

Travis Jass

By Nick Wooly

A flat tire is never good, especially minutes before your first time trial.

As Travis Jass, 28, was in line before the 2006 Iowa Games time trial, his front tire flattened, leaving him minutes to replace it, get in his proper starting place and go. As he and two fellow competitors started changing the tire, James Thacker, a friend, calmly asked, "Do you still want to go?" As Jass answered yes, Thacker told him to stay put and he'd be right back. Jass was 25 seconds late to the start, and a fury came over him as he raced like he had never raced before. When the final cyclist crossed the finishing line, it was determined that Jass had won his category by more than a minute and a half.

This was Jass' second top podium finish of the season. His first win came during a winter roller race. His third win came in the Iowa Games road race on the day following his time trial victory, and his fourth came at the Tour de Webster in Webster City in August. Not bad, especially for a guy who weighed 293 pounds New Year's Day of 2005 and managed to lose 100 pounds in a year.

It started New Year's day 2005 when Jass and three other employees at Shimkat Auto in Fort Dodge each bet \$25 to see who could lose the most weight in three months. Jass won and decided to use the \$100 to buy a used Diamondback road bike. He simply wanted a way to stay fit and keep the weight off and as he says he "kept on riding." While he continued to enjoy riding the Diamondback around Fort Dodge during 2005, he never considered getting into racing or getting serious about cycling.

When asked how he got into racing, Jass replied, "The DNA strain in me." Shortly after New Year's 2006, he stopped into Bike World and met Steve Lauber. Lauber encouraged Jass to try a roller race



Photo by Becky Fletcher

he was hosting shortly and even offered to teach him how to ride on the rollers if he'd show early enough before the race. Unsure at first, Jass decided to give it a try and won his first race. With newfound confidence, he was on his way. The next person to help Jass in his development as a competitor was Webster City cyclist Thad Neil in 2007. Jass had seen Neil's name in racing results and looked up to him as a local rider.

Last year was a breakout season in racing Cat 4 where Jass won the state titles for roller racing, the state criterium title, (soloing the last three laps) and the state time trial without any special time trial equipment. Just to show he isn't a one-discipline athlete, he also has won the Fort Dodge Adventure race (bike, kayak and run) twice in the last three years. He even teamed up with his wife Diane of 11 years to win the Fort Dodge Indoor Triathlon relay the last two years. Jass currently rides for Fort Dodge Trisport with the likes of Craig Jarrard, Eric Knox, Ben Acree and Monica Shelly. His teammates love him, and it's easy to see why. His motivation for training is to work hard so he can help his teammates.

"He really is a super nice guy, too — very, very humble. He will gladly sacrifice placing in a race to lead his teammates out for a sprint. At the Clear Lake Road race, Jass led us out the last two miles to the finish line for us to place second and fourth. He will do anything for you." Jarrard added, "His drive sets him apart from others. He has such a high pain tolerance."

The two words that best describe Travis Jass are commitment and loyalty. His wife, Diane, and two kids, Matthew and Joshua, know this, as do his Fort Dodge Trisport teammates.

Whoever said nice guys finish last never met Travis Jass. ■



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