

# All Sport – Team Swift Special Report

## Ryan Eastman races with U.S. Junior National Team in Europe 2009

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17 years old  
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*In May Ryan Eastman was selected to go to Europe with the U.S. Junior National Team. All Sport-Team Swift is proud to have a team member selected to participate in these important races with the U.S. Junior National Program. The U.S. Junior National Team house is based out of Izegem, Belgium. During the month trip the races he did were; Interclub Hoboken (Belgium), Course de la Paix (Czech Republic), 3 Ettappen Rad (Germany) and Van Axel (Holland). These are four hard and prestigious races, especially Course de la Paix which is a Nations Cup race. Below are Ryan's Race Reports.*

### First race weekend: **Interclub Hoboken (Belgium)**

After the first couple of days of getting comfortable in the house and a few training rides, including the famous Koppenburg, the team headed to our first race. I am the only first year 17-18 on the team and the others have all done some what similar racing in the past, but not me. This would be my first race with this kind of talent. I guess you could say I was a little nervous, I mean who wouldn't lining up with 200 little (or not so little) Tom Boonens. The race was called Interclub Hoboken.

Interclub Hoboken was awesome. Such a different style of racing. It is so much faster and much more fun. It was crazy because there is all that road furniture that you have to navigate, along with jumping up curbs and racing on the sidewalks. The race had 33 teams and 200 riders!!

I started out in a good position so I didn't have to have the trouble of moving up through all the riders. The race was a total of 114k with two 50k laps and 2 local laps of 14k before the finish. Around the first 50k lap I stayed in the first 15 riders and followed attacks, staying attentive, making sure that I did not miss any of the major moves. Toward the end of the lap a break went and then another group of around 10-15 guys got off the front and it was probably the only break that I did not get in. They got a big gap and it was basically for sure that the winner was going to come out of that.

On the last 50k lap up the short climb I was 6th wheel and the guy on the front killed it up the climb and we dropped the field. There were around eight of us. I looked at my teammate Ian and he told me to go, so I attacked over the top of the climb bringing one guy with me from Avia (the strongest team in the race).

The two of us worked together to close the gap. A couple guys made it up to us

and eventually after another million attacks and regroupings we began an organized chase to get into the front group. Even with all these attacks we were able to stay away from the peloton and finally I got into a solid group of 10 that worked well together.

We finally got the front group (of around 18) in sight. It was extremely hard. We made it and I had a teammate in it so I was not working any harder than anyone else in the chase group, just rolling through. Jacob (my teammate) and I both traded turns of covering moves. When we finally left the big 50 laps and began the smaller finish circuits Jacob and another guy got off the front and it looked like it was going to stick. On the last local lap a group of 3 got off the front and then a group of 7 joined them. So now with around 5k to go. I attacked out of the group to try and bridge up, but I was unable to and I got caught by the group of around 18. From then on I basically just hung on.

The last section of cobbles hurt. I came over the finish line in 28th place. I was pretty happy with my first race in Europe because I was able to be active in the front the whole race, and make the front split of around 30 guys. The rest of the team did awesome as well. We were basically in every important break there was in the race. Charlie got 17th, I got 28th, Jacob got 29th, Austin and Ian were in the group behind, and Andrew flatted out of the front group but came in within a minute of the leader. My next race is Course de la Paix. This race is known to be called the Tour de France for juniors. It is long with 6 stages and is very hilly.

## Second Race Weekend: **Course de la Paix (Czech Republic)**

### Stage 1

Course de la Paix is known as the Tour de France for juniors, and it started today, and I was on the start line. The race went pretty good. To start out it was raining the first half of the race and then stopped for the second half. It was a road stage 90k, lollypop course. Each lap started out with a 5k climb that had a few dips in it.

The first time up was really hard, from the gun it was an all out sprint. No wasting any time here. Up the climb all of our legs weren't ready of the guys on the team and most of us suffered, but we still made it in the front group. The course descends for a while, then onto a fairly long rolling section with a cross wind. The second time up the climb I felt really good, I was warmed up and ready to go now. Once again I made it over in the front group. Still really hard! Third time up the climb, same deal, made it in the front group. From then on it was chill in the pack and wait for the crazy sprint. The race has 150 guys starting and the front group that I was in was probably whittled down to 89 now.

The final 7k is rolling downhill really fast-probably around 50 miles per hour. Then there are two, roundabouts on the down hill toward the finish in the final kilometer. It was insanely aggressive and I lost a few places through the first round about. The second round about is with 500 meters to go. I was sitting in 30th by now and the whole field went to the right of the round about and I took the left side and made up a few places. The final stretch is slightly uphill with cobblestones at 250 meters to go. I started my sprint and got 20th place. I'm second in best young rider, but we have the same time (he just finished 3 or 4 places in front of me. The break stuck with 6 guys, at 23 seconds. So I lost no time to the guys in the sprint. The team road well, I was the first one in with

Austin in 22nd, Jacob in 24th, the rest finished in the bunch losing no time. We attempted to bridge up to the break, Jacob and me but got caught. Andrew almost made it but he was solo on the decent in a head wind so the field caught him. This race is harder than anything I have ever done.

