



## Chris Thater Memorial Hosts the Women's USA CRITS Finals This Weekend

*Erica Allar still in the Orange Jersey*

Athens, GA - This weekend marks the first time the Women's USA CRITS Finals will be held in a city other than Sin City. The 27th Annual Chris Thater Memorial will serve as the grand finale for the women's Series on August 28. The women's event will be centerstage on Saturday, with a host of other races and festivities leading up to the last race of the day - the Women's USA CRITS Finals.

"The Chris Thater Memorial is the perfect race for the Women's Series to finish," says Jim May, Chris Thater's event director. "At Thater the women get their own chance to shine as the feature event on Saturday evening. All eyes will be on them."

### How did the Series unfold?

The battle for the Orange leader's jersey presented by Champion System has switched hands three times through the Series. Colavita-Baci's Theresa Cliff-Ryan held the lead after winning the opening event of the Series, the Terrapin Twilight Criterium in Athens, GA.

Treads.com/DFT's Tiffany Pezzulo was the apparent leader heading into the second event, the Giro d' Grafton in Grafton, WI, as Cliff-Ryan was not starting the race. Pezzulo and Erica Allar (Team Vera Bradley Foundation) were the top riders coming in from Athens and were only separated by 10 points. Pezzulo was able to hold off Allar in the sprint and gain valuable points to increase her lead over Allar by 19 points. Cycle Loft's Kacey Manderfield took over the Maxxis Best Young Rider's Jersey presented by Cyclingnews and would hold the lead in that competition going into the Finals, while race winner Jackie Crowell of Team Type 1 took over the lead in the Sportsbase Online Lap Leader Jersey presented by VeloNews.

Pezzulo donned the Champion System Orange leader's jersey at the Iron Hill Twilight Criterium in West Chester, PA. A late solo break by BikeNZ's Lauren Ellis could not be drawn back in, so it came down to a field sprint between Pezzulo and Allar. Allar was able to win the sprint, placing second in the race, and take the Orange leader's jersey on her shoulders and increasing her lead over Pezzulo by 11 points. Ellis' solo win meant she would take over the Sportsbase Online Lap Leader's Jersey.

The last race before the USA CRITS Finals was the Presbyterian Hospital Invitational in Charlotte, NC. Attack after attack tried to stick but this race and its \$25,000 prize purse was going to come down to a bunch gallop down the finish. Cliff-Ryan walked away with her second USA CRITS victory, but Allar's 5th place finish was enough to keep her lead over Pezzulo going into the USA CRITS Finals at the Chris Thater Memorial.

Allar knows a thing or two about winning a Series title; last year she won the Best Young Rider competition. "I am honored to be in the lead heading into such a classic event as the Chris Thater Memorial," says Allar. "I was ecstatic to be able to follow all of the events on the Series, and I am looking forward to finishing the Series at Thater and defending my lead."

Pezzulo will be laying it all on the line at Thater, especially since the race is only a few hours from her hometown of Rochester, NY. "The Series has been great for me," says Pezzulo. "The racing has been awesome and all the courses have offered something really unique and interesting. I am excited about being in 2nd in the overall, and I'm looking forward to giving it everything at Thater. After a disappointing race in Charlotte, I'm especially motivated to come to Thater ready to fight as hard as I can to regain the leader's jersey."

## **What to expect in the men's race**

The Men's Series still has the Chris Thater Memorial to contest before its finals in Dallas, TX at the TX TOUGH GRAND PRIX III. The overall lead has never been so close with 2 races still to go. Clayton Barrows (AXA Equitable) has only a 4 point lead over Maxxis Best Young Rider Isaac Howe (Mountain Khakis). Watch for these two riders to be going head-to-head for the mid-race points prime. Reigning USA CRITS Champ, Mark Hekman (Mountain Khakis) knows what it takes to win the overall, so be on the lookout for Big Red to do a lion's share of the work for Howe.

Since Barrows and Howe (as well as their teams) will be marking each other, this opens up the race for another non-Series contender to take the race win. Fly V Australia and UnitedHealthcare presented by Maxxis have to be on top of that list. Fly V's Jonathan Cantwell is not on the start list so it will be up to Bernie Sulzberger or Aaron Kemp to fly the V Australia colors at Thater. Sportsbase Online Lap Leader Hilton Clarke of UnitedHealthcare presented by Maxxis is another favorite to win but do not count out Frank Pipp (Bissell) or fast-man Juan Pablo Dotti (Aerocat), both of which are backed by strong squads.

### ***Women's Series Leaders***

#### **Event Winners**

Terrapin Twilight Criterium (Athens, GA) - Theresa Cliff-Ryan, Colavita-Baci

Giro d' Grafton (Grafton, WI) - Jackie Crowell, Team Type 1

Iron Hill Twilight Criterium (West Chester, PA) - Lauren Ellis, BikeNZ

Presbyterian Hospital Invitational (Charlotte, NC) - Theresa Cliff-Ryan, Colavita-Baci

#### **USA CRITS Leader presented by Champion System**

1. Erica Allar (Team Vera Bradley)
2. Tiffany Pezzulo (Treads.com/DFT)
3. Kacey Manderfield (Cycle Loft)

#### **Maxxis Best Young Rider presented by Cyclingnews.com**

Kacey Manderfield (Cycle Loft)

#### **Sportsbase Online Lap Leader presented by VeloNews**

Lauren Ellis (BikeNZ)

### ***Men's Series Leaders***

#### **USA CRITS Leader presented by Champion System**

1. Clayton Barrows (AXA Equitable)
2. Isaac Howe (Mountain Khakis fueled by Jittery Joe's)
3. Mark Hekman (Mountain Khakis)

#### **Maxxis Best Young Rider presented by Cyclingnews.com**

Isaac Howe (Mountain Khakis fueled by Jittery Joe's)

#### **Sportsbase Online Lap Leader presented by VeloNews**

Hilton Clarke (UnitedHealthcare presented by Maxxis)

**For More Information:**

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**About USA CRITS Championship Series**

Now in its fourth year, the USA CRITS Championship Series is comprised of the best professional bicycle races in America, organized under one umbrella with one mission - to crown the best male and female professional criterium cyclist in the country.

**About Chris Thater Memorial**

The Chris Thater Memorial is dedicated in memory of Chris Thater, an avid cyclist, who was killed by a drunk driver. The event is a project of the Broome County STOP-DWI Program to heighten awareness about the drunk-driving problem. The race attracts over 1,500 participants from local athletes to world-class competitors with crowds of over 10,000 spectators. The Chris Thater Memorial consists of the Pro, Elite and Novice cycling events, and a national class 5K Run.

**About STOP-DWI**

The Broome County Stop-DWI Program's mission is to improve highway safety through the prevention of drunk driving in our community. As a result of STOP-SWI's comprehensive effort, Broome County has achieved much success in the effort to combat drunk driving. Many lives have been saved. The number of people seriously injured has been dramatically reduced and cultural attitudes concerning drinking and driving have changed.