



**Rider Roster:**

Chase Renick  
Mike Margraf  
Eric Riggs  
Clint Rogers  
Sean Van Horn  
Noah Young

## Team Swift Race Report #17

### Tour de l'Abitibi

July 2004  
Quebec, Canada

### Cuumulative Individual Results

7<sup>th</sup> place Chase Renick

### Cuumulative Team Results

5<sup>th</sup> place Team Swift

Maillot brun (meneur du classement individuel):

\* Chris Stockburger (Etats-Unis)

Maillot orange (meneur du classement aux points):

\* Michael Vanderaerden (Belgique Kon.Balen)

Maillot bleu (meilleur junior de première année):

\* Chris Stockburger (Etats-Unis)

Champion grimpeur de la 36e édition du Tour de l'Abitibi :

\*Jean-Michel Schweyen (Belgique VC Ardennes)

### Race Description

Founded in 1969, this classic cycling event represents the one and only North American event of the Junior World Cup. Each year, the best junior cyclists give themselves a rendez vous in Abitibi at the end of July to run for this prestige competition. Team Swift and Lombardi, another local Bay Area Cycling Team, combined forces to compete at the Tour de l'Abitibi in Quebec. Chase Renick and Mike Margraf attended as representatives from Team Swift this year. Chase finished 7TH Overall in the General Classification and Mike finished 26TH.

## Chase Renick

Tour de l'Abitibi  
July 2004  
7<sup>th</sup> Place Overall

### Stage 1

The Monday opening criterium was the first stage and I knew that it was going to be extremely fast, mainly because it was only 7 laps equivalent to 15,4 kilometers. Well I was right and the pace was so hard the first few laps that many people could not even finish the first 4. I had taken on the idea that I wanted to finish every race with some confidence so I wanted to see the front. I was unable to see the very front but I was five guys back, which for me was plenty of wind. In the end I finished thinking that if this race was going to be this hard all week I was in for a real treat.

### Stage 2

The team time trial along with the individual were the greatest two contributing factors to winner in this race I had heard. Therefore, I wanted to be on peak physical and mental performance from the start. I team was very strong and I warmed up probably not long enough. The pace was fast but it was different than a time trial in the sense that you crucified yourself, or at least I did, when I was at the front. About 4 k to the finish I totally popped but with my help and a great team we finished 4th in the team GC. Not bad

### stage 3

The first road stage had me a little worried because you do not know what to expect when you have never encountered anything like something before. The towns were packed with people who added to the excitement and chaos of the race because fans were pumped but riders became for sketchy. I road near the front all day because I did not want to crash and my legs felt good. In the end I held my position and I felt so excited at the different style for racing. Everyone that was there would agree that to win this race you need good legs but a stronger head. The race can be won off of someone more intelligent on the finishing circuit than someone on the road burning himself out. Interesting heh

### stage 4

The time trial in the mine was an experience to have but not to repeat because it is hard to race in those conditions. The mine is meant not to keep you warm and ironically the only thing we are trying to do in the mine is warm up. The dampness changes the temperature so much that when you finally exit the mine it almost like someone is choking you or something. Anyway my TT was fair but not that great, but there were a lot of good time trialists that did not do well in the conditions either. I was in 28th GC or something like that, I was not happy and I wanted to change it.

### Stage 5

Later that evening there was a road race and it started raining on the way to the race. I was nervous about racing with already sketchy riders in the sun and now I was going to do it with them in the rain. Anyway when we

arrived there was a massive tail wind so I knew the word "crash" was going to become very familiar. Well soon enough about 1/4 into the race there was a mass pile up with about 45 riders including the leader. When I got out I was so scared and so adrenaline pumped I went to the front. I felt this urge to attack because I felt so good. Soon I was by myself for about 1k then 2k then 3k and finally Stockburger bridged up to me and a few others guys. Laura told me not to drive the pace so I basically did not work the whole time. When we came into town we had a 2 min gap on the field which in l'Abitibi is basically unheard of. I had my chance to win a stage and I messed it up really bad trying to help Stockburger take the win. I obviously still have not gotten over it but I am definitely happy I listened to my gut the first time. Thanks Laura

#### Stage 6

Now my tactics had changed quite a bit because as leader on my team in the GC I needed to seal that position in the end. There were still 3 really hard and sketchy stages left so I was pretty nervous. Well just my luck the field was pissed the next day that a break got up the road so nothing went. But at the same time the field was so anxious that we had the fastest day so far in the race. I got involved in a scary, massive, pile up luckily Stockburger was in it again and we chased along with 30 other riders back the in the main field. When the day ended I thought this is not the end don't let your guard down the hardest is yet to come.

#### Stage 7

This road race was pretty exciting crazy and fun. The first 11k or 12 k were the rolliest in the race thus far. So it was interesting to see how everyone felt with so much flat riding. I road near the front and felt absolutely great I went with 5 or 6 breaks and decided that nothing was going to go. Perhaps a simple day but I considered it just as successful as any other day of riding because I did what I love to do.

