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Inside

MAY 2018 // VOLUME 59 // NUMBER 4

Bothies: Sandy Carson; Miller: Michael Darter; Cimbura: Benjamin Rasmussen

Stories

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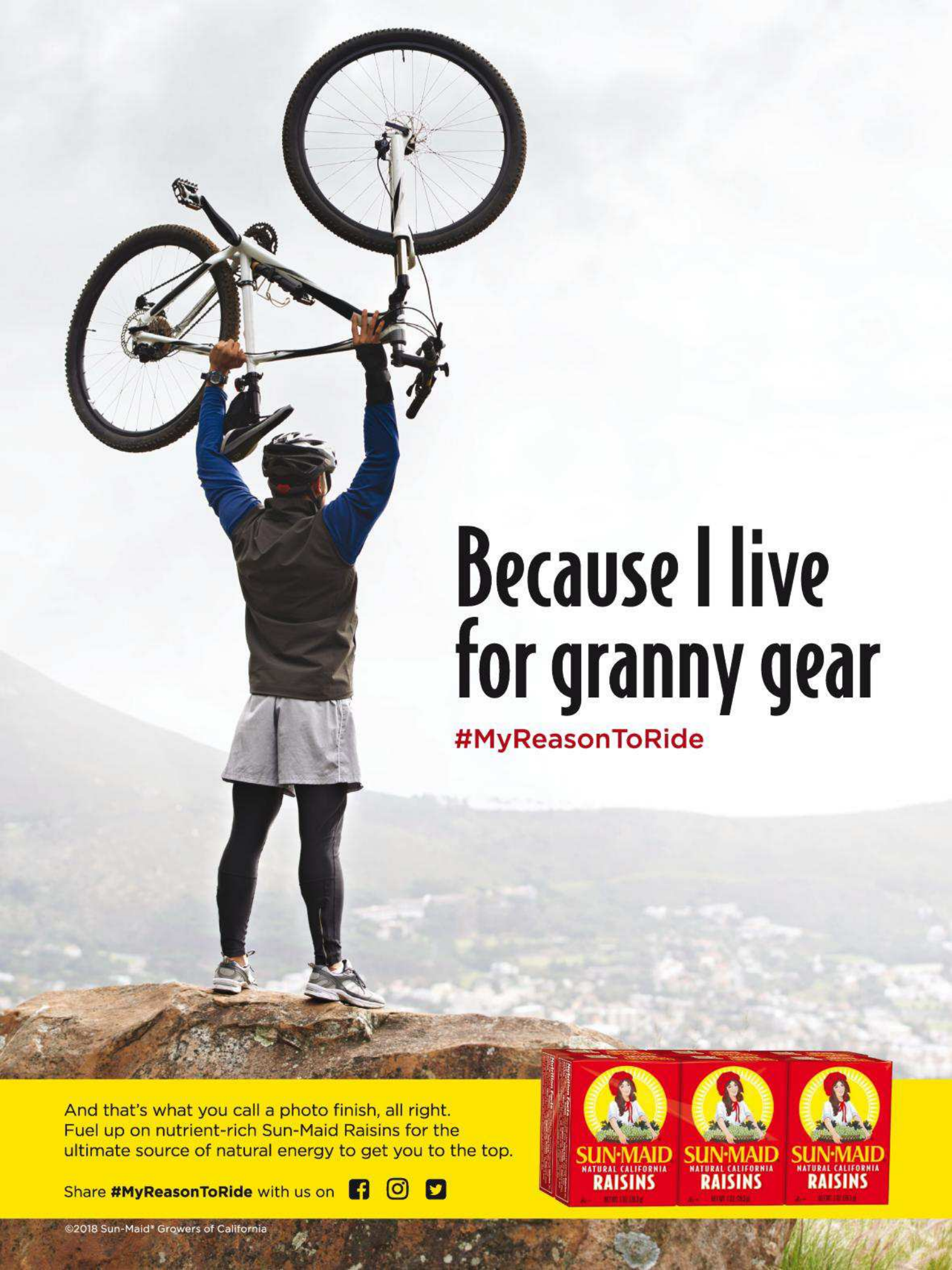
Stuff

Cover

Photograph by Sandy Carson. Ian Dille, Dean Hearne, and Nick Coombes ride through the Lost Valley of Glencoe in the Scottish Highlands.

Jersey, Gloves: Matt Rainey; Garmin, Specialized: Mitch Mandel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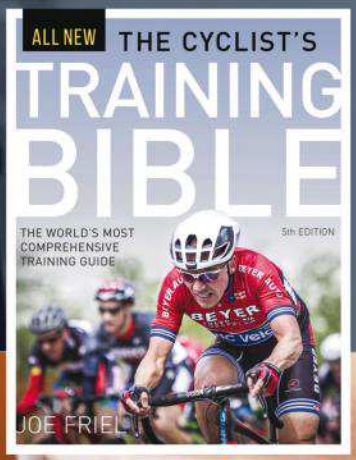

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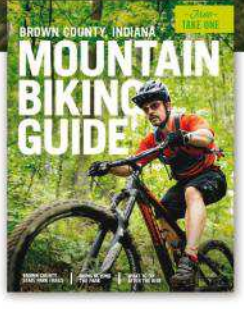

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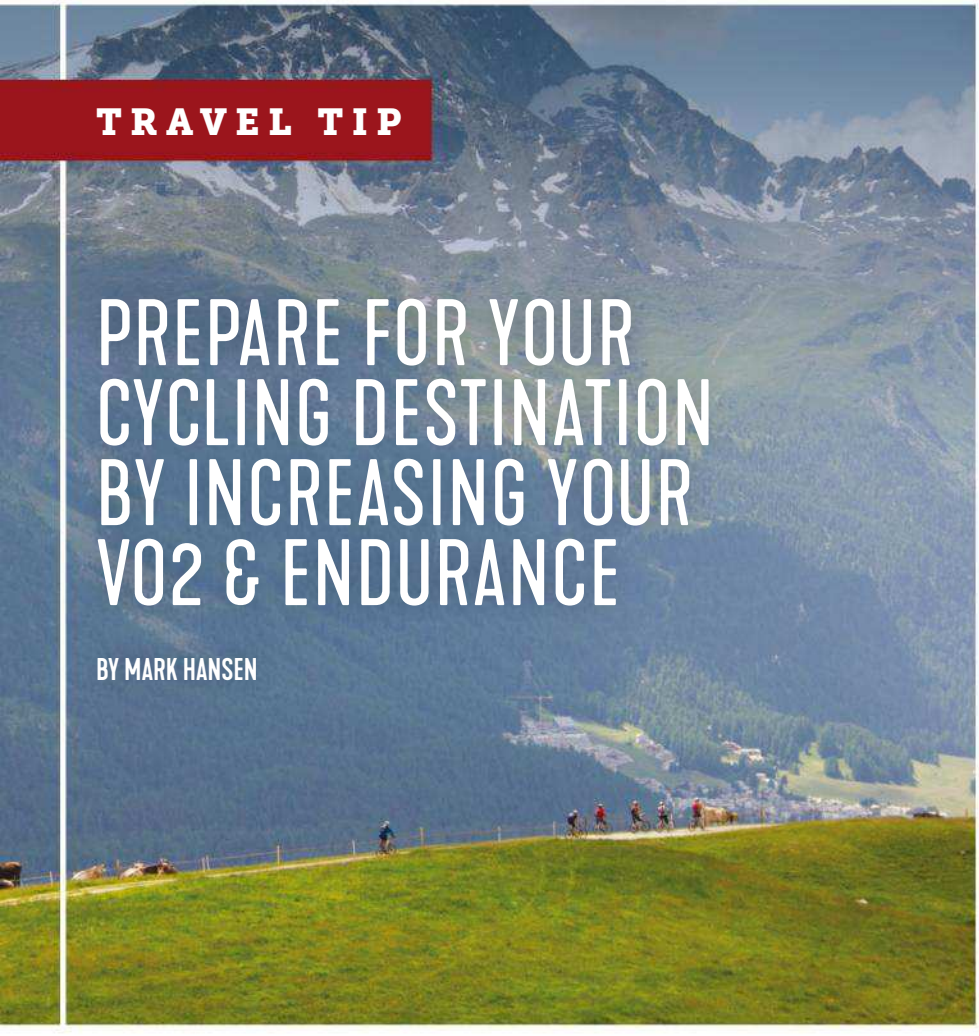

TRAVEL TIP

PREPARE FOR YOUR CYCLING DESTINATION BY INCREASING YOUR VO2 & ENDURANCE

BY MARK HANSEN

Cyclists have long sought ways to improve their performance through nutritional supplements and creative training strategies. Some have gone as far as using synthetic drugs and blood doping to gain an advantage. A new supplement giving athletes EPO-like effects and in turn, increasing their VO2 max is generating some controversy.

The product that has been producing so much debate is EPO-BOOST® - an all natural supplement developed by U.S. based Biomedical Research Laboratories. EPO is industry shorthand for erythropoietin, a hormone produced by the kidneys that regulates red blood cell (RBC) production.

Increasing red blood cell production has long been the focus of competitive athletes due to the impact that RBC levels have on oxygen intake and utilization. The greater the red blood cell production, the greater the body's ability to absorb oxygen, which in turn gives an athlete more strength and endurance. Strength and endurance are precious resources to any athlete. Thus competitive athletes have tried various techniques to gain an advantage by increasing EPO and RBC levels.

Traditional techniques for boosting RBC levels include synthetic drugs and blood doping. These practices are both dangerous and banned by organized sports associations. The makers of EPO-BOOST® claim that their patent-pending formula is all-natural and is clinically shown to safely increase erythropoietin levels, resulting in greater strength and endurance.

The scientific evidence behind EPO-BOOST® does seem to be compelling. A 28-day double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial, performed by Dr. Whitehead from the Department of Health and Human Performance at Northwestern State University, showed that the active ingredient in EPO-BOOST® increased EPO production by over 90% compared to the group taking the placebo.[1] The supplement group also showed dramatic improvements in athletic performance (as measured by VO2max and running economy).

Since its release, competitive athletes have raved about this new supplement, which offers all the benefits of greater EPO levels with none of the dangerous side effects or legal trouble. Pablo Santa Cruz, a category one cyclist, used EPO-BOOST®. Pablo stated, "I am very skeptical with nutritional supplements due to the prevalent lack of clean manufacturing practices and banned substance contamination. I am very glad to have researched and tested EPO-BOOST to my and my performance support team's satisfaction. Particularly, I am very encouraged with breaking through key power and speed thresholds after 6 weeks of using these products."

