

Age no barrier for cycling star

Roach returns from injuries, sets 4 records

By Jim Gintonio
The Arizona Republic

Terry Roach, one of the top female velodrome racers in the country, reached the pinnacle of the sport in only four years, setting six national and two world records.

Big accomplishments, for sure. But they take a back seat to her mental toughness: She set four of her records this month after suffering serious injuries in a spectacular crash during a bicycle race in Parker in March. She suffered a punctured lung and broken ribs, and fellow competitors rode over her, raising fears that she might also have had a broken neck.

Giving up competitive cycling never crossed her mind.

"I was just off my bike for a month," she said. "I did better than most people expected. I had to take it slow building back up again."

So when she went to the Masters National Track Cycling Championships in Colorado Springs two weeks ago, she didn't know what to expect. That was compounded by the fact that she had to take three weeks off in July because of the effects of heat exhaustion.

Despite the problems, she broke her own records in the 2,000-meter individual pursuit with a time of 2:36.4 in eight trips around the 250-meter outdoor cement track.

She is now preparing for the World Masters Track Cycling



Tom Tingle/The Arizona Republic

Scottsdale's Terry Roach, 50, set two national and two world marks at the Masters National Track Cycling Championships on Aug. 11.

Championships in Manchester, England, Sept. 15-21, and the World Masters Games in Melbourne, Australia, Oct. 5-13.

One of her top performances came in the 2000 Olympic Trials,

when she beat women 30 years younger and finished in sixth place.

"I'm stronger now than I've ever been," said Roach, who lives in Scottsdale and is the founder and president of Body Stabilization Training. "I'm faster at (age) 50 than I was at 46. And I think I can go faster."

"I'm not sure how much longer I can do this at this level. But I'm very fit, and it makes me feel good. I have no aches and pains, and with all the orthopedic problems and ailments people have in today's society, I plan to be active for a very long time."

Racing at the elite level involves many commitments, including flying to the nearest velodrome, in San Diego, every weekend. She races for medals and championship jerseys. A year's worth of races around the world can set her back \$10,000.

She used to run marathons, but after back surgery in 1987, she turned to cycling, riding in local races. When she decided to try velodrome racing, she was surprised to find that she was a natural.

"I never realized I had the talent," she said. "I knew I had some riding talent when I finished in the top three in road races, but I never had cycling goals or aspirations. I never dreamed I'd be in this situation, 50 and winning."

"Most riders have been doing this for a long time, since their teens. I feel lucky I got the opportunity."

Her training techniques surprise those both in and out of the sport. Although she rides six and sometimes seven days a week, some of her workouts last for only 30 minutes.

Another of her strategies involves sleeping in an altitude tent, which simulates an altitude of 10,000 feet, and breathing hypoxic air.

Terry Roach

AGE: 50.

RESIDENCE: Scottsdale.

OCCUPATION: Founder and president of Body Stabilization Training. Formerly taught physical education in elementary and high school, and worked for the Center for Sports Medicine.



EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in physical education from Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas; master's from Arizona State in physical education with an emphasis on exercise physiology.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regarded as the one of the best velodrome cyclists in the world despite not taking up the sport until she was in her mid-40s. Holds six national and two world records.

PARTING SHOT: "This is a great spectator sport. The people are right there and can see all the action. A velodrome is what Arizona has to have if we expect to have any Pan Am Games here. Maybe someday it will happen."

"I started sleeping in it on May 1 to get ready for the altitude in Colorado and had absolutely no trouble," she said. "What the tent does is help you perform with less oxygen at a very high level. One of the best methods for training is sleeping high and training low."

Reach the reporter at jim.gintonio@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-8380.