

Top rider TORQs up consistency

By BEN PAPALIA

THE key to a successful finish in next month's Cape To Cape mountain bike challenge is "consistency".

That's the advice from Australian world championship representative Katherine O'Shea.

The Victorian rider, who averages 700km a week for training, is preparing for her first Cape To Cape, although she's no stranger to stage bike races.

This year, O'Shea competed at the Mountain Bike World Championships in Canada, before tackling a competitive stage race in East Timor.

"Consistency is the key for stage bike races," she said. "If you're reasonably consistent throughout the race you shouldn't lose out too much."

"Even if you don't start well or do have a bad stage, you can still get up for the next day."

O'Shea will tackle the 210km, four-stage Cape To Cape race with veteran mountain bike riders Dan McConnell and Robbie Hucker to form team TORQ.

The trio are expected to hotly contest the four-day Cape Leeuwin-to-Dunborough ride.

"I've never raced in WA and I think Cape To Cape will provide a good challenge. From what I've heard, it's a great course, good riding and is going to be tough," O'Shea said.

WA's mountain bike equivalent of the Tour de France begins on October 14, with the lure of a \$10,000 prize pool having attracted Australia's best riders.

HANDY HINTS Week 3

When riding fire-road trails or single-track, pick your line well ahead of where you're riding (about 10m, if possible), keeping your front wheel in your peripheral vision. This will make your transition around bends smoother and faster. If other bikes have ridden the trail ahead of you, there will be a visible line on the trail that indicates where they have been. This line will have less loose gravel and have better traction.

When climbing, it is ideal to keep your chest low to the bars, elbows bent downwards and your weight evenly distributed between the wheels. Avoid standing when climbing on loose surfaces.

On descending slopes your cranks should be horizontal and you should be standing up off your seat with your weight towards the back wheel.

The more aggressive the terrain or obstacle the further back your bum should be over your back wheel.

If you have to ride across a patch of loose sand, place your weight over the rear wheel as much as possible, keep pedalling and only make slight movements with your handle bars. The secret is to ride as straight as possible. As soon as you turn, the front wheel will dig in.



Katherine O'Shea

SHORT PASSES

Lowndes captures Safari title

MOTORSPORT: V8 Supercar star Craig Lowndes has warmed up for next month's Bathurst 1000 by winning the Australian Safari off-road event in WA at his first attempt. Lowndes, who dedicated the victory to long-time mentor Peter Brock, crossed the finish line with navigator Kees Weel 1hr 12min 44sec ahead of Victorian pair Darren Green and Wayne Smith.

Lowndes and Weel dominated the race, which legendary driver Brock attempted to win several times but never succeeded, claiming victory in nine of the 17 stages as the event covered 3600km of WA terrain.

Russian to the championships

TENNIS: Elena Vesnina and Alla Kudryavtseva will play an all-Russian final at the Tashkent Open, with both vying for their first title. In the semi-finals, fourth-seeded Vesnina rallied in the third set to beat fifth seed Monica Niculescu, of Romania, 6-3 6-4. Seventh-seeded Kudryavtseva, fresh from her first runner-up effort in Guangzhou, China, on Sunday, defeated Evgeniya Rodina 6-1 3-6 6-3. Vesnina, 4-1 down in the third, won five consecutive games to secure her second appearance in a final this season. The Russian was a runner-up in Istanbul in July. Niculescu, a doubles specialist, was playing in her first singles semi-final.

Taylor-made Opals perfection

BASKETBALL: The Opals completed a perfect opening round at the world championships with a 91-68 win over China in the Czech Republic last night. Penny Taylor showed she has recovered from a back injury, shooting 16 points, while Lauren Jackson played less than three minutes and was kept in cotton wool for tougher tests ahead. With the US one of Australia's opponents in the next phase, coach Carme Graf used the game to rotate her players and get increased minutes into some of the youngsters. Taylor was heavily involved at both ends of the floor and the Opals were on fire offensively, hitting 63 per cent from the field in the first quarter.

NBA complaint crackdown

BASKETBALL: Tired of players complaining, the NBA plans to crack down this season on "overt" gestures, such as swinging a fist in the air in anger. Players can be called for technical fouls even if those actions were not directed at a referee. The league wants more respect for the game and its officials, so it is expanding the list of punishable unsportsmanlike actions. "We just want to have everyone take ownership of how our game looks and the image of our game, and send a message that we want player complaining to be minimised and for everyone to have