Mr. Cruz is not alone in his praise of the product. Travis Beam, a top cyclist from North Carolina, used EPO-BOOST® in his preparation for his season. Travis stated, "starting the season I made several goals to accomplish in my racing career. To achieve those goals, I knew I needed something extra to support my training. After a month of using EPO-BOOST I started seeing crazy gains in my endurance and power during training and my speed picked up to the next level! I am a firm believer in these products and cannot wait to see how these gains will help my performance in events later this year."

Not everyone is so endeared to the product. Several athletes have said the supplement gives some athletes an unfair advantage. They describe the performance improvements as "unnatural" and pointed to athletes from cycling and long distance running as evidence that people are catching onto the supplement and using it for a competitive advantage.

A company spokesman, speaking off the record, admitted that the product doesn't work overnight and that most athletes won't see the extreme performance enhancements for 3-4 weeks. In a world infatuated with instant success, that kind of realistic admission might cost some sales but is likely to keep customers happy.

While the controversy over the advantage athletes using EPO-BOOST® are obtaining is unlikely to go away anytime soon, one thing is for sure; blood doping and synthetic drugs are a thing of the past now that amateurs and professionals alike can tap into a natural product that generates Olympian-like strength and endurance.

Any athlete can use EPO-BOOST® without a prescription and without changing a diet or exercise regimen. The company offers an unparalleled guarantee. Athletes can use the product for a full 90 days and if not completely satisfied, send back whatever product is remaining - even an empty bottle - and get a 'no questions asked' refund.

A company spokesman confirmed an exclusive offer for Bicycling readers. If you order this month, you'll receive $10 off your first order by using promo code **"Bike10"** at checkout. You can order EPO-BOOST® today at www.EPOBOOST.com or by calling 1-800-780-4331.

[1] Whitehead et al. Int J Sport Nutr Exerc Metab, 17 (2007): 378-9.

JOIN THE RIDE

WITH OUR EDITOR, LEAH FLICKINGER

YOU + BIKE = POWER. *Before gran fondos and gravel grinders went mainstream, there was the humble* ***CHARITY RIDE.*** // These rides aren't sexy, but they have a massive impact. ***BIKE MS ALONE HAS RAISED $1 BILLION TO DATE—SEE OUR INSIDER'S GUIDE, PAGE 23.*** // The stories in this issue also reveal a side of these events we rarely celebrate—***how they change the lives of everyone involved.*** There's the woman with rheumatoid arthritis who rode **525 MILES** for the Arthritis Foundation (*basically off the couch*) and this summer will conquer some of France's biggest climbs. ***The celebrity chef who didn't consider himself an endurance athlete until he tackled the 300-mile Chefs Cycle, lost 27 pounds, and became a cycling convert.*** The guy who once rolled his eyes at raising money to ride—until a charity event helped him celebrate his late father's life (*oh, and today he's one of its top fundraisers*). // *And then there's* ***MIKE CIMBURA.*** *Read about his battle with ALS, his personal mission to raise awareness, and his quest to feel the wind in his face* ***(page 32).*** // ***THAT POWER I'M TALKING ABOUT?*** *How cycling so profoundly transforms us that it becomes our most potent agent for change.* **HARNESS YOUR #PASSIONWATTS.**

Leah

↑ JENN RAMSEY HAS A DEBILITATING FORM OF ARTHRITIS—BUT THAT HASN'T STOPPED HER FROM RIDING THE 525-MILE CALIFORNIA COAST CLASSIC A DOZEN TIMES.

THE ONE-OF-A-KIND ELECTRIC CARGO BIKE THAT CARRIES MIKE CIMBURA ON THE THREE-DAY, 235-MILE DEATH RIDE TOUR THROUGH COLORADO'S SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS TO FIGHT ALS. ↓

Portrait: Matt Rainey; Bike MS: Courtesy; Jenn Ramsey: Courtesy; Bike: Benjamin Rasmussen

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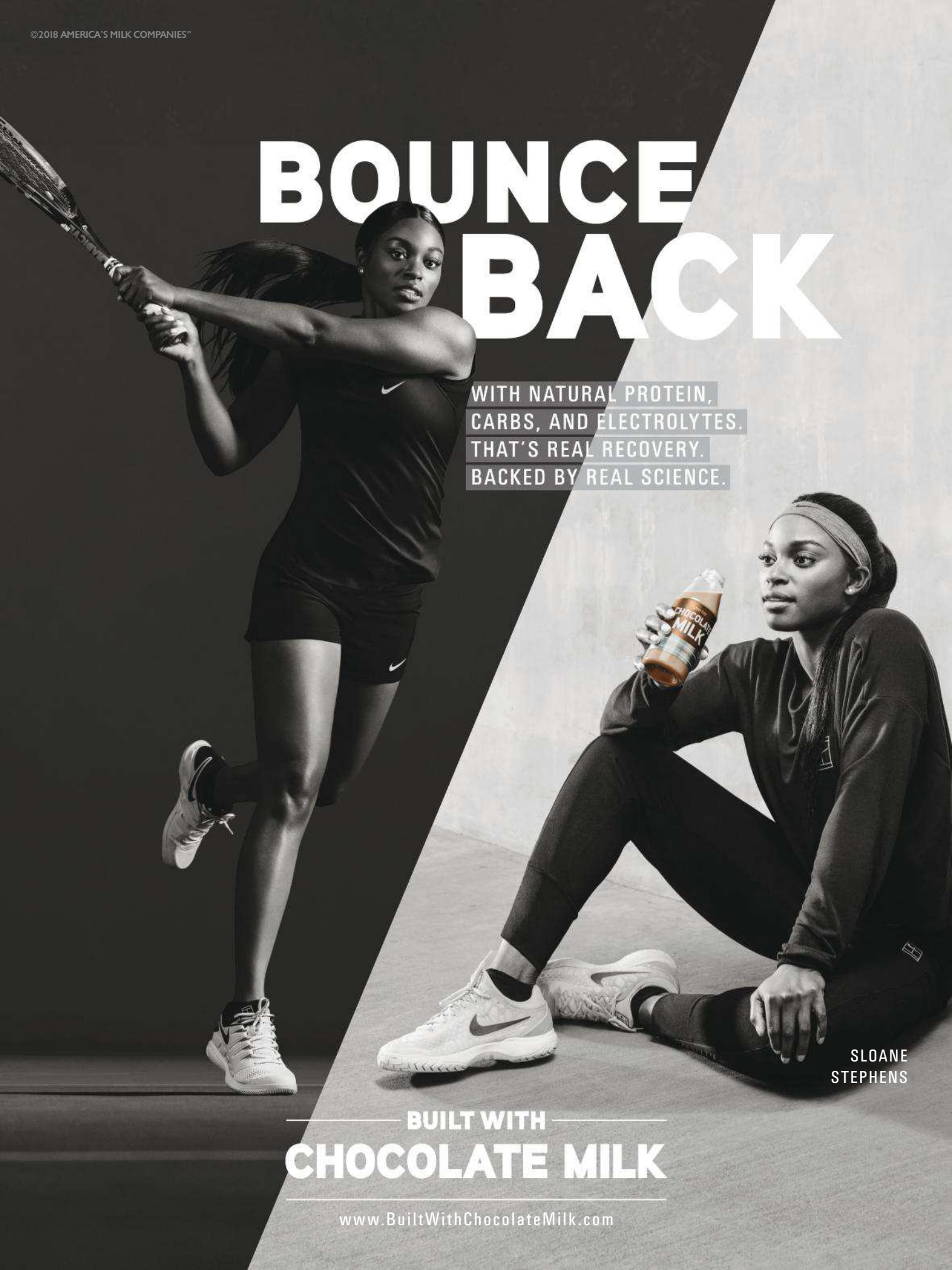

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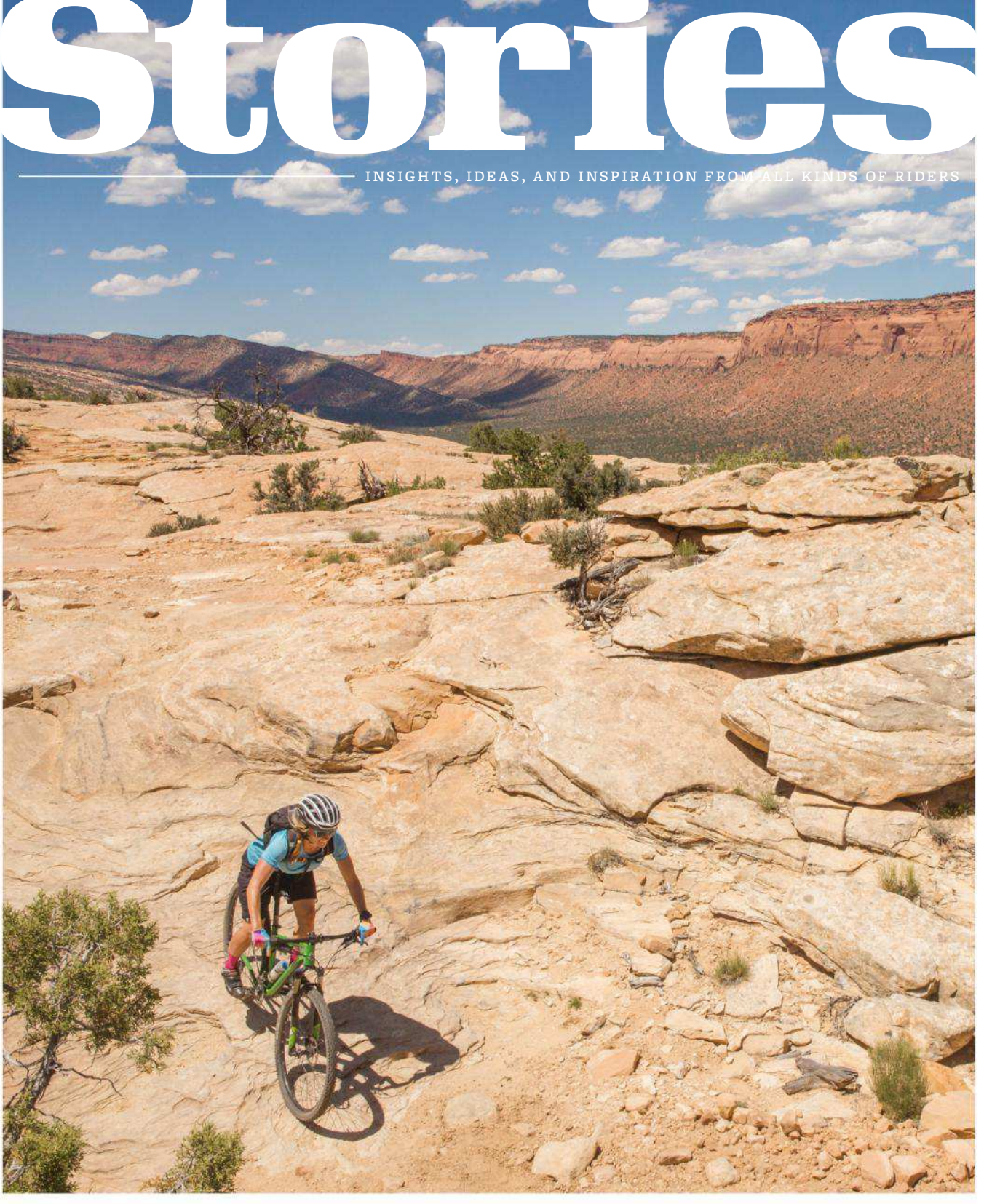
Stories

