

EDITOR'S LETTER

Peter Kofman racing a 2012 Tuesday Night Criterium hosted by the Midweek Cycling Club in Mississauga, Ont.

CANADIAN Cycling MAGAZINE

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Canada

Matthew Pioro
Editor

The ride takes time

During my discussion with Peter Kofman about the Erace Cancer Cycling Team, (p.26) our talk, like any good chat about cycling, ranged across many topics. We spoke about our early forays into the sport and our impressions. Peter has some good insights that struck me. He got his start in mountain biking around 2000. He had some success, was feeling confident in his skills and tried his luck on the road approximately five years later.

"One of the first road races I did was the Niagara Classic. You know, Effingham Hill?" Peter said referring to the southern Ontario race's brutal climb. "I tried it on an 11-21-tooth cassette. It was great for five minutes, and then it was really bad on that hill. The experience woke me up. I just couldn't believe the skill and the fitness of the guys around me who were the same age [mid-40s]. So I said, 'That's it. I'm going to put my head down. I'm going to become as strong a cyclist as I can possibly be.'"

Peter has quite the resolve. Roughly seven years after he made his plan, he's racing in the top masters category in Ontario. But it's not just his dedication that's striking; it's the time that it took to achieve the goals. "I guess at that time I was naive about it," Peter explained. "I didn't really realize that even though I'd been mountain biking for four or five years, and at that time at a high level, just how much energy it took and how much commitment it takes to be a great cyclist."

Cycling seems like a simple sport. Trying to explain the skill and difficulty of it to non-cyclists can be frustrating. How hard can it be once you've mastered the balance, which most of us did as children? But you soon see the challenges once you start getting serious about the sport. Think about one of your early group rides that left you totally shelled. Or think of that twisty, technical trail you thought, surely, is unrideable. With time came some skill and progress. Even riders who've reached the top levels of the sport can find themselves faced with more years of training before they can participate in races such as the Tour de France. In a discussion of potential Canadian riders for this year's Tour, North America's first yellow-jersey winner, Alex Stieda, mentioned how he thinks one particularly talented Canadian pro is still too young for the three-week race. This rider needs to do more multi-stage races before he's really ready for something as massive as the Tour. (See p.79 to read Stieda and Steve Bauer's analysis of Canadian Tour de France hopefuls.)

Still, it can be hard to keep perspective sometimes, especially when progress is slow. I've definitely felt the frustration that comes when results don't seem to show up after training. This spring I had a humbling race in which I slipped back as I lost contact with one group and then another. Where were those base miles and intervals that I had put into my legs? Yes, it sounds like a naive question, one Peter might have asked after his first race. The effects of my training are there, sure. But like all of us, I have some more riding to do. It's a time commitment I'm looking forward to.

Erace Cancer Cycling Team

Competition combined with purpose

by **Matthew Pioro**

Around a Christmas dinner with some wine, Peter and Lori Kofman discussed cycling and the role it played in their lives. Peter was a Masters 2 racer (he's now up to M1) who focused on road and cyclocross. Lori continues to be a strong mountain biker and road racer. Their daughter, Mikaela "Fudge" Kofman races for Scott-3 RoxRacing on the World Cup circuit.

While the family was passionate about cycling, Peter was reflective at that time on more important matters. It was nearing the end of 2011. His father had passed away from esophageal cancer not long before.

"Lori and I aren't the youngest kids on the block," Peter, who is now 57, says. "I was still into racing, putting in huge hours, doing everything I do to be as competitive as I can possibly be in the disciplines I'm in. As a cyclist, you spend this enormous amount of time on the sport. We were thinking, 'It's kind of selfish really.' I mean, it's amazing, as cyclists, how much time we put into training and everything else. At the end of the day, what's the reward? The reward is, if you are lucky, you get on the podium and somebody gives you a T-shirt or a water bottle. We wondered, 'What are we doing it for?'"

From that discussion, Peter and Lori decided to combine their passion for cycling with a charitable component. The charity they chose to focus on was the Princess Margaret Hospital. The organization has a strong cancer research arm, which was important for Peter because of his father. However, Peter and Lori didn't follow the charity-ride route. Instead, they formed a team, Erace Cancer Cycling Team, that would add an element of fundraising to the sporting events they'd be doing anyway.

Within a week of Peter and Lori's discussion, they had gathered together roughly 40 like-minded riders for the

2012 season. Then, they found sponsors. Last year, the team raised \$45,000 by getting names of sponsors on their jerseys. Currently, the list of supporters includes a production company, contractors and builders, architects and financial companies. Strikingly, there's also another cycling club listed as sponsor: a club sponsoring another club. But, the Midweek Cycling Club is there because of the relationships Peter and his team have with the other organization. Midweek has a weekly Tuesday-night criterium series in the summer with an early and a late race. Peter often helps out with the early race and competes in the late one. Midweek was able to help Erace last fall. The club also organizes a cyclocross race in west Toronto. Through this event, participants could donate to Erace's cause. Midweek also donated some of the race fees.

Erace has developed other in-kind links. One of their riders can help team members with massage therapy. Another owns a bike shop. He gives discounts on service and donates to

THE SCENE

CANADIAN CLUB




PROFILE

Club Name	Erace Cancer Cycling Team
City	Toronto.
Established	2012
Members	32
Web	eracecancer.ca

the cause. Even Mikaela carries the Erace banner to the World Cup circuit. "Everybody seems to want to step up and help what we are trying to accomplish here because they realize what we're really trying to do is help a greater cause," Peter says. "All of these relationships can be symbiotic. It's all very positive."

In 2012, Erace had a successful season. They participated in many of the province's mountain bike, road and cyclocross races. They had riders in the Canadian road national championships and the world cyclocross championships in Louisville, Ky. In the Ontario cyclocross club challenge last year, Erace placed fifth, which is impressive since it was up against some clubs with at least four times the membership.

For 2013, the team's focus for its fundraising is Camp Oochigeas. While the team enjoyed its partnership with Princess Margaret, it wanted to do something a little more grassroots. Oochigeas is an organization that offers programs all year long to children affected by cancer. It runs camps in the Muskoka region, north of Toronto, as well as camps in the city for kids too sick to travel. There's a personal connection for the team: some of its members were once patients at the camp and others were counsellors.

By March of this year, Erace had already raised more than the total sum gathered in 2012, \$50,000. The team seemed poised to continue racing and to keep racking up victories, and not just on the bike. 

Erace Cancer Cycling Team members from left to right: Mike Ybanez, Massimo Pascuzzi, Peter Kofman, Steve Smith and Gavin Brown

"All of these relationships can be symbiotic. It's all very positive."

