

# McKenna McKee: Elite Cyclist, Racing to Inspire, Educate, and Empower!

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## There is joy in inspiring others!

Ask McKenna McKee about a favorite moment cycling with Team Novo Nordisk, and you'll hear about the kids she meets along the way: kids with Type One Diabetes like herself.

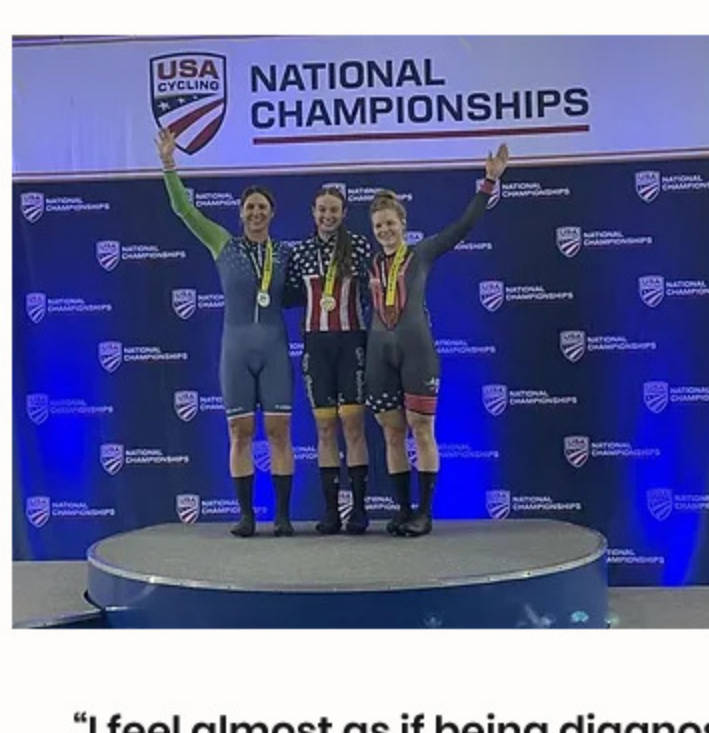
"One time at the T-town Velodrome track," [1] McKenna recalls, "a little girl spotted me in the bleachers due to the continuous glucose monitor (CGM) I was wearing, just like her."

"Meeting her and sharing our diagnosis stories was the highlight of my time in T-town. I could see her getting excited thinking about the possibilities of her future, knowing someone older who also has Type One Diabetes is living their life at a high level in sport."

Another of McKenna's treasured moments was the day she won her first individual national championship title in the Elite Women's sprint:

*"I was crowned the youngest female cyclist in American history ever to win the individual sprint event at Nationals! Achieving this goal allowed my self-confidence and belief to grow exponentially in just a matter of seconds."*

## We are thrilled to introduce you to the youngest female cyclist in American history ever to win the individual sprint event at Nationals AND an inspiring member of our TEMPO cycling coaching family - McKenna McKee!



*"I will never forget the day we met McKenna McKee and found that she wanted coaching to achieve her goal of joining Team Novo Nordisk, the world's only professional cycling team made up of Type 1 Diabetics. I knew I was standing in front of a champion." - Coach Kirk Whiteman, 3 time World Track Cycling Champion*

## "I feel almost as if being diagnosed [with diabetes] was my calling."

People ask McKenna if she ever wishes she never had diabetes. Her answer surprises most people when she says, "No."

She started at age six that she was a Type 1 diabetic. That day changed her life forever. Since then, she always remembers: *"I didn't choose to have diabetes. It chose me."*

After they learned she had Type 1 Diabetes, she spent four days in the hospital, followed by learning how to monitor blood sugar, count carbs, and give injections to herself. McKenna says, *"Not fun, but you adapt."*

## "I started riding solo as soon as I could reach the pedals!"

McKenna grew up in Portland, Oregon, a cycling-friendly city, sometimes called Bike-Town. Her parents had her pedaling the tandem bike with them when she was two. She was riding by herself as soon as her feet could touch the pedals. By the time she was eight, she was racing.

Around that time, McKenna's dad showed her a newspaper article his friend had given him. It was about a professional cycling team made up of all diabetics, Team Novo Nordisk. Reading the article, she knew - she wanted to become a professional cyclist and be on that team! Making the team became the first goal she had ever made in her life!

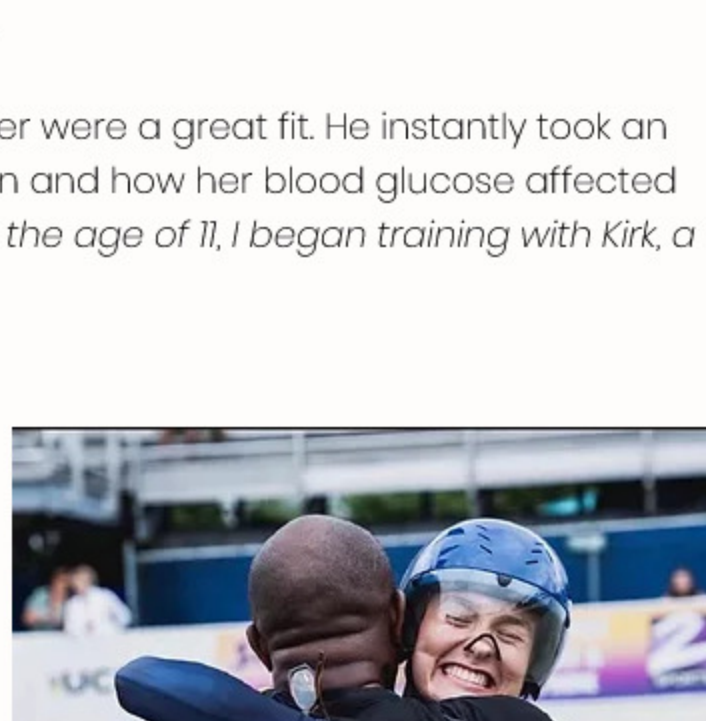
## "From that day on, I found my purpose, drive, and mission."

