

# Really bad case of road rash

**B.C. SUPERWEEK:** Goldstein back in saddle after near-fatal crash

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So picture this: You're riding a bike at 70 km/h down a steep mountain road in a tight pack of riders. Someone swerves. There's a crash.

You fly head-first off your bike, your face hits the pavement and becomes a brake. Most of your teeth are smashed and the impact literally scrapes your lips off your face. Also broken are your right arm, collarbone, pelvis, several ribs and cheekbone.

That's what happened to Vancouver cyclist Leah Goldstein on July 7, 2005, in a near-fatal crash during the Cascade Classic near Bend, Ore.

This Saturday, Goldstein will be back on her bike, part of the Vancouver-based Symmetrics team that hopes to win the Tour de White Rock criterium, the opening event of B.C. Superweek.

"I do feel lucky to be alive," Goldstein, a road warrior if ever there was one, said Tuesday after a training ride up and down Mount Seymour.

"My face basically stopped me," she said of the accident.

"It was horrendous. I could feel my skin burning off. My bike was broken in half and my helmet was shattered. Well, actually, my body was shattered. I broke everything from top to bottom. I had road rash all up and down and lots of stitches."

Goldstein still has nerve damage around her mouth. Her lips have been replaced.

"Thank God I had a good plastic surgeon," said Goldstein, who still needs a lot of dental work.

In pain and lapsing in and out of consciousness, Goldstein remained on the side of that Oregon road for 1½ hours before being airlifted to hospital in Bend, where she stayed in the trauma unit for 10 days. She was then flown to St. Joseph's in Vancouver, where she spent another 13 days.

But Goldstein, 37 and still focused on representing Israel in the 2008 Olympics, never thought about quitting. The first thing she did when she regained consciousness was wiggle her toes. She could feel them move.

"I said, 'Hallelujah, I'm OK,'" she said. "The next day when I woke up after surgery, I knew I was going to ride again."

The doctors weren't quite so certain. They told her she'd probably never be able to ride competitively. Sports shrinks told her to prepare for not being able to ride again.

Obviously, they didn't know who they were dealing with. Goldstein, a former world kickboxing champion and an Israeli commando who taught self defence to that country's special forces, had her own ideas.

"Leah is amazing," said Symmetrics co-founder and manager Kevin Cunningham. "She's so strong and tough. She's as tough a person as I've ever met."

Goldstein spent three months in a wheelchair. She wasn't supposed to move, but she badgered her mom and sister into driving her to the track at Eric Hamber Secondary School so she could work out.

"The first time out there, it took me a couple of hours just to get around the track," she



Vancouver cyclist Leah Goldstein will be back in action at the Tour de White Rock this weekend after a horrific crash last year, in which she was severely hurt. — FOR THE PROVINCE

said. "I made it around 17 times by the time I got out of the chair."

Goldstein started riding again in January. The first few times were pretty weird.

"I was kind of wobbly when I first started riding," she said. "It was like I'd just had three bottles of vodka."

But things straightened up in a hurry. She's faster now than she was a year ago and has been winning consistently, including a road race last month at Mount Hood, Ore.

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