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The last hurrah

Mt. Hood Cycling Classic ends on high

By ADAM LAPIERRE
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“With mixed emotions” is how Chad Sperry describes Sunday’s successful end to the 11th and final Mt. Hood Cycling Classic. “Satisfaction,” he says, after growing the event from humble roots in the early 2000s to one of America’s top elite road racing events for several years running; and “sadness” in knowing that the amazing 11-year ride is over.

Talking Monday while packing up equipment from Sunday’s Three Summits Road Race, Sperry has precious little time to reflect on the end of the Classic before he and his crew at Breakaway Promotions moves on to the next event — the nine-day Ride Sun Valley Mountain Bike Festival in Idaho, June 29-July 7.

“The Mt. Hood Cycling Classic has been a huge passion for us over the

years, so it’s sad to see it end,” he said. “But there’s also great sense of accomplishment in what we were able to accomplish. We brought the best of the best, not just in the country but the world, to the Gorge. To bring that caliber of athletes here to compete on our home turf has been an amazing experience to be a part of.”

Citing a variety of reasons — mainly dwindling corporate and industry sponsorships — Sperry announced this spring that 2013 would be the last run for the HMCC. But although the event itself hasn’t netted money in several years, Sperry’s Breakaway Promotions, an event company spawned from organizing the HMCC, is doing quite well.

After next week’s world-class mountain biking competition and festival in Sun Valley, the company moves to Central Oregon for the Cascade Cycling Classic, followed by Wine Women and Wheels in Sherwood, Obliterate in Seattle, the Masters Road National Championships and the Leadman Triathlon in Bend and the Columbia Gorge Marathon in Hood River Oct. 27.

“We’ve got a few days to get the equipment dried off, loaded up and then hit the road for Idaho,” Sperry said. “This year’s event was another success and a great way to end things. The race was very clean, very few mishaps and the top pro finishers were about as close as I’ve seen in the history of the event. We also dodged a major bullet in terms of weather on Sunday and conditions turned out to be pretty ideal.”

Heavy rain forecast near Mount Hood on Sunday didn’t materialize, and rather than riding slick roads in a downpour, racers faced intermittent drizzles and balmy temperatures on the final, most physically demanding stage of the event. The evening before, conditions were near-perfect for the spectator-lined Downtown Hood River Criterium (stage 3), and before that the time trial stage (The Dalles to Hood River) was run in windless conditions that, Sperry said, were the calmest he can recall in all 11 years of the event.

“The best way to end the story is to offer a sincere, heartfelt thank you to all the businesses, individuals, volunteers and community members who helped make it such a success over the years,” Sperry said. “For a community as small as Hood River to host an event of the size and caliber as the Mt. Hood Cycling Classic is unheard of. I can’t thank the community enough or all the support we received over the last 11 years.”



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CHAD SPERRY,
Mt. Hood Cycling Classic race director



Photos by Adam Lapierre and David Mackintosh

WORLD-CLASS racing over the weekend in the 11th and final Mt. Hood Cycling Classic. Pictured here is action from all four stages of this year’s event, from the rolling hills east of The Dalles, to downtown Hood River, to the north side of Mount Hood.

