



The Georgia Interscholastic Cycling League

31 Barksdale Drive NE

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www.georgiamtb.org

FORMER GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL CYCLIST TRIUMPHS OVER STROKE TO PURSUE PRO CYCLING CAREER

Atlanta, GA - For Release – February 2, 2016 - Former Georgia Interscholastic Cycling League athlete and current Intern, Ben Edwards, suffered a Spinal Stroke at a middle school track meet in 2010 that left him unsure he would ever walk again. And although he still suffers from complications of the stroke, including nerve damage in his right hand and numbness in his left leg and torso, he hasn't let that deter him from following in his parent's footsteps, or pedals, in pursuing a pro cycling career.

Cycling was a big part of Ben's life growing up. Both his mother and father raced collegiate road at West Point, and his mother was nationally ranked. So it was only natural that Ben would eventually get into the sport. Ben had all but given up competitive sports after his stroke in middle school since he couldn't compete at the same level he was used to. In 2012, Ben's sophomore year in high school, he took up his dad's offer to go Mountain Biking with him. ***"Everything about the sport clicked for me,"*** said Edwards. From there he entered his first race, a 6-hr, three-man team with his dad and a friend.

Soon after that, Ben's dad watched the movie, *Single-Track High*, about High School Mountain Biking in California and learned that there would be a league starting in Georgia in 2014. During Ben's senior year in high school, with the help of his dad and team coach, Sam Stroud, Ben and 2 fellow students formed a team in Columbus to race in the inaugural Georgia High School Cycling season. Racing in the most competitive category - Varsity Boys - Ben made it to the podium in Race # 3 with a lot of heart and determination!

At the end of the 2014 season, Ben was asked by League Director, Kenny Griffin, to become involved with the League through their internship program. ***"I immediately said yes! For me it was a no-brainer,"*** said Edwards. ***"The league stands for everything I love about the sport and their aim is to get more kids on bikes; who wouldn't want to be involved in that?"*** Ben's internship duties include assisting during the race season, and helping to coordinate the silent auction for the annual league fundraiser this spring, *Crankin' for the Kids*. GICL League Director, Kenny Griffin, said, ***"Ben is a great role model to all the kids coming through our programs. As an Alumnus, we appreciate all his hard work and commitment, and his willingness to give back to the League."***

Health issues from the stroke have been Ben's biggest challenges in cycling. But, he didn't want his competitive cycling career to end after just one high school season. He wanted to race collegiately! He received a few scholarship offers, but decided to stay in Georgia to race for the Kennesaw State Club team, where he currently serves as the team co-captain. He is studying marketing and would love to work in the cycling industry in some capacity. 2015 was a successful season for Ben as he topped the winner's podium with his first-ever win in a 6-hr race. Lauf Forks, the maker of the world's lightest suspension fork, also signed on as his first sponsor. This season he's looking forward to racing the Collegiate Mountain Bike Nationals and Mountain Bike Marathon Nationals for the first time. He is hoping to make a name for himself; to get him closer to his goal of signing with a pro team.



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Off the bike, Ben is a typical college kid – hanging out with friends and making 2AM food runs. He’s a bit of a music geek, so you might find him at a local record store, attending a concert, or just playing his guitar. He also hopes to get involved in a campus ministry a couple of friends recently started.

But, the bike is where he gets his inspiration. ***“It’s awesome to hop on the bike, escape all the noise, and feel completely free for a few hours.”*** Ben says cycling has had a huge impact on his life. ***“I’ve met some of my best and closest friends through the sport, it has given me so many opportunities, like this internship, working in bike shops, sponsorships, and getting to travel all over the place to ride and race my bike.”*** He takes his approach to life like his favorite cyclist, Phil Gaimon. ***“Phil always finds a way to make things fun or sees the humor in a negative situation,”*** says Edwards. Although Ben says he can’t put into words all the ways cycling has impacted his life, he has certainly put a positive spin on his situation, and hopes to inspire others in the sport he loves!

Connect with Ben through the GICL at: ben@georgiamtb.org , on Facebook at Ben Edwards or on Instagram @benedwardsmtb.

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