



PRECISION
– by Stefan Ritter –



Left A self portrait. Photo by Stefan Ritter with assistance from Ashley Na.

An Introduction

The Birth of My Olympic Dream

**It was my job
to be precise.
When winning
or losing is
defined by
thousandths
of a second,
you need
to be.**

Every calorie burned to every calorie eaten; every minute spent sleeping to every minute spent awake, training and recovering; every kilogram lifted in the gym; every watt pushed into the pedals; for every day, of every month, of every year you have been doing this; every thought you've had; every word exchanged

with your coach; every experience you have lived; all leads to every decision you make on race day – to a moment of precision.

Little did I know that my first bicycle – at the age of six – would put me on a trajectory toward that very moment. My track cycling career started out on the trails with that mountain bike. A small seed was growing into a sapling. I kept riding and at twelve years old I joined the Juventus Cycling Club here in Edmonton. Now, being further submerged into the world of bikes and introduced to bike racing, it was becoming clearer that this sport was made for me. The speed, the tactics, the technicalities, the rush when you get it all right, the precision required for it all – I loved every second of it and I found where I belonged. As I learned more and more about the

sport, and that the world champion gets to wear the coveted rainbow bands (the UCI rainbow jersey), I had my sights set on becoming a world champion and dawning that jersey.

After a couple years of learning to race on the road, track, and mountain bike, I competed at my first Canadian Junior/Cadet Track Cycling National Championships as a second-year cadet (sixteen years old)

where I won the Sprint event. This foreshadowed my young career as a sprint cyclist on the velodrome. One year later, now a first-year junior, I became the 2015 Sprint and Keirin Junior National Champion. This qualified me to represent Canada at the UCI Junior Track Cycling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan later that year. From that point onwards I knew I was going to pursue sprinting on

the track instead of track-endurance or the other cycling disciplines. My training now got more specific and sprint oriented and it paved the way for the next season.

Image The Argyll Velodrome in Edmonton, home of the Juventus Cycling Club. Photo by Stefan Ritter.





The First Precision

When all the Moving Pieces Come Together

At the 2016 Canadian Championships I won all three sprint events as a second-year junior (eighteen years old). I again qualified for the Jr. World Championships, this time in Aigle, Switzerland. In competition there on the day of the 1 Kilometer Time Trial, my legs were feeling smooth and fast. My Coach, Alex Ongaro, noticed it too, thinking to himself that day, "I had a positive feeling that everything was in place, ready, and the best it could be. I knew you were going to have the ride of your life. The confidence and readiness you had, gave me that assurance." And the ride of my life it was. I was one of the first riders on the start list to go, and I posted a fast time of 1:01.673 seconds to put me on top of the leader board with many riders yet to start. My job now was to sit

nervously and wait, and the rest of the riders went. Some threatened to best my time, but none did.

Before I knew it, and after the whirlwind of emotions, I was standing on the top step of the podium; wearing the rainbow jersey; a gold medal around my neck; a world champion, listening to the Canadian national anthem playing proudly in front of my teammates, competitors, family, friends, and the rest of the velodrome. A moment of precision. That very moment, in its essence, is the culmination of every thought, every decision, every moment of my life, that all led to this point. That sapling that was nourished years ago, felt like an older and wiser tree at this point. The exact nature of all its rings, all the bark, everything it's

"I had a positive feeling that everything was in place, ready, and the best it could be. I knew you were going to have the ride of your life."

- Alex Ongaro

Left A close-up image of the drivetrain on my road bike. Every part fits together seamlessly.
Photo by Stefan Ritter.



Left Image depicting the precision of the sun - it is exactly where it is meant to be. Photo by Stefan Ritter.

Right A wise old tree and the intricacies of its bark that help form it. Photo by Stefan Ritter.

been through, was now beginning to show. Back to Switzerland, the rest of that competition saw me win Bronze in the Sprint and I was just off the podium in the Keirin. There was still room to grow.

