

they call him KOSTA.

Kanstantsin Sivtsov is not a complete unknown factor as a rider, although when he took a convincing stage victory at Brasstown Bald the press corp was frantically digging through the archives trying to get facts on this 25-year-old from Gomel, Belarus. In 2005 Sivtsov won the U-23 road World Championships. Last year he rode for Barloworld and finished a respectable 32nd in the Tour de France. With a tall, lanky body it should have been no surprise that when the road turned steep, Sivtsov was able to accelerate away from Leipheimer and Lowe. With that stage victory he was able to jump up the GC and take the leader's jersey to Atlanta.



How did you get into the sport of cycling? I wanted to play soccer and I went to a cycling school because I was told I could play soccer too, then I liked the bike and kept with it. I was 13 yrs old.

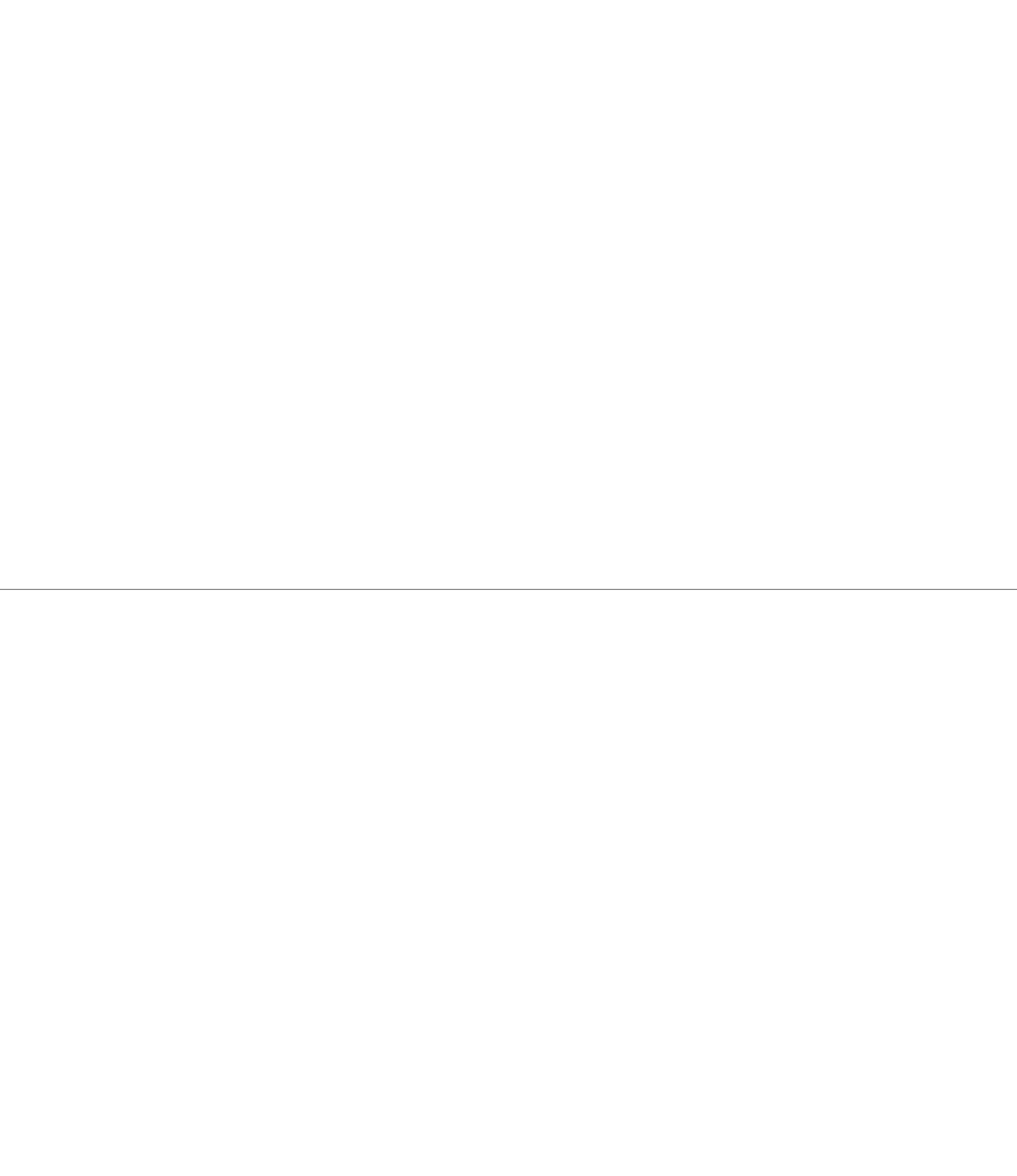
What was your childhood like growing up? I went to school and played lots of sport, soccer especially.

