

↓ ACTION FIGURE ↓

RIDING LESSONS

IN THE LAND WHERE LANCE GOT HIS START, A DIFFERENT ARMSTRONG IS MAKING IT COOL TO RIDE FOR SCHOOL.



"If you're passionate about something, it's addictive," Armstrong says.

n At last spring's inaugural Texas state championship race, four boys and three girls from Wichita Falls waited intently as the director of the Texas High School Cycling League, Andrew Armstrong, announced the final standings, from last to first. "And, finishing in second place," said Armstrong, "Birdville High." The Wichita Falls racers erupted with excitement, then ran up to receive their first-place plaque. "Ask your school to place that in its trophy case," Armstrong instructed as the kids posed for photos.

Armstrong, 25, who discovered bike racing while attending

Boston College and now teaches theology at Jesuit College Prep in Dallas, hopes to mimic the recent growth of collegiate cycling at the high school level. Roughly 30 students from across the state attended the state championships, the final event of the 16-team league's spring schedule. After the race, BICYCLING sat down with Armstrong as he reflected on last season and planned for the next.

HOW HAS THE CYCLING COMMUNITY RESPONDED TO THE LEAGUE?

The community has been great. I'll be in a Pro 1 or 2 race and someone will roll up to me and say, "Hey, how's the high school league going? I've got this old frame I want to donate." We've also received support from local bike shops and from alumni. The Jesuit club has everything you need to start riding—shoes, helmets, jerseys. I'm warehousing it in my apartment.

HOW CAN RIDERS START A CYCLING CLUB AT THEIR HIGH SCHOOL?

Find a couple of students who want to represent the school and a faculty member who wants to help. Also, if the parents say, "We want this for our kids," the school will respond. Around

October 2005, a junior told me that he wanted to start a club. I told him that if he got the club approved I would take it from there. By the next day he had gathered the required 10 signatures from interested students. By November we had a small group of students who would meet after school to ride a couple of times per week. At the same time, a local racing club, Team Bicycles, Inc., was recruiting at high schools for its junior team. In March 2006, we joined forces to promote a high school-only race. We were the first in Texas to have a USA Cycling-registered high school cycling team.

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Some of Armstrong's athletes are hardcore riders; others "have a more stroll-in-the-park attitude," he says.

WHAT OBSTACLES HAVE YOU FACED?

Schools are cautious because of the perceived liability. However, you can register your club as its own USA Cycling team, which provides insurance benefits.

IS TRAINING SAFELY IN DALLAS A PROBLEM?

We started out in a neighborhood with a mile-long loop and no stop signs. It's an easy 10- to 15-minute ride from campus. Then I found out from some students that their

friends had said, "I'd come to practice, but I don't want to be seen in spandex on campus." So now we practice at White Rock Lake, a 10-mile loop in the middle of the city. It's the primary training destination for cyclists. There, it's cool to be on the bike and in spandex.

HAS THE LEAGUE ATTRACTED THE STATE'S TOP JUNIOR RACERS?

We had a handful out there today, but they mostly focus on their own racing calendar. My long-term vision is to see the league more legitimized as a high school sport. If it gains varsity status, kids will be able to use it for their PE credit. Some kids in the league are seasoned athletes and they really understand pushing their bodies to the limit. Others have more of a stroll-in-the-park attitude. A couple kids hadn't done anything athletic. Now they're starting to consider themselves athletes. They feel good about that, because they've always been the kids who didn't make the team.

ANY FUNNY STORIES FROM WORKING WITH NOVICE RIDERS?

Last year I did have to let a kid know about the protocol for wearing spandex shorts—that they're the only thing you wear.

PERSONALLY, WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF DIRECTING THE LEAGUE?

It's my passion. If you're passionate about something, it's addictive. Other people go, "Wow, he's really into that. I wonder why? Let's go see." Plus, when I want to get a ride in, it's also team practice.—*Ian Dille*

BIKES ON THE LOOSE

8 GREAT CLUB RIDES—AND HOW TO JOIN IN

THE RIDE	THE VIBE	THE 411
Veloteers Bicycle Club's Gladeville Sunday Morning Ride (Mt. Juliet, TN)	50-mile endurance ride, 14–17 mph	Wilson Bank & Trust, 8875 Stewarts Ferry Pike; visit veloteers.org for time
Gyros Cycling Club's Saturday Ride (Raleigh, NC)	50–100 miles on scenic country roads; 17–22 mph; 2 groups	Location varies; email tony@raleighgyros.com for more info or visit raleighgyros.com
Orange County Rebel Riders' Tuesday/Thursday Rides (Irvine, CA)	2 or 3 routes, depending on demand; ride length depends on how much daylight is left	Windrow Park, 6 p.m.; ocrebels.com
Summit City Bicycles' Saturday Urban Ride (Fort Wayne, IN)	30–50 riders total, with groups for all abilities; postride dinner	Irwin's Bike & Sport, 5500 Merle Hay Rd., 5:30 p.m.; irwinsbikes.com
Pittsburgh Off-Road Cyclists' End of Monday Monotony Ride (Pittsburgh)	A mix of city streets and trails; skill instruction provided	Parking lot next to Remedy, 5121 Butler St., 6 p.m.; porcmtclub.org
Longview Bicycle Club's Wednesday Nighter (Longview, TX)	30–40 miles; no whining allowed; know your way home	Woolley G's Bike & Fitness, 4410 N. Hwy. 259, 6 p.m.; longviewbicycleclub.org
Charlottesville Triathlon Club's Tuesday Social Ride (Charlottesville, VA)	18 easy miles; postride pints	Main Street Market, 6 p.m.; sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/cvilletri
Bicycle Doctor's Bike Event (Dousman, WI)	28-mile training ride with 2 groups and postride treats at shop café	Bicycle Doctor, 105 N. Main St., Wed., 6 p.m.; bikedr.com

Tell us what's cool about your club's ride: BICYCLING@rodale.com