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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CLARKE AND MCCRAE SEIZE LAS VEGAS FINALE; FALCON AND BENJAMIN 2008 USA CRITS CHAMPS**

Atlanta, Ga. (September 25, 2008) – With the whole of the cycling industry watching, Toyota United rider Hilton Clarke and Advil Chapstick rider Jen McRae masterfully wrapped up their 2008 seasons by claiming victory at the USA CRITS Finals in Las Vegas, Nevada. The evening also crowned the overall USA CRITS series champions – Yosvany Falcony (TOSHIBA-Santo) for the men’s series and Kelly Benjamin (Cheerwine) for the women’s edition.

“The word for the night was composure.” Clarke told the crowd of racing fans and cycling professionals assembled for the annual Interbike conference. “In the last three laps I had to keep my composure, because it was just crazy out there. In the corners every time...I just gave myself a bit of distance and really made sure I had that last corner.”

The Las Vegas event was the dramatic conclusion to an entire year of high-speed racing that began with the Athens Twilight Criterium in late spring. From the beginning of the Las Vegas finale, a trio of Toyota-United riders showed the crowds gathered in the glittering shadow of the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino that they meant business. Ivan Stevic consistently stayed at the front of the race, soaking up prize money and giving Clarke the piece of mind that he was controlling the race for his teammate.

Kelly Benefit Strategies/Medifast rider Jonny Sundt was just one of the competitors who did all that was in his power to add drama to the race; going away from the pack for several laps with Metro Volkswagen’s Christian Helmig. Then TOSHIBA-Santo rider Frank Travieso got in on the action for as long as he could. With eight laps to Jittery Joe’s rider Cody Stevenson also made an effort. Then it was Ricardo Esquela (Successful Living) who lit up the field as the lap counter began to wind down. Esquela’s teammates made their intentions for a win clear with six laps to go, massing at the front of the race. However, they were unable to hold that position for long.

Stevic provided the final coup de gras, bringing his teammate into perfect position to navigate the final lap. Once Clarke was there, he was once again unstoppable. In the final hundred meters Clarke pumped his fists before the crowd, knowing that his team had once again helped him secure victory.

Series leader Yosvany Falcon finished in seventh place, a full four places behind TIME rider Adam Myerson. The pair, who began the evening knowing that an entire year’s effort was at stake in

Las Vegas, anxiously waited the final series results in front of the start/finish line. In the end Falcon defended his TOSHIBA squad's 2007 triumph at the series by a narrow 13 points.

"I spent the whole race keeping an eye on Myerson," Falcon said once he had been given the official word. "I've been feeling strong even though we've had a hard season and this win gives me high hopes for the what's coming in 2009 and beyond."

The women's event began earlier in the evening, not too long after darkness capped an extremely warm day in Las Vegas. Temperatures were still firmly in the 90's when the final scrap between series leaders Kelly Benjamin (Cheerwine) and Jennifer Wilson of the Vanderkitten squad got underway. Benjamin held only a 64-point lead over Wilson going into the Vegas finale and the pair closely watched each other throughout the course of the race. Their diligence, however, opened up opportunities for other riders in the field to control the shape of the race. Veteran criterium specialist rider Jen McRae (Advil Chapstick) was became one of those opportunists.

Unlike the series leaders, McRae arrived at the USA CRITS finale without any teammates and waited for the right moment to launch her attack. With just four laps left to go in the Series, McRae left an anxious field of competitors in the company of Christina Smith (LoneStarWorks.com). With the clock ticking down on the race, the field began to close on the two escapees and McRae was unwilling to lose her chance at a win. She relentless held a pace that Smith soon could no longer maintain, and minutes later crossed the finish line first with a 30-second advantage.

"This is such an awesome way to end the season." a breathless McRae said after her victory lap. "I've been consistently third all season long and quietly been wanting to improve upon that. So to do that here in Las Vegas is totally awesome."

And while Cheerwine may have lost the day out on course, they were able to hold on to Benjamin's overall Series lead with her sixth place finish and ultimately defend her position for the USA CRITS title.

#### **About USA CRITS**

USA CRITS National Criterium Series has been developed to feature a brand of cycling unique to the United States, the criterium. Criteriums are historically run on short laps through city streets. Riders accumulate points throughout the year awarded through start points; laps led; first, middle, and end sprint point laps; and the final order of finish. Criteriums offer spectators the opportunity to watch Olympians, world and national champions up-close as they ride at top speed. This has made the criterium format the most spectator-friendly form of cycling entertainment. Events on the USA CRITS series have the ideals that have made criterium racing an American legacy: Challenging courses that showcase arts and entertainment districts; a large and energized base of spectators; broad community support; and strong marketing opportunities for sponsors. For more information, visit [www.usacrits.com](http://www.usacrits.com).