



Andy Schmidt of Lake Geneva earned a gold medal at the 2016 USA Cycling Amateur Road National Championships in Louisville, Kentucky roughly one year after being struck head on by a Ford F-150 while training. (Photo courtesy of Weldon Weaver)

# Collision course

## Local teen overcomes car accident to win national cycling title

By David Michels  
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As 16-year-old Andy Schmidt pedaled across the finish line at the 2016 USA Amateur Road Cycling National Championships, he threw his hands to the sky, exhaled, and cheered along with the crowd.

Not just because he was victorious, although he did win.

Schmidt made sure to revel in the crowd's ovation because this precious day was one he feared he'd never see.

And he almost didn't.

A head-on crash with a Ford F-150 nearly put a premature end to his cycling career — and his life — on June 15, 2015.

While training for the 2015 national championships last summer, the Lake Geneva native was struck by a pickup truck during a routine exercise, breaking his leg and putting his eight-year cycling career in jeopardy.

Ever since, Schmidt has worked tirelessly to reassert his goals and return to the sport he loves, spending countless hours training, lifting weights and undergoing physical therapy.

And instead of folding, Schmidt claimed not one, but two medals at this year's championship in Louisville, Kentucky, bringing home a gold medal, as well as a bronze.

The shine of Schmidt's newly-minted accolades pales in comparison to the feats he's performed in private, however.

"I guess he's a cliché, because he has the heart of a lion," Schmidt's cycling coach Mark Fasczewski said of his dedication in a phone interview Sunday.

Fasczewski has coached cycling for more than 20 years and Schmidt for three.

He recognizes what it takes to make it to the professional level of cyclocross and, he said, Schmidt's got it.

"I think that provided nothing crazy goes wrong, if Andy wants to have a career as a professional cyclist he could probably do it," Fasczewski said.

"He has the determination,

motivation, will power, drive, desire that you see out of professional cyclists. He doesn't know what quit means."

### Head-on collision

Even when things did go wrong, it wasn't enough to stop Schmidt.

With roughly one week remaining before the 2015 USA Amateur Road Cycling National Championships in Lake Tahoe, California, Andy and the rest of the Holowesko Citadel cycling team were going through the final stages of their training in Aspen, Colorado.

**"I had no time to react," 16-year-old Andy Schmidt said of the oncoming truck. "I hit it and I remember just feeling nothing."**

"We went out on a training ride, and this was the first training ride we split up on because we all had our own intervals to do and we all have different coaches," Schmidt said. "Our coaches wanted us to do different things that day, so I was actually by myself."

There's a small computer attached to the bike, Schmidt further explained, the purpose of which is essentially to monitor the effort put out by the rider.

During the ride, he briefly checked his instruments to gauge his progress, but when he looked back up it wasn't the road he saw stretched out before him.

Instead, it was the grill of a Ford F-150.

"I glanced down ... to make sure I was on track for my interval," Schmidt said. "And I look back up and right in front of me there's a truck, like two feet away, and I had no time to react."

"I hit it and I remember just feeling nothing."

Bystanders reported that the truck launched him up into the air, roughly eight to 10 feet off the ground.



Andy Schmidt earned two medals at the 2016 USA Cycling Amateur Road National Championships last month, taking first in the criterium race and third in the time trial. (Submitted photo)

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## Regular season finale

### Latest YMCA softball scores and standings

By David Michels  
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The calm before the storm. This week marks the last before two of the Lake Geneva YMCA's summer softball leagues, the Major and Senior Softball Leagues, delve into the depths of their postseason schedules.

Below are the latest scores and standings from this week's slate of contests as teams prepare for their respective play-off pushes.

#### Friday Night Softball

Fat Cat's remained undefeated with a 15-10 win over Foley's, extending their record to 8-0.

WLKG FM Radio likewise maintained its firm grasp on second place in the standings with a 16-6 romp against Timmy's Tools, as well as a 21-9 shellacking of Help Wanted.

Merry Water Farms also downed Help Wanted, winning 20-10.

Lake Geneva Golf Cart bested Stinebrink's 13-11, and Advocate emerged victorious over the He-Bros.

#### Standings

Fat Cat's	8-0
WLKG FM Radio	7-0
Stahulak Concrete	5-0
Foley's	5-2
Timmy's Tools	4-4
Merry Water Farms	4-4
Advocate	3-4
LG Golf Cart	3-5
Matustik Builders	2-4
He-Bros	2-6
Help Wanted	1-7
Stinebrink's	0-8

#### Major League Baseball

In a battle of first place teams, it was Rae's Towing who held the upper hand over Peck & Weis, defeating the heating and cooling aficionados 9-7.

Rae's also bested Basso Builders 12-0.

Meanwhile, Peck & Weis dropped its second straight, losing to GLP Automotive 14-11.

