



Harry Potter and Cycling

If you have been watching movies for any amount of time, you are surely familiar with the book and film series about Harry Potter. Even if you haven't read the books or watched all the movies yourself, you are bound to know something about this fictional young wizard. It is the biggest selling fiction series in history. Like a lot of fiction stories, there is some level of reality in those books and movies. Every great fiction story has an element of reality in it. That's why we can relate to the characters.

When the movie series Star Wars was the big thing, we all knew about Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, light sabers, death stars and the Force. The series lasted for six episodes and was an Academy Award winner. The next big box office hit was a sort of ancient history. In the Lord of the Rings, it was Frodo, Gandalf, wizards, enchanted swords, elven magic and of course the ring of power. In the Harry Potter books and movies it is Harry, Ron, Hermione, wands, capes, potions and magic of all sorts. In everyone of these three different stories, it ends up being the same basic story line. Good versus evil.

Star Wars - Take away the Force, all the high tech weaponry and outer space theme. You end up with a story of good rebels versus the evil emperor and his legions of clones. The evil empire is eventually brought down when their dark leader is destroyed by his own apprentice.

Lord of the Rings - Take away the wands, wizards, magic, flying creatures, elves and dwarves and it is the same thing. The good people of Middle earth band together to defeat the evil tyrant in the land of Mordor.

Harry Potter - Take away the wands, potions, brooms, dragons and magic and you end up with an evil, lunatic wizard actually destroying himself, in an attempt to defeat his hated rival, Harry Potter.

So, why am I writing about Harry Potter and what does that have to do with bike racing? Well, in a sense they are a lot alike. In each of these stories, the bad guys use every means possible to defeat their enemies. Lies, treachery, double cross, wanton killing and total disregard for anyone. They will stop at nothing to win. They have no principals whatsoever. They want to win no matter what the cost. The only place that isn't true is in the Harry Potter stories. Yes, Lord Voldemort is extremely evil. A madman bent on dominating the world. The only person he fears and longs to destroy is Harry Potter. During a few scenes in the stories/movies, Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort briefly duel against each other. It is obvious when they first meet in such a duel that Harry is in over his head. Lord Voldemort plays with Harry like a toy, but this is where the story is different from Star Wars, Lord of the Rings or the rest. When Lord Voldemort confronts Harry, he refuses to fight until Harry has his wand. Despite the total disregard he has for Harry, he wants to win in a fair fight. He doesn't attack until he knows Harry is equally armed.

That is the point I am trying to make. In bike racing, especially Junior bike racing, we try to teach the kids how to compete and grow in the sport. Like every sport, the kids find their heroes. Many Juniors got into the sport

because of parents or friends, but they quickly identify the big names and long to imitate their success. Unfortunately parents, coaches and teammates do not put enough importance on competing with honesty and integrity. We want our kids to win, sometimes at all cost. The idea of winning no matter what grows like a weed. When we read about an athlete getting caught for doping or some other form of cheating, you can bet that wasn't an idea that just suddenly popped into their head one day. Dishonesty is a habit that comes from not being willing to accept the rules and the results that come from following the rules. Not every cyclist is destined for yellow jerseys or gold medals. Some are simply going to participate in the sport and get the best results they can get. The struggle comes when you have an athlete who works hard to become the best version of themselves and they have to compete against someone who doesn't fight fair. We hate these villains in the movies and we hate having to race against their cycling counterparts.

Bicycle racing takes a lot of flak for having athletes who get caught doping. But the only reason anyone hears about it is because cycling is about the only sport actively trying to stop cheating once and for all. Nobody thinks about food being contaminated or cars being defective until someone discovers contamination or safety flaws. When we hear about something negative in the news, we shouldn't be saying, "Look, another crook got caught!" What we should be saying is, "Thank goodness someone with integrity is checking and catching this." If we want things to get better, we need to start teaching our kids about playing fair and honest. If young athletes saw their parents, coaches and teammates trying to be honest athletes, they would mimic that behavior. When we watch an excited athlete cross the line ahead of all the other riders, we share in that excitement. If we find out later that they cheated in order to get that victory, we feel cheated ourselves. No athlete has ever regretted winning honestly. Plenty of them have regretted cheating.

The 2011 season is approaching. Athletes are busy in gyms, on trainers, in spin classes or if they live in good climate - out on the road. If you have a young champion in the making or if you are a young champion in the making. Take a lesson from the Harry Potter stories. Race fair! Give everything you've got and don't stop until you cross the finish line, but race fair. Race clean!

Good Luck!