INSIGHTS, IDEAS, AND INSPIRATION FROM ALL KINDS OF RIDERS



THE THING THAT CHANGED IT ALL

LEARNING TO COMMIT

I did my first Xterra off-road triathlon in 2006 on a bike I borrowed from a friend. After that, I was hooked on mountain biking. The technical aspect was hard for me, but I was excited to train for something new. To improve, I rode with people who were better than I was. We would stop at tricky sections and reride them a few times. One day we came to a big log, a bridge, and then another log. There were six of us, and we all took turns. I was out of my comfort zone, and I fell off. But I had spotters, and it was fun just to do it. I got it on the second or third try. That gave me the confidence to attempt more challenging obstacles. Most of the time overcoming them is easier than I think—it's just a matter of committing to it. **EMMA GARRARD, 36 / PROFESSIONAL TRIATHLETE AND NORDIC PROGRAM MANAGER, PARK CITY SKI & SNOWBOARD / PARK CITY, UTAH**

Photograph by **MICHAEL HERMSMEYER**

Bothies by

MORNING AT SUARDALAN BOTHY IN THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS

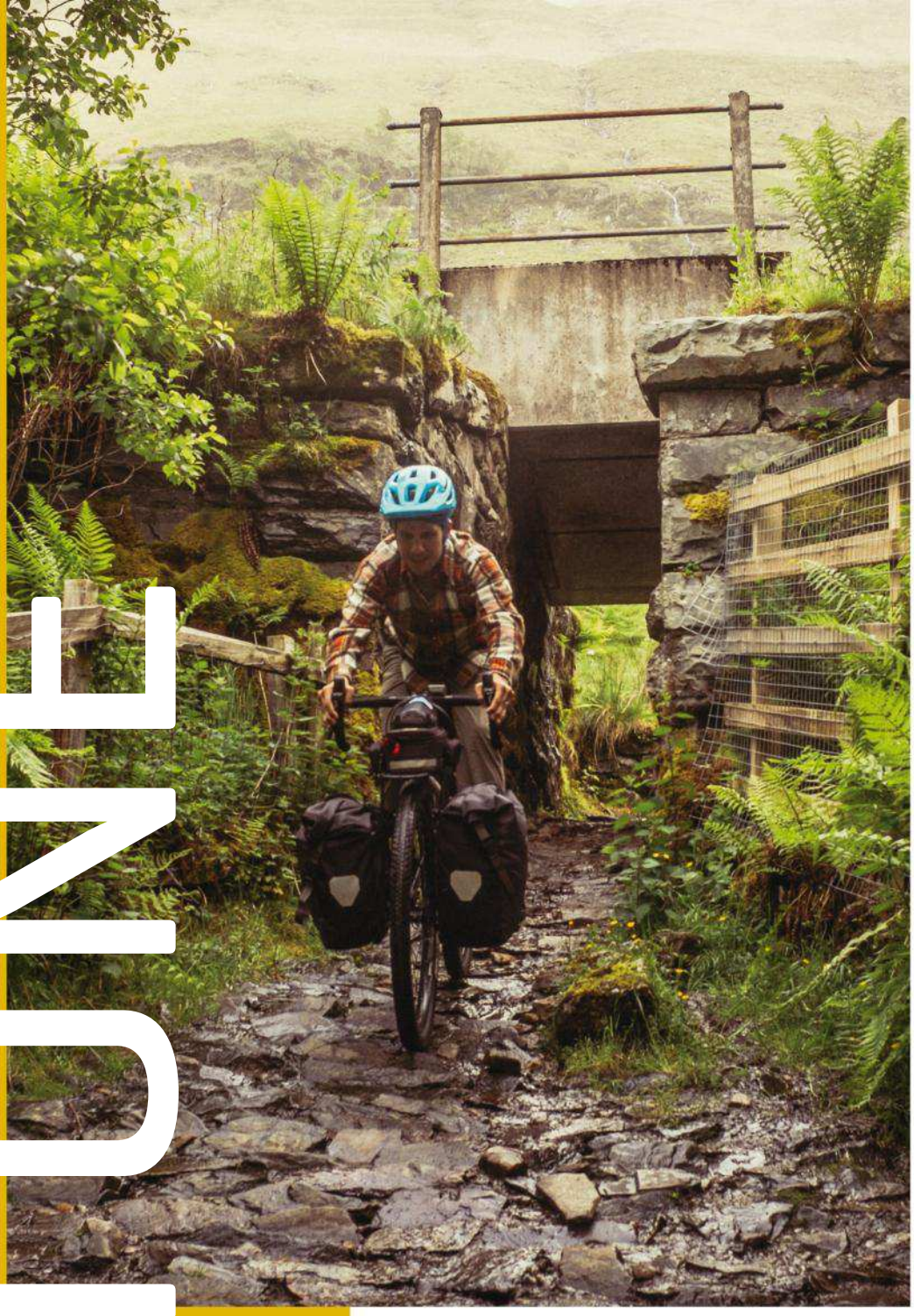
Nightfall

ACROSS THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS, A NETWORK OF RUGGED, ANCIENT COTTAGES OFFERS SHELTER TO WEARY BIKEPACKERS—IF YOU CAN FIND THEM BEFORE SUNDOWN.

BY **IAN DILLE**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SANDY CARSON**

STONE



You learn things on a seven-day bike tour across the Scottish Highlands with a bunch of old BMX pros. You learn, for example, that your friends might not always prioritize your personal safety.

As you straddle your burly adventure bike at the precipice of a steep and rock-strewn descent, covered in rain-slickened moss, your friend will yell, "Ride it!" Another will encourage, "Yeah!" Someone else will frame the shot with a camera.

The words of your beautiful wife—"don't do anything stupid"—will run through your head. And then you'll push hard with your right leg, throw your ass back over your Brooks saddle, and clip in.

At the bottom, you'll turn to your friend, the photographer, and say, "Did you get it?"

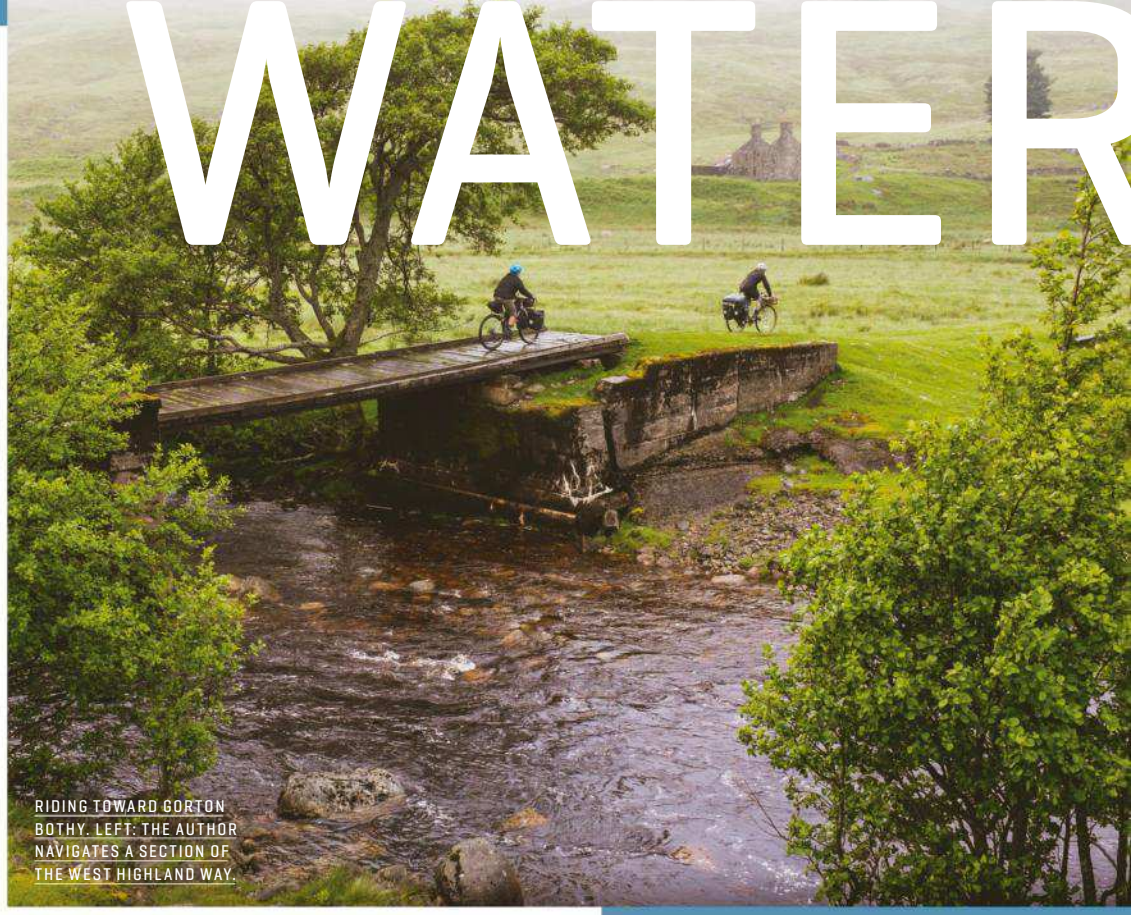
Sometimes the stones we find in Scotland are the ones between our own ears. But for the first two days of our trip, which took us along Scotland's West Highland Way, they're mostly beneath our tires.

