36 over the nine-mile course.



Eddie O'Dea



And They're Off!

The Duo Pro pair from Athens, GA, **Wakeracing's The Crew, Less Two** set the early pace on the warm, sunny and dry afternoon. "**Wild Bill**" **Lanzilotta**, a former Fort Lewis College student and Durango mountain bike old-school member, now turned University of Georgia biochemistry professor, rode his second lap of the race in 40 minutes flat. This was a harbinger of the blazing fast lap times seen throughout the race in the hard and solid course conditions.



Professor "Wild Bill" Lanzilotta

Lanzilotta and partner **Jeremy Edge** hammered out the fastest 11 of the first 12 laps by the time dusk settled on the Georgia International Horse Park. Shortly before midnight, however, the 5 Man Faster Mustache team - with three more sets of fresher legs in reserve - had taken the overall lead. Wakeracing's The Crew, Less Two's tumble from the leader board wasn't entirely by accident, however. After 15 laps, an assured win in their class,

and with plans to race again the following weekend, the pair took a "virtual" six-hour lap and got some shut-eye.

Into the crisp, clear moonlit Georgia night, **Faster Mustache** gained momentum, but as the new day broke they discovered there was a new force to reckon with. Going into the final six hours, the **Naval Special Warfare Flyin' Frogs** team poured on the steam. Even after **Nathan Sibly's** record breaking lap time, the four-rider Men's Sport class squad continued to post impressively fast lap times of right around 40 minutes as the race drew closer to a finish. By the end, both teams had to ride a 30th lap to determine the winner, and Faster Mustache prevailed by a mere ten minute margin. "We were close, so we thought we'd try for the win," explained NSW team captain, Eric Skalski.

Another local favorite, Five Person Co-Ed team **Priority Fe-Mail's** class win included the efforts of 12-year old **Megan Lilly**, who was just 4 months old when 1996 Women's Gold Medallist **Paola Pezzo** stormed to victory at the same venue.

Megan rode for two laps, coached by her father Thom Lilly. The second of her two laps was the faster, at 1:17:06. This was one of the top twenty fastest laps of all the women in the race!

Who knows what time Megan would have posted had she stuck around to ride some more, but with a school gymnastics tournament on Sunday calling her away, she had to leave early Saturday evening.



12 year-old Megan Lilly rode two laps then left to do gymnastics

Not all contenders were local, however. **Liz Baumgardt-Kays** of **Loves Park, IL** plans to visit all six races of the Suzuki 24 Hour National Points Series. The Women's Solo runner-up at Conyers has already put over 6,000 miles on her vehicle's odometer driving to and from the first two races in the 2008 Suzuki 24 Hour Series, and she plans to attend the remaining four events. The travel and sacrifice are worth it for the machine shop owner.

"**Joe Alligood** and my husband and I attended the 2007 series final at **Moab, UT** last October and had such a great time! On the way driving back to Wisconsin, we decided we'd had such a great time it would be neat to do the whole series, so this year we are doing all six races," she said. Competitors need only race three events to be in contention for overall titles and prizes, but for Baumgardt-Kays it's not about the minimum points it's about the maximum fun.

"The [Suzuki Series] races are a great time and a fun atmosphere. For me it's well worth the travel and time to enrich your life this way."

The **Suzuki 24 Hour National Point Series** now travels to Big Bear, WVa., close to Granny Gear Productions' home office, for Round Three on June 7 & 8. Expect to see the climbers and experts in technical, east coast singletrack come to the fore.

Thereafter the series goes to:

Killington, Vt, July 26/27
Landahl, Mo, September 20/21
Moab, Ut, October 11/12

For more information about the **Suzuki 24 Hour National Point Series**, please visit www.grannygear.com.

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 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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