

## BC repeats cyclocross nationals win

By Joshua Cole  
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BC cycling has another cyclocross national title. The BC cycling team left for Austin on Tuesday, Jan. 6, the day before school reconvened to defend their national title from last year's national championship in Boulder, CO.

Some 18 hours later the team arrived in Austin, a city very similar to Asheville in its culture, including food, arts and music. The collegiate nationals race was held on Saturday, Jan. 11, four days after the team arrived, which allowed everyone to recuperate from the long, back wrenching drive and get in some course reconnaissance—learning the course, tricky turns, barriers on the course, such as the multiple sets of jagged limestone steps.

Cyclocross, like mountain biking, is a sport heavily reliant on weather conditions. Racers at the highest levels have an array of different tires with varying tread patterns for dry, normal, wet and sloppy mud conditions. In the days before the race the course was dry, fast and technical, meaning the course was very challenging in some sections especially where it was off-camber.

Being in Texas, the soil was sandy so it allowed water to drain well from the course. The forecast for Saturday was calling for snow or at least rain with a possibility of sleet. Throughout the week Austin remained in the 30's with a chilling wind. Some racers felt apprehensive about the impending chance of snow or rain, as it would turn the race upside down with respect to which racers excelled and which ones fell, quite literally.

Friday, Jan. 10, was the collegiate team relay where four riders, two women and two men, were picked by each school to race one lap against each other. It was one of the most interesting aspects of collegiate racing at nationals as it is heavily team focused even for members of the team not racing. Teammates not racing helped to support their teammates racing by working in the pits, where racers are allowed to stop for new bikes if they have a flat tire or trouble with parts, or by making sure that racers had everything they needed, clothing, water, energy gels, etc. Small things can add up if only to help reduce stress for racers to help them succeed. As the racers came back through the start line new racers of that school would accelerate into action to take up the chase for first.

BC had an exceptionally strong relay team made up of Walker Shaw, Sarah Hill, Zach Valdez and Allison Arensman respectively. As each rider



BC Cyclists at omnium awards.

finished their one lap they gathered with the rest of the team to watch the next rider in much anticipation until finally Arensman was the last rider on course followed closely by a strong female rider from King College, a school also known for their strong cycling program. Hearts pulsed with increased haste until seeing Arensman crest the top of the hill with an eight to 10 second gap on the competition. Elated with joy, teammates embraced one another at the finish. The relay proved that BC came to nationals ready to win and ready to win in commanding style.

The next day, Saturday, the rains came and the course changed into a complete mud bath with even simple sections of the course becoming treacherous to ride. Sections that were previously possible to ride were now off-the-bike running sections, nearly a quarter to a third of the course

became a bike-shouldering race to slip the least. The finishing straight was a long 600-800 meter paved stretch and was one of the only sections where riders could go full gas.

The DI and DII women were combined into the same race, with the DI women starting two minutes ahead of the DII schools. Arensman had a strong start coming into the first corner around fifth place with teammate, Hill not far behind. "By the time we hit the first off-camber section I was in second, I was able to move around into first place. I put in a couple solid attacks; I had a three second gap once we hit the [finishing straight] I put in another attack and got about five more seconds and then I just kept the gas down from there and tried to keep the bike upright and ride smooth

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