We'd set off from Glasgow with a rough agenda: to pedal to the very tip of the Isle of Skye, the iconic landscape from which the famous YouTube street trials rider Danny MacAskill hails, to visit some whisky distilleries (or to at least imbibe a few bottles of "malt," as the locals say), and to overnight in Scotland's mythical bothies, the centuries-old shelters that trail-worn travelers are free to use.

Though we had read about the bothies, we still didn't quite believe they existed, or know if we could find them. Most sit on private property and are accessible only by remote dirt roads or trails. A core group of U.K. hill walkers and cyclists, volunteer members of the Mountain Bothies Association, manage and maintain the shelters. And up until about a decade ago, the bothy locations were shared almost solely by word of mouth.

Today, the MBA lists the coordinates of Scotland's nearly 100 bothies on its website using the U.K. grid reference system, which isn't super helpful unless you're a professional surveyor. However, a recently released book, *The Scottish Bothy Bible* (written by a professional surveyor) offers more detail. Even with the bible, finding bothies isn't easy, but that's one

WATER



RIDING TOWARD GORTON BOTHY. LEFT: THE AUTHOR NAVIGATES A SECTION OF THE WEST HIGHLAND WAY.

of the most appealing things about them.

During the journey, I was the fourth wheel on a crew comprised of photographer Sandy Carson, a Scottish ex-pat who now lives near me in Austin, Texas, and two of his old friends from the U.K., Dean Hearne and Nick Coombes. Decades ago, Sandy and Dean had been amongst the best freestyle BMX riders in the world. Though they'd moved on from the BMX lifestyle years ago—Dean is also a photographer, and co-owns the online home decor and lifestyle shop, The Future Kept, while Nick has an office gig with the U.K. government—the three of them had stayed in touch.

Our first stop out of Glasgow had been the Glengoyne distillery near the town of Dumgoyne, which has been bottling Scotch whisky "legally" (wink, wink) since 1833. We bought a bottle of the 12-year-old, and then rushed to a ScotRail depot 17 miles away in Dumbarton, making the train that would shuttle us up into the Highlands by mere minutes.

Outdoor recreation is ingrained in Scottish culture, and the trains that head north frequently stop at isolated trailheads. We sat amongst fellow bike tourists and hikers. Near the town of Tyndrum, where the railroad tracks intersect the West Highland Way, we unloaded our bikes and began pedaling again.

A trail comprised of old military roads, abandoned railways, and drovers' paths that runs 96 miles from Milngavie (just outside of Glasgow) north to Fort William, the West Highland Way is better suited to hiking than bike touring. We made slow progress, muscling through fields of boulders and stopping to photograph the potential spectacle brought on by peer pressure.

Along the trail, Dean finds a sheep skull, lashes it to his wooden basket, and later names it Doc. Sandy bombs a series of brick stairs beneath a train trestle and breaks his rack. I discover midges, the tiny Scottish insects that swarm your face and bite you as you fix your friend's broken rack.

As the evening light begins to fade, an intermittent mist rolls in. We turn onto a gravel road we believe leads to a bothy called Gorton. We'd seen the shelter described online as "large, lonely...no firewood," but knew little else—other than that the structure was built with solid stone walls.

We encounter a wide and softly flowing river.

After exploring the banks for the shallowest possible crossing, Sandy huffs, utters a refrain that would become common during the course of our trip—"Fuck it"—and trudges into the knee-deep water.

You become accustomed to wetness in Scotland. Though we'd scheduled our trip for June, ostensibly one of the country's driest months, we wore rain jackets and gloves 50 percent of the time. The temperamental conditions could leave you both sunburned and soaked within the same day.

Yet we also came to appreciate the wet weather for the beauty it spawned. Crystal clear creeks, from which we fetched water for coffee and oatmeal. Tranquil ponds that provided a midmorning bath. Damp bogs bursting with mosses, ferns, and wildflowers, and bright green grasses that blanketed the treeless mountainsides. Waterfalls that cascaded hundreds of feet down sheer cliffs.

I blessed the Scottish wetness for all the bridges it necessitated, from rickety wooden spans to architectural marvels made of intricately laid stones, and became a bit of a bridge fanatic. "Bridge porn!" I would shout, a signal for Sandy to photograph me riding back and forth, smiling gleefully.

After fording the river, we embark on our first of four quintessential bothy-finding experiences. An undulating path that forces us to push our bikes as much as we ride them. Cold, exhausted legs. Growling stomachs. Someone out front pointing excitedly. A small building in the distance.

A thick, wooden door and an unlocked latch. A shove, and it swings open. Inside, out of the wet.

FIRE

You learn other things on a seven-day bike tour across the Scottish Highlands. You learn that if an online description of a bothy reads, "No firewood," when you arrive at the bothy, which is situated against a grassy hillside without a tree in sight, indeed, there will be no firewood.

And if you wish to warm your aching body and dry your sodden shoes, then you should gather the fallen limbs you encounter miles away from your lonely bothy and strap them to your panniers.

We learn this lesson after the fact.

Yet even without a fire, in this bothy we are overjoyed. The sparse shelters, which once served as lodging for farm families and sheep herders, were abandoned during the advent of the industrial age—and allowed to turn to ruins as Scotland's rural inhabitants migrated to the cities. So there's a certain irony in our excitement, a hundred-plus years later, to travel from the city to this restored stone hut.

We giggle as we explore the two large rooms—one for sleeping, another for cooking—and lay out our sleeping pads on the earthen floor. In the absence of firewood (or peat, the coal-like fuel source that grows in the Highlands bogs), we drink whisky to warm ourselves. It's the burning of peat to dry the malted barley, we learn on our whisky-tasting tour of Scotland, that imbues the beverage with the unique, smoky flavor for which it is renowned (or reviled, depending on who you ask).

Glengoyne is historically distilled without peat, and we easily reach the bottom of the bottle. Then we pass out. In the morning we wake to blue skies, put on our still soggy shoes, and return to the West Highland Way, pedaling up and over a mountain pass on a cobbled road built in the 18th century.

At a ski chalet on the far side of the pass, we try haggis (a Scottish staple made of sheep's heart, liver, and lungs) and then take a trail paralleling the busy A82, coasting through the Glencoe Valley, craning our necks in bewilderment at the soaring granite peaks.

We'd intended to make it to a bothy near the town of Fort William that evening. But even with the summer sunlight lasting until nearly 10 p.m., we run out of time. During our weeklong ride across Scotland, the sun never seems to fully set, with twilight lasting well past midnight. This benefited us when tracking down bothies late into the evening, but also led to casual morning departures, putting us up and out on the trail each morning by, as we joke, "the crack of eleven."

After aborting that evening's bothy hunt, we instead hop the last ferry across Loch Linnhe, with a plan to wild camp that evening. The practice is common in Scotland, where freedom-to-roam laws protect the public's ability to cross private lands and even spend the night on them, so long as the property's owners aren't disturbed.

DINNER BY CANDLELIGHT IN GORTON BOTHY. LEFT: NICK COOMBES STOKES THE FIRE AT GLENBUCK BOTHY. BELOW: THE AUTHOR AT SUARDALAN BOTHY.

On the ferry, a local man points us to an inlet where a mountain stream feeds the loch, and then traces a line along our map—"I'd suggest you camp up there," he says. We follow his instructions and find a small meadow situated next to a waterfall with a view of Ben Nevis, the U.K.'s highest peak.

The summit of Ben Nevis, they say in Scotland, is clear only one day out of every 10, and today is one of those days. As the sun sets on the mountain, the rock face of the round summit glows in red hues.

That night, beside the rumbling waterfall, we warm ourselves with a fire.

Having become experienced bothy hunters and Scottish wild campers, we greet the morning with confidence. In Fort William, we pick up the Great Glen Way, which runs 79 mostly gentle miles along a series of placid lochs (including the famous Loch Ness). So great is our confidence that before we embark on the sunny ride, we sample some malts at the Ben Nevis Distillery and grab a bottle for that evening. We even crack open a six-pack of local craft beer, sipping the suds as we pedal beside the lochs.

When we reach the tiny village of Aberchalder, where we intend to bothy that evening, Nick pulls out his phone and snaps a photo of a dirt road he notices slicing up the face of an abrupt hillside, simply for the reason that this road appears to be perhaps the steepest road he has ever seen in person.

"Imagine if we had to go up that?" Nick laughs.

Then we pull out our map and attempt to locate the bothy. Eventually we come to the certain conclusion that—though we wish we were not so certain—the bothy is located beyond Nick's hilltop.

FLESH

You learn things about your friends on a seven-day bike tour across the Scottish Highlands. You learn that your friend Sandy has a deep and heartfelt love for his homeland, for its feature-film-worthy landscape ("Crap scenery, eh?" he likes to joke), and its cultural eccentricities.

You learn this because as you push your burly, bag-laden adventure bike up a 20-plus-percent dirt grade, you are kind of cursing Sandy.

At a grocery store in Fort William, anticipating a flat, easy day ahead, Sandy had stocked up on Scottish junk food: jars of Branston Pickle, fruit shortcake and fig roll biscuits, bags of dry roasted nuts, midget gems (gummies), Irn-Bru (the Fanta of Scotland), and packets of crisps (potato chips). We'd divided the guilty pleasures amongst our panniers, and now we're literally bearing the weight of Sandy's affection for Scotland.

Yet for as much as Sandy identifies as Scottish, he cannot live in this country. He grew up in a former mining town outside of Glasgow in the 1980s. When the Scottish steel plants began to fail and local industry tanked, adolescent gangs flourished. Kids like him, who differed from the norm because they rode BMX and listened to punk music, became easy targets. He visited the U.S. for the first time after thugs smashed a bottle over his head. When he got stabbed, he left Scotland for good.

Other things you learn, you learn about your friend Nick, who has to stop during your tour to take medicine, because he sometimes suffers from dizzy spells, because, you learn, he has a cancerous two-inch tumor inside his skull. It affects his memory, too. But he does remember when doctors drilled a hole in his skull to examine and biopsy the tumor, and then told him that because of its location near sensitive areas of his brain, they would not be able to remove it.

Nick is perhaps the strongest member in our group, and midway through our trudge up this hill, he throws a leg over his bike and—with an animal howl—begins hammering up the wall-like gradient.

