

Breaking Away

Bucknell Cyclist Receives Prestigious National Award

Bucknell student Todd Dowling '07 was awarded the 2006 John Stenner Collegiate Scholarship from USA Cycling, adding to Dowling's achievements while at Bucknell.

The yearly scholarship, named after the late US National Team member, recognizes two student-athletes—one male, one female—who have demonstrated “outstanding leadership qualities in their respective cycling communities and their major accomplishments during their student-athlete careers.” Dowling, a senior Biology student, chose to focus on his work off the bike more than his competitive resume.

“I emphasized my academics and the growth of Bucknell Cycling during my tenure as president on my award application,” said Dowling. “The growth was the result of hard work from a lot of people.”

Throughout his Bucknell career, Dowling has been a singular force behind Bucknell cycling. As Dowling himself attests, “When I arrived at Bucknell three years ago the team consisted of six members, and the oldest member was a sophomore. A year later, we reorganized the team and I took over the position of club president, where I helped to organize the greatest expansion in team history.”

Two years removed from six members, the team jumped to over twenty, including a newly spawned women's team. But the growth wasn't just in numbers, as Dowling notes. “As the team matured, we learned from the past and gained experienced riders such as Mike Chauner '08, which enabled us to train more effectively.”

Soon, the team began to win more and more races, and in 2006, Bucknell traveled to the Collegiate Nationals in Kansas with a full men's and women's team for the first time in history.

This accomplishment is magnified when the situation surrounding Bucknell Cycling is considered. This is not a varsity sport. There is no coach, no manager, and limited funds. Every aspect of the club is student-run. This structure requires difficult work and contributions from every member of the team.

“I worked with the team's business guru Sam Camens '07 in approaching businesses to sponsor the team,” said Dowling. “I remember working with my teammate and roommate Steve Szwec '07 to piece together functional bikes from parts and pieces we had accumulated over the years to give new members (who arrive without ever riding a road bike before) the opportunity to ride.

“Additionally, the team had to work hard to find a way to logistically transport nearly twenty racers to events as far away as University of New Hampshire.”

This increased success has caused waves through campus and conference. Recently, Bucknell has hosted annual races—a tradition that continues this March when an estimated three hundred collegiate racers will race on 7th, 6th, and St. Louis Streets—which has helped to boost awareness on campus and in the community.

And Bucknell is not just a campus success story. Eleven races were won by Bucknell cyclists last year in what USA Cycling described as “arguably the most competitive collegiate cycling conference in the country – the Eastern Collegiate Cycling Conference (ECCC). Chauner held the conference leader’s jersey for some time and has taken first in multiple men’s “A” races during the past two years.

All this has alleviated some of the pressure on Dowling, who has been able to dedicate time to various honors societies and tutoring, two strong contributing factors in his recent scholarship. Dowling can also be seen at basketball games as an enthusiastic supporter of the team.

Dowling also sees this dedication paying off for the cycling team this year.

“The cycling team continues to excel as we follow the example of our varsity peers in being outstanding student - athletes. We are working hard in preparation for what looks to be another successful season.”

In the summer, Dowling continues to ride with the WBI Investments non-collegiate team, comprised of a number of college and graduated cyclists, including three other Bucknell graduates. Dowling says he plans to continue riding with the team after graduation, and is working towards a higher level of racing than he has attained before.

“I could say volumes more,” says Dowling. “There have been a lot of growing pains in overcoming these obstacles, but the team continues to grow and strengthen.”

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The Bucknellian

Volume 139, Issue 2 (February 2, 2007)

This sports feature, created for the campus newspaper, tried to capture Dowling’s story and personality while chronicling the birth of the campus cycling team under a 700 word limit.