GLP also defeated WLKG 96.1 FM Radio 4-3, while Voyager Capital Management and Basso Builders logged a 4-4 draw.

WLKG went on to win its second game of the week, however, defeating Upper Crust Pizzeria 8-5.

#### Final Standings

Rae's Towing	9-3
Peck & Weis	8-4
Upper Crust	7-4
Voyager	5-6-1
GLP Auto	5-6-1
WLKG 96.1	4-7-1
Basso Builders	1-7-3

#### Senior Softball

Season leader Spinal Rehabilitation Center of Lake Geneva ended the regular season atop the standings, logging two final victories over Kokodynski Orthodontics (7-3) and Lake Geneva Chiropractic (11-9).

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# Cycle/Schmidt was ‘praying for rain’ entering final race of championship

Schmidt said he also recalls the moment when he plummeted back to earth, and the splitting leg pain that followed.

Oddly enough, the first thing on his mind post-impact wasn't his immediate health, nor that he'd effectively cheated death in this potentially fatal collision.

His first thought was of competing at the national tournament, or, more succinctly, not.

“I just immediately knew that my nationals that year were over,” Schmidt said.

It wasn't until minutes later, when he was off the road and awaiting the paramedics, that the potential long-term ramifications of the accident dawned on him.

“I knew there was no chance I was going to be racing nationals and then, there were moments, like after I'd kind of limped to the side (of the road), that I thought I wouldn't be able to race again. Just because of how much pain my leg was in, and I was worried that something really bad happened to my leg where I wouldn't be able to race again.”

Thankfully, Schmidt's injuries weren't that severe.

He did fracture his left tibia, as well as acquire an assortment of scrapes and bruises, but despite splitting his helmet in half Schmidt suffered no head trauma.

“Obviously, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was,” he said. “You don't want to have a fractured leg, but I was lucky — it wasn't as serious as it could have been. I could have broken my neck. It could have been a lot worse, so I was just grateful that all that happened was a hairline fracture on my tibia.”

### Worst nightmare

That same sense of relief wasn't present back in Lake Geneva, more than 1,000 miles away, however.

Parents Chris and Tammy stayed home in Wisconsin while Andy traveled to Aspen, and on June 15 they received a phone call that is every parent's “worst nightmare come to life.”

“Especially as a parent of a cyclist,” Chris said. “He trains a lot on the road and, as we know, people are distracted drivers, between

phones, texting and things like that. That's always on our mind.”

Chris and Tammy left for Chicago immediately, determined to be on the next flight to Aspen, but Mother Nature had other ideas.

All flights were grounded due to inclement weather, leaving the Schmidt parents no other option but to return home.

Eventually, the two found a flight from Milwaukee to Denver, from which they rented a car and drove the rest of the way, but not until days later.

“That head-on collision, he's lucky,” Chris said. “We're very fortunate that he walked away like he did. We have people that we know who have been paralyzed and, if we can send any message through this, it's just be careful. A text message isn't more important than somebody's life.

“Some people, to gain two or three seconds, everybody's so impatient. At the end of the day, we've all got to care about each other.”

### Road to recovery

It takes more than a 4,000-pound pickup truck to keep the kid off his feet for long, though.

Despite being laid up with a full-leg cast, the accident only managed to keep Andy off the roads for a month before he was back on his bike.

Andy began pedaling again in late July, he said, and by the end of August he was cleared to compete in cyclocross once more.

That being said, however, he was hardly racing at 100 percent.

The sole purpose of Andy's physical therapy was to heal and regain the strength in his broken leg in order to avoid a muscular imbalance.

What was overlooked in the process was the pain in his back.

“When I was recovering from my injury, we focused a lot on my leg and nothing else,” Andy said. “And actually, the day after I got hit I noticed my back hurt more than my broken leg did.”

And even after spending innumerable hours in the weight room and physical



Andy Schmidt took first place in the criterium race for the 15/16-year-old age group at the 2016 USA Amateur Road Cycling National Championships. (Submitted photo)

therapy, the muscles in his right leg still dwarfed those in his left.

The strain of trying to keep up with his dominant right leg wreaked havoc on the left side of his back as a result, exacerbating the injury and plaguing him for the whole of the cyclocross season, from September to January.

“When he got back on the bike he was putting out so much power on his right leg that it caused the left side of his back to work harder to try and even it out,” said Chris.

And for seemingly each step Andy took on the road to recovery there was an equal step back.

“It was just a crazy amount of things he had to overcome,” Fasczewski said.

The worst of it came during the cyclocross championships in January, when Andy's back locked up to the point he could barely finish the race, let alone compete.

And to see his son struggle like that after all

the adversity he'd already endured, that was the hardest thing to do as a parent, Chris said.