## Stage 2

90k race. 15k from start to the base of the big climb. The climb was 6.5 miles long. For the first half I was able to ride near the top 15, then it started to get super hard, and this is a pretty long climb. I made it over the top in a small chase group about 15 seconds off with the tail end of the front group in sight. We did not have enough guys to be able to catch back on because it was not down hill it was rolling for a very long time now, with 2 shorter climbs around 2k in there as well. The rest of the field caught up on this beautiful ridge that just rolls along. The front group had 48 guys in it, including two of my teammates. There was a 3k climb before you shoot down this super long twisty decent, and then 25k or so of flat/rolling to the finish.

An Italian guy attacked out of the field and I was feeling good so I chased and a group of 7 including me got away from the field as we neared the top with a pretty good gap. The 7 of us went very fast down the decent tacking all sorts of risks to keep the gap. After the long descent the seven of us worked well together on the flat section. Toward the final 5k it was getting really hard but I hung in there. We did not get caught (a success). I was pretty done by the time for the up hill drag to the finish and got sixth in the sprint without any time gaps. I haven't got the results of the time gaps between the groups yet but I know there were 48 guys in that front group, then the 7 of us, then the rest of the field of around 50 that we broke away from. I am pretty bummed that I did not make that front group, I should have. They were right there. But at least I made it a little better by putting around a minute or 2 into the second half of the field that we broke away from. Tomorrow is the Time Trial, and then the longest road stage in the afternoon.

## Stage 3a/3b

Today was the double day and started out crappy (literally). At 5:30am I woke up with massive stomach pains and diarrhea. I felt like I had to throw up too. I couldn't eat any breakfast, so the day was looking pretty bad. I got some medicine from Alex (souigner) which helped a little. The time trial was in the morning and a road race in the afternoon. Since I lost like 3 to 4 min on that front group the day before, and I was sick, even if I did an awesome time trial it would not move me up in GC. So Barney (Team director) had me go easy in the tt and save myself for the stage in the afternoon and days to come, two of my other teammates had the same plan. The other three were to go for it.

As the day progressed I started to get a pretty bad headache. I rode the time trial at an easy tempo to make the time cut. I didn't feel too bad while on the bike, but I felt bad once I got off. The team did pretty good getting 27th and a few in the top 30. The winner of the time trial averaged around 30-31mph (he would later win the road race this afternoon as well). These guys here are unbelievable. We went back to the hotel and got some lunch. I could barely keep down a turkey sandwich.

The road race was 100k with two climbs on each lap and five laps total. I felt

pretty bad and just hung onto the back the whole race. Not much to write about this stage. My legs did not feel so bad, but my stomach did which made it hard today. Basically I'm not too sure what happened at the front but no breakaway succeeded, so it ended in a field sprint. Since my legs did not feel too bad only my stomach I decided to go for it in the sprint. I new I had 400 meters in my legs. The German's were controlling it with 1k to go. The road narrowed and I got shot back halfway down the field. I was around 50th place going into the final 500 meters on an up hill to the finish. So it was a 500 meter climb to the finish on a narrow road. I was able to move up a bit and then toward the top at around 200 meters to go people started to fade and I passed quite a few people and got 32nd place. I felt horrible during this race and went back to the hotel wrecked. Hopefully tomorrow would be a different day. It starts out with a 5k climb at 10% after just 1k into the race.

#### Stage 4

Compared to yesterday things took a turn for the better. I slept through the night, woke up with only a little stomach pain, and was able to eat breakfast. Today's stage is the hardest one of the race. We started out and after only 1k into the race there was a 5k climb averaging 10%. It was a full out sprint for 1k to get to it. I had bad position and spent the whole climb closing gaps. At the top it continues to roll upwards and I had to close a 15 second gap to the back of the front group. I made it and was happy because I was feeling pretty good today. The course proceeded to descend for a kilometer or two and then climb for a kilometer of two. Eventually there was a fairly long descent reaching speeds of 58mph.

Surprisingly most of the juniors here are not that great at descending so I was able to pass quite a few guys and move up to top 15 leading up to the next 5k climb which was right at the bottom of the descent. Up this climb I felt awesome. I did not have to worry about people opening gaps because I was right near the front. Now I could just focus on climbing. The climb was awesome. It was in a canopy of trees all the way up, perfect road surface and grade as well. I was felling great. As I crested the top I was in the front group and in the top 10 or 15 riders of it. This was a big confidence booster. As I was looking around it was pretty nice. This was the most beautiful race I have ever done, the views, the road surface, the racing, just everything, it was a beautiful day.

