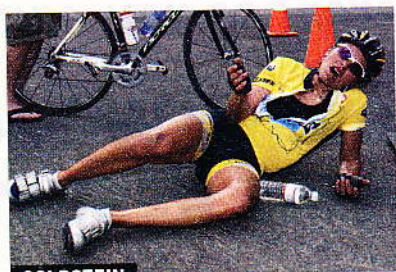


FORMER SOLDIER, KICKBOXING CHAMP GUTS IT OUT AT MT. HOOD



GOLDSTEIN

If there was a defining image of the May 29-June 3 Mt. Hood Cycling Classic, it was of two-time defending champion Leah Goldstein collapsing on the ground following the pivotal 89.5-mile stage 5 trek up to Mt. Hood Meadows Resort. Goldstein had endured a barrage of countless attacks from the Aaron's team that tried in vain to dislodge her overall lead. Upon crossing the line 1:24 down to stage winner Felicia Gomez, Goldstein had to be assisted off her bike.

"They murdered me out there," said the 38-year-old with dual Israeli/Canadian citizenship as she sat on the ground, where she remained until the podium presentation 30 minutes later. "I was in the Israeli Army for six years. I was a world champion kickboxer [in 1987], and it was easier than this. No one has ever hurt me like that before."

The women's race saw 2005 world pursuit champion Katie Mactier show up for her first road race since the track World Cup season ended in March. Riding for ValueAct Capital, the 2004 Olympic silver medalist took the first two stages, including the 3-mile stage 1 prologue, only to drop down the general classification when Katherine Carroll (Aaron's) took stage 3 and the overall lead on a hilly climbing day. Waiting in the wings was Goldstein, who stepped up and destroyed the field over the stage 4 time-trial course, beating second-placed rider Beverly Harper (Webcor Builders) by 59 seconds.

Gomez and two of her teammates attacked Goldstein dozens of times throughout stage 5, the last day to gain significant time before the closing criterium. But the Symmetrics rider, whose sole teammate Marni Hambleton had been dropped, chased down every single aggression until she let Gomez slip away in the final kilometers.

"That was the most painful day of my life," Goldstein said, adding that she had been in too much pain to eat during the stage. "I tried to make some allies, but nobody would help me today. I never rode so hard in my life."

Afterwards Gomez could only concede she'd been beaten by the stronger rider. "We threw everything we had at her," Gomez said. "She is tough, very, very tough. She deserves to win."