

In Pursuit of 1.7 Seconds

Estephany Valdivia began racing bikes on her school team when she was 12 years old. She has won the City of Lima cycling competition against 30 other schools for the past three years. The National Team coach asked her to tryout and ride on the local velodrome track. Her times were fast enough to qualify for the Junior National Team when she was 14 years old.

Estephany lives in the rough neighborhood of Callao in the suburbs of Lima. The region is famous on the nightly news for riots, protests and hourly robberies. Estephany lives in an adobe brick house on a rough dirt street where people do not go outside at night and run to the bus stop during the day. Her father is a hard working truck driver making \$650 per month. Her mother takes care of Estephany's younger brother and sister ages 3 and 8 years old.

Her parents are tremendously supportive of Estephany and her bike racing. Half of their income goes toward sending her to a private girls school in the city where she learned to speak English. Her father routinely helps Estephany train in the morning by driving his car behind her at 4:30 AM before the city traffic gets busy. After a 25 mile training ride Estephany heads to school and her father starts working driving his truck.



Estephany with her mother and father at a local race

Estephany's main events are the 500 meter Standing Start Pursuit race and the MATCH SPRINT race. The 500 meter pursuit is basically a drag race where two riders start on opposite sides of the track and go as fast as they can for two laps trying to catch each other. The match sprint is when two riders start together and jockey for position during the first lap and forcing the other rider to take the lead thus providing a draft for the trailing rider. On the third and final lap the following rider then tries to slingshot around the lead rider on the last lap and a wild sprint takes place down the final home stretch. Estephany says she likes the excitement and bike handling of the Matched Sprint races.

During the 500 meter standing start pursuit race Estephany set the Peruvian junior record of 39.6 seconds and broke the previous record by over four seconds. To qualify for the junior Olympic Games in Argentina next July she will need to complete the 500 pursuit in 38.0 seconds or less. She needs to cut 1.7 seconds

from her time. The qualification for the Junior Olympics will be next spring. She is certain with more weight lifting and intense speed work that she will improve her time. She is still only 16 years old and she will get stronger and faster naturally doing the next few years with more training.

I watched a video of Estephany during a recent velodrome pursuit race at the junior Pan American Games in Chile. The velodrome was a beautiful indoor track with a glass smooth cement surface. The facility was quite a contrast from Estephany's dirt streets in her neighborhood. She was wearing her white and red Peruvian National Team skin suit and black aero helmet. She looked more like a Captain America super hero than a 16 year old cyclist.



Estephany on the wooden track in Lima, Peru

At the start of the race the track official held her bike from behind. When the gun sounded she stood up and accelerated her 48 x 14 fixed gear for the first ten pedal strokes up to 25 mph. Then she sat down and tucked into her aero bars going into the first turn. She continued to accelerate to over 37 mph while following the two inch wide line around the inside edge of the track. Without wobbling her cadence was over 120 rpm during the second lap. I asked her why she likes riding the pursuit races and she said it makes her feel like she is flying.

Estephany is very focused on her training and she likes to ride her bike every morning, afternoon and night. She is more excited about getting new racing tires than she is about new clothes. I have known her for three years and I have been impressed with her combination of physical talent and maturity about staying committed to training and going to school. Her classmates think she is a little crazy when she comes to school with skinned knees, elbows and knuckles



Estephany warming up at the Junior Pan American Games in Chile this past September

after a training crash at the velodrome. To save her hands she now uses full finger gloves when racing.

During the past year we have received many donations of equipment and clothing to the PAC Tour Peru Fund. We have sent Estephany many of the nice shoes, helmets and clothing in her size she can use for training and racing. Her dream is to get her own lightweight track bike..size 48cm. Currently she is borrowing a bike from a friend on the team, but sharing bikes is sometime difficult when riders are racing at the same time or changing aero bars for different events.

Estephany is racing at an elite level on the track. Most of the international racers are using tubular tires and wheels which are not available in Peru. She has a nice tubular disk wheel that was donated last year. We are trying to get Estephany a lightweight tubular front aero wheel with 165 gram silk tubular tires which are only used for events.

It has been interesting to watch Estephany's progress and development into being one of the top cyclists in Peru. She is very thankful for the support and donations she has received. She feels responsible to make the most of her opportunity to represent Peru in the next Olympic Games.

