

**34<sup>th</sup> Annual**  
**Mt. Washington Auto Road Bicycle Hillclimb**  
**August 19, 2006 (weather date August 20)**  
**Starting times: 7:40-7:55 a.m.**

- **Tyler Hamilton returns to defend title, challenge record**
- **Auto Road adds second bike race in response to high demand**

June 13, 2006 – Pinkham Notch, N.H.

Tyler Hamilton, the controversial 2004 Olympic gold medalist and Tour de France stage winner, returns this summer to the White Mountains of New Hampshire to defend his champion's title in the **Mt. Washington Auto Road Bicycle Hillclimb**. He leads a field of professional and amateur cyclists and extreme sports enthusiasts in the 34<sup>th</sup> annual bicycle ascent of the highest peak in the northeastern United States.

The race, which operates independently of national and international cycling federation sanctions, is the primary fundraiser for the **Tin Mountain Conservation Center** in Conway, N.H. The presenting sponsor, **Polartec**, provides essential support for the race, including the blankets with which volunteers wrap the riders after they cross the finish line at the usually chilly summit.

Last year, Hamilton made a surprise return to Mt. Washington, a race he had previously ridden twice, in 1997 and 1999, winning both times. He won the 2005 Hillclimb in 51 minutes 11 seconds – well ahead of the other top men in the race but shy of the course record time of 49:24, set in 2002 by rising star Tom Danielson. This year Hamilton announced his plans well in advance: He will try to win the race, for what would be his fourth Mt. Washington victory in as many attempts, and to beat Danielson's best time and reclaim the record.

#### THE RACE

Regarded by many professional cyclists as the most difficult uphill race in the world, the Mt. Washington Auto Road Bicycle Hillclimb is a 7.6-mile contest against the famed Auto Road's severe grade (average 12 percent, with a 22-percent grade in the final yards), unpredictable precipitation and relentless wind, which in some years has blown riders off their bikes on the upper slopes above the tree-line.

The extreme-sports aspect of the Hillclimb has only increased the demand for places in the field. This year the race reached its capacity of 600 riders within three hours of the opening of on-line registration in February, and hundreds of other would-be competitors were consigned to the waiting list.

Motivated by so many requests for the opportunity to pedal up the mountain, the Mt. Washington Auto Road this year has added another bicycle race, called Newton's

Revenge and scheduled for Saturday, July 8. Newton's Revenge is a separate event from the long-established Hillclimb, but it will attract a similar caliber of riders.

The Mt. Washington Auto Road is open to bicycles only three days of the year: the Hillclimb (August 19), the Hillclimb Practice Day, which this year is July 9, and Newton's Revenge on July 8. Registration for Practice Day began when registration for the Hillclimb closed. Practice Day's field – 300 riders – is now also full.

## THE CONTROVERSY

In 2004, Tyler Hamilton won the gold medal for the men's road race in the Olympic Games in Athens. He was also a team leader in the Tour de France. One year, he won one of the Tour's longest stages with an impressive early breakaway despite riding with a broken collarbone. However, later in 2004 he was judged to have failed blood-doping tests, and despite his consistent declarations of innocence, he was suspended from sanctioned competition for two years. That suspension will end in September.

As a non-sanctioned race, the Mt. Washington Auto Road Bicycle Hillclimb can allow Hamilton to compete, and the Marblehead, Massachusetts, native is a welcome presence at Mt. Washington. In his first appearance here, in 1997, Hamilton took the race to a new level of visibility, shattering the old course record with a time of 51 minutes 56 seconds. He lowered the record two years later to 50:21, where it stood until Danielson's debut victory in 2002. (Danielson won again in 2003, in 51:05.)

Danielson, like Hamilton before him, and like 2004 Mt. Washington winner Justin England, found the Mt. Washington race to be convincing evidence of his hill-climbing ability and part of his ticket to ride on major teams in international competition. Other aspiring riders enter the Hillclimb with the hope of similarly making such an impression.

The race starts in four waves, beginning at 7:40 a.m. with the Topnotch group and continuing with slower groups at five-minute intervals. Spectators may hike up the Auto Road prior to the start of the race.

For more information about the Tin Mountain Conservation Center and the Mt. Washington Auto Road Bicycle Hillclimb, visit Tin Mountain's Web site at [www.tinmtn.org](http://www.tinmtn.org). The Tin Mountain site includes access to a complete list of entrants for the race, arranged by name, hometown or state. (Information about Newton's Revenge is available at [www.mountwashingtonautoroad.com](http://www.mountwashingtonautoroad.com).)

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For press credentials and further information about the Mt. Washington Auto Road Bicycle Hillclimb, phone or email John Stifler, Press Liaison, at **(413) 585-0924** or [jstifler@econs.umass.edu](mailto:jstifler@econs.umass.edu).