We learn soon into our trip that Dean is the weakest rider in the group, and we are okay with that because Dean is okay with that. In his post-BMX life he'd run marathons and achieved other feats of endurance, but over the last year he'd done little more than bike commute a few miles to town and back. When Sandy invited him on the trip, he almost declined. But two weeks prior to our departure, he thought, *You know what? No kids. No boss. I've set up my life for adventure like this. I'm in.*

He wills himself along, welcoming a push to reach the top of a long climb or a bit of amateur physio treatment on his aching knee, and proves that the mind is indeed more powerful than the body.

After an hour of huffing and heaving to the crest of the hill, we descend into an uninhabited valley, where someone points excitedly at the Glenbuck Bothy, a two-story structure draped in golden light.

WIND

The rain returns as we ride west toward Skye. We suffer the spray of passing tour buses as we make the white-knuckled descent to the village of Shiel Bridge.

There we encounter a crotchety clerk at the Shiel Shop, buy a bottle of malt, climb a mountain overlooking a loch, coast through a misty pine forest, and in the twilight, find the Suardalan Bothy.

It's the best yet, outfitted with wooden bunks and an iron stove. We discover that the previous visitors, per the MBA bothy code, had stocked the shelter with a large stack of dry firewood before they left.

We're only a ferry ride away from the Isle of Skye, and the next day, at an old lighthouse with complimentary tea, we load our bikes onto the last manually operated turntable ferry in Scotland.

We'd read about a bothy at the northern tip of the Isle called the Lookout, a former coast guard station from which you can spot whales swimming in the Atlantic. And we intend to make it there, but the weather remains ominous, forcing us to stop in Portree and overnight at a bed and breakfast.

There, we find we're not the only hardened bike tourists getting soft. At a pub on the town square, we share a round of pints with Mike Ryan, who's on a three-week tour with his 14-year-old son, Caelan. Mike tells us he's a park ranger at Big Bend National Park in Texas, and we find we share mutual friends.

LOOKOUT BOTHY, ON THE ISLE OF SKYE. LEFT: SANDY CARSON, NICK COOMBES, IAN DILLE, DEAN HEARNE (L–R) OUTSIDE GLENBUCK BOTHY. ABOVE: SUMMITING THE QUIRAING.

He and his son are heading south, and we suggest they stay at some of the bothies we visited.

"I heard they're hard to find," Mike says. We nod our heads in unison.

A band plays Gaelic folk songs. Another round ensues, and then another.

The next morning comes too early, but the trip's most geographically stunning ride awaits. Skye's rock formations, the Storr and the Quiraing, draw tourists from all over the world, and we're soon amongst them, hiking up the Storr in our cycling shoes, a salty sea breeze swirling around us.

We ride along the undulating coastline and turn to summit the Quiraing. Up there, where legend has it that ancient tribes once used the rock formations to hide their cattle from raiding Vikings, we don't dare stand too close to the cliff's edge for fear that one of the many mighty gusts will blow us into oblivion.

Finally, we find the Lookout Bothy. It's a relatively easy walk from the road, and when we arrive, we discover that the tiny hut is already occupied by a half dozen other travelers. Everyone is welcoming and, per the bothy code, eager to make space for others. But we'd never intended to stay overnight—we'd left our bivvy sacks and sleeping bags at the B&B in Portree.

You learn things on a seven-day bike tour through the Scottish Highlands. And over the course of the week, I'd learned that in all of life's day-to-day stresses and excesses, really, I don't want for much more than a warm sleeping bag, the companionship of friends and loved ones, and a beautiful view.

We use the bothy for a respite from the whipping wind. We make coffee and watch for whales.

Then we get on our bikes and let the tailwind take us home. ***B***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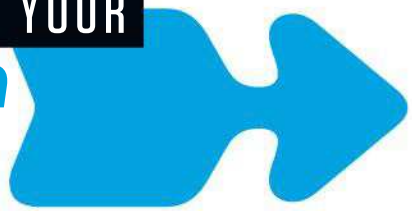
PLUS: 27 EVENTS THAT WILL IGNITE YOUR #PASSIONWATTS



THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL

Plunkett and his wife, Christine Fennessy, on the 2017 Perimeter Ride.

FOR KEITH PLUNKETT, 37, THIS MULTIDAY CANCER RIDE WAS A CHALLENGE AND A GETAWAY—UNTIL IT BECAME SO MUCH MORE

I did my first Pennsylvania Perimeter Ride Against Cancer in 2007 as a cheap, weeklong bike vacation with friends. For six days you ride 500 to 600 miles from the start—which changes each edition—back to Palmerton, Pennsylvania. The biennial event raises money for the American Cancer Society. I paid the $1,000 fundraising minimum out of pocket.

At the time, my dad had some early-stage cancer cells in his prostate, but it wasn't a big deal. Or so I thought. By 2009, the cancer had metastasized. But treatment seemed to be working, and he was also planning to undergo radiation. I thought I'd return to the Perimeter Ride that summer with a success story to tell: My father was fighting cancer and winning.

But by 2010, he needed chemotherapy and was involved in some clinical trials. As months passed, I watched the strongest man I knew wilt into a frail bag of bones. I had to learn how to pull him out of bed without hurting his weakened shoulders, the same shoulders that just the summer before could outdrive me on the golf course. He died the following June, a month before the 2011 PPRAC.

I'd missed so much work taking care of him that I couldn't do the ride that year. But my wife, Christine, drove me out for two days of it. It felt good to be with my Perimeter Ride family, but afterward I got sad, depressed, and then pissed off. Why even do the ride? Where was all this money going? Why was my dad gone? I talked to a therapist who helped me realize thousands of people are helped by the kinds of clinical trials my dad did, many of which are funded by organizations like the American Cancer Society. I also realized the ride was a celebration of my relationship with my father, who had been a huge supporter of my cycling.

By 2013, I was no longer asking for money so that I could do a ride. I was doing it to help other people's fathers live longer. Now I volunteer with the planning committee, and this past year, Christine and I raised more than $8,000. I used to feel like charity rides were more "Look what I did" rather than "This is what we raised." But when you have a personal connection, they give you the power to make a real difference.

My dad's memory also keeps me motivated during the ride itself. Last year, I woke up the morning after a rainy 100-mile day feeling utterly defeated. But I remembered how my father, in the few months before his death, would still iron his khakis and dress shirt before chemo appointments. He left me with that lesson: No matter what's going on, you suck it up and get yourself together.—***As told to Selene Yeager***

FUNDRAISE LIKE A BOSS

THROW A SHINDIG // Rent out a fire hall and invite your friends for a dinner and dance party. Set up a taco bar and queue up Spotify. Charge a cover at the door and put a tip jar by the food and booze.

Courtesy

BIKE MS FTW!

Multiple sclerosis is a disease in which the immune system attacks the central nervous system. While it can be managed with medication, there's no cure yet. Bike MS is the largest fundraising ride series in the world and has been supporting the National MS Society since 1980. Here's your insider's guide. BY JOE LINDSEY AND RILEY MISSEL

BY THE NUMBERS

200
number of participants who rode from Minneapolis to Duluth in the first MS 150 in 1980

34
percent of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's total revenue from Bike MS rides (2016)

80,500
PROJECTED NUMBER OF 2018 BIKE MS RIDERS

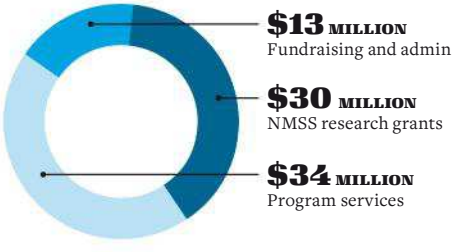
77
NUMBER OF BIKE MS EVENTS IN 2018

44
STATES WITH A BIKE MS EVENT

$1 BILLION+
amount raised to date by Bike MS riders to fund research grants and program services

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

$77 MILLION RAISED BY RIDE PARTICIPANTS IN 2016



9 STANDOUT RIDES

Koreen Burrow was diagnosed with MS in 1991. But that hasn't stopped her and husband, David Fox, from finishing at least one Bike MS ride in each state. They recommend these nine standout events.

BIKE TO THE BAY
PERRYSBURG, OHIO

"The ride takes place near Lake Erie, and at the end of day one, you get a free ferry ticket to go to Put-In-Bay Island."—*Koreen*

TOYOTA BEST DAM BIKE TOUR
PEWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

"The afterparty lasted until 2 in the morning! We were sure they would stop selling beer at some point, but they never did."—*Koreen*

BORDER BASH
ORANGE BEACH, ALABAMA

"This chapter just rolls out the red carpet for you. The ride is along the beach. They do a really nice dinner on Saturday night, with a lot of fresh seafood."—*Koreen*

BIGHORN COUNTRY CLASSIC
SHERIDAN, WYOMING

"If you want beautiful scenery, feeling like you're on the road with just a few friends, wide shoulders, and low traffic, Wyoming's your ride."—*Koreen*

COLORADO POWERED LOCALLY BY ANTHEM
WESTMINSTER, COLORADO

"In Fort Collins, on the first night, you stay in a college dorm. They have a big party. Riding over Horsetooth Reservoir is gorgeous."—*Koreen*
"It is not gorgeous. Koreen loves to climb. I'm usually in the beer tent. It was daunting, but I'm glad I did it."—*David*

BP MS 150
HOUSTON, TEXAS

"At the finish on day two, at the Capitol building in Austin, there's like 30,000 people cheering you on, yelling your name."—*David*
"David's tearing up just thinking about it."—*Koreen*
[Editor's note: The finish has been moved to the Circuit of the Americas outside of downtown Austin for 2018.]

CYCLE THE SILVER VALLEY
KELLOGG, IDAHO

"It's all rail trail, so you don't have to worry about traffic, and it runs along a beautiful stream, with no more than a 6 percent grade."—*David*

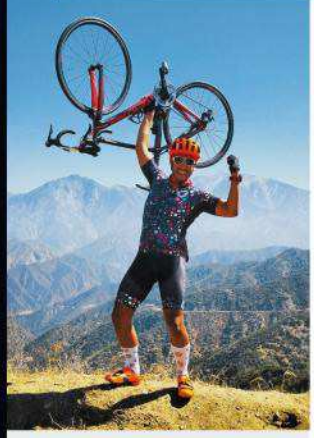
WAVES TO WINE
SAN FRANCISCO

"There are rest stops at wineries. After the finish, you eat (again), drink (again), and they drive you back to San Francisco. The bus ride is very quiet!"—*Koreen*

GREAT LAKES WEST MICHIGAN BREAKAWAY
HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

"We were treated like family. Those Midwestern rides—you just can't beat the people and the camaraderie."—*Koreen*

I'LL NEVER *HAVE TO* RIDE ALONE *AGAIN*



Salgado, on a training ride in Southern California's San Gabriel Mountains in 2016.

