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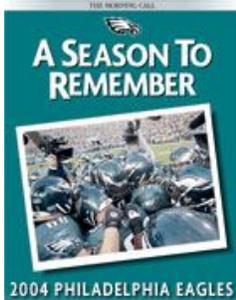
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- With more scoring and no ties, I think it will be more exciting.

From The Morning Call -- July 2, 2005

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Geist gets back in the track groove

She comes off the road, sets a U.S. junior track record in the 2k pursuit.

By Gary R. Blockus
Of The Morning Call

Kim Geist wants to be in her top racing form next week.

But to take stock of her training, she decided to take a test run Friday night during the Valley Sports and Arthritis Surgeons' Firecracker 100 at the Lehigh Valley Velodrome.

Geist, who graduated from Emmaus High School last month, passed her final exam by riding a junior-world-championships-qualifying time in the women's 2-kilometer individual pursuit, setting a track record for U.S. juniors in the process.

"I actually didn't know where I was [in terms of track fitness] before this," said Geist, who finished third in the pursuit at junior worlds last year. "I've been riding the road a lot, and I just got back from junior road nationals [in Utah], so this was my first full pursuit."

Geist, who won her U.S.-record 19th junior national title by capturing the criterium two weeks ago, will compete in the 2005 U.S. Junior National Track Championships that run next Wednesday through Saturday at her hometown track in Trexlertown. As she said, however, she's pretty much invested herself in road racing this season.

She rides for the Victory Brewing professional team out of Pottstown. The squad includes former LVV junior star Lauren Franges, who promised she will compete in T-town before the summer is over.

Friday, Geist broke Franges' pursuit track record for U.S. juniors, tearing through the six-lap race in 2:34.95 and edging Franges' 2001 time of 2:35.024 by less than three-hundredths of a second.

Franges and Laura Van Gilder, a Poconos resident, are both riding for the U.S. national team in Italy at the moment.

"This is a whole different ballgame," Geist said of riding for an actual trade team. "The money is much bigger. It's different and a little more intense."

Geist found out last month how intense pro riding is. She competed for her team in the Liberty Classic women's race, part of the Wachovia Cycling Series, which concluded with that race and the men's U.S. Pro Championship in Philadelphia.

She finished 69th overall, in the tail end of the lead pack.

"Going up the Manayunk Wall, the crowd [support] made it much easier," she said.

The crowd, she said, was supportive during her junior world qualifying effort on Friday night, too.

Geist began her six-lap solo effort on Friday with a 28-second first lap around the 333-meter concrete oval. When she reached full speed, she turned in laps in the 25-to-27-second range.

"The last kilometer — three laps — you're not thinking about anything except the track in front of you," she said. "The crowd helped. I could hear them on the front straight, but on the back straight, it was so quiet I didn't know if I was losing time."

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- Forget them. I was a fan, but not anymore.
- I don't understand it, I can't pronounce half the names, and I never liked it anyway.

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Actually, the crowd on the back straight was sparse. Only about 400 fans showed up for the Fourth of July weekend event. The velodrome is traditionally closed this holiday weekend because of vacation and travel conflicts. After looking at the turnout, first-year velodrome CEO Ron Horn quipped that he knows when he will be taking a vacation next year.

Geist is hoping for plenty of fans on the back straight next week, when she competes in the pursuit, points race and scratch race in her last junior nationals. She has a shot at making junior worlds in all three events.

"Making the [qualifying time on Friday night] will probably ease up the tension a bit for junior nationals," she said. "Now all I have to do is win it. I don't have to worry about making the time standard."

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