The next section of the course was rolling for about 30k with a strong crosswind. It was on the border of Germany atop an open ridge. Basically this was the most I have ever suffered on a bike. Six Russians were on the front killing it, single file, strung out, in the gutter, pain. The front group was around 30 riders now and over the crest of each of the 100 rollers I rode far beyond anything I have ever gone before. Then we hit this descent that lasted around 15minutes. It was awesome and basically the only time I was not on the rivet the whole day. After the decent, it was flat for a bit. Then a short 2k climb that seemed like a wall and I had to full out sprint over the top to stay in the front group. Then we went down a crazy descent with a Belgium flying off the road.

About 3k of flat left with a slight uphill drag to the finish. Charlie attacked got chased down. With 1k to go Jacob got off the front with a few riders but they sat up as one of the riders from Slovenia attacked out of that group. The field winded up for the sprint and I was in the middle of the pack. Jacob held his position and stuck it out for 6th

place. Ian got 17th and I got 23rd. A very successful day and our team was very happy. And I was stoked that I made the front group and did not have any stomach pain. Unfortunately Andrew Barked dropped out of the race through. That was the hardest day on a bike I have ever had, and I made it!

## Stage 5

Today was the last day. The cross-section of the course looked like the teeth of a shark. There were 4 circuits on the course. It was basically either climbing or descending. It starts out with a 3k climb, pretty steep. Down a sketchy descent through some towns, onto a big road, turn off the big road onto a road as wide as a bike path that leads into the longer climb that was around 4k, descend after the climb and then do it all over again a couple more times. The race lasted 2.5 hours and we got over 6,000ft of vertical climbing total (that's a lot!!). First two laps I stayed near the front to not waste any energy filling in gaps people open.

On the third lap there was a break up the road of 8 guys and an Italian attacked out of the bunch and I jumped on his wheel, and the two of us worked to make it up to the break. Once we got there it was pretty disorganized. It only lasted for another couple of kilometers before we were caught by the field. Up the long climb I was feeling pretty good as I was sitting in the front 15 guys. Over the top every time I had to punch it so hard to stay in contact. It is just all out every time up every climb. The descent was really fun, at the top of the climb it just opens up and you can see the while valley on you was down the twisty decent with grassy fields scattered with trees on either side of you.

The last lap was by far the hardest. Up the first climb, riders let gaps open up at the top so I had to jump hard and bring them back. It was actually a pretty big gap, but on the descent I dropped the group I was with and caught back on. Man, starting right at the front really helps. Charlie was up the road in a break away for two laps I believe, and on the road he was virtually in third place on GC, but then they got caught on the last lap. The final time up the 4k climb was another moment where I think it was the hardest I have ever pushed my body. After the decent we turned left and headed back toward downtown Terizen for the finish. I was in the front group and there was a break away a bit up the road. Heading into town Charlie and I took the opposite side of the round-about and swung into nice position up in the top ten.

As we turned off the main road onto a smaller one the roads were wet for some reason and it quickly became sketchy. In the final 500 meters there was a crash right in front of me, and I locked up the brakes and went onto my front wheel for a while and slammed my back wheel down while slamming into a Belgium, bumping shoulders, I held it up. The pack was all scattered from the crash and I crossed the finish line in 37th. Finally, I finished the hardest race in the world for juniors. This was a very long and tiring week. I pushed my body further than I have ever gone. This was a beautiful race, the talent here, it is just amazing. I'm pretty sure I finished 47th over all. After I got sick my goal was to just finish this race, I pushed through that day and felt great in the days to go. It was pretty cool racing against countries instead of trade teams.

Next Friday I start 3 Etappen de Rad, which is a stage race in Germany. It is UCI ranked 2.1 so it should be another hard race. Back to Izegem for a few days of easy riding and rest.

## Third Race Weekend: **3 Etappen Der Rad (Germany)**

### Stage 1

Stage one was an 8k time trial. It was 100% fat with three 180 degree u-turns, and the rest was straight with no corners. It was a cool course half of it was totally forested and the other was a little more open. There was not much wind but the clouds were lurking in the distance. My start time was around three in the afternoon. After my warm up I headed to sign in, and then climbed up the start ramp. Our director Ben Sharp was in the car behind me, we had the megaphone on the hood of the car so he could yell at me to go faster.

Down the start ramp I went into the moist shaded forest of Germany, the roads were wet as I sprinted up to speed. Through the time trial Ben was giving me time checks. I was half a minute up on Austin half way through the race so I knew that I was on a decent time. I wasn't really feeling amazing but not horrible, I was somewhere in between. Through the u-turn and back into the forested road I had 1k to go. I needed to keep on top of my 14, through two corners and a sprint with 100meters to go and I finished in 39<sup>th</sup>; 31 seconds behind the winner of the time trial. It was not too bad of a performance; I don't think that I was satisfied with it through (usually you aren't unless you win).

