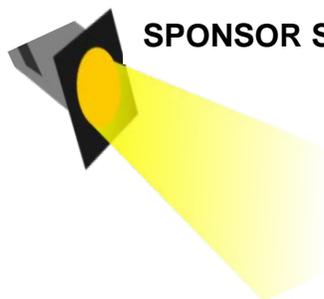


SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT



Skaates Inc.

If you haven't met George Skaates, you ought to. He's been with Pen Velo since the early days. He's a native Nor Cal fixture having been born and raised in San Francisco. Racing since the early '70s. He's been a district champion, raced in multiple states (of mind?) and has been a sponsor of the club for over 30 years.

Before joining Pen Velo, George's racing career was in the impressive royal color of purple on team Masters Elite Racing Team, aka MERT. The team dominated many of the regional and some national races of the time. As a Cat 2, George competed with many of the well-known racers of the day. People like former pro George Mount, Joe Breeze, Gary Fisher, Tom Ritchey, Lindsay Crawford and many others. Quite the group to be banging elbows with every weekend. Looking back, it's not hard to realize the caliber of racing a few years ago was perhaps more intense. It seems Northern California has been cultivating many a neo-pro and pros for a while now. Lots of strong racers just waiting and watching for the opportunity to make their move. Sound familiar? Yep, it hasn't changed much.

Today, you'll find George running Skaates Inc. It's a Hydronic and Plumbing business based out of Burlingame. The company is thriving and servicing many of the companies and clients all up and down the peninsula. Skaates.com On the bike, you'll find George almost every weekend on the club rides. He's the guy on the Time carbon wonder bike. Just don't ask him about changing out tubes; it might take a while. Last time he had a flat it took him three tubes, three cartridges and 25 minutes to make the change. Fortunately, he was surrounded



George heading back on the PV Saturday ride (2018)

by a friendly group of Pen Velo riders who watched and waited...and waited.

The next time you put on your PV kit and you see that Skaates logo on your sleeve, you now know who is behind the support. George has been a racer, a tremendous supporter of our club, he's been a great friend and a trusty wheel to follow at every club ride. Thanks to George for all that you do and have given to make Pen Velo the best club around.

-- Travis Ma



Beat the Clock

The race is on! The race against the clock, that is. Dust off your time trial gear and get ready to ride this premier time trial training series on Canada Road. First one is on Saturday, February 10. All info is on the Pen Velo web site:

penvelo.org/beat-the-clock



The Burlingame Criterium is cancelled for 2018. The city of Burlingame is doing major road construction downtown at the Stack's corner. This directly impacts the race course and racers' safety. We are considering alternative courses. Watch for updates on our web site: penvelo.org/burlingame-criterium

Meet the new Athletic Director: Menko Johnson

As was announced in January, Bill Fallis has stepped aside from his role as Athletic Director. Luckily, the Board has selected a highly knowledgeable and skilled racer to take the reins and oversee the race program. Menko Johnson has been racing for over 20 years and has been a member of Pen Velo since 2009. He recently sat down with new Board member Chris Levins for a quick Q&A.

What made you want to start racing?

MJ: My best friend in high school convinced me that doing a criterium would be "fun." I was 15 years old and had never raced bar-to-bar before and found myself with 50 other juniors racing around the old Ziggurat course in Southern California. The entire race was a blur and I was really scared as we all rubbed bars together. I didn't race a bike again for another year. But I loved riding, and soon got enough experience and skills to feel more comfortable in those large So. Cal races of the 80s.

What is one of your most memorable races or what accomplishments are you most proud of?

MJ: Sometimes you remember a race because of the success you had; sometimes it's not the result, but the extraordinary lengths you push yourself to; and sometimes it's the people around you that makes it special. Winning the Burlingame Criterium in 2016 was a combination of all three of these. I was in a 2-rider break with Sean Estes (Specialized/ Muscle Milk), and I knew I was outclassed after a few laps in to it. Every time he took a pull, I struggled to stay in contact, but that's what made this race so special. Whenever I saw the wheel slipping away, the pain feel like it was too much to bear, I heard a teammate, a friend, a family member, cheering my name along the side of the course. It was an amazing feeling and one that made me cherish being a part of Pen Velo.



What do you have planned for the coming year and beyond as the athletic director?

MJ: When Bill Fallis stepped down as athletic director after 17 years that left some big shoes to fill. Having been intimately involved with the race program for several years, I'm very excited to be moving into the position of athletic director. I will try to improve the experience of being a part of the race team for all Pen Velo athletes. My hope is to continue to expand the race program to meet the needs of the diverse group of racers that we have. This includes riders new to racing as well as seasoned racers who are looking to make it to the next level. I want the Pen Velo racing program to offer something for everyone and meet the needs of all different types of racers.

If someone from the club is interested in riding more competitively or interested in racing, what would you suggest?

MJ: Well, I think back to that first race I did and what scared me was riding handlebar to handlebar with other riders. I had

the fitness, but I didn't have the skills needed to ride closely with other riders and to race. Now with our race team program that we have here, riders can test their fitness on many of our club rides be it the Saturday, Sunday or the Tuesday-Thursday rides around Portola Valley. But once you decide you want to start racing, you need to also build your skillset. Our race program now has clinics with skills drills and many forms of training to help a rider learn all the skills needed to be successful in racing. As beginning racer, the first thing I would want to do is practice some of those skills and learn what it's like to ride side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder with other riders safely.

What do you do when you are not on the bike?

