

Blake Caldwell, Fast and on the Rise – the Interview

Contributed by Staff
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Blake Caldwell, Fast and on the Rise – the Interview -by Amy Bush Blake Caldwell is a rider who, as a U23 rider, found himself on the podium of multiple national championships. This year, as a professional with Garmin-Chipotle, he found himself on the podium of another national championship. This time it was the US Pros National Road Race Championship in Greenville, S.C. where he placed 2nd after an all-out sprint with Tyler Hamilton. I spoke with Blake while he was at the recent Garmin-Chipotle team camp in Boulder and found him to be a very kind and humble man.

Blake Caldwell at US Pro Championships

Amy Bush (AB): How did you decide to become a professional cyclist? Blake Caldwell (BC): I was 7 and living in Boulder and growing up with the Red Zinger Mini Classic. They had a 7-10 year old race and it was my dad's suggestion that I give it a try. That hooked me on it and started the process. From then on, I was always just trying to get better. I wanted to win but also do bigger and bigger races. By the time I was 10 I started traveling around and doing the Junior Nationals and seeing TV coverage of Greg Lemond and then Miguel Indurain at the Tour de France and that's kind of when I got my aspiration there just seeing it on TV and realizing how big of a sport it really was. AB: And you turned Pro in 2005 with TIAA-CREF (now Garmin-Chipotle)? BC: I joined the team in 2003. At that point it was the VMG U23 Junior Development team. Then TIAA-CREF came aboard and the team went professional in 2005. AB: What do you like about riding for Garmin? BC: It's always, even from an outside view, been a team that I wanted to be on. It was an American team and every year, more and more experienced riders came on, riders that I could learn from and I've found that's one of the ways I learn best, just by experience. So, having those more experienced riders on, that was a big draw with Garmin and I'm thrilled that each year they keep adding more and more riders. AB: You seemed to have a little bit of a hard time with such a close loss at the US Pros Road Race Championships. Is that something you've been able to make peace with yet? BC: Yeah, it's something I think about a lot and it's something I hear quite often from other people referring to how close it was. It's something I'm trying to use in a positive way. I have 10 more years as a professional. It's a huge motivational factor for me this year and it will serve as a reminder that every second, every little bit counts---every bit of preparation, every training ride. There's just no one thing that could have gone into that race to make it turn out differently. So I like to look forward and think that everything I do has the potential to make a difference. AB: A little more than a week later, you had your crash in the Tour of Missouri. You mentioned in your blog the next day that you had no memory of the crash. Is that still the case or has it started coming back to you? BC: It's still the case. I don't remember the crash at all. I remember very little of the time trial, just starting out and I do remember how I was feeling. I kind of remember the day a little bit, but, as far as the moments before the crash, I don't remember that in enough detail to even, without other people's help, even guess where I crashed. It's kind of foggy. In a way that's a blessing. It's something I won't be thinking about whenever I'm riding. It's not a fear, it's just something that happened. AB: You had some pretty significant injuries including the fractured pelvis and sternum. How are you healing? BC: I'm pretty much back to normal. Now it's just a matter of getting my fitness back but that's nothing I haven't done before. AB: And you're at the Garmin camp now. How is that going? BC: This is a really fun camp, we're half way through it. It's just a lot of fun. You get to know the riders in a relaxed atmosphere and just kind of get to know each other without the pressure of results or any pressure from outside sources, just to get to know each other for who we are. It goes a long way to contribute to the team atmosphere at Garmin. AB: How do you feel your season went overall, minus the crash? BC: I look back on it and, even with the crash, it's still the best season I've ever had up to this point. It was kind of up and down but it still felt like I was building, building, building throughout the season. I look back and feel like I did a good job maintaining focus throughout the season even with the accidents. AB: Are there any specific improvements that you feel you made this season as a rider? BC: I think a lot of it is just attention to details. My coach, Allen Lim, and I have been working together quite closely this year. Every ride is planned out. Whenever I'm on the bike, it's for a purpose. It's not just on the bike. AB: Did you have any specific goals that you didn't meet or were you looking at the season more just, as you said, a chance to learn more about details? BC: I think, going back to my list of goals for the season, I achieved them all. One was to learn from the other riders on the team, especially Christian, Maggie Backstedt, Ryder Hesjedal. Just to be able to watch them and see the effort and how they got to where they are. You can see that. That was the number one goal. Another goal was to place top 5 at Nationals and I did that. AB: Are there any riders that you think would make a great breakaway companion? BC: I'm just thinking about the guys on the team right now but Tom Peterson is a guy that comes to mind because he's a work horse that never stops. Being on the team with him is very fortunate and he just strikes me as the guy that will never give up. That's kind of what you want to have in a breakaway, someone that will just push all the way to the end. AB: Can you tell me a little about your family? BC: I have one younger brother and both my parents live and work in Boulder. My brother's going to school in Greeley. We're all pretty into cycling. AB: Kind of a family thing. BC: A family thing….yep. AB: Is there something or someone that always makes you laugh? BC: Dave Zabriskie is always good for a laugh. AB: What is one thing you would consider the ultimate accomplishment in your cycling career? BC: Just being a good teammate on Garmin-Chipotle. I think this is a team that, for the foreseeable future, will be at the forefront of American cycling. I'm really proud to be a part of it and I just want to be as significant a part of it as I can be. AB: Do you have any specific goals for 2009? BC: Honestly, I haven't really sat down and come up with a list of goals. Right now there's just a lot of other excitement and dreams about next year.