

Manhattan Beach Sun

The Weekly Newspaper of Manhattan Beach

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Weekend Weather Forecast

Friday

Sunny

79°



Saturday

Partly Cloudy

77°



Sunday

Partly Cloudy

77°



Cyclists Converge on City



The riders take off from a crowded start.

Thousands of spectators lined the streets near Live Oak Park at Sunday's 48th annual Chevron Manhattan Beach Grand Prix, which featured racers from pro cyclist Floyd Landis to participants in the children's races.

Rahsaan Bahati of the Rock Racing became the first cyclist to win the Men's Pro Race three times in a row, taking home a gold medal and a check for \$3,140. "It's a great atmosphere once again, the Chevron Manhattan Beach Grand Prix," Bahati said. "It's one of the best races we can have in Southern California."

Many athletes go through certain rituals to prepare for big races, something that Bahati said was difficult to do because his children have been sick. "It's been a rough couple nights," he admitted. "I woke up this morning with my one-year-old vomiting on me, and I was up from that point on. Bahati had to ride his bike in a headwind to the race from his home. "I live on the other side of Long Beach; it was just an hour-and-10-minute ride."

The race is known as a criterium, which typically means racing on a closed circuit of less than three miles over a specific amount of time. Kenneth Hanson, who placed third in the Men's Pro Race, called the Grand Prix one of the biggest criteriums in the nation, if not the biggest in Southern California. "It's definitely a prestigious race, so it's always good to get on the podium here for sure," he said.

Race Director Eric Smith noted that the Grand Prix was founded by Ted Ernst in 1962 and is the second oldest race in the country. Ernst also founded the South Bay Wheelmen, the local cycling organization that organizes the event with the Lions Club of Manhattan Beach. "It's attracted the top racers in the country and around globe," Smith said. "It's one of those races where if you win Manhattan Beach, it goes on your resume. For some people, it's the pinnacle of their cycling career."

Manhattan Beach City Councilmember Richard Montgomery has enjoyed attending the race over the last dozen years, stating the quality of the racing seems to get better every year. "They say it's the preeminent bike race in the country based on the talent level and the course," he said. "It's a great chance to showcase our city."

Smith could not quantify the value of hosting the race in Manhattan Beach, but knows many cyclists spend the night before the race in town. "It generates revenue and exposure for the city," he said. "This race gets publicity for the city worldwide. In the cycling community, people just say, 'Manhattan Beach,' and everyone knows what it is."

Operations Director Bob Jones of the Lions Club said his organization has helped run the race for more than two decades.

"It's our major fundraiser for the year," he explained. "We've had a good response over the years from residents." Jones added that among the best parts of the event are the children's races. Kids from two to 14 get the chance to ride their bicycles or tricycles as their doting parents and remaining spectators cheer them on.

According to Jones, many kids have gone on to compete with the professionals as adults, and the event also draws parents to the sport. "We've picked up quite a few parents that joined the South Bay Wheelmen, not for the racing aspect as much as the rides they do every weekend," he said.

The Grand Prix is the non-profit's biggest fundraiser, allowing the Lions Club to pay

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Flags and our National Anthem

IT'S THE FOURTH OF JULY
By Karen Russo

When I think of the Fourth of July, I think of flags flying and red, white and blue all about. And what goes with that but our national anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. I don't know about you, but every time it is sung, I get a lump in my throat. Whether at the Hollywood Bowl, a ballgame, a military service, a graduation, or wherever, my throat closes, my mouth quivers and the words get stuck. However, it is not true if belted out by a rock star or even an opera singer. It is only if "we, the people" sing it. I think my emotional response comes from the feeling of community coming together in shared reverence for something bigger than ourselves. The same thing happens

to me in church when with hands raised, we sing *The Lords Prayer*. There goes the throat again. I don't remember this happening years ago. Maybe it is just one more symptom of aging. We feel things more deeply.

We all know that *The Star-Spangled Banner* was composed by Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812. But did you know he was a poet and wrote only the words as a poem? The tune was an old English drinking song, noted for its challenging range, which was the official song of the Anacreontic Society, an 18th Century gentlemen's club of amateur musicians in London.

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