HOW AIDS/LIFECYCLE HELPED TOMÁS SALGADO, 38, FIND A PLACE TO BELONG

In 2016, I was newly single, and I didn't really know anybody in the LGBT community. A coworker told me about AIDS/LifeCycle, a seven-day, 545-mile ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. I signed up, hoping to meet someone new. I figured I could get my mind off my heartbreak and do something good for the community at the same time.

The ride was about 500 miles longer than I'd ever ridden, but I started training. I live in Long Beach and work in downtown L.A., so I'd do the 52-mile round-trip commute. After a few months, I felt prepared for the ride physically, but I was nervous about the social aspect. I'd come out about nine years before and had always been in a relationship. I'd never been around a couple thousand gay men at once. We have a reputation for being a bit bitchy, judgy, I guess. I thought I'd be on my own and not really talk to anybody. But a week before the ride, I met this guy, Randall Jones, and we ended up riding nearly every mile together and became close friends.

When you're out on the road all day, that's the best time to talk to people. There was a team called the Winona Riders, and when we passed one of them, we'd go, "Uh-oh! A Winona Rider on your left! Check your belongings!" It was fun because nobody took themselves too seriously. I'd packed a different outfit for camp every night. Turns out people just wear the same thing every day and no one was judging me on my clothes or fitness. It was just a big, inclusive group.

After that first year, Randall and I started a fundraising team with a few people we'd met on the ride. We're obsessed with donuts, so we named it The Flirty Dozen. Our kits are pink with sprinkles. The team had 15 people and raised about $120,000 in 2017, our first year. And now we're gearing up for the 2018 edition.

Outside of training rides, the group gets together at least once a week. We celebrate birthdays, do housewarmings, have dinner, go to bars, go camping. We do fundraisers and ride with local teams. We're all in our thirties, just trying to figure things out. We're all interested in fitness and cycling, and in pushing ourselves. I'm still single, but thanks to a charity ride, now I've found my people.—***As told to Riley Missel***

FUNDRAISE LIKE A BOSS

ORGANIZE A TRAINING RIDE // Charge a donation, and designate a leader and support riders with tools—even better, have a friend drive a sag wagon. Have everyone sign a waiver—USA Cycling offers permits and release forms for noncompetitive rides.

Courtesy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IT JUST FEELS GOOD

Though he traded up to a Giant Defy for the ride, Goldman still loves riding his Cannondale Bad Boy.

ACE OF CAKES STAR DUFF GOLDMAN, 43, WAS OVERWEIGHT AND STRESSED. THEN HE FOUND CHEFS CYCLE

I'm a bear of a guy. I've struggled with weight since college, and as a judge on *Ace of Cakes* I sometimes have to try 24 desserts a day.

In 2015, my friend, chef and cyclist Jeff Mahin, encouraged me to do the first California Chefs Cycle, which was 300 miles over three days and raised money for No Kid Hungry, a charity that provides meals to children. I said I'd give it a whirl and pretended to train for a couple of weeks, but then chickened out. I had played hockey and football and lacrosse growing up, but endurance sports were never my thing.

Jeff wouldn't leave me alone, though, so the following year, I got a Giant Defy and started training more seriously. I live in West LA, so I would ride down to the beach and on the beach path. At first I was worried, like, "What if I ride five miles from my house and I'm cooked? How do I get home?" Then it got to be fun to see how far I could go. When I rode the 50 miles to Palos Verdes and back, it was an incredible feeling.

Still, cycling was intimidating. You see these guys on $10,000 bikes, super lean with huge calves, and then here comes big old me. But everyone was so welcoming and just wanted me to do great. I did 70 miles of Chefs Cycle in its second year. I was at the back, doing 8 mph. Two of the guys in the front dropped back for me and we had such a good time goofing around. I figured, "If you guys are going to sacrifice your ride for me, at least I'll entertain you." Last year, I did all 300 miles.

Since I started doing Chefs Cycle I've lost about 27 pounds. It was just exercise and eating clean. Look, I love cake. I'll never not love cake. I fucking love cake. But with riding, everything pushes everything else. Eating cleaner and feeling better makes me ride more because it feels good, and riding makes me want to eat clean and feel better.

I'll sometimes get out for five, six-hour rides. I just fell in love with it. I just go and go and go, and get into a rhythm that frees my brain. I notice what's going on, but I'm not stressing about life or work. My mind can wander. It's almost like dreaming.—***As told to Joe Lindsey***

FUNDRAISE LIKE A BOSS

MONETIZE BIG TRAINING DAYS // Nate Freed, of Vista, California, bagged an Everest—climbing 29,092 feet in a day on a single ascent—for his cancer ride. Using social media and Strava to solicit donations, he raised $1,000.

Goldman: WENN LTD, Alamy


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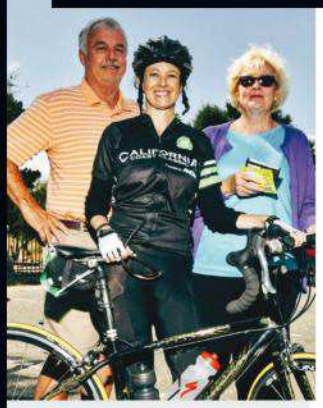

Ramsey and her parents, John and Donna Ramsey, in Sisquoc, California, on the 2017 tour.

JENN RAMSEY, 45, IS UNABLE TO STAND FOR MORE THAN 30 MINUTES—BUT SHE'S RIDDEN THE 525-MILE CALIFORNIA COAST CLASSIC A DOZEN TIMES

By the time I was diagnosed with polyarticular juvenile rheumatoid arthritis at 13 months old, my arms were already contracted, and I've never been able to fully straighten them. I barely have cartilage in my ankles—it's bone on bone. My left ankle hurts pretty much all the time. Sometimes it feels as if my tibia has been replaced by a knife, and every time I step down, it jabs into my ankle. I generally can't stand for more than a half-hour without difficulty.

In January of 2006, both of my grandmothers passed away in the same week. I thought, *I gotta do something big with this life.* I happened to be on the Arthritis Foundation website and saw an ad for the eight-day, 525-mile California Coast Classic. I was intrigued. I knew I wanted to try a big event, and although walking is painful, riding a bike is less stressful for my joints.

I got a hybrid and rode a half-mile loop near my house in Virginia about a thousand times because I wasn't comfortable on the road. I showed up in San Francisco with a bunch of T-shirts and my heavy bike. It was way harder than I thought. The first day, I made it about 50 miles. I didn't finish the next day either. Then I started to figure out pacing and nutrition, and finished all but one of the remaining days.

I've come back every year since—and it's changed my life. I feel strong, and I love the idea that I can do something not everyone can do. Riding up a hill, when I'm going at my own pace and I'm just focused on my breathing and my pedal stroke, my mind is clear. I love climbing—it's a better position for my body, and my arms are already contracted. This July, I'm planning a Trek Travel trip in France to do the climbs of the Tour, including Mont Ventoux.

I love talking to parents whose kids have arthritis. I can show them what's possible. Some people have said, "Wow, you ride in pain." I'm not saying it's not hard. But riding eight days is hard for everybody. I try not to be overly dramatic about myself. The people I meet who were diagnosed later in life, they have lost more. Sure, it's a struggle some days, but I do everything I can to stay healthy. Cycling allows me to do more than just read and watch Netflix. I always feel better after a bike ride. Doesn't everybody?—***As told to Evelyn Spence***

FUNDRAISE LIKE A BOSS

MAKE A SPREADSHEET // Keep track of who you've contacted, what they've donated, and who you owe a thank you or a follow-up, advises Derek Engfelt of San Jose, California, who has raised more than $100,000 for the Arthritis Foundation.

Courtesy

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PICK YOUR CAUSE—HERE'S YOUR RIDE

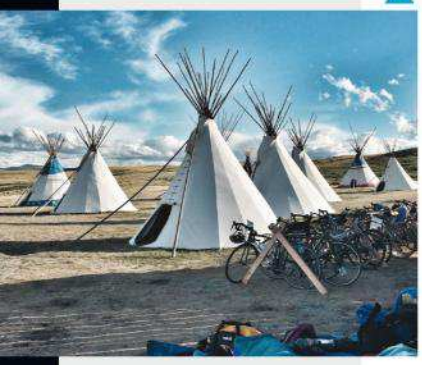
BY EVELYN SPENCE

1 CAUSE Our National Parks

RIDE **Climate Ride**, July 17–22, 2018, in Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks in Montana and Canada, respectively

YOU'LL SUPPORT The Glacier National Park Conservancy, which makes green improvements like solar panels, and bike racks on the park buses.

EXPERIENCE A multisport adventure on the Canadian border—four days of cycling, one day of rafting, one day of hiking—with just 50 participants. Sleep in a tipi, listen to experts speak each night on topics ranging from climate change to astronomy, and climb the iconic Going-to-the-Sun Road.



2 CAUSE Mental Health

RIDE **Hot Hundred**, July 28, 2018, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

YOU'LL SUPPORT The Tuscaloosa Mental Health Alliance, a network of 50-plus local agencies that provide prescriptions and transportation for patients, community education programs, and camps for children.

EXPERIENCE A deceivingly flat century that becomes an epic challenge due to temps and humidity that can both hit the 90s. But the sno-cones at the rest stops will keep you going.

3 CAUSE Feeding the Hungry

RIDE **The Supermarket Street Sweep**, December 1, 2018, in San Francisco

YOU'LL SUPPORT San Francisco-Marin Food Bank, which serves 225,000 people in the Bay Area.

EXPERIENCE Part food drive, part bicycle race. Riders use donated dollars to buy goods from grocery stores, then haul it all back by pannier, trailer, or backpack to a warehouse. Fastest to transport a designated amount wins, as well as the individual and team that cart the most food total. The 2017 loot: 15,358 pounds.

4 CAUSE Cancer Care

RIDE **24 Hours of Booty**, July 27–28, 2018, in Charlotte, North Carolina

YOU'LL SUPPORT The Levine Cancer Institute, Levine Children's Hospital, and the LIVESTRONG Foundation.

