

National Champion Feehery, McClintock Win Feature Races At Edwardsville Rotary Criterium, Event Is Big Success

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - National criterium racing champion Brandon Feehery of Knoxville, Tenn. and Dr. Amy McClintock of Edwardsville won the men's and women's feature races at the 13th annual Edwardsville Rotary Criterium bicycle races, presented by Busey Bank, held Saturday afternoon and evening in downtown Edwardsville.

The event was another highly successful one, as fans and families enjoyed themselves tremendously in watching high-quality racing from competitors from throughout the region and also enjoyed favorable weather throughout, with sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-80s, with a favorable breeze blowing off and on during the races.

Both the Kids' Zone and Entertainment Zone were packed during the racing as well, as fans of all ages came out to support the event, one of the highlights during the Edwardsville summer. And a major change in both scheduling and the Criterium joining the Illinois Cup tour helped bring more racers out.

"We joined the Illinois Cup this year," said Criterium race director Brian Mulhall. "It's brought in some additional riders that competed for a title at our event, after racing all season. And we've got beautiful weather tonight. The Kids' Zone was packed, the Entertainment Zone's going to be packed tonight, we're going to raise a lot of money for Rotary, give it away. So really, that's what it's all about, support our cause."

The change in scheduling for the races included the movement of the two main races, the men's Pro Category 1/2/3 and the women's Pro race, into early evening slots instead of late night, as has been the case previously, which was a big help for the entire festival. And through connections and sheer luck, the Pro men's race features national champion Feehery.

"Yeah, it is," Mulhall said. "So the Pro men's race starts at 6:30, and they'll race for an hour. The Pro women race at 5:30. We've got a big field for both groups. The Pro men's race, we actually, through a connection and some good luck, we have the national champion criterium racer coming in, Brendan Feehery. It's a real honor. So he is at the top, right now, of all criterium racers. If people understand races, then you get it. But to have a national champion of your sport, whatever it is, in your city, that's quite an honor."

It was an important coup to bring in Feehery for the men's feature race and it's one Mulhall is very proud of. He also emphasized the importance of how the event allows people to escape their problems and enjoy a great time at the event.

"Well, it is," Mulhall said. "And I think it speaks highly of 13 years of the event. The Rotary Club volunteers are amazing. There are 150 people who come in to volunteer for this event today, with a diverse group of responsibilities. To see the people, folks laughing, with all the stuff that's out there today and all the negativity, the news, it's so nice to come out here for a couple of hours and just get away from all that stuff. The kids enjoy themselves, the kids racing, the physical activity of the Criterium and the fans and the businesses. And it's just such a nice time for people to be able to step away."

The event enjoyed another successful year and it's something Mulhall's very proud of.

"I think this is going to be our biggest ridership ever we've had by a little bit," Mulhall said. "We don't crunch numbers, but I'm fine with that. And the sponsorships came through this year; we have 70 sponsors. We set a record on sponsorships. And I'm telling you, the weather cooperated and I just kind of pinch myself when we have these situations because you can't have them every year."

The success of this year's Criterium sets up the tone for the 2024 event, with the third Saturday in August a date that fans and others circle in their calendars.

"Well, it sets up next year nice," Mulhall said. "We've become the third Saturday in August that Edwardsville's the place to be. If you're in Illinois or Missouri or surrounding states, and we'll have racers from over 10 states this year that come in. They

come in every year. And it's a signature event for a one-day race. Oftentimes, these races are two days and you get more racers in, because they get two days to race. But we have a packed group for a one-day race, it sure is."

It's a situation that Mulhall and the race committee are pleased with and they couldn't have asked for anything better.





"No, I mean, we really couldn't," Mulhall said. "i walked around today, I'm happy, I'm tired, I'm sore," he said with a smile. "I'm just praying for racer safety and spectator safety, so that's kind of right now. What you're really saying is 'please, no major wrecks.' Racers go down and they know that. They get road rash and they break collarbones and they break wrists. We just try to stay away from the big stuff, the head injuries and things like that. But that's just part of their racing. They aren't mad when they go down, because that's just part of it. We're at the point of the event now where we want the racer safety, spectators to have fun the rest of the evening until 11 o'clock, everyone to make it home safe and to start planning for next year."

In the opening races, the nine-and-10-year-old boys junior race was won by Grant Goodwin of St. Louis, with the 11-12 winner being Oscar Garner of Glenview, Ill, Edwardsville's Grady Hagedorn the 13-14 winner, Nate Wending of Springfield, Ill. the 15-16 winner and Logan Baugh of Missouri the 17-18 champion. in the girls junior races, Troy's Clare Rose won the nine-and-10-year-old competition, Isabel Armstrong of Glen Carbon took the 11-12 race, while Leno Shelton of Hoffman Estates, Ill. won the 13-14 race and the 15-16 winner was Jenna Honer of O'Fallon.

In the women's Category 4 and novice race, the winner was Anna Ricketts of Hanna City, Ill., with Brenda Bylantis of Westmont, Ill., coming in second and Josie Bylantis, also of Westmont, placing third. in the men's novice race, Dave Oriente of Orland Park,

Ill., was the winner, with Dustin Olson of Highland finishing second and Edwardsville's Drew Scanlan coming in third. In the master's races, Brianna Overbey of Edwardsville won the 35-44 age group, with Lynn Wilson of Kansas City taking the 45-54 category and Leah Sanda of Western Springs, Ill. won the 55-and-over race.

In the women's Category 3 and 4 race, Jordan Gweyn Austin of Orland Park, Ill, won, with Mya Dixon of Reno, Nev. coming in second and Jacqueline Wunrow of Glendale Heights, Ill. placing third. In the men's Category 4/Novice race, Ron Shindell of Reno was the winner, with Justin Ricketts of Hanna City, Ill. second and Chris Henderson of Paducah, Ky. coming in third. In the men's masters races, the 35-44 group was won by Sean O'Connor of Wildwood, Mo, with the 45-54 group winner being Kurt Wilson of Kansas City and the 55-and-over race winner was Chris Harris of St. Louis.

The men's Category 3 and 4 race was won by Carter Lembke of Columbia, Mo., with Jura Gerlach of Heartland, Wisc. coming in second and Minmaurice Fong of Nashville finishing in third. McClintock won the women's feature race, the Women's Pro, with Ashley Weaver of St. Louis coming in second and Olivia Reeve, also of St. Louis, coming in third. In the day's final race, the men's Pro Category 1/2/3, Feeherty won, with Asa Black of Leawood, Kan., in second and Ian Schmurbusch of Eureka, Mo. coming in third.

A total of 235 riders competed in this year's Criterium, with 196 of them unique riders and only 39 duplicates.







[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)