



Masters of their World

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Orla Hendron

With only a few days to the kick off of the World Track Masters in Manchester, where Susie Mitchell (Sundrive Track Team) and Orla Hendron (Orwell Wheelers) have a full schedule of events, we caught up with their respective coaches to see what it takes to make it to the top of the world on the track.

The "Mammy" of the women's racing scene in Ireland, Orla Hedron is an example of how hard work, dedication and above all, perseverance can reap rewards. Currently Orla is working with coach Mark Kiely.

"I've been looking after Orla for the last two years but before that she had a great coach in Paddy Doran who already had her in great shape before I got my hands on her" says Kiely, "I just helped with the finishing touches, but to do that you have to have someone who believes in you as a coach and has the ability to believe in themselves, Orla has this in spades and when pointed in the right direction she excelled"

This resulted in Orla winning the 2k pursuit and medalling in the points and scratch in the World Masters in Manchester 2014.

"For 2105 the plan from early in the year was always going to be to defend her World Title in Manchester in the pursuit and with a different approach to training this could and will stand her in good stead to be in better shape in the scratch and points race also"

Mark and Orla divided the racing season using early season as conditioning, cranked it up in the middle up and slim down the operation and then went full tilt for the end goal of the Worlds.

"The preparations so far have gone to plan and we have achieved all the goals we set ourselves along the way" says Kiely.

According to Mark, the plan was very straight forward, train hard three days during the week (two of these days were double days which were short and specific). The weekends were on the track behind the Derry or riding the vets/women's league on Sundays.

Not leaving anything to chance the duo looked into everything extra to gain those vital 10's of seconds like aero helmets, using double discs or front tri spoke, chains, tyres even using different types of skin suits and using/not using gloves.

"I know Orla is in a much better place since last year and better prepared. The more I work with Orla the more amazed I am at her drive and hunger to succeed and always seems to be in great form smiling and laughing all along the way"

Susie Mitchell

Susie, coached by Hugh Byrne races in the 40-45 category this year with her key event the 2k pursuit, where she claimed the title and the rainbow stripes in 2012. I asked Hugh about Susie's training week.

"People might be surprised that Susie's training load mostly comes to less than 9 hours a week. There are of course times when this would increase e.g when doing a 10 day endurance block, or a 4 day track camp. No junk miles here – every hour is accounted for and planned for and more importantly part of a very detailed yearly plan. This plan would be a fluid thing but worked out between rider and coach based on experience, review of previous year and of course new ideas and knowledge gained"

Susie leads a very busy life with her young daughter Tori and travelling all over the country with her job as a fish vet so she relies heavily on rollers and gym work throughout the year.

"When she does visit the track, it is always to do something quite specific and a stopwatch and pen and paper are always involved. She would also do very precise work behind the Deryn with Mark Kiely, who is a black belt in the art of deryn coaching" according to Byrne.

The 2k Pursuit would always be her prime focus and this year she has some top class opposition in the her category with multiple World Champion Erin Criglington (New Zealand) , and a top UK TT rider Melanie Sneddin to name but two.

Susie's total focus is always on improved performance and if that brings reward, then that's great but medals without improvement would be a hollow achievement.

"She has worked too hard for that" says Hugh. "It is, of course always good to work hard, but more important to work smart hard and this is what she does in spades".

Susie will also ride Points / Scratch and the 500m.

Best of luck to Susie and Orla, we look forward to reporting on their progress over the week.

Thanks to Hugh & Mark for taking the time out to chat to us.