

Abbott, Sears win Stenner scholarships
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Mara Abbott and Jason Sears have been named recipients of USA Cycling's annual John Stenner Collegiate Cycling Scholarships.

Abbott, of Boulder, Colorado, attends Whitman College. Sears, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, attends the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Each received a \$2500 scholarship "based on academic achievements, athletic accomplishments and service to the community with an emphasis on collegiate-team involvement and leadership," according to USA Cycling

The scholarship program, funded by donations to the USA Cycling Development Foundation, is named in honor of John Stenner, a 1992 Olympian and former U.S. national team member who was one of the founding fathers of the National Collegiate Cycling Association (NCCA). The 29-year-old died in May 1994 when he was struck by a pickup truck while traveling home from work near Mead, Colorado.

Abbott, a 22-year-old senior economics major, carries a 3.70 GPA in the classroom. At the 2007 USA Cycling Collegiate Road National Championships, she won three gold medals with an overall Division II championship, a victory in the road race and as part of the winning Whitman College team time trial squad.

Racing throughout the season domestically for Webcor Builders and overseas with USA Cycling's women's national team program, Abbott began the 2007 season by winning the Oak Glen stage of the Redlands Bicycle Classic in California, taking the mountains classification and finishing second overall. In May, Abbott won a stage and the overall classification of the Tour of the Gila before placing second at the UCI World Cup in Montreal. In July, she won three more national titles at the USA Cycling National Festival at Seven Springs. With a victory in the elite women's road race, Abbott was crowned both elite and U23 national champion. She also captured a U23 national time trial title.

In August, Abbott was named to USA Cycling's women's national team program and competed in her first European races. In September, she was chosen to represent the United States at the 2007 UCI Road World Championships in Stuttgart, Germany, and is considered an Olympic hopeful for the 2008 Beijing Games. She also signed a pro contract with Team High Road, formerly Team T-Mobile.

Abbott is a member of the NCCA's Board of Trustees.

Sears is a graduate student at MIT where he is a research assistant at the Plasma Science and Fusion Center and secretary of the MIT Cycling Team. He carries a 4.70 GPA with a double major in electrical engineering and computer science and minor in mathematics.

Sears captured an overall national title at the 2007 USA Cycling Collegiate Track National Championships and finished seventh in the criterium at the collegiate road nationals. Throughout the season, Sears also claimed eight top-five finishes in various regional and collegiate events throughout the U.S.

As a member of the MIT Cycling Team, Sears exemplified leadership through various initiatives including the procurement of permanent training space for the team, the organization of off-season training programs and the appointment of a team coach. Sears also led weekly team time trial practices and assembled gatherings of top MIT riders with the goal of deepening their commitment to one another.

As secretary of MIT Cycling, Sears oversees all operating procedures and helps cultivate relationships with alumni and the community. Sears also helps other institutions start collegiate cycling programs.

"The contributions of both Mara and Jason to collegiate cycling throughout the 2007 academic year have been tremendous," said Steve McCauley, USA Cycling director of development. "Their success in the classroom, on the bike and in the community is unparalleled and their contributions define them as the best

all-around collegiate cyclists in the U.S. this year.

"On behalf of USA Cycling, I'd like to thank and congratulate them for a phenomenal year."

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