### Stage 2

Stage two was a hilly 86k road race. Distance wise it was a very short race, But I knew it was going to be a pretty hard stage. 40k into the race there was an 8k climb that had some pretty steep pitches on it. There was a barrage of attacks leading up to the base of the climb from kilometer zero. Once we hit the base of the climb there was a break of 5 guys up the road with a minute gap and Ian, our GC guy, said that we need to help to try and bring it back because it threatened his top 10 in overall GC.

I went to the front on the climb and set a hard pace for about 2 kilometers but made sure that I wasn't going too hard because we still had 20 more minutes on this climb at least, then Charlie attacked and the other teams jumped to get onto his wheel. He did not get too far, the field was strung out and it was all back together again. I was slowly drifting back on the climb as the pace was set higher and higher. Due to my efforts at the start of the climb I was losing ground slowly. The grade kicked up to around 10% and guys were getting dropped like flies, I was at the tail end of the field, and a gap was opening up. Near the top it false flats and I was around 15 second off the back. Me and a Guy from the German national team were chasing together, once we reached the top I dropped him on the descent taking risks to catch back on. At this time Charlie was way off the back from his attack and Ian fortunately made the front group.

Things turned out to not be so fortunate up there. Through a tight corner someone crashed out in front of Ian taking him down. His bike broke and he could not ride it. So he jumped on Anders bike and had to chase back on by himself. I could see Ian now and I was not too far away, I eventually caught him and the two of us worked to try and get

him back to the main group. A larger group of around 10 caught us. We went over two shorter climbs only a couple kilometers long, and as we crested the last one before the long down hill to the finish I went to the front and lead Ian down the descent. The two of us went nutz going down this forested descent filled with switchbacks and tight sweeping turns. We were gaping the group and definitely descending faster than the front group we were chasing. We completely dropped the chase group we were in. Now once at the bottom there was only 5k to the finish, totally flat. I went on the front and rode as hard as I could trying to limit the time Ian was going to lose. The two of us traded turns and we were still putting time into the chase group and minimizing the time loss. Over that last 5k we averaged 50k to 52k an hour most of the time. We caught a group off the back of the main bunch, passed them like they were standing still. We crossed the finish line and I was totally spent.

Ian was really bummed that he had the bad luck of getting crashed and losing his top ten on GC, but I think he was grateful that his teammates tried everything to help him. Andrew was in the main bunch, and he had a good time trial the day before so he moved into 11<sup>th</sup> on GC.

#### Stage 4

Today was the last day and it was pretty long. It had like 3 or 4 big climbs and it was awesome beautiful country roads the whole day. I was feeling really good today. Over the Cat 1 climb Andrew was getting dropped so I eased up to get him on my wheel and got him to the top and bridged him back up the front group in the slightly downhill section. The yellow jersey and two other guys got off the front and I attacked out of the group to bridge up to them. I got half way across and I was just stuck in the middle. Not gaining on the break but not getting caught by the field, so I sat up and wasted no more energy. In the final 15k of the race USA raced very aggressively attacking and getting into breakaways. Ian attacked and held off for 4<sup>th</sup> place with Charlie coming in close behind in something like 13<sup>th</sup>. I came in the main field in like 22<sup>nd</sup> or something. Today was a much better day. Andrew also moved into the top ten on the final GC getting 9<sup>th</sup> place.

#### Fourth Race Weekend: **Van Axel (Holland)**

The last race I did in Europe before returning home was Van Axel. It's a UCI 2.1 ranked race in Holland. It was basically all flat with lots of cobbles, except for the last stage which was anything but flat. In the first stage not too much happened; it was a field sprint with a break that was successful, and I attacked with 1k to go and got caught at 400 meters to go.

In the second stage it was a time trial and I rode to a solid 28<sup>th</sup> I believe. I was now 26<sup>th</sup> on overall General Classification.

In the afternoon stage 3 I crashed in the rain on the lat cobble section, but it was within 3k to go so I fortunately did not lose any time on GC, but I did lose the chance to have a crack at a stage win, it was a field sprint.

In the last stage the race went to the Belgium Ardennes so it was very hilly. I felt very strong and comfortable on this course. Getting in to breakaways and attacking thought the day. My teammate Jacob was off the front in a group chasing a break on the

last lap, so I did not participate with the field in chasing him down and the field sprint went up a 700 meter climb and I got second in it taking 13<sup>th</sup> on the stage.

From my performance on the last day I jumped up 10 spots on the general classification moving up to 16<sup>th</sup> on the final GC. I was dreading the cobbles before this race when we pre road the course, but I learned racing over them that I actually like them.

-Ryan Eastman

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