MJ: I'm an Educational Technology Director in Fremont Union HSD where I design learning environments, integrate technology systems, and help teachers use those tools more effectively. Outside of cycling I'm fortunate to have a wonderfully patient wife Cami, and active 14 year old Mattheus who keeps me busy between coaching his soccer teams, taking him to gymnastics meets, and occasionally riding our bikes together. I also enjoy taking our forever enthusiastic dog Athena out on walks to keep it all in perspective.



Get well soon!

Pen Velo sends best wishes for a speedy recovery to Glenn Fetsch who was injured in a crash at the Early Bird criterium on January 14. Hope to see Glenn back at the races soon!

Cyclocross Nationals: A View from the Pits

As Cyclocross Nationals was held on, relatively, home turf in Reno this year it was a golden opportunity to have a strong Peninsula Velo/Summit Bicycles presence for the preeminent event of the season...and show up we did! With 10 riders looking to toe the line it was decided that Clark, Menko and I attend as the de facto pit/go-fer crew to help ease the pressure that goes along with a race of this caliber. The hope was that we could take care of all the small things that have a tendency to add up during pre-race prep and make it easier for our brave 'crossers to take on this world class course (at altitude).

Our task started easy enough with a non-championship race on Tuesday, January 9 with Shawn Becker as our lone competitor. Turns out it was a great way to familiarize ourselves with the layout of the venue and were able to offer advice to those who would be arriving and racing later. We also got a feel of how the pits operated and it was nice to have only 1 "B" bike to worry about. The race saw the only rain of the week and made things a bit snotty but there wasn't any need for bike swaps or power washing and Shawn was able to ride a nice, safe recon and share his experience with the other racers as they filtered in.

Wednesday saw the first of the championship racing and a lone PV'er racing that day, Bill Harkola. With no "B" bike in the stable we were tasked with helping warm-up go smoothly and basically screaming our lungs out.

Thursday was the day where we would see the most action. We had to tend to 3 racers and 3 bikes in an early race (Ken Salvail, Mark Koenig, Ross Tinline), 2 racers and 2 bikes mid-day (Shawn Becker and Steve Hindman) and 5 racers and 4 bikes early afternoon (Basil Moutsopoulos, Martin Kozera, Matt McNamara, Rene Larro, Thomas Switzer and an adopted NorCal racer from Menlo Velo- Miles Keep). I would be lying if I said that I wasn't more than a little bit nervous at the prospect of screwing something up for these guys who had trained so hard to perform in the biggest race of their lives. Luckily the mechanicals were few and the bike exchanges that were necessary were very fluid...plus we were able to get our riders back on their "A" bikes within a half a lap.

Words can't describe the respect and admiration I have for our Cyclocross Nationals team. Watching them battle the best racers in the country on an incredible course from lousy start positions left me in awe. Kudos to each and every one who made the journey and thanks for letting us be a part of it.

-- Brandon Tyler



Left to right: Thomas Switzer, Clark Natwick, Matt McNamara, Brandon Tyler, Ross Tinline, Menko Johnson, Rene Larro, Ken Salvail, Basil Moutsopoulos, Bill Harkola, Miles Keep, Martin Kozera (Not pictured: Mark Koenig and Shawn Becker)

The Early Bird Training Series: A mentor's perspective

On any Sunday in January, when many are either putting in those long base miles or at home on the couch watching football, you can find a couple hundred new racers taking part in that annual NCNCA rite of passage known as the Early Bird Training Series. Velo Promo has been promoting the Early Bird Series in Fremont since 1988, when current Early Bird coordinator Larry Nolan did his first race. In 2018, Larry coordinated the Early Birds with a group of four coaches, including PV Team Coach Matt McNamara. Over the years, the program has been honed and refined, and is now the model for the [USA Cycling Beginning Racer Program](#). In addition to the coaches, the Early Bird program relies on an army of experienced racers in orange vests who assist the coaches in presenting the curriculum, running the on-the-bike drills, and observing/mentoring the practice races. After participating in the EB's for several years, the next logical step for me was to start giving back as a mentor. 2018 was my fifth season as an Early Bird mentor. It has been a rewarding experience for me over the years, helping new racers (including some of our PV riders) learn the pack riding skills that will make them safe racers.

Mentors have many duties including helping with "walk through" demonstrations, supporting the coaches with the on-the-bike drills, and occasionally impersonating a traffic cone! We also mentor the practice races - riding behind the race, observing and offering encouragement (and getting a subtle reminder as to why it's better to race near the front). My favorite part of mentoring is the de-brief after the race. I love hearing the racer's point of view as to how the race unfolded and the occasional "a-ha moment" when someone connects what they've learned during the clinic to a personal success during the race. If I have somehow contributed to that, then I've done my job. It's been a very satisfying five seasons for me - I plan to be back again next year.

-- Yvonne Walbroehl



Larry Nolan

Photo: Craig Huffman



Women's debrief session.

Photo: Larry Nolan



Mentors in action.

Photo: Joseph Siwa



Upcoming Century Rides and Fun Rides

With spring right around the corner, there is no lack of events to fill your calendar. Whether you want to add to your base mile training or just go out and have fun, there is sure to be a ride to suit your needs. To view a list of local rides, visit: [Cycle California](#)

This month we are highlighting the 29th annual Strawberry Field Forever. It takes place on Sunday, May 20, and winds through the roads of Santa Cruz County. For more information or to register, visit: [Cyclists for Cultural Exchange](#).

If you would like to highlight your personal favorite in this newsletter, you may email social@penvelo.org. Please note, however, that neither the newsletter nor the Pen Velo mailing lists are to be used to solicit funds.