Is your family a sporting family? My father and my brother use to play soccer, just for fun and the whole family followed many sports through the media.

You finished more than a minute ahead of Thomas Dekker in 2004 at the worlds. How did you run away from such a strong field? I went away with three laps to go and I know that I had lots of endurance and that race required endurance so I reached deep to keep my gap.

Did the worlds course that year suit your style? Yes because it was a hard climb in the end.

Are there any other Belarusian riders that the world of cycling should be aware of? If so, what are their strengths? Kyrienka and Last that won two gold medals in Manchester at the track Worlds.



What is a typical day like for you? I live in Italy during the season in a apartment in a village close to Bergamo, in the north of Italy. I usually wake up at 8:00 a.m., have breakfast and then start training at 9:30 a.m. After training I try to rest and watch television and surf the internet. Then it's dinner and a chat on the phone with my wife.

What is the best thing about the country of Belarus? Belavezkii park, it's a natural park that's very nice and famous, and of course the capital city of Minsk.

What is the climate like and what do the people think of cycling? Twenty years ago it seemed colder, now it's warmed up and it's similar to central Europe. Cycling has started growing, thanks to me!

What would you be doing if you weren't a professional cyclist? I don't know! I wanted to be a sportsman my whole life, and I did it through cycling.



“I had been waiting for this moment so I gave it everything.”

You came from Barloworld to what at the time you thought was T-Mobile. That sponsorship ended. Were you worried? No. The name was changed, but the organization didn't. The team organization is important to me. The staff didn't change, the riders didn't change.

Was your victory at Brasstown Bald a surprise for you? It wasn't really a surprise. I talked to my director, the riders, and George Hincapie about this mountain and I was prepared for it. That stage was important to the general classification. After five days of racing I needed to focus on that stage because it was important. It is a very steep mountain which suits me.

When you attacked was that your decision or did the director tell you? No, I decided to attack. I knew I couldn't wait for a sprint. George Hincapie had explained the course to me and told me that I should wait until the very end and do one good attack. So I found the right moment and went as hard as I could.

What were you thinking after you broke away? I felt good. I had been waiting for this moment so I gave it everything.

Were you thinking of winning the stage or taking the lead? When I went I was only thinking of winning the stage. It wasn't until

after the stage that I knew it was possible to take the lead.

You went head-to-head with Levi Leipheimer on a tough climb and beat him. Did you think you could ride away from him? I tried to ride away and I did it. That's it. I wasn't sure, but I had to try.

Were you intimidated by Leipheimer and his talent? Yes because he was heavily favored and already won hard races.

Are you racing the Giro and will the team give you a bigger role? I'm doing the Giro. The Giro is important for me and the style of racing suits me and it is important for my Italian teammates. We will be concentrating on stage wins there with Morris [Possoni] and Marco [Pinotti]. [At press time, Kosta sat in 7th place]

Do you think the Tour de Georgia is good preparation for the Giro? Yes. It is a beautiful race and great organization. This is my first race in America. The first two hours in stage 6 my heart rate was 150 beats, a medium effort. Then at the end there are attacks and attacks which are very similar to the Giro. The Tour de Georgia is very similar to the Giro. The stages are all up and down, which is good. Stage 5 was very long [133 miles] and up and down. It's good and very good preparation.

Do you feel that you had the race won after you had the four second lead at Brasstown? It's not over until the end of the last day. I was focused because there were time bonuses and we had to work hard to defend the lead. It wasn't a rest day. *OR*