

Team USA arrives in England, completes 1st race

BY BRIAN WHITE
Sports Writer



Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton congratulates members of Team USA on their upcoming visit to England during a recent press conference held at the Town Council Chambers in downtown Edenton. (Staff photo by Bud Weagly)

Team USA and its touring party members arrived in Poole, England early Saturday morning after leaving the United States late Friday. Cycle Speedway racing is a thriving sport in the nation of Great Britain along with other countries in most of Europe. Many of the International Cycle Speedway members greeted the USA team with open arms as they made their first appearance in a foreign nation. "It's unbelievable to be on foreign ground here in England, it's a beautiful place," said Ofelia Baxter, Vice-President of Operations at the Edenton Cycle Speedway.

Soon after touchdown at the London airport, Team USA and its touring party was taken to the Poole England Raceway. "It's a home away from home," stated Frankie Eaves, Team USA coach. "For the first time at an international track in England the set up is unbelievable. Colin and Graham Sutton have done wonders to the facility." Team USA's guests have been housed at the Poole Club Room. "We can not thank the Poole Club enough for all of their support in taking us in, we are very thankful," said John Turner, Senior Vice-President of the Edenton raceway.

Racing, and more racing was on Team USA's agenda as soon as the members stepped off the plane.

Soon after arriving at the raceway the team hit the track to begin preparation for the 2003 World Championship races. All of Europe's raceways are roughly the size of the American Cycle Speedway raceway in Edenton. Adapting to racing around tight turns and quick acceleration off the

turns is the key to competing well in this sport. "The tracks are very different," stated Josh Dunn, member of Team USA.

"Were getting the hang of it pretty quick, especially after installing an International straight to the Edenton track."

Team USA was treated to some exciting racing on Sunday, as the Poole club hit the track in team racing against Horspath, a team in Oxford, England. Two-time world champion, Dave Hemsley, competes for the Poole club, and was glad to see the Edenton group. Other world renowned racers who visited the Edenton facility in October 2002, including Kevin Lowman, Jason Ashford, Pete Young, Adam Peck, Aaron Lowey, and Dave Murphy were also present at Sunday's match. Colin and Graham Sutton, the principal club leaders in England were also present and happy to see the Edenton crew.

At the conclusion of the 18 heats, Team Horspath stole the win, edging the home team by 12 points.

Team USA took to the Poole raceway concluding the Division two match. The match was the first for the young group, and the first ever by an American group.

After being in Europe for less than 24 hours, the team competed against some of the best young competitors from around the world. After competing in 13 heats, team USA picked up 4 individual wins. Chad White earned three heat wins, with Jeremy Krider earning the other win for Team USA. Kyle Craft consistently finished the heats in 2nd place. This was an accomplishment in itself.

Concluding the team's first international race, Team USA was defeated by the Junior World Select team. The World Select team was assembled with various riders from all over the world to help with continuous practice efforts. Team USA lost the event by a slim 10 points. "Bearing in mind the age and relative inexperience to international style racing, team USA had a particularly

impressive performance," Colin

Sutton, Poole Cycle Speedway coach stated after the event. "The American team did very well. They all gave one hundred percent and raced very well," Pete Young, the 1997 British Cycle Speedway champion stated.

At the end of the day, Team USA had wide smiles on their faces. "I think we did a good job today, we gave it all we had," team captain Chad White stated. "The wins we had today were great, I worked hard to earn three of them, and I'm proud of everybody's accomplishments." Jeremy Krider who also earned an individual win was happy with his team's performance, "It was a competitive, nice race. We had a few surprises; it was very different from the American style races. It feels nice to win an individual race on this track."

Kyle Craft informed everyone of how hard the race was. "It was hard," Craft stated. "I learned a lot. I need to work on getting off the

gate (start) better." Josh Dunn, who normally races in the Biggs Pontiac Pro Am Stock, is ready for the Junior World Championships. "It was a tough match," Dunn stated concluding the 13-heat event. "This is very new to us; I think we're prepping hard for the Championship races this weekend in Poland." Slippery track conditions hampered some racers, especially Kevin King, Jr., "This is a good, fast, and slippery track. It's rather difficult. I need to focus on how to stay on the inside of the track, King stated. Team USA's youngest member performed at his peak during Sunday's match. "We had some really tough competitors. I need to work harder on the take offs," the young 10-year-old Cody Eaves stated.

Team USA's impressive performance did not stun many in the world of cycle racing, especially coach Frankie Eaves. "Due to the level of competition from the European select team, I think the US team fared well, com-

ing within 10 points of winning in their first ever competition," Eaves stated concluding the event. "I think the 6 kids have a bright future in bicycle racing and today was a good tune-up for the world championship races."

Team USA will begin a series of practices beginning on Monday, leading up to the group's departure for the Junior World Championship races in Czestochowa, Poland.

The elite 2003 World Championship races kick off Friday and runs through Sunday. Team USA will compete in all three days of the competition. The 6 from the Edenton raceway will become the first ever from America to participate in these elite events.

Team USA's participation in the series of events have begun a new era in the sport overall. "Another chapter in the sports history has begun," Graham Sutton, founder and Chairman of the Board at the Poole Raceway stated. "We visited the Edenton track last year. Our first step in growing to an international level has been completed today. The sport will only get stronger and stronger."

Watch for more updates including the Junior World Championship races in Poland. Team USA will also compete in the special International Race Weekend at the Poole raceway on Sunday, July 26th and 27th. For more information be sure to check out the website at www.cycle-speedway.com. Cycle Speedway will also be holding practices on July 19 and July 26 from 5 to 8pm.

Call the raceway office for more information at (252) 482-1655.

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