

# criterium takes bicycle racing to new level

By JAMES FISH  
Epoch Times Staff

WINTER HAVEN, Fla.—People who think bicycle racing means a long line of tired men struggling up some remote mountain, need to see a criterium.

Instead of thinking of men climbing a mountain, imagine a pack of 35 riders whizzing by 35 inches away from you, traveling at 35 mph on the streets of your local downtown.

Now imagine them coming by like that once every minute, pedaling, passing, sometimes crashing, lap after lap. This is bicycle racing in your face, almost literally. This is a criterium.

Criterium racing takes place on short courses laid out on city streets. The races generally last an hour or two, and the courses are compact enough that a spectator can easily walk to several different corners during the race, and still stroll up to the finish line for the final sprint.

This is fan-friendly bicycle racing. Forget standing on some remote mountain roadside for seven hours waiting for your favourite rider to pass by in seven seconds. This is bicycle racing for the TV generation—nonstop action, up close and personal. This is bicycle racing that rewards the rider and the fan.

**CYCLING CLASSICS CRITERIUM**  
The second annual Chain of Lakes

Cycling Classic Criterium ran last Sunday in Winter Haven, Fla., part of a bicycle-racing weekend that included a time trial and a road race. But the peak of the event was undoubtedly the Criterium.

The Chain of Lakes event, presented by Cycling Classics, Inc. is a special event for a lot of reasons. Though it is a first-class event, attracting professional riders from around the country, it is not held to make money. All the proceeds are donated to the local humane society.

The theme of the event is Cycling—Community—Charity. Besides offering racing in nine different classes, Cycling Classic has children's races for toddlers to 9-year-olds, and children's activities like games and face-painting, free bicycle helmets for children, and a demonstration by a stunt-riding team.

The Criterium is a day in the park for the whole family, with two stands selling barbeque and beverages, a friendly crowd, and of course, the high-adrenaline spectacle of bicycle racing.

**TOP-RANK RIDERS**

The Cycling Classic event received the prestigious "Florida Cup Series" designation in only its second year, which is an enormous honour. Because of this it attracts top-rank pro riders.

This year's winner in the Professional class was Ben Renkema, two-time Michigan state champion in the pro class, who now races with the Globalbike team.

Renkema played a waiting game early in the race. "There were a lot of attacks. Nothing really got away until that big group of guys went up the road. I picked out what guys were in it and thought 'That's probably the winning move,' so I got across to it," said Renkema.

"This is the type of course where you can't wait to the last minute. You've got to stay right there because it is so tight."

Twenty-two years old, Renkema has been racing pro for four years. "At this point there's no bigger races I can do," he said. "I am racing the fastest people there are."

"This is the type of course I prefer. The more turns in it the more I like it. It's really tight, the roads aren't that wide. There's a lot of places to recover, but when you do go you've got to go hard and quick, so it really zaps the energy out of your legs."

Besides sponsoring a top-flight racing team, Globalbike donates bicycles to third-world health care workers to help them reach more patients.

In 2009, Globalbike received the "Best Project by a Professional Sports Team" award from Doug Ulman, Chairman of the Lance Armstrong Foundation.



RACE WINNER: Ben Renkema (green jersey) blasts his way to winning the Chain of Lakes Cycling Classic Criterium in Winter Haven, Fla. JAMES FISH/THE EPOCH TIMES

# Pac-10 hits the skids

Once proud conference looks to the future after all-time low

By SUSAN SHAN  
Epoch Times Staff

Who knew that prominence could be so fleeting?

The once glorious Pac-10 is in shambles after a miserable year in which their regular season champion, California, is 1-5 against the RPI Top 50. Their best win came against third place Washington at home.

And Washington is barely in the RPI Top 50 at No. 49.

For starters, the Pac-10 can thank the past two NBA drafts for their speedy demise.

The 2008 NBA Draft went something like this: USC's O.J. Mayo at No. 3, UCLA's Russell Westbrook and Kevin Love at Nos. 4 and 5, Brook Lopez from Stanford at No. 10, followed by Arizona's Jerryd Bayless at No. 11.

The Pac-10 provided essentially half of the top 11 picks in one of the best draft classes in recent memory with no player having stayed in college past his sophomore year.

