

What's new in bike racing? How about tandem road racing and the Duet Cycling Classic stage race!

They really go fast, and that's fun!"

"I'm a cyclocross person. I'll try anything with a bike."

"This is refreshingly different."

"This may need a whole new tactics book."

"This" is tandem road racing — some 300 pounds of riders and machine perched on two skinny tires, taking wet turns at spine-tingling speeds, attacking one-kilometer uphill time trials and averaging over 30 mph while making the rounds on criterium courses.

Tandem road racing is a format that's long occupied one of the more obscure burners on the cycling stove. That is, until Russell Morton, a veteran Category 1 racer from Eugene Ore., met a passionate stoker from Los Angeles, Ray Patterson, at the January 1988 Long Beach bicycle trade show. They talked, rode, talked some more. Morton came away intrigued by the notion of racing the big rigs.

For 13 years a half dozen tandem teams filled a sluggish moment in the agenda of the annual Mt. Tabor Races, part of Portland, Oregon's Rose Festival. Morton had observed the contests from three perspectives — as a race official, as the state's United States Cycling Federation representative, and as one of many racers waiting for their individual events. "It was more of a freak show than a bike race," he recalled. Still, the 10-mile spurt of giant bikes and mismatched teams that was over in a matter of minutes had caught his attention.

Upon returning home from Long Beach, Morton convinced his employers, the Burley Design Collective, to sponsor a four-day road stage race for tandems over the July 4 weekend. The event was dubbed the Duet Cycling Classic, and as requests for race entry forms came in, Morton's confidence in the concept grew.

The couple of dozen Category 1, 2, and 3 racers who entered the Duet Cycling Classic also seemed to enjoy the idea of having a stage race for tandems. It was as mixed a field as you are likely to find in a single open category: seasoned road racers (i.e. newer masters category riders) of the postwar baby-boom generation looking for a new challenge, young turks just hitting their stride, and a couple of male/female teams.

They took on two 45-mile road races, a one kilometer steep uphill time trial, and a one-hour-plus-a-lap criterium. Despite intermittent showers, the speeds were

fast, the sprints competitive, and the teamwork tactics, well, novel. "I was pinching Butch's butt, anything that would seem to work at the moment," said Dan Vrijmoet, stoker on the Team Co-Motion tandem.

Co-Motion battled both sides of the hills with the teams from the Beaverton Bike Club and Emerald City Velo to grab the general classification lead. All three captains displayed iron nerves as they piloted wet curvacious downhills at nearly twice the posted speed for automobiles. First BBC, then Emerald got away, but Team Co-Motion continued to rope them in next time around on the climb.

"At the Duet we found out that the camaraderie of working together that much and being able to hold it together for the whole race was a chief element to success," said Morton.

Alan Scholz, captain of a tandem sponsored by Advanced Training Products, more or less concurred with Morton. "If there's not many hills, it gets to the real thing — compatible styles," he explained. "If the stoker won't accommodate the captain's style, then it doesn't matter if they're national caliber singles racers or whatever."

Scholz, with his brother Hanz as stoker, were in contention on g.c. until mechanical failure relegated them to play chase in the second road race. Nevertheless, they stayed with the program, even outsprinting Team Co-Motion for the criterium win, if "sprint" is the word for it. "The wind-up on these things takes so long, we had to begin on the backside, into the 10-mph wind," said Scholz.

"We tried passing everyone on the outside from about fifth place. They came out of nowhere on the inside [on the second to last corner before the finish straightaway] and hit the corner first," verified Co-Motion captain Butch Boucher (pronounced Boo-shay).

And everyone's misgivings about crashing seemed to have been for naught. "I was a little reluctant to get in there and rub shoulders on a tandem at first," said Del Scharffenburg, captain of the Beaverton Bike Club tandem, "but this was actually one of the safest crits. I'd been in."

"Tandem racing may be safer than singles racing," said Morton, "It's so hard to do a sudden lateral move; you can't just go two or three feet to the left suddenly."

Perhaps just as important as the racers' reactions to the event were the impres-

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