

{BEING PRO}

Maxx Chance



Team: Sage Titanium-WTB
Age: 26
Hometown: Boulder, Colorado

You just completed the 350-mile-long XL 350 race at Unbound Gravel. What was that like?

Unbound XL is a self-supported adventure around Emporia, Kansas, following all the best dirt roads that Kansas has to offer. It's basically a big group ride, and then you just keep going and going and going. I took a bit under 22 hours to complete it; 11th overall.

Besides the distance, what challenges were you expecting to

face during Unbound XL? What was the longest distance you've ridden at once to prepare for it?

I knew that there were going to be some points that really sucked. If a mechanical happens out there, it can be easy to spiral. So, my plan was to just keep eating and drinking and taking care of myself, and try to enjoy it. It's a big challenge, so why not enjoy it! Just before Unbound I finished up a trip where I skied Mt. Hood, then rode from Mt. Hood to Mt. Shasta, then skied Mt. Shasta. One of those days was 150 miles of mixed terrain and took over 10 hours. So, I felt like I had gotten some good prep for the race.

How did you get started riding bikes?

I grew up riding bikes around Boulder with my family. It wasn't until I went to a local cycling team practice with my younger brother that I was hooked. I did a practice 'cross race with the team on a borrowed road bike, I think I must have been 11. I bashed my shin up on the pedals (and still have the scar) but was having the time of my life. From then on, it's been bikes. The first pivotal moment in my cycling career would be signing with the Clif Bar development team as a 16-year-old. They were the best junior cyclocross team at the time, and we had full support at races—bikes,

wheels, mechanics, the real deal. I really got my foot in the door on the national scene with them. Second would probably be winning the Single-Speed Cyclocross World Championships in St. George, Utah, in 2019. It was just what I needed after a long couple of road seasons and being a bit burnt out on road racing, 'cross and all of it.

What motivated you to make the transition to gravel racing?

I was ready to be done with road racing and getting a bit bored of always traveling to the same uninspiring courses in the U.S. to race 'cross. Then, due to some drama during the

pandemic between my team (Wildlife Generation) and me, I was fully ready to leave the road behind and start a new chapter. I spent the summer of 2020 exploring all the sweet roads, trails and high-country goodies that the Boulder area has to offer and couldn't believe that even though I have lived here my whole life, I never really explored what there was off the beaten path. Gravel, for me, means the ability to take a different path while continuing to be in the community that has given me so much, but also finding out what I truly enjoy about riding bikes.

What did your equipment choice look like for Unbound XL?

I rode my Sage Storm King GP with a Fox suspension fork. I built the bike to be a quiver killer and fun to ride on some of the rockier and gnarlier trails that I ride pretty often. For the race, I think that the suspension fork was pretty valuable and just took the edge off a bit. For the drivetrain, I rode a full Shimano GRX Di2 build with a 1x for the simplicity of it, with a 42 up front. I used 42mm WTB Resolute SG2 tires. These things roll really fast but also have plenty of grip. Plus, the SG2 provides bead-to-bead protection. I have these mounted to WTB CZR i23 carbon wheels with WTB sealant. I have used this combo for a while now and have been really, really happy with it.

How much does someone need to eat to finish a ride like Unbound XL?

Yikes, I ate a lot more calories than I can wrap my head around. But, I love a good gas-station meal. I started with some Maurten 320 hydration in my frame bag and brought little satchels

with me so that at the resupplies I could load 1000 calories into the hydration bladder and be covered. I supplement that with gas-station pizza, Snickers, candy and Cokes. Near the end, I was just kind of done eating and forced down a gel to get to the finish.

What extra gear did you bring along to finish the ride?

A bunch of tire plugs, a few spare tubes, CO2 cartridges, a pump, a chain link and a shooter of whiskey just in case.

Was there any piece of gear you wish you had brought with you during your ride this year that you'll make sure you have next time?

A better front light and better spare batteries. The combo I had wasn't working for me, and when I charged the light I could only have it on low, which made it hard to see. And, the spare batteries I brought were not lasting the length of time advertised, but it was okay. Otherwise, I was super happy with my equipment choices.

Are you planning on returning to Unbound XL in 2023? How would you change your approach to the race?

At this point I'm undecided. I definitely have the endurance race bug. But, the course was a bit draining mentally at the end. Those roads are so straight and so roly. If I do decide to do it again or another ultra-race, I would probably race the same way, but make sure to have a more dialed light and navigation setup. I was having issues all race navigating, and my lights were on the fritz for a couple of hours near the end of the night. But, overall, I was happy with how I raced it. ■

