

Yk cyclist aims for the top

Denise Ramsden inches closer to world championship spot

by James McCarthy
Northern News Services

The world of cycling is getting to know Denise Ramsden a little better these days.

The 19-year-old Yellowknife cyclist has been named to the selection team for the 2010 World Cycling Championships in Melbourne, Australia, which takes place in September.

She said it's going to be an exciting time until the final national team is named.

"There's eight in the pool and only six will get to go," she said. "It's one of my goals for the season."

Ramsden's most recent event was at the National Cycling Championships in Edmonton last month, where she managed to stick with the field in the U-23 women's division 127 km road race and cross the finish line at the same time as nearly everyone in the race – clocking in at three hours, 14 minutes and 21 seconds. Her official placing was 15th as riders were counted across the finish line.

Ramsden said her performance there was one of the factors in her selection, but not the only one.

"They took all my races into

consideration to this point," she said.

"I've been racing with the national team in Europe and I raced in Philadelphia in June and I had decent results in all those races. I've been going full bore since March."

Her European trek took her to such countries as Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, where she said cycling is a big deal.

"It's cool to see everyone out on bike paths," she said. "Cycling is a big part of their culture."

Ramsden has been on the national team for two years now, but the last few days have been perhaps the toughest of her life as she had to deal with the death of her father, Dave Ramsden, on July 5, after a brief battle with cancer.

Dave got to see his daughter race one last time at the nationals in Edmonton, where he was receiving treatment, which Denise said was a special feeling.

"He was always very supportive of my racing," she said. "He came the other times to watch me, but we did some finagling and he got to come and watch. It was so great to know he was watching."

The knowledge of her father's illness made her a much stronger

athlete on the bike, she added.

"You think about that on the bike, but he's going through chemotherapy, which is tough, and so you just have to go for it and be tough as well," she said.

Denise rides with Team Kenda, based out of Indiana, meaning she spends a lot of time training in the U.S.

During the off-season, Denise, who was awarded the Mary Beth Miller grant from the Yellowknife Community Foundation, is a biology major at the University of British Columbia. She said she wouldn't be able to travel without support from the North.

"I get lots of support from people who e-mail me," she said. "I also get help from Sport North and the Yellowknife Community Foundation, and that's important as well."

She will be back on the bike on Aug. 3 for an event in France, followed by a race in the Netherlands in September.

Yellowknife's Denise Ramsden has been named to the Canadian national selection team for the 2010 World Cycling Championships in Melbourne, Australia, this September.

photo courtesy of Team Kenda