Last year told a similar story. The Pac-10 continued their generosity by providing Arizona State's James Harden at No. 3, Arizona's Jordan Hill at No. 8, USC's DeMar DeRozan at No. 9, and UCLA's Jrue Holiday and Darren Collison at Nos. 17 and 21.

The NBA departures decimated a conference and a team—UCLA—that had gone to three straight final fours from 2006 to 2008.

For the first time in NCAA Tournament history since the 65-team format began, a Power Six conference may only send one automatic entry into the big dance. The Pac-10 holds the "honourable distinction" of possibly making history.

However, it's not all about the NBA pillaging the Pac-10.

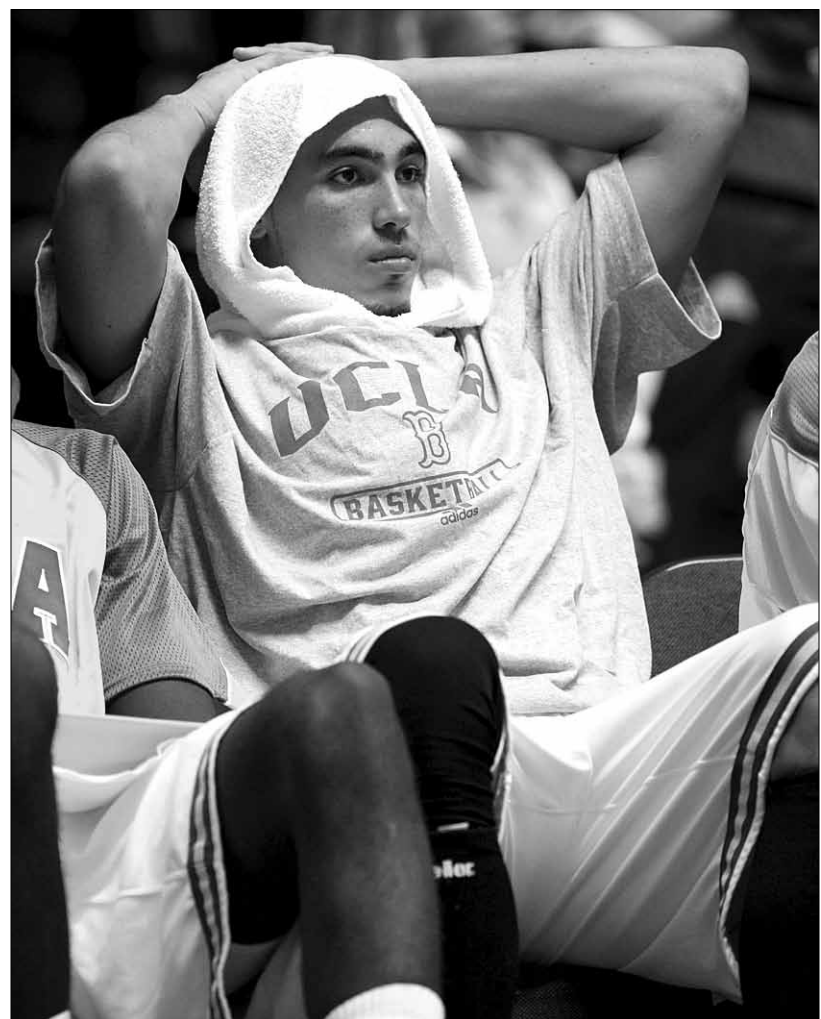
Barely into 2010, USC had the best non-conference showing with quality wins against then-No. 8 Tennessee and then-No. 20 UNLV in the midst of an eight-game winning streak.

Less than a day after winning their eighth game in a row, coach Kevin O'Neill called the team in and explained that the upper administration decided to self-impose sanctions on the basketball team, which includes a postseason ban.

The penalties were related to recruiting violations involving former coach Tim Floyd, former player O.J. Mayo, and Mayo's relationship with agent/booster Rodney Guillory.

Thus, the hottest team in the Pac-10 was now unable to compete in the conference tournament or the NCAA Tournament.

"My heart sank for a second," said senior point guard Mike Gerrity. "I was frustrated. That's what you play



DISAPPOINTED: UCLA along with other Pac-10 schools haven't had much to cheer about this season. STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

college basketball for—to play in March."

What followed for the Trojans was losing five out of the next seven games and finishing the season on a five-game losing streak. They had nothing left to play for in an essentially lost season.

