

# Tour de Emerald Coast

## 5 Saturdays in July

*By Dan Steighner*

I'm sure most of you as cyclists have read or at least heard of Lance Armstrong's book "23 Days in July". For those of you who are not aware of this book, it is about the Tour de France. Come July 2010 the Emerald Coast Cyclists will be writing their own history with "5 Saturdays in July", The Tour de Emerald Coast. You got it; ECC is hosting a local stage race for its members. It will be 5 stages with a different stage taking place each Saturday in July.

What will be unique about this stage race is everyone, regardless of your skill level, will be in the hunt for the title of this not so grand championship. You may be asking yourself how this is possible. We have implemented a handicap system that will give slower riders a head start over the faster groups. Each rider will be assigned to a category, CAT1/Main Field (Fast Guys), CAT2/the riders who cannot survive the main field of a local Tuesday night ride and form group 2 and CAT3/riders who struggle to survive group 2 on Tuesday nights. Please understand the Tuesday night ride reference is just that, a reference, to help us gauge rider ability and what category each rider should be placed in for the TDEC.

The handicap system will pre-establish the breakaway, leaving the CAT1 and CAT2 riders chasing the CAT3 riders as they try to cut into their lead, ultimately catching them before the finish or coming up short as a CAT3 rider crosses the finish line first. For a 50 mile stage the CAT3 riders will have a 30 minute head start over the CAT1 riders and 22.5 minutes ahead of the CAT2 riders. We have developed a highly complex scientific formula involving each rider's estimated Vo2 max, BMI and power to weight ratio. I don't fully understand it but our resident rocket scientist, Charlie Helms, assures me it is accurate. Seriously, we do have a slightly less complex formula that helped us determine the head start times but that is "hush hush" and "not ready for public release".

There will also be male/female groups and age groups. Age groups will be 0-59 & 60+. To make things fun we have taken the best young rider competition and flipped the requirement. The Vintage Rider Competition will be held for riders 60+. This will add a little competition within the competition.

There will be awards for the overall Male & Female winners, Age Group winners, and individual stage winners. Participation is paid for through your ECC membership, so the only other thing needed is your involvement to make this a success. So please join the ECC for what we hope is the first annual Tour de Emerald Coast, and join in a little friendly competition. To sign up please contact John Stamp, Charlie Helms or me and we will get you on this prestigious list. Also, please take time to review the format and rules when they are posted in the upcoming issue of the Paceline.

One last thing, we have invited Lance Armstrong but it seems he has a prior engagement for July -- Maybe next year.