From this point I was brought onto the Elite Track Sprint squad and up first we had the Pan-American Championships in Aguascalientes, Mexico, that same year in the fall. Finding itself at 1888 meters above sea level, the velodrome in Aguascalientes is remarkably fast. At the time, it held the Elite Men's world records for both the Flying 200 meter and 1 Kilometer Time Trials. Coming off of good form from Switzerland, the stage was set for another precise moment in my career. In competition, the Velodromo Bicentenario saw me

break both Junior Men's world records for the Flying 200 and the Kilo with the times of 9.738 seconds and 1:00.578 minutes respectively. One of which, my Flying 200 meter time, still stands to this day. Here, Mexico saw another example of exactness in the history of cycling, and a point of precision in my own story. The velodrome of Aguascalientes would prove to offer up another point in my career, an exact moment of a rather different nature.

To round out the 2016/2017 season, I raced the Cali, Colombia and Los Angeles, USA World Cups and the World Championships in Hong Kong. Now in the Elite ranks that season was all about gaining valuable race experience as I still needed to be faster. In the following

2017/2018 season, I raced the Minsk, Belarus World Cup where I won a silver medal in the Keirin, my first major Elite international success and it was promising leading up to Worlds in 2018. Although I was faster than in Hong Kong the year prior, this year's in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, proceeded to show me where I still needed to grow. Soon thereafter it was off to the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in Australia. As these were my first major games, I didn't know what to expect and like Worlds a couple months prior, this race would be all about being there and getting racing experience under my belt. That season, so far, was already filled with excitement, promise, and injury as I broke my left collarbone twice (2017, 2018), and sustained a concussion the one time.





The Second Precision

An Unexpected Turn: When Those Pieces Dissociate and You are Left to Pick Them All Up

After racing in the Netherlands and Australia with a broken collarbone, it was now time to get it fixed for good. Back in Canada and after surgery, my training took on a new shape as I could not bear any weight with my left arm. However, this proved to be some of the best training for cycling. When I came back in August 2018, after just one week back on the bike using my arm, it was back to Aguascalientes for Pan-Am Champs. In Mexico during training in the days leading up to the race, I was going faster than I had ever gone before, something I had my left clavicle to thank for. On a flying 100m effort, my coach, Franck Durivaux, told me after the fact that I was on form to possibly have a shot at breaking the then current Flying 200 meter World Record. To the disbelief of

many, I never got the chance. The Keirin was the first race for us, and an unfortunate crash in that notoriously dangerous race booked me a one week stay in a Mexican hospital: unconscious, and not waking up.

“Accidents are not accidents but precise arrivals at the wrong right time.”

– Dejan Stojanovic

Five quiet days went by and then I was airlifted back to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton. Here in the ICU, it would be five more days until I woke up from the coma

I was in. At this precise point in my life, the course I would then follow was altered. My Olympic aspirations for Tokyo 2020 were simply translated to an Olympic recovery that would require nothing short of the same herculean effort it took to become a world champion. This is the second precision. Dejan Stojanovic writes in his poem *Being Late*, that “accidents are not accidents but precise arrivals at the wrong right time.” In the moment I could not see, the precise nature of my crash and the journey that ensued – in the larger context of my life – can only speak to something grander and more profound. Stojanovic concludes his poem by stating “so I will have to be a little bit late.” Although a little bit late, I would say I am right on time.

Left illustrating the confusion and loss of direction I felt at first. Photo by Stefan Ritter.



*"Although
a bit late,
I would
say I am
right on
time."*

Stefan Ritter

Image Depicting how my life felt after the crash: dispersed and fragmented with pieces missing, requiring me to sort through them and put my life back together again. Photo by Stefan Ritter.



Front cover Alluding to the precision of the sun in the poem "Being Late," this image depicts the precision of the celestial body. Photo by Stefan Ritter.

Back Cover Following in the motif of precision in celestial bodies, the moon represents the exactness of my track cycling career, its end, and my recovery from the injury I sustained. Photo by Stefan Ritter.