Meet a Member: Thomas Logue: Taking the Lead on a Carbon Fiber Bike

By Francine Garrone

Thomas Logue was content with being a couch potato the summer before his senior year of high school—until one day in early July 2005 while channel surfing he landed on the Le Tour de France. He had heard of the annual cycling event and knew who Lance Armstrong was, but never saw the nearly month-long race live. “It was awesome to see cyclists climbing snow covered mountains and sprinting shoulder-to-shoulder,” Logue said. “The whole rest of July I sat riveted to the TV every morning watching Lance win his seventh consecutive Le Tour de France title.”

Following the conclusion of the race, Logue, an undergraduate student at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) and president of the Cal Poly Materials Engineering Student Society that heads the university’s Material Advantage chapter, had to try it. “I asked around and found a friend of a friend with an old steel frame bike,” he said. “I was amazed at how fast the bike was compared to mountain bikes. It seemed like it wanted to rocket out

from underneath me with every pedal stroke.” Logue rode local bike paths a few times a month before leaving his hometown of Los Gatos, California, to attend college in San Luis Obispo. “My freshman year of college I had an amazing time but it felt like something was missing,” he said. “One of the guys in my dorm was on the school cycling team and had two beautiful road bikes. Before the summer started I decided I would buy myself a new carbon fiber road bike and just do it.”

Logue spent his sophomore year training on the hills of San Luis Obispo and joined the California Polytechnic Wheelmen cycling team his junior year. The second fastest sprinter on the team, Logue takes the role of “lead man out.” His strategy is to push his way into a good position in order to ride as fast as possible right before the finish line, launching his teammate into a good position to outrace the other teams’ sprinters during the last 300 yards of the race. “I put out all my energy for my teammates so they and the team can win,” he said. “Helping

a teammate win is awesome because it makes me feel like part of something bigger than just myself.”

During the 2009 road season, Logue helped the Wheelmen place second in their conference. “One great thing about cycling is the team aspect. A lot of people see cycling and think it’s one man out for himself,” he said. “This couldn’t be farther from the truth. For example, drafting (riding closely behind another rider, which creates an air pocket) is so effective in cycling that teammates will sacrifice themselves for each other by sitting at the front while a teammate conserves energy.”

Logue has incorporated his materials science and engineering background into cycling. Currently, he rides a carbon fiber bike with the lightest brakes, shifters, and derailleur (the mechanism that moves the chain from one gear to another) on the market. These parts are made not only from carbon fiber, but also aluminum and titanium.

Over the past year Logue has not been able to compete in non-collegiate races due to breaking his collar bone in a cycling crash during the last race of the 2009 season. However, he continues to train, cycling upwards of 300 miles a week. “Cycling is amazing because you get out on the open road and just get lost in yourself,” he said. “To stay motivated during these rides I imagine myself leading the pack in the Giro d’Italia (Tour of Italy) or going on a solo breakaway on the slopes of Alpe d’Huez (one of the main mountains in the Le Tour de France) and pretty soon I’m riding next to Lance Armstrong, helping him win his eighth Le Tour de France.”

Figure 1: Thomas Logue (center, green shirt) leads a road race during the 2008 cycling season at California Polytechnic University.

Figure 2: Thomas Logue sprints ahead of another cyclist during a road race at California Polytechnic University.

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