

THE CONVERT: ONE MAN'S SWITCH FROM RUNNING TO RIDING

Masters Cycling

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UPHILL BATTLE

HILL-CLIMB'S PAIN
IS ALSO ITS APPEAL

THE COMEBACK

TERRY ROACH RETURNS
TO THE WINNER'S CIRCLE

MUD BATH

Walberg comes from behind
to win Cyclo-cross Nationals



Coming back, again and again

Accidents don't deter world-record holder Terry Ann Roach

IF YOU RACE BICYCLES, the time will come when you crash or go headfirst over the handlebars. You probably will break bones, maybe worse.

Real bike racers eventually get back in the saddle.

Terry Ann Roach is a real bike racer.

Throughout her cycling career, Roach has had numerous bike crashes and injuries, but the 55-year-old from Phoenix always has returned to racing. In the process, the Masters cyclist has won 10 world cycling championships.

The two most recent victories took place in Sydney in October 2007. "Lining up with many past Olympians that now compete on the Masters circuit was such a thrill," said Roach, who set two world records at the meet. (She won the 500-meter time trial with a women's 55-59 world record of 41.729 seconds and won the 2,000-meter individual pursuit with another age-group record of 2:49.467).

At the Champion of Champions gala dinner, Roach was named Overall Champion for the 55+ age division. Fresh from her 14th National Women's 2,000-meter IP win in Trexeltown, Pa., in August, the title in Australia was "the icing on top of the cake" for this cyclist who has come back from debilitating injuries.

Her most recent accident occurred in February 2003. On a mountain bike training run, Roach crashed, landed on her head and broke her neck. Surgeons eventually fused three of her vertebrae. The injury kept her out of racing for three years.

That accident was preceded in 2002 by another wipeout. "I crashed, breaking ribs, puncturing my left lung, and other riders



▲ Showing her medal: Roach in a typical spot, on the podium.

rode over my back and neck," Roach recalls. "I got back to riding the end of May, went to nationals in Colorado Springs in August and set national and world records (in the women's 50-54 age group) faster than my age 45-49 times in the 2K IP and 500 TT."

Roach's worst accident may have been a

car crash in 1977, which resulted in a decade of back pain, degenerative disc disease and fibromyalgia, leading to major back surgery in 1987. The experience had a profound effect on Roach, who was inspired to earn a graduate degree in exercise physiology and eventually developed her own body mechanics program. In



1991, she founded Body Stabilization Training, a program that uses yoga, martial arts and other techniques to heal and strengthen patients. Over the years, her clients have included golfer Jack Nicklaus, Olympic swimmer Misty Hyman, the Phoenix Suns and Seattle Mariners.

Around the same time she launched her business, Roach began experimenting with biathlons and short triathlons. A marathoner, Roach found that cycling resulted in much less pain. She fell in love with the sport.

By 1994, Roach was winning some local Arizona cycling races. She might have

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—Terry Ann Roach

stayed at that level, but in 1996 she met cycling coach John Serra. He saw Roach ride at the Valley of the Sun stage race in Arizona.

“He told me I was fit all wrong on the bike, but that he could make me into a world champion,” Roach said. So at age 45

in 1997, she joined the pro women’s bike tour, winning two Masters National Track Championships and breaking the world record by 14 seconds in preliminaries at Manchester, England, as a complete unknown.

In the finals, however, Roach’s rear wheel jammed. Her closest competitor caught her on the first lap and won.

“Looking back, this was the lowest moment in my cycling career,” Roach said. “Expecting to win the championship, since I had beaten the world record by 14 seconds, this was absolutely devastating.”

But Roach had a taste of competing at a high level. She couldn’t get enough of it. In the years since, she has won numerous Masters national and world championships. Perhaps her most satisfying accomplishment was placing sixth at the U.S. Olympic Trials in 2000.

And her litany of comebacks was capped in Sydney with that win and record at 500 meters that was unexpected.

“I had a horrible start, going off the track but just thought, I’m at the Worlds, get your butt in gear and get going!” Roach said.

She described standing on the podium after the race listening to the national anthem as one of the greatest moments of her life.

“At 55 years old, I have no intention of stopping racing permanently, as that is the beauty of Masters racing,” she said. ■