EXPERIENCE Possibly the least-intimidating 24-hour ride out there. Cycle (or walk) as many laps (1 or 100) as you can around a three-mile loop, with 1,200 of your closest friends. At last year's midnight pizza party, participants inhaled 1,600 slices in 20 minutes.

5 CAUSE Kids with Autism

RIDE **CHAFE 150 Gran Fondo**, June 16, 2018 in Sandpoint, Idaho

YOU'LL SUPPORT Children on the spectrum in Idaho's Lake Pend Oreille School District—the money goes to fund learning tools, and training and support for staff and families.

EXPERIENCE A single-day, high-country, 150-mile road ride that circumnavigates (key word) the gorgeous Cabinet Mountains. Translation: no major mountain passes or sustained climbs, and a total elevation gain of about 3,500 feet.

6 CAUSE Empowering Survivors of Domestic Abuse

RIDE **Cycle the WAVE**, September 16, 2018, in Bellevue, Washington

YOU'LL SUPPORT Women Against Violence Everywhere (WAVE), which runs domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs across Washington State.

EXPERIENCE An all-women's (no exceptions) road ride full of fun perks—firemen handing out tamales at rest stops, fresh flowers to adorn your helmet, Top Pot donuts, and free postrace massages. Routes range from 12 to 70 miles.

Courtesy: Climate Ride, Pann-Mass Challenge, Supermarket Street Swap: Derek Yarra; TD Five Boro Bike Tour: Sam Polcer/Bike New York

FUNDRAISE LIKE A BOSS

CRAFT INCENTIVES // Make pins, magnets, or other tchotchkes and offer them as premiums. If you're really artistic, do a silent auction: Tricia Samuel of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, raised hundreds of dollars by selling paintings and photos.

DO THE "STUPID HUMAN TRICK" // Reward your benefactors with a good laugh at your expense. Pledge to pull a stunt—get pied, go #fullsend into the local reservoir, shave your body—if you hit a milestone for donations.

7 CAUSE Military Troops, and Disadvantaged Kids

RIDE: **Flag2GC**, August 4, 2018, from Flagstaff, Arizona, to the Grand Canyon

YOU'LL SUPPORT The Flagstaff Marine League Charities, which includes Toys for Tots and the Wounded Marine Program.

EXPERIENCE A knobby-tire, point-to-point adventure. This 65-mile ride goes on single-track, Forest Service roads, and fire roads, and typically takes 5 to 8 hours. Chance of heavy mud: likely.

8 CAUSE Crushing Cancer

RIDE **Pan-Mass Challenge**, August 4–5, 2018, in Wellesley, Provincetown, and Sturbridge, Massachusetts

YOU'LL SUPPORT Adult and pediatric cancer care and research at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

EXPERIENCE A multi-location event that includes 13 one- and two-day rides across Massachusetts with a tight-knit, almost spiritual, vibe (and clam chowdah at the finish). Since 1980, more than 105,000 cyclists have raised nearly $600 million.

9 CAUSE More Kids on Bikes!

RIDE **BACooN Ride**, June 16, 2018, in Waukee, Iowa

YOU'LL SUPPORT The Iowa Bicycle Coalition and the RAGBRAI Dream Team, which coaches at-risk and disadvantaged youth to complete the seven-day ride across Iowa.

EXPERIENCE A 72-mile paved rail-trail loop through the flat Raccoon River Valley, with 10 bacon stops—that's 20,000 strips, plus bacon-themed foods.

10 CAUSE Serving People with Parkinson's

RIDE **The Copper Triangle**, August 4, 2018, in Frisco, Colorado

YOU'LL SUPPORT The Davis Phinney Foundation, which provides people living with Parkinson's resources like exercise videos and a 300-plus-page manual for how to live well.

EXPERIENCE Challenging climbs at (very) high altitude. The 79-mile loop crests three stunning Rocky Mountain passes—Fremont (11,318 feet), Tennessee (10,424), and Vail (10,666)—for a total gain of 6,500 feet.

11 CAUSE Bicycle Advocacy

RIDE **TD Five Boro Bike Tour**, May 6, 2018, in New York City

YOU'LL SUPPORT Bike New York's free education programs.

EXPERIENCE The biggest charity ride in the country: 32,000 riders pedaling over iconic bridges (Queensboro, Verrazano) and past landmarks like the New York Public Library, on closed roads.

12 CAUSE Providing the Joy of Cycling to People with Visual Impairment

RIDE **Cycling for Sight**, June 30–July 1, 2018, in San Marcos, California

YOU'LL SUPPORT The San Diego Center for the Blind, which helps visually impaired individuals live independently, and the Blind Stokers Club (a "stoker" is the rear cyclist in a tandem, who provides most of the power).

EXPERIENCE Solo road cyclists and tandem teams ride routes ranging from 23 to 50 miles, with a kickoff pool party. Blind stokers travel from as far away as Taiwan.

13 CAUSE Boosting the Power of Bikes in Africa

RIDE **Ride On for World Bicycle Relief**, December 2018, on Zwift

YOU'LL SUPPORT World Bicycle Relief, a nonprofit that distributes bikes to rural African communities in need.

EXPERIENCE A virtual, 24-hour bike-a-thon on Zwift. Pro racers jump in to lead rides, and top fundraisers get prizes that have included a Wahoo KICKR smart trainer and a Stinner bike. B

MIKE CIMBURA IN THE ELECTRIC-ASSIST CARGO BIKE CALLED THE BOOTLEGGER.

THE BEAST, THE BOOTLEGGER, AND THE DEATH RIDE

HOW MIKE CIMBURA DEFIES THE DEGENERATIVE DISEASE THAT HAS TAKEN ALMOST EVERYTHING FROM HIM—AND BECOMES A CYCLIST AGAIN

BY **CHRISTINE FENNESSY** ▪ PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BENJAMIN RASMUSSEN**

HE COULD HEAR THE WIND.

AND DESPITE THE FULL-FACE HELMET that he hated and the goggles that protected the last part of his body that he could still move, he could feel it. On his face like he used to. His cheeks. His mouth. It washed over him in a thunderous rush.

He could feel the tires. The one to his left wanted to rise up, catch the air, obey the physics and send them hurtling over the edge. He could sense that Zach, seated behind him, was pushing with all his strength, digging that left wheel into the ground, steering the cargo bike's 500-pound load like a snowmobile through the left hand turn of the switchback.

They swept through it at 50 miles an hour.

He could hear the smile in Zach's voice as he hollered, "Whoa!" He knew his friend was crouched low over the handlebar of the Bootlegger, trying to get as aero as possible. Trying to go even faster down Red Mountain Pass in Colorado's San Juan Mountains. The goal is for them to one day hit 60 mph. When Mike Cimbura was well, before the feeding tube, before the tracheostomy, before the total paralysis and the wheelchair, before the indignities and the frustration and the tears, before all the bills, he'd hit 62 on his road bike. They hadn't come close the previous year, in their first Death Ride Tour together.

MIKE AND ZACH RIDING IN FORT COLLINS, COLORADO WITH HORSETOOTH RESERVOIR IN THE BACKGROUND.

IF CYCLING, A SPORT SYNONYMOUS WITH ***MOVEMENT,*** EXERTION, AND **EXHILARATION,** HAD ITS POLAR OPPOSITE ***IN A DISEASE, IT WOULD BE ALS.***

They wouldn't today, at this year's event, either. But they will keep trying.

Before ALS, Mike Cimbura was a hell of a rider. With Zach and the Bootlegger and a charity ride called the Death Ride Tour, he still is.

If cycling, a sport synonymous with movement, exertion, and exhilaration, had its polar opposite in a disease, it would be amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. The neurodegenerative disease weakens motor neurons that deliver messages between the brain, spinal cord, and muscles. As the neurons die, the muscles become paralyzed. People with ALS lose the ability to move, talk, eat, and eventually, breathe; they do not, however, lose the ability to feel. But when they are hot, they cannot sweat, when they are cold, they cannot shiver, and when their feet are placed in a tub full of Epsom salts and scalding water for 20 minutes by a caretaker who neglects to check the temperature, they can feel themselves burn but cannot escape their pain. In perhaps the cruelest twist of all, ALS mostly leaves their brains alone. They know their bodies are holding them hostage. They typically die of respiratory failure. If they choose to get a tracheostomy—a surgically created opening in the neck through which they breathe via a tube connected to a ventilator—they usually die from infection, heart failure, or blood clots. Every 90 minutes, someone is diagnosed with ALS. The average life expectancy after diagnosis is two to five years, it tends to strike those between the ages of 40 and 70, and it occurs more often in men. There is no known cause or cure. Nicole Cimbura, Mike's wife of 24 years, calls it "the Beast."

Before the Beast caught him, Mike, 52, lived a life of constant motion.

He began road racing as a freshman in college. After graduating from the University of California Santa Barbara, he moved to Lakewood, Colorado, where he and his younger brother John started their own racing team. They handpicked the guys, kept it small, found a few sponsors, and did pretty well.

As a Category 3 rider, Mike wasn't the fastest. But he was dedicated. Even while married, working full-time as an accountant, and starting a family, he still averaged 30 hours of training and two—sometimes more—races a week between March and September. Mike was just as driven in the off-season, picking John up at 5 on Saturday mornings to snowshoe up nearby Loveland Pass. They'd spend two and a half hours climbing through thigh-deep snow, then snowboard back down. Then they'd do it again. And often a third time.

"He always had a massive amount of energy," says John, 46, who raced as a Cat 2 on the team. "To sit still and not do something physically active I think just drove him nuts."

His work ethic paid off, especially on the hills. Mike's teammate and friend Leonard Callejo nicknamed him "Blade."

"Regardless of how in shape I was, I could never outclimb Mike," says Callejo, 50. "He was so narrow and thin, I couldn't draft off him and I would just see this tiny blade pedal away from me."

If he didn't drop them on the climbs, Mike would crush them in other ways. "We'd all be in pain and Mike would just not stop talking," says Duane Marlatt, 50, another former teammate. "He used to annoy us all, in a good way."

Cycling tapped Mike's essence. It channeled his drive, his energy, his analytical mind, and his ability to mentor. He taught pack etiquette, tactics, and training concepts to new racers, built up bikes for them, then taught them how to wrench on their own. He was always taking coworkers or neighbors out on the road, hoping they'd find their bliss there, too.

But he was more than a cyclist. He was the

barn dad who taught his eldest daughter how to drive an F250 attached to a horse trailer. He was the science geek who helped his two girls win awards for building bridges that weighed ounces yet could hold 50 pounds. He was the breadwinner who passed up the promotion that would have meant missing his son's football games. He was the partner who always had Nicole's back. He was the friend who loved music, mosh pits, and playing drums. So when the Beast came for him on that October day in 2014, the day he did not have the strength to clip his own fingernails, there was so much for it to take.