**COACHING CAROUSEL**

Oregon's Ernie Kent has reportedly been told that he will be fired at the conclusion of the season and Washington's Lorenzo Romar could find himself on the hot seat if the Huskies fail to make the NCAA Tournament.

O'Neill, Arizona's Sean Miller, and Washington State's Ken Bone are first-year coaches at their universities.

The messy situation between O'Neill and Arizona began when O'Neill was an assistant under legendary Wildcats coach Lute Olson. Olson took a personal leave of absence in the 2007-2008 season, leaving O'Neill as the interim head coach. O'Neill was then designated by athletic director Jim Livengood as heir-apparent to Olson when Olson retired.

Olson's return along with an inconsistent season with O'Neill at the helm prompted conflict, forcing O'Neill to leave Arizona. However, Olson suddenly retired in October of 2008 for medical reasons, throwing Arizona into chaos once again.

Russ Pennell was named interim head coach and then Miller was hired from Xavier after a nationwide search at the conclusion of the season. The Wildcats have now had four coaches in four years.

The coaching musical chairs has affected everyone surrounding the Arizona program. NBA rookie sensation Brandon Jennings originally signed with Arizona but chose to play in Rome for a year instead.

Jeff Withey transferred to Kansas after Olson's retirement and the Rivals.com No. 13-ranked recruit for 2009, Abdul Gaddy, de-committed from Arizona and is now at Washington. The instability also contributed to stars Jordan Hill and Chase Budinger leaving early for the NBA.

The rebuilding job Miller was left with has made this season difficult. O'Neill was in an even tougher situation in the wake of the Mayo scandal and Floyd's subsequent resignation.

**CAN ONLY GET BETTER**

Despite the weakest set of teams in perhaps the history of the Pac-10 this year, there is hope for the future. Josh Selby, Rivals's No. 4-rated recruit, and No. 21-rated Doron Lamb have narrowed their final college choices to include Arizona.

Reunited teammates No. 13-rated Terrence Jones and No. 43-rated Terrence Ross are rumoured to be leaning toward Washington in a possible package deal.

UCLA is also primed to make a return to better days with commitments from No. 19-rated Josh Smith and No. 41-rated Tyler Lamb.

The nation will find out whether or not the Pac-10 will make history this year on March 14 during Selection Sunday. Look on the bright side—at least things can't get much worse next year.

# Manchester United crush ageing AC Milan

By MARTIN MURPHY  
Epoch Times Staff

It was a night where Wayne Rooney shone once again, as he pushed his season's tally to 30 goals. Rooney scored twice and helped Manchester United to a 4-0 (7-2 on aggregate) home win over an ageing AC Milan team, that has surely seen its best days.

David Beckham was hoping for a happier return to Old Trafford, but alas it was no fairy-tale ending. In fact, it was a very one-sided affair.

Rooney opened the scoring after 13 minutes and again just after the start of the second half, which more or less ended any chances of an AC Milan come back.

"It was a fantastic night for us. The goal right after halftime finished the tie," said United's manager Sir Alex Ferguson in his post-game press conference.

AC Milan manager Leonardo had gambled on taking off his central defender Daniele Bonera and replacing him with striker Clarence Seedorf at halftime, but that tactical switch backfired.

The rout was on when Park Ji-Sung whipped a perfectly timed Paul Scholes pass into the far corner for United's third goal. Darren Fletcher headed in a fourth near full time.

Rooney scored four goals in the two encounters with AC Milan. He has effectively stepped up to the plate this season and filled the gap that Cristiano Ronaldo left when he parted for Real Madrid.

"He's one of the best, if not the



WAYNE'S WORLD: Wayne Rooney and Manchester United were too much for AC Milan to handle on Wednesday in Champions League. GIUSEPPE CACACE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

best at the moment," said Beckham about Rooney in an interview with Sky Sports.

"Messi, Ronaldo, he's up there with the best of them."

AC Milan is an ageing team. The average age of their bench was 34. When they needed some changes they brought on Filippo Inzaghi (36), David Beckham (34), and Clarence Seedorf (33) whereas United brought on younger players like Darron Gibson (22) and Rafael da Silva (21). Youth beat experience on this Wednesday night.

United's star player Wayne Rooney is still only 24, but Milan's young striker Pato, 20, was unable to play due to injury.

