

Rwandan junior cycling champion Jonathan Rafiki is making a name for himself in the United States after a string of impressive performances across road, gravel and mountain bike events, further strengthening his preparations for the UCI Road World Championships in Montreal.

The 17-year-old, who is [Rwanda's reigning Junior National Mountain Bike \(MTB\)](#) champion, has spent the past two weeks racing in Colorado, where he has consistently finished among the top riders despite competing against older and more experienced cyclists.

According to the [Africa Rising Cycling](#), Rafiki's campaign began with a standout ride at the 719 KOM Challenge, where he claimed the Colorado State Games junior title and finished second overall in the 127-kilometre race, which featured more than 2,100 metres of climbing.

He followed that performance with another runner-up finish at the SBT GRVL Red Course, before taking second place in the junior category at the Ned Gravel Gold Course.

Rafiki also showed his versatility on the road by winning the Tuesday Night Thunder B Criterium, demonstrating his ability to switch comfortably between endurance races, technical gravel events and high-speed circuit racing.

The performances underline the progress of one of Rwanda's upcoming young cyclists as he builds towards the UCI Road World Championships later this year.

During his stay in the United States, Rafiki has received equipment support thanks Colorado-based Excel Sports, while local host families have provided accommodation throughout his racing programme.

A family legacy on two wheels

Jonathan's success comes as his father, Rafiki Uwimana, continues to contribute to cycling development in the United States.

Uwimana, one of the pioneering riders of the original Team Rwanda project that helped introduce Rwandan cycling to the international stage, is spending the summer working as a guest mechanic at Silver Stallion Bicycle & Coffee Works in Gallup, New Mexico.

Located within the Navajo Nation, the community-based cycling hub provides bicycle repairs, technical training and support for young riders in an area where access to cycling infrastructure has traditionally been limited.

Beyond servicing bicycles, Uwimana has been mentoring aspiring mechanics, supporting mobile repair programmes and helping introduce more young people to the sport.

His work reflects the same values that shaped Rwanda's cycling development over the past two decades—using bicycles not only as a competitive sport but also as a tool for education, opportunity and community development.

For the Rafiki family, this summer has become a story of two generations carrying Rwanda's cycling flag in different ways.

While Jonathan is chasing podium finishes against some of North America's strongest young riders, his father is passing on the knowledge and experience that helped lay the foundations of modern cycling.