McKenna felt most at home when she was on her bicycle and working towards her goal of making Team Novo Nordisk. Cycling became and still is her outlet. *"When I hop onto my bike, nothing else matters."*

The father of one of her cyclocross teammates knew how driven she was and suggested she meet coach [Kirk Whiteman](#).

McKenna realized right away that Kirk and her were a great fit. He instantly took an interest in learning more about her condition and how her blood glucose affected her before, during, and after exercise. *"So, at the age of 11, I began training with Kirk, a world champion track cyclist."*

## "Kirk [Whiteman] is the greatest mentor, coach, and friend anyone could ask for."



## Kirk steps up McKenna's training:

Kirk had her doing triples (3 workouts a day), 3 to 4 days a week. Some days, she did quad days (4 workouts a day), starting a workout every 2.5-3 hours!

To maximize power output, she began doing standing starts plus three days a week in the gym. She was able to pedal up to 1,540 watts of power and trained at that level regularly.

"All of this training prepared her for racing. By 2019, at 16, her race times put her on the podium more than once. By the spring of that year, talent scouts noticed her.

And then...

## ... McKenna's dream comes true!

A talent scout from Team Novo Nordisk saw her racing and recommended her to be a member of the team, and she was IN! She was training and racing with other diabetics, just like herself!

She became an ambassador to other diabetics just by being on the team and exemplifying the reality of overcoming the limitations of Type 1 diabetes.

Her mission to *Inspire, Educate, and Empower* diabetic athletes, as well as fellow female athletes, was underway.

## The challenge of racing and training with fluctuating blood sugar levels

All elite athletes have up-and-down days. Regulating blood sugar levels due to diabetes within safe ranges can be an extra challenge.

*"When I am training hard, my blood sugar range(s) will expand slightly since adrenaline and stress cause our hormone levels to fluctuate during exercise. I have trained my body to adapt to feeling low or high caused by these fluctuating levels."*

Sometimes, low blood sugar will cause the body to stop producing neurotransmitters in the brain. When the brain's communication breaks down, it's like my body's driver, *the brain*, is asleep at the wheel.

## Mental Toughness - turning disappointment into opportunity

When there are setbacks, McKenna says, *"I just keep my head down and continue to look at the bigger picture. I like to remind myself how far I have come and how far I am willing to go to reach my goals and achieve my greatest self."*

Kirk has given me an important saying I use to remind myself of the big picture when I feel despondent: *He says, "Your 100% is your 100% of your 100%. Meaning your best effort is just as good as your best effort."*

Another important guiding principle McKenna has received is: *"The things that are meant for you will not go past you. I feel this advice in my soul and firmly stand by it."*

The ability to be present, giving my 100%, without the burden of self-criticism, perfectionism, or past mistakes is the benefit of the additional layer of mental performance training.

## "It's also important to me to encourage my fellow female athletes in any way I can."

*"I like to remind myself and them - no dream is too big, and no dreamer is too small."*

All our lives, women hear, *"You run like a girl! Or, women are too weak!"* McKenna says. *"The only way we change that stigma for women is by uniting together to show we are just as strong and just as powerful as any man. We must stand up for the right to be just as seen and just as heard as men."*

McKenna's core belief as an athlete is: *"Being a good teammate and showing caring sportsmanship on and off the track of competition is the key to remaining kind, humble, and caring to others."*

## McKenna's secret competitive edge!

We asked McKenna about her favorite competitive edge. She said that using [DIALED \[IN\] Muscle Cream](#) enables her to consistently keep up her punishing training schedule, which helps her stay ahead of the competition.

She says, "I use the product before, during, and after working out to enhance my rest and recovery leading into the next day."

## Training for her ultimate goal - to represent the USA one day at the Olympics!

McKenna McKee is a model of the positive impact a champion athlete can have who has the goal of being, as she says, *"kind, humble and caring to others."*

As you read this, McKenna is probably out there somewhere, training her heart out to reach her goal of one day representing the USA on the Olympic cycling team in one or more of the events.

Thanks to her faith in herself and the abundance of support she receives from her parents, friends, coaches, and teammates, we know that one day, she will stand on the Olympic podium as the national anthem of the USA is played!

**PS: If you want to receive Kirk and Jenny's monthly newsletter filled with inspiration, free coaching/exercise tips, plus find out about special offers, sign up for the DIALED [IN] monthly newsletter below:**

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*Peter Douglas Black, LMT, Freelance Writer*