

THE MAGAZINE OF FLORIDA CYCLING ENTHUSIASTS

# Florida Cycling Magazine

**Ride Faster Further?  
Sugar and Oxygen**

**FCM Interviews Greg LeMond**

**Touring Events:  
Miles for Hope  
Six Gap**

**LIVELONG BENEFITTING LIVESTRONG  
RIDING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW**

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## Specialized 2011 FSC Series #1

### Women's Race Report

By: Geri Laverty

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Tallahassee, Florida - How time flies! A year has flown by since I returned to Tallahassee from a racing hiatus and now I'm here again.

The plan was to leave late Saturday morning with some guys from The Bike Room in St. Petersburg, Quentin Leer and Marshall Eli. I was kind of hoping to make the 3:30 time trial, but not totally committed, and we were cutting it close on time. My friends don't really "train" (yet) - they mostly just ride for fun and drink plenty of beer for recovery afterwards. Full of excitement to attempt their first mountain bike race ever, and the first race of the series, we set off from the bike shop to begin our five hour drive to Tallahassee. There were threats of rain in our area and I wondered what the weather was going to be like in North Florida.

We arrived around 2:30 Saturday afternoon - an hour

to go before the time trial. I was feeling drowsy and relaxed from being a passenger on the long drive, and decided to skip the early pre-race jitters and the time trial. I didn't think I was going to be able to do all of the races this season so I didn't need the extra points anyway. We found a nice spot to park and got ready to practice the course. I was thrilled because it was an absolutely gorgeous day out—sunny blue skies and not too humid—and I was excited to show off these cool trails to the "newbies".

Tom Brown Park is known by Florida mountain bike racers as one of the best racecourses in the state! The well-maintained trails are mostly hard-packed and flowing single-track full of twists, turns, and whoop-de-doods with a few gradual climbs. Some of the terrain is orange clay and not only is there is a BMX course you have to maneuver through; there is another section with a lot of jumps that is also like a BMX course but on a much larger scale.

On Sunday, the races began with the presentation of an American flag to Dave Berger of Goneriding.com

by rider and military helicopter pilot Mark Legaspi to commemorate the tenth anniversary of 9/11. He gave a touching speech and reminded us all of that dreadful day, but how it brought the whole country together. After the National Anthem, we also had a moment of silence in memory of the 9/11 victims, one of which was my stepmother Anna Laverty.

First the kids race their little hearts out at 8:30! Then the White wave went off at 9:30, mostly “Base” or beginner class. My friends went off first in the Base 19-29 age group and were to do 2 laps, a total of 13 miles. I commend them both for racing Base and not “Novice” class. The Novice class is for beginners who are really new at mountain biking and the course is 6.5 miles. Quentin and Marshall were up for the longer race in the Base class! Quentin wrecked several times, but still managed to have a blast out there, while Marshall managed to keep the rubber-side down more. They got the fifteenth and sixteenth place spots. Based on Marshall’s lap time, he would have won the Novice class. Hey, not bad for their first race!

Then it was my turn. Carolyn Van Vurst, Jennifer Moos, Belinda Williams, Tracey Wallace, Steffie Penco, Heather Davis, Shelly Allen, and myself were the eight women Expert/Pro racers on the start line for our 11:30 start in the Yellow wave. We were to do four 6.5 mile laps, 26 miles altogether. I knew that was a long race but I told myself, “Not a problem!” I’ve been racing in the mountains for the past several months doing the Southeast Regional series and the Tallahassee course seemed easy to me compared to all the climbing in the mountains I’ve been doing, so I felt ready. One thing for sure, I was going to have a good time out there on a fun course, and I had great support with Marshall and Quentin ready to hand me gels and water bottles each lap.

The whistle blew and the mad dash across a long, wide field ensued! I pushed hard trying to get into position. The last place I wanted to be is stuck in the back. I knew Shelly Allen was going for the hole-shot because of our conversation while we were spectators during the White wave. I also had planned on getting the hole-shot, but when I saw her right in front of me, I fought to get on her wheel and stay

there so nobody could come between us.

Into the woods we went, with Carolyn right behind us. Into the first gradual climb, Carolyn came around and took the lead. I stayed on Shelly’s wheel feeling like we had a nice pace, pleased knowing that we had gapped half the field. Not long after I found myself losing ground and Jennifer Moos came around me without much hesitation. I felt I didn’t have the strength in my legs and settled into a fourth place position and tried to ride at a fast, but safe, pace. But, I was alone out there without anyone in sight to catch.

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Sometime during the second lap I saw who I thought was Shelly on the side of the trail trying to fix a mechanical. I wasn’t positive it was her, and I didn’t know at the time that she had a flat tire. I kept going hard, but I half expected to see her again out there. I told myself I was now in third position, and I tried hard to keep up my speed to maintain it. During the SERC series, I got caught towards the end of some of the races, and I didn’t want that to happen this time so I worked on maintaining my speed. Some guys from the





Sport Class would pass me, and I would get on their wheel and try to keep up for as long as possible.

After each lap I would come through before the finish line where our tent was set up and Marshall and Quentin handed me a Gu or Power Gel, and a water bottle. It worked out perfect. Even with the support, going into my fourth lap my legs were starting to cramp, and I was feeling hungry—a classic “bonk”! I thought to myself that the next race I must eat more. A lot more. I shouldn’t feel this hungry! I went into preservation mode and soft pedaled so my legs wouldn’t lock up completely and I just hoped I wouldn’t get caught by the next racer behind me. Somehow I managed to finish the final lap and cross the finish line only about one minute 45 seconds ahead of fourth place Belinda Williams. That was close! A few more miles and I would have gotten caught!

“...during race results and podium, they decided to do a mustache contest!”

Podium: Carolyn Van Vurst came in first, Jennifer Moos got second place, and I ended up in third place. I also want to mention another podium “contest” they had at the race that weekend. It all started with Ryan Woodall, the young man who won the Tallahassee race, and wins most of the mountain bike races in the state of Florida, deciding to grow a mustache. To describe to you how fast he is, let me just say that his average speed at the race was 15.62mph. My average speed was 12.08. Anyway, someone started a page on Facebook: The Ryan Woodall MTB Mustache club, and then during race results and podium, they decided to do a mustache contest! There were children and adults alike out there with fake mustaches glued on, and it was really funny to watch. I think Ryan won that contest, too!

The next Florida State Championship race is Sept. 25th at Fernandina Beach, Jacksonville, an awesome race venue, and FSC # 3 will be at Haile’s Trail, in Gainesville. For more results and race information go to [www.goneriding.com](http://www.goneriding.com)

