

FEATURES: BEING THERE: MASTERS PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Johnathan Edwards
November 27, 2013



The Masters Pan American Games, held in Guadalajara, Mexico, attracted cyclists from over 15 different countries to compete in track and road cycling disciplines. The games are the continental masters cycling championships held each year for member nations of the Pan American cycling conglomeration (USA, Canada, Cuba, Mexico and the rest of south America including Brazil). Riders competing in the games are usually selected by their national governing bodies, based on their performances at their respective national events.



"Doc" Edwards leads the pack out of Guadalaran corner.

Guadalajara, Mexico, it's a pretty big city—about 1.5 million people. The Pan Am elite games visited Guadalajara in 2011, which allowed for the velodrome, many roads and buildings to be renovated. The wood velodrome in Guadalajara is an indoor 250 meter track with banks at 42.8 degrees and resting at about 6000 ft elevation. There aren't many velodromes like this in the world.

The only rider from USA to compete in the track events was John Platero, in the 55 + category. He competed in 5 events and managed 3 gold medals for his efforts. Interestingly there was another rider from Washington D.C. named Santiago Yeppez. Although he lives in Washington DC, he's racing for Ecuador. As was the case with many of the team Mexico riders, they live in the USA but they compete for Mexico.



Johnathan, Louie and John.

The time trial, road race and criterium were held in the heart of Guadalajara. The roads in Guadalajara are pretty crazy, it's loud and the pollution is ubiquitous. There is a lot of traffic and no one seems to follow the rules. Stop lights don't seem to apply to motorcycles, street vendors everywhere and pedestrians don't use the crosswalks. But the organizers gated the race course off completely for all events.



Louie's TT bike gets the once-over by the ever vigilant UCI.

Team USA was represented by four riders: Louie Amelburu, Johnathan Edwards, Rachel Holczer and John Platero. The UCI referee was very strict about measuring the TT bikes and made a lot of riders change their equipment. No one's handlebars were UCI legal and our seats were too far forward. One might of thought we were at the Tour de France! They weigh your bike and measure it before every race. We were all panicking on how to make our bicycles UCI legal. John Platero was ready to cut his bars with a hacksaw. In the end, in true sporting spirit, other riders showed us how to move our bars and seat in a UCI legal position.



Louie Amelburu won his road race in an exciting sprint finish and John Platero won the bronze in his. None of us placed in the criteriums. All in all it was a great trip. We were invited to a farewell dinner for the delegates at a wonderful restaurant called Santo Coyote. The ambiance and the food were incredible. We sat at a table with people from Uruguay, Ecuador, Mexico, Argentina and the USA. All of us eating, drinking, laughing and sharing tales from home and the past races. Future invitations by everyone to everyone to come visit their country. Sports and the Arts are the grand equalizers. It doesn't matter your color you are or what language you speak, sports makes everyone equal. However, everyone loves a winner. The USA came away with six gold medals and two silver medal. Everyone was happy with that.

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