Milan's only real tactic seemed to be the chipped ball over the United back three, which had no success. Rio Ferdinand did a good job of keeping the defense well organized.

United enjoyed great success attacking down the right-hand side. They had free reign there, as Milan players like Ronaldinho's tracking back was poor.

A superb volley from David Beckham after 75 minutes nearly made his return to Old Trafford a spectacular one. The United crowd did give Mr. Beckham a rapturous welcome home.

"The thing I'll take is the reception I got from the fans. It was unbelievable," said Beckham.

**COSTLY LOSS**

Real Madrid was eliminated in the knockout stages of Champions League for the sixth straight season on Wednesday after a 1-1 draw at home with Lyon. Lyon had taken the first leg 1-0 three weeks ago in France.

Cristiano Ronaldo gave the team in white a one-goal lead in the sixth minute but Miralem Pjanic equalized in the 75th minute for Lyon.

The Spanish soccer giants spent over \$200 million on stars like Ronaldo and Kaka and will now miss out on potentially tens of millions of dollars in revenue with this Champions League exit.

On Tuesday, Arsenal and Bayern Munich also reached the quarterfinals. Four more ties will be completed next Tuesday and Wednesday after which eight teams will be left to compete for Europe's top club soccer prize.

# Flying crash adds drama to Atlanta NASCAR race

By JAMES FISH  
Epoch Times Staff

Kurt Busch under dragged Juan Pablo Montoya on the second Green-White-Checker restart to win the NASCAR Sprint Cup Kobalt Tools 500 at Atlanta Motor Speedway last Sunday but Brad Keselowski's high-speed flip was the big story of the race.

Kurt Busch and Kasey Kahne traded the lead throughout the race, with Juan Pablo Montoya and Denny Hamlin also taking brief turns as leader.

Clint Bowyer took his turn up front by beating the field out of the pits on lap 331, heading for a Green-White-Checker finish, but four laps later, Jimmie McMurray hit Bowyer, and the pair collected 10 other cars by the time the spinning stopped.

Kurt Busch was on the inside with Montoya on his right for the second Green-White-Checker restart, but an early acceleration by Busch caught Montoya off guard.

Montoya spun his tires in an effort to catch Busch, and ended up blocking much of the field while Busch headed for the finish line. Matt Kenseth made a strong run but Busch crossed the line three car-lengths ahead.

"You've just got to put yourself in position to win these things. You never know what's going to happen at the end," Busch told FOX.

"I just kept focused on not spinning my rear tires. I wanted to make sure I hooked it up just perfect."

**THE FLYING KESELOWSKI SHOW**

Brad Keselowski, known in NASCAR for aggressive driving, smashed into Carl Edwards on lap 40, sending Edwards sliding up the track into Joey Logano and then into the wall.

Edwards and Keselowski have had bad blood between them since Keselowski knocked Edwards 10 feet into the air at the April 2009 Talladega race, and apparently Edwards decided that this was the race to retaliate.

On lap 323, Edwards tapped Keselowski in Turn 3, then shoved him hard exiting Turn 1. Keselowski turned backward and flipped, landing hard on his roof before bouncing back onto his tires. Keselowski was unhurt, but his car was destroyed.

NASCAR announced at the start of the season that it wanted more contact and more conflict, and many people predicted that it would lead to an incident like this. At 185 mph, even a minor bump can have major consequences.

Now that NASCAR has reaped the results of their ruling, how will they react?

Likely NASCAR will penalize Edwards, claiming that blatant and deliberate contact is "over-aggressive driving," reducing their earlier announcement to nothing but pre-season PR.

As veteran racing announcer Eli Gold of MRN radio (the official NASCAR broadcasters) put it, payback has always been part of the sport. NASCAR fans called for a return to rivalries between drivers, on-track retaliation for earlier contact, and this was one of the things NASCAR promised it would bring back.

Burt when is it acceptable to wreck an opponent, and when is it deemed "over-aggressive driving" and penalized?

Racer-turned-commentator Kyle Petty said that it was all right to spin someone at one of the slow tracks but not at one of the fast tracks.

Race winner Kurt Busch said circumstances defined when deliberately crashing another driver was acceptable. "To see a guy that's a hundred laps down to take out a guy that's running really well, that was a tough pill to swallow," Busch said on NASCAR.com.