

Justin time for this Kiwi

BY TERRY BELL
SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealander Justin Kerr didn't know too much about Vancouver before he saddled up for Sunday's Westside Cycling Classic.

But he sure was a quick learner.

Kerr travelled from his temporary home in Los Angeles to be with his girlfriend, Vancouver bike racer Marie-Claude Gagnon.

And he won the 126-km Westside race in two hours, 41 minutes, four seconds, comfortably ahead of Vancouver's Tim Abercrombie, who was second for his Garneau Evolution team.

Victoria's Tyler Trace of the Trek Red Truck Racing team was third in 2:43:42.

"It was a very pleasing win," said Kerr. "A lot of good riders turned out."

Gagnon finished sixth in the women's race. The couple met at a bike race in Pakistan.

Laura Brown of Maple Ridge-based Local Ride Racing took the 84-km women's race in 2:22:24.

Kerr, in his second season with the Los Angeles-based Liquid Fitness team after three seasons in Europe, had no teammates with him.

But he was smart enough to latch on to Vancouver's Abercrombie, a perennial contender in the race.

Kerr and Abercrombie

got away by themselves with three of the 12 laps to go. It was a two-man race from then on.

"I'm just here for a couple of weeks visiting my girlfriend so I'm doing some different races for a change of scene," said Kerr. "When Tim went, I knew he was strong so I went with him."

Abercrombie, a 30-year-old environmental consultant when he's not biking, has had his share of disappointment in this event.

Two years ago he got away with the final break group but ran out of gas. Last year he was in the breakaway pack but got a flat tire on the final lap.

Said Abercrombie: "Today I got away with the right guy. We worked well together until the last lap. He just had a little better legs than I did on Camosun hill."

Of the first race in the five-race B.C. Cup series, 22-year-old Brown said: "It feels so good, I've been waiting for this for a long time."

"I've been so close to winning so this feels so good.

"We had a great team here and we just drove on the climb on every lap. We finally got a four-person break. I had a teammate in there and the pack just got more tired."

The B.C. Cup continues next weekend with Kelowna's K-Town classic.

tbell@theprovince.com



New Zealand's Justin Kerr signals victory Sunday in the Westside Classic cycling race. GREG DESCANTES — FOR THE PROVINCE