“To see him work hard through coming back and then have arguably the worst race of his life in terms of sheer suffering — I've never seen his face suffer more than he did in those national championships for cyclocross,” Chris said.

“As a parent, you feel horrible for him. As a parent, I had felt like he had had enough lessons, and he should be able to reap the benefits of his hard work.”

That was the breaking point.

Following the end of the season, Andy decided to take a break from his bike indefinitely, opting instead to commit himself to getting healthy.

The family went so far as to contact a trainer from California to identify and assess the problems caused by his leg and back, as well as prescribe a rigorous new regimen of massage and physical therapy to help heal his maladies.

“At least five days a week he was down in the basement doing his core stuff, his back stuff,” his father said.

“I've seen so much dedication and he's worked so hard. I mean, he's always had just an insatiable drive to do well, he's highly competitive in everything, but you see him putting in that hard work, the things that nobody sees, that nobody cares about really, and to me, that makes him different than the guy who maybe has a lot of talent and doesn't have to put in the work.

“That makes it that much more satisfying to go out there and put it on the line and come away with the win.”

### Full circle

And satisfying it was.

After nearly a calendar year of rest, therapy and more training, Andy was finally ready to compete at the 2016 USA Cycling Amateur Road National Championships in Louisville, Kentucky; the same tournament he was preparing for prior to his accident.

The four-day competition kicked off with the time trial on June 30, and that's where Andy made his triumphant return, finishing third in the event with a time of 28:57.52.

“Going into it, I wasn't expecting anything, which I think almost helped me,” Andy said, admitting that the time trial is his weakest event.

“It was probably the best time trial I've had in my life ... so I was super pumped about that and excited for the road race, because the road race is kind of my specialty.”

Road racing is a more traditional form of racing, Andy said.

Whereas the cyclist is alone on the course racing against the clock in the time trial, the road race is against other bikers.

And the trick is, Andy explained, that it isn't just the strongest racers who win.

It's more cerebral than that.

You also have to be the smartest, employing tactics on when to attack, when to draft, when to conserve energy and when to sprint.

Unfortunately, the results didn't match his expectations.

Despite running with the front of the pack for the majority of the race, Andy cramped up near the end, again plagued by the effects from last year's accident.

As a result, he ultimately finished in 32nd place with a time of 2:02:14, and was forced to watch as the other racers spurred ahead down the final stretch.

“Obviously, since I

cramped up it didn't go as I hoped, but I still think I raced as well as I could race and that left me extra hungry for victory in the criterium,” he said.

And in the criterium, the ravenous Schmidt would not be denied.

Entering the final race, Andy said all he could think about was his injury, the work he had done to overcome it and the constant setbacks and pitfalls that had haunted him throughout the year.

Through it all, he'd persevered.

And this was his moment.

### Praying for rain

The criterium race is similar to the road race, but consists of multiple laps around a shorter course in lieu of one long circuit.

“I just went into that race with a really good mindset and obviously it paid off,” Andy said.

He also went into the day praying for rain, hoping that a steady downpour prior to the race would make the course too slick to handle for the other contestants.

“I'm really good in those conditions,” Andy said, citing his background in mountain biking.

“Since the road gets so slippery it definitely takes a lot of bike handling skills and since I used to race off road I'm a pretty good bike handler.”

And that's putting it lightly, according to Fasczewski.

“Andy has incredible bike-handling skills,” the cycling coach said. “Probably in the top one percent of his 15-to-18-year-old age group. He has incredible bike handling.”

And, fortunately for the Lake Geneva teen, his prayers for precipitation were answered.

The course was drenched come the start of the race, causing nearly half of the 79-athlete field to either fall out of contention or crash.

And as the front runners continued to jockey for drafting position entering the final mile, Andy knew it was time to make the winning move.

“Everyone was looking at each other to see what the others are going to do,” Andy said, and while their pace lulled he decided to attack, sprinting ahead, refusing to so much as touch his brakes through the final 90-degree turn.

“I mean, his bike slid sideways and it didn't phase him,” Fasczewski said.

Andy clinched the gold with incendiary speed, winning decisively with a time of 44:16 that did more than just secure first place.

It also validated a year of pain, uncertainty, hard work and strife.

“It definitely meant a lot, winning that about a year after I got hit, just because I thought I wouldn't be able to ride a bike again,” Andy said.

“Just all the work I put in over the last year, training, rehabbing my leg, rehabbing my back, the moment I crossed the finish line, I can't describe it, it was just amazing.”

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# YMCA/Senior softball standings

Central Vending finished second in the standings and logged two wins in the final week of the regular season as well, downing the chiropractors 13-5 and Kokodynski Orthodontics 9-8.

### Final Standings

Spinal Rehab.	10-2
Central Vending	7-4
LG Chiropractic	3-8-1
Kokodynski Ortho.	2-8-1