

## 'Don't think. Just go' Roller Rumble Series — where 20 seconds on a bike feels like an eternity

By Heather Clark / *The Bulletin*

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"The longest 20 seconds of my life on a bike."

That's the comment I heard repeated over and over last Tuesday evening while taking part in the Roller Rumble Series — a one-of-a-kind weeknight bike race in Bend. The race is raucous, high-energy and lighthearted. And, it's held in a bar.

My initial sentiment — "How hard can it be?" — was quickly replaced by: "That ... was ... hard!" — which I managed to utter unintelligibly between desperate gasps for air after giving the race a go myself. Good thing I had a Dark Side Stout nearby to stay "hydrated" between rounds.

The Roller Rumble is a unique kind of indoor bike race. During the Rumble, two riders compete head to head on bicycles: on each racing bike, the front wheel is removed and fork-mounted to a fixed steel bar, leaving the rear wheel to spin atop rollers.

Riders race for 400 computer-simulated meters, pumping their legs furiously in a single gear. The race typically lasts from 15 to 23 seconds, depending on the riders' speed, which among the fastest men can exceed 60 miles per hour.

A 5-gallon plastic bucket is positioned between the riders, just in case someone made the mistake of entering the competition on a full stomach.

Last Tuesday marked the second round of the six-week Roller Rumble Series, which is held on Tuesdays at Silver Moon Brewery in Bend. Racing is open to anyone 21 or older (even the bartenders at Silver Moon get cajoled into racing). Riders race a minimum of one round and up to four rounds for those who advance to the finals. There's no Lycra to be found at this bike race. Participants come clad in boots, sandals, jeans and even dresses.



Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Dan Gilmour, right, competes against Ryan Sperring during the Roller Rumble, a computer-simulated 400-meter indoor bike race, held Tuesdays at the Silver Moon Brewery in Bend.



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Participants are known not by their real names, but by self-selected race names like Spinderella, El Guapo, and Maverick. In the first round, participants aim for a top time in order to move on to the bracketed portion of the competition. Last Tuesday, the fastest eight men and fastest six women following the preliminary races were seeded for the head-to-head second round. Winners continued to move on until the last two riders standing met for a championship final.

Guy Olson, who at the time was working behind the bar at Silver Moon, got roped into racing last year when the Roller Rumble made its debut at the downtown Bend pub.

“It was just so much fun,” said Olson, 26, whose race name is Laredo Winds. “I always come back.”

The Bend resident claims the distinction of holding the Roller Rumble record time of 15.11 seconds — a mark he was unable to duplicate last Tuesday.

The racing itself, he said, “sucks.”

“It’s really bad,” he added, laughing. “It’s the longest 15 to 18 seconds of your life.”

His record-setting strategy? “Basically just blacking out,” he said. “You go as fast as you can. Don’t think. Just go.”

But the excitement surrounding Roller Rumble is as much about the energy exuded by the boisterous crowd as it is about the racing itself. Ben Hoover, a Cascade Couriers employee by day, calls the racers to the line and counts down to the start: “Four ... three ... two ... one ... GO!”

The event’s co-hosts, Daniel Brewster, owner of Cascade Couriers, and Eric Power, owner of Bend Velo, record the results of each race and take turns cranking up heart-pumping, crowd-pleasing music to set the tone for each race. (Who doesn’t get revved up upon hearing the intro to Ozzy Osbourne’s “Crazy Train” or AC/DC’s “T.N.T.”?)

Spectators crouch directly in front of the riders to be close to the action. Once the racing starts, all eyes in the pub turn to the riders, and the rooting and good-natured heckling from the rowdy crowd begins. A projector screen mounted behind the racers displays which rider is in the lead and which is trailing as two colored bars inch closer to the finish mark.

“The louder the people scream, the more it pushes you,” said Olson. “The more people who come down here and are screaming, the better.”

Heidi Faller, 36, known as “Bike Ridie Heidi” at the Roller Rumble, is new to indoor roller racing. Nonetheless, the elite-level mountain biker was the Week One women’s winner and the Week Two runner-up. She said she underestimated just how challenging sprinting a short distance could be.

“It seems easy, and you don’t have a hard gear on the bike,” she said. “But you don’t do that anywhere in racing or riding around ... you don’t spin that fast.”

## Roller Rumble Series

What: Indoor stationary bike racing series

Where: Silver Moon Brewing, 24 N.W. Greenwood Ave., Bend

When: Six-week series; racing begins at 7 p.m. on Tuesdays through April 12

Who: Open to anyone

Registration: Starts at 6:30 on race nights at Silver Moon; cost is \$5 to race, \$3 for spectators

Format: Points are accumulated over the course of the series; overall men’s and women’s champions will be awarded custom medals at the series finale on April 12

Also: Awards and raffle prizes are presented each race night; participants and spectators receive a raffle ticket with paid admission

Information: Call 541-382-2453 or visit [www.bendvelo.com](http://www.bendvelo.com)

And though it seems like the race should be over in a flash, the time can drag on for those on the bike giving it their all.

“I’m trying to figure out whether or not I should breathe,” Faller said. “It seems like I’ve been going for so long. Really, it’s 20 seconds, but you feel like you’re up there for so long.”

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