

2015 GU Energy Extraordinary Courage Award

The Extraordinary Courage Award recognizes student-athletes who have persevered through challenging circumstances and overcome adversity to develop and excel as a model student-athlete.

Esmée DeBarssi, San Domenico School, NorCal High School Cycling League



Unbeknownst to many, Esmée entered mountain bike racing in her freshman year suffering from an eating disorder. With the help of many supportive people in her life, she has been in recovery and is now working toward educating students and coaches in promoting a healthy body image and how to avoid eating disorders. Esmée has been a leader in her high school's chapter of "The Body Positive," an organization dedicated to the education and promotion of healthy body image among students. In December, Esmée and one of the founders of The Body Positive delivered a presentation to NorCal coaches on promoting healthy body image and avoiding eating disorders. Tragically, this past race season Esmée lost her best friend and former teammate, Emily "Ember" Brightwood in a car crash. Despite being

devastated by Ember's death, Esmée continued racing. She honored Ember's memory by racing the NorCal Petaluma race last Spring on Ember's race bike, as Ember's parents and friends watched.



"I shared my story, and we talked about the dangers of eating disorders, and the benefits of a healthy body image. Biking saved my life. If coaches continue to teach biking hand in hand with healthy body image, I know it can save others too."