#### Stage 8

The 32 lap crit was hard up until the last 3 laps. Why would I say this? Funny story, I was freaked all day about crashes and I wanted to ride strong at the front. Well at about 5 laps to go I needed water bad, I drink more than the rest of my team mates and I need water but they were out too. So I yelled at our support at 4 to go for water. He ignored me and I was pissed. Then I came at 3 to go and he said "You don't need it" I was so angry I could not feel the pain anymore I move up like 30 positions in just that one lap and came by the next lap to yell at him. He ran away or hid himself because he was nowhere in sight. Anyway that one move help set me up for a secure finish and I was like 57th or something. But interestingly I was 8th GC until the last lap and the riders got careless. AT the 80th rider there was a split, like some one let the gap open or something, and the 7th placed rider lost 10 sec which moved me to 7th and him to 8th. It just goes to show that you have to be on your toes until you cross that finish line. All in all Nathan was wrong man this race was awesome. (Referring to a previous email from Nathan Miller who wrote about lasts years Abitibi Trip)

PS: I missed a stage when we did a 25 lap crit but I could not remember

when it happened. Don't worry it was not that exciting.

Sincerely,  
Chase Renick (ferocious animal)

## **Mike Margraff**

Tour de l'Abitibi  
July 2004  
26<sup>th</sup> Overall

Chase and I went straight from Superweek in Wisconsin, to Quebec, Canada for the Tour de l' Abitibi. We almost missed our flight out of Montreal and when we get to Val D' Or our bags were missing. Reading past race reports from Team Swifters, we seemed to be right on track for this race. Missing flights, lost baggage - all the great things that make life just that much more interesting. However, we were able to get all our bags on the morning of the prologue so things worked out in the end.

The Tour de l'Abitibi is the largest junior stage race in the world, with 27 teams and 162 top cyclists from around the globe, including South Africa, France, Japan, and Belgium. For this special event, we joined up with Team Lombardi to make a very solid team. This race is 7 days long, with 9 stages (some days there were two races) ranging from the two short time trials to 116 km road races. The entire race is well supported with large follow caravans and enthusiastic crowds. I couldn't wait to get started!

The race started out with non-stop crashes and I got caught in the middle of one, but it was just the prologue so my time did not count for the overall. The Team Time Trial was the first stage and I knew we could put in a good time. There were 27 teams that started so I was hoping for a top ten finish. We worked really well during the time trial and I knew we had a good time going. Going into a roundabout with only a couple of kilometers left, we had our speed up above 35 mph and one of my teammates started to make a wrong turn. He then tried to correct himself but it was too late. So over the curb he went, flipping over the bars. It was something you would see in the Tour de France. Luckily, we only had to finish with 3 guys and we finished with 4, so we all got the same time. We had the fastest time so far! However, three teams would later beat us but we still hung on for fourth place - only 29 seconds down from the US National Team! It was a great way to start out the race because we were all now tied for 19th place on the GC.

The next couple days were pretty uneventful besides always trying to avoid crashes. Stage Four was the individual time trial. It started in a mine which was pretty awesome, and cold. Climbing out of the mine there was a 17% grade for a little over half a kilometer. I felt really good climbing out and I was later told I was in the top ten coming out of the mine. However, as the time trial went on my legs just did not have the power that they usually have. I was having a hard time getting my heart rate up and pushing the pedals. I rolled across the finish thinking I had a 70th to 80th place time trial. I

checked the results and to my surprise I got 31st place out of the 160 cyclists that started the race. Not great, but I'll take it. I now sat in 23rd place overall.

There was another stage later that afternoon and it was cold, wet and raining. After about 10 miles, some French guy decided to get physical with me (the Europeans were extremely aggressive, constantly pushing and shoving in a way that is frowned upon in the states) and shoved me hard into deep gravel on the side of the road. My bike slid out from underneath me and so down I went along with 20 or 30 other cyclists. As I came to a sliding stop (when you are going 30+ mph on the wet it takes a while to stop sliding) I expected my bike to be mangled, but to my surprise it was in one piece. Quickly, I jumped back on and started chasing back onto the peloton. I got back on but I then had to deal with the pain of my road rash which did not feel too good with all the wet road grime washing up against it. We still had another 40 miles so I knew I would just have to live with it. During all the commotion following the crash, a break got off and it eventually built to 18 guys. They would stay away and finish 2:21 ahead of the peloton. I fought my way through heavy winds to the front of the peloton, and we broke away to form a chase group. Unfortunately, going into town we were led to a wrong turn. We were going in and around barriers and dealing with traffic because we were off course and this part of the road was not closed. To say the least, it was a bit sketchy. By the time we got to where the circuit was the peloton was already coming in. So there went our lead. Chase was able to get in the break so he was able to sky rocket up in the GC. He was now sitting in 8th place! During the rest of the stages there were no other breakaways that stuck. I was able to get in a couple but the peloton was not going to let another one slip away.

On one of the stages we had a helicopter follow us and it was great to see the footage from that. It looked like the Tour de France. I ended up finishing 25th overall (out of 162). Our team ended up in 5th place out of 27. I was pretty happy knowing that I was racing against the best in the world. Also, the courses were pretty much pancake-flat, definitely not my style of racing, but I feel that my ability on the flats has greatly improved. This race was all about the two time trials and our team did a great job in both. I felt really strong during the event, in fact, the strongest I have ever felt. For 3 days straight we averaged 28 mph, so racing here in the states is going to seem like a walk in the park! This was a great experience. It is something I will never forget the rest of my life. It once again reminded me that I am so glad I am a bike racer.

I would like to thank my private donors and sponsors who made my travel possible, and Team Swift and Team Lombardi for believing in me and giving me this opportunity. I would like to give a special thanks to Mark Switters, Darrell, and Mr. Riggs for their incredible support (from bike maintenance and team plans to making sure we were well-fed and hydrated) throughout my entire stay. I owe my success in the race in a large part to you guys.

Note: On the flight home from Montreal, the airline showed footage from our race - Hey, I was there!!!

Keep reading and peace,

Mike Margraf

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