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THE ROAD TO NATIONALS PRESENTED BY HOVERAIR: ENDURANCE MOUNTAIN BIKE NATIONALS

By: Anne Stein June 24, 2025

With multiple national titles under her belt, Haley Batten knows the power of setting big goals.

On a cool summer evening in early June, Olympic silver medalist and multi-World Cup MTB winner **Haley Batten** (Specialized Factory Racing) is in France with Team USA preparing for a weekend of racing in Lons-Le-Saunier (she'll end up winning the elite women's XCO race). Soon afterwards, she and her teammates are off to Val di Sole, Italy, for round 5 of UCI World Cup racing.

A native of Park City, Utah, the ever-smiling Batten learned to ride a bike at age 6 and started mountain bike racing locally at age 9 with her brother and dad. "I don't think I imagined racing around Europe back then, but by the time I was 15 or 16, I had a pretty big vision," she says.

Cycling's always been a part of Batten's family life, whether it was camping and riding in Moab, or bike touring together in the Czech Republic. "I had so many friends and family in the sport, and the Utah cycling community is amazing," says the 26-year-old. She hiked and skied, rode with the local all-girls Young Riders group, and regularly rode with her dad after school and work. "I don't think I knew I was training," she says. "We were just riding and exploring together."

Batten was hooked fast, winning her first MTB Nationals title at age 14, following up with more age-group national titles, then turning pro at age 17. "I had to skip the last few national championships because as I got into elite World Cup racing, it was hard to travel back and forth between Europe and here," she says.

Batten scored her biggest career win at the 2024 Tokyo Olympics MTB race, winning a history-making silver medal - the best placing for an American since the sport's 1996 debut. Competing at nationals, however, brings her career full circle.

"Nationals is one of my favorite events and as a kid, that's what inspired my Olympic pursuit. They brought the Olympic team onto the podium and introduced them, and I'd just won my first junior national title. I realized then that there's a whole international level to the sport I was enjoying, and I got pretty hooked."

"For me, national championships are pretty core to our sport and a goal that's really inspired me."

Coached by 3-time Olympic gold medalist Kristin Armstrong, Haley has additional motivation this season: She's racing for the Leukemia Research Foundation, sporting their stickers on her helmet as her mom successfully battles the disease. "She's pretty incredible," says Batten about her mom. "It's been a testament to our family and the strength we have as a team. We are fighting hard right now."

Though the illness has shifted her race calendar so she can spend more time in the US, the relentlessly optimistic Batten says she's going with the flow. "It's made me a better athlete and person. I'm embracing where I am now and how life has changed," she says.

Over the course of her career, Batten has participated in nine USA Cycling MTB National Championships. Have you ever wanted to compete in a National Championship? Join us on July 14-20 at the 2025 **Endurance MTB Nationals** in Roanoke, Virginia.

HALEY'S TIPS FOR MTB NATIONALS:

Embrace the opportunity! Nationals are so unique and the atmosphere is special. Soak up the atmosphere and support and excitement, which can fuel you in a lot of ways.

For a big event, I break performance into three things: Bike, Body, and Brain (mind).

-Bike: What kind of tires do you need? how is your bike fit? Take care of your machine and make sure your equipment is fresh and dialed in and chosen for the right conditions.

-Body: Prepare for conditions. It'll be hot and humid, with roots and rocks. Learn the course and prepare physically to perform well. Train in hot environments.

-Brain/Mind: Focus on your goal/s for the race and why they're important to you. What are your expectations? Are they realistic? You might not be there for a title, but for the experience, or the next step in your career. You'll be more excited if you know what your goals are and why they're meaningful.

HALEY'S ADVICE FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN TRYING MOUNTAIN BIKING:

Embrace the challenge of riding and racing. Sometimes people think training and racing has to be perfect, or that it will come naturally. That's not the case in life or in anything that brings excellence. When you can rise to the occasion, that's what makes people special and allows you to achieve greatness.

Develop the skill set to lose. I train every day to win but I know when I fail, I have the skillset to become better. It's not losing; it's not meeting your expectation of winning. Look in the mirror and see what you did well, and what you can work on.

Expect the sport to be hard and expect yourself to have what it takes. Our sport prepares you for life in so many ways! Embrace the challenge, know it's going to be really hard – you might not even know how hard it's going to be --- and have the mindset to overcome. Trust that you are strong enough, and learn as much as you can from sport and life. You can really go a long way. Gear up for your own Road to Nationals and **find out if you're eligible** to compete in one or more of this year's National Championships!

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