



LEFT
Coach Dominique Larocque

RIGHT
Larocque working on the trails

BELOW AND OPPOSITE
LaRoccaXC participants



THE SCENE

LAROCCAXC SCHOOL

Building mountain biking and leadership skills

by Cheryl Madliger



"My vision is of a place for visitors to reconnect, 're-wild' and rewire their brains."



If running a mountain bike school doesn't seem like enough work, how about designing and building trails, maintaining 108 acres of forest and operating a consulting business? Dominique Larocque, owner of LaRoccaXC Mountain Bike School, does all of these things. The school runs on the grounds of the Creative Wheel Centre, 35 minutes north of Ottawa.

Larocque first operated her mountain bike school for 13 years at Camp Fortune, an outdoor centre in Gatineau Park, across the Ottawa River from the capital. With the trails getting busier and busier, Larocque found herself looking for a change. Taking her cue from the International Mountain Biking Association, an organization she's passionate about that helps create and preserve mountain biking trails, she purchased her own land. On this plot, she designed and built sustainable trails that enabled her to coach without distraction.

"I bought the land in 2003 and haven't stopped," Larocque says. "I

basically bought a jungle. There was just rocks and trees and I felt like an Amazon woman clearing the land."

The trails are set up in a snake-and-ladder layout with stacked loops, which allow Larocque to watch numerous athletes at the same time, correcting technique as they ride. With 20 km of technical track and 123 m of elevation, the setting is perfect for interval training.

Larocque's passions shine through in LaRoccaXC, which offers weeklong camps for kids and weekend retreats for teenagers and women. She believes that connecting with nature is a potent medicine; the school gives people the opportunity to do just that.

In Rock Paper Scissors camps, children learn mountain biking skills and learn about fitness and nature. They get a taste of sports psychology in the process. At leadership retreats, teens improve bike handling and fitness, but also learn about sustainable trail design and building, wilderness first aid and bike repair so they leave with skills for summer jobs.

Other retreats that Larocque runs



What to do after you've been hit

by Larry Humber

Id had several close calls in the past. But I wasn't so lucky on an early-morning ride in mid June along Queen Street West in Toronto. A car, fighting the sun's glare, turned right into me, hitting me flush and sending me tumbling from my almost-new Trek touring bike. On the bike's frame were a couple of stickers I'd found in a Spanish bike magazine. They basically said, "Respect cyclists – give them lots of room."

Accidents happen out of the blue; there's not a lot you can do. As Ryder Hesjedal said days after taking a nasty tumble in Switzerland shortly before the 2013 Tour de France, "You just go down, in a split second, and hard."

"What month is it?" the ambulance attendant asked me, noticing some bruising on my left temple and a gash or two elsewhere. I gather that is a standard question asked of those who may be concussed.

"I think it's May," I said. I then tried to explain that in my line of work (I'm a freelance writer), I'm always a little vague about dates and other details.

"We'd better get this guy to hospital," he said.

"What about my bike?" I asked.

"Don't worry. We'll take care of it. We'll put it in the ambulance," he said.

When we arrived at the hospital, just blocks from the accident scene, they told me to lock my bike to the racks outside the emergency entrance. There were plenty there already – I hoped not accident victims like me.



As I waited in a hospital room, a policeman appeared and asked for details. I was still pretty vague about what had happened. Only later was I able to replay it in any detail in my head. Another policeman, who was also at the accident scene, arrived soon after. He'd trained police riders and spoke about the process. "It's not a course if you don't bleed," he said. I was given a copy of the police report, with a number of boxes checked off and other pertinent details.

The doctor duly arrived, noticed that I had several abrasions, but was "awake" and "alert." I guess so as I was sent packing after getting a patch on my swollen left wrist. No broken bones, apparently, but my toe was getting purple. It was all recorded on a pink form that the doctor handed me as I left.

Outside, I quickly realized the bike wasn't going anywhere. The frame was dented, meaning it was headed for the scrap heap. I released the front brake so I could at least push it, and then caught the subway home, stopping at my local bike shop en route. ©

THE SCENE

BIKE ACCIDENT

POST-ACCIDENT TIPS

The initial shock of being hit by a car will likely leave you in a bit of a daze, so best not to rush things. But at the very least, get the driver's phone number.

The first thing people in the know asked me after I told them of the accident was, "Did you get the police report?" It's formally known as a motor vehicle collision report and gives details of the other party, notably his insurer. It also identifies the investigating officer.

I was given various suggestions as to how to proceed from there. A lawyer friend said to consult one of those firms that deals in accidents and such. "Injuries don't always manifest themselves right away," he said. "You may even end up missing time from work and will need to be compensated."

A fellow at my local bike shop had experience with a door prize that sent him sailing and broke a bone or two. "Don't even talk to the driver," he advised. "Go right to his insurance agency." But others suggested that I deal directly with the driver, who seemed like a decent sort.

You need to get the replacement value for your bike at very least. I also cracked my helmet, so that added to the bill. My shades were broken, too, so another expense. On top of that, a bill for the ambulance came to my door a few weeks after, something I wasn't expecting. It was \$45 for the ride of a handful of blocks.