The neurologist assured Mike and Nicole it was not ALS, and even wrote as much in a follow-up letter. Mike went on weekly business trips that November and December, and while he was gone Nicole would read the letter every night before bed to calm herself down. She prayed for cancer. Something they could beat. Until Mike called her and said he couldn't lift his carry-on, couldn't make it up the stairs, was starting to stumble.

"I feel like every day more of me is dying," he said. "My body feels like it's changing."

And she knew.

Mike and Nicole still sleep in the same bed, on two twin mattresses that fit perfectly inside their king-size frame. Her side is covered in a pink One Direction blanket not because she's a fan but because caring for Mike often requires a person working on either side of him and so it's something she lays out every morning for people to crawl all over. Mike's side is an air mattress that hums constantly as the cells within it alternately inflate and deflate to relieve pressure on his body.

On Nicole's bedside is a small table with, among other things, a Bible and two photos of her and Mike. One is his college graduation in 1992, the other from a Christmas party in 2009. In both, they are smiling broadly. On Mike's bedside, among other things, is a rectangular ventilator, a humidifier, a small oxygen canister, and a tall IV pole holding a plastic bag filled with mustard yellow liquid. The liquid is his breakfast and the monitor on the pole says it's feeding him at a rate of 200 milliliters an hour through a tube that snakes across his purple comforter and into his gut. Behind him, a gray, padded sling with adjustable yellow straps hangs flat against the wall. The straps connect to a plastic hanger that hooks to a mechanical track in the ceiling that travels across the room and into the shower.

Mike is propped up in bed. He has brown hair, a brown beard, and he's wearing a blue vest over a Denver Broncos shirt. The vest is inflated with air and vibrating with a loud *chug-chug-chug*, shaking loose mucus he can't cough up on his own. He's staring up at Nicole, who is standing by his side. He's trying to say something.

Nicole, 48, is tall and blond and almost always moving. She gets up every two hours during the night to care for her husband and works full time as a teacher during the day. She rarely yawns. She calls Mike "babe" and the people around her "hon." She says "blessed" often.

Now she is still, her arms crossed, her blue eyes locked onto his blue eyes. She slowly begins to recite a series of numbers that each represent a series of letters, pausing whenever he responds with a single, slight blink.

"1, 2, 3, 4, P, Q, R, S…S?" she asks. "5, U…U? 1, A, B, C…C?" She stops the vest. She knows what he needs. She almost always knows. Sometimes when she's really tired she can't store the letters in her head and she writes them on a small whiteboard on his side of the bed. S-U-C. He needs suction.

She flips on a suction machine and it drones like an air compressor. Then she runs a narrow catheter into his tracheostomy. She feeds it into his lungs, gently suctioning up the mucus shaken loose by the vest.

Mike normally communicates using the tablet set up above his bed. It uses infrared technology to track his eye movements so he can do stuff like surf the web, watch Netflix, email, and speak. To talk, he locates the appropriate letter on the keyboard with his eyes then blinks to select it. After he composes a word, a male Siri-like voice speaks it for him. It's slow and imperfect and usually it works. But not lately. Not since one of his caregivers (Mike has several) accidentally scratched his left cornea while dressing him. Because of the disease, his blinks are no longer rapid and reflexive but perilously slow, leaving his eyes vulnerable, and when the caretaker pulled his shirt over his head, the collar got him. Now the machine isn't calibrating right and they must rely on their number and letter system of communication, their "paper" system as they call it, because it's written on laminated pieces of paper that hang everywhere—in the shower, in the

NICOLE AND MIKE, IN ZACH'S GARAGE, GETTING READY TO RIDE.

ZACH YENDRA, WITH HIS 1968 FORD COUNTRY SEDAN WAGON, IN LAPORTE, COLORADO.

kitchen, on the window of their wheelchair-accessible van. When technology fails or is unavailable—or a cornea gets scratched—it is their only means of communication beyond one blink for "yes" or two blinks for "no."

But Mike can still trigger certain areas on the tablet's keyboard, like the box that initiates the harsh, pulsing alarm he's now using to get Nicole's attention.

"What do you need, babe?" Again, she patiently recites the numbers and the letters. When he blinks once for 'm' and once for 'o,' she stops.

"Mouth?"

One blink.

"Okay." She inserts a Yankauer—a long, thin suction instrument similar to what the dentist uses—in his mouth and each nostril and suctions them out.

It's 7:50 on a Saturday morning in mid-January and today is a big day. Zach is driving down from Fort Collins with the Bootlegger. Barry is coming over. So are the neighborhood guys. They're going for a ride.

But first Mike must spend these 30 minutes having the mucus shaken and sucked from his lungs. Then his caretaker will fit him in the sling that will lift him by his armpits and knees and take him into the shower. He'll hang like that, quads to stomach, uncomfortable as hell, as the caretaker pulls packing material from inside the pressure ulcers on his backside and rinses the wounds. Next, she'll lower him onto his shower chair and wash him. Then Nicole will be home from the chiropractor, and will treat the hole in the arch on his left foot where the skin graft didn't take. The skin graft that was the result of the caretaker who put his foot in a tub of Epsom salts and scalding water and missed Mike blinking as hard as he could as he sat through third- and fourth-degree burns.

After that, he'll go back up in the sling so his wounds can be washed again, repacked and rebandaged. The trash can in the bathroom will slowly fill up with gauze, wipes, plastic, and adhesive backings. Then they'll dress the guy who used to nail the rockabilly look—slicked back hair, long sideburns, English Laundry and Ike Behar dress shirts—in sweatpants, a long-sleeve T-shirt, and untied silver Nikes. Nicole will give him stomach meds, a probiotic, and a blood thinner through his feeding tube.

Four hours and 21 minutes later, Mike will be ready to ride.

Zach Yendra was used to fielding crazy requests, but nothing like the email he got on April 17, 2016. He read through it again. *I'm the president of the Death Ride Tour, a charity cycling event to support the fight against ALS. I have a friend with ALS who would like to join our tour this year and we need to build him a custom bike similar to the Bootlegger.*

The email was from a guy named Barry and he'd sent it at 5 a.m., just hours after leaving a voicemail the night before. Zach

shook his head. *Who is this guy?*

It really wasn't a great time. He was slammed. Zach, now 33, owned his own company, Yendrabuilt, in Fort Collins, and he and his small team did interior design and built custom furniture for breweries and bars. The work was satisfying—he loved designing and building stuff—but it was a constant headache, too, managing multiple projects and always looking for the big job.

Still, it was an intriguing crazy request. He loved bikes. Growing up in Lincoln, Nebraska, he'd ridden just about everything since he was a kid. He'd done some mountain bike racing, but competing wasn't his thing. Epic gravel rides with insane climbs were more his speed. He'd worked for a local framebuilder before starting Yendrabuilt, and was known around town as the guy who built funky, functional bikes—an adult-size Big Wheel, an eight-person "pedal jeep bus," the Bootlegger.

Zach built the original Bootlegger in 2011 for a buddy who owned a bar and wanted a bike that could transport kegs. It took him six months to design and build the three-wheeled cargo bike that could carry two barrels. The first model wasn't even finished before he started designing the bike's second iteration, which would have an electric assist. He wanted this model—what he started calling the Bootlegger Prototype—to be even stronger, faster, more bombproof.

His bar for success was high and elusive: Build a bike that could handle 200 pounds in the cargo bay, was fun to ride, and could keep up with his friends on 100-milers in the mountains. Such an uber functional, shreddable bike—and many of the components required to power it—didn't yet exist. To get what he wanted, Zach and his father, Carl, a machinist, had to invent their own suspension and steering system and machine their own dropouts. Zach invited his buddies to his shop for "shred tests"—they'd send the Bootlegger over plywood ramps and corner it so hard the inside front wheel would go airborne more than a foot off the ground. They'd ride it off road and on the snow and off curbs and skid it out and flip it over and just try to break it. And every time they did, Zach figured out what failed and made it stronger until he'd finally built a bombproof bike that absolutely rips.

This was the bike this Barry guy was talking about in the email he'd sent at the crack of dawn. The Prototype that had taken Zach five years—and more than $100,000 in time and parts—to build. The bike Barry wanted to replicate in less than two months, for a guy with ALS.

Again Zach wondered, *Who is this guy?*

Barry had found Zach through amazing dumb luck.

Now 65, Barry Sopinsky had started the 235-mile Death Ride Tour in 2009 as a fundraiser for ALS, and as a way to honor his own father who had died at the age of 44 from the disease. He'd read about the Death Ride (so named because it was meant to be done in a single day) in a book, adapted the route, and made it a three-day event that starts and ends in Silverton, Colorado, every June. (In 2017, he added a new one-day version of the ride, called the Death Ride Challenge.)

Barry had met Mike Cimbura in early 2015, just months after Mike's ALS diagnosis when he could still walk and talk. Barry invited him to speak at that year's ride. He'd recently heard from Mike, who—despite being on full life support—wanted to participate in the 2016 ride. If Barry could help him find him a bike.

Barry had no idea where to start. He couldn't envision the type of bike that might work. But he was persistent. He talked to everyone about Mike. One night, he was talking about Mike at a brewery in Denver, when the owner pointed to the bar, said a guy named Zach had made it, then pulled up a picture of the Bootlegger on his phone. He showed it to Barry. The sky-blue bike had two 26-inch wheels with 4-inch cruiser tires on either side of the U-shaped cargo bay in the front, and a giant 36-inch wheel with a 2.5-inch tire in the back.

"Holy shit, this could work," Barry said. He called Zach that night, left a message, then followed up with that email.

Now, three days later, he finally had Zach on the phone. He clarified what he was looking for: a bike that could safely carry a guy on full life support for three days over five mountain passes and 16,500 feet of climbing. The Bootlegger was perfect. He just knew it. "We're doing this!"

Zach listened, incredulous. His first thought was, *No way.* He knew nothing about ALS, nothing about being responsible for someone on life support. He had his business and a one-year-old daughter and plenty of deadlines to deal with already.

But his second thought was this: *How far can I push the Bootlegger?*

Zach did not tell Barry yes.

He had to meet Mike first. He had to make sure they were a good match—did they have the same riding style? He had to talk to the people who cared for him—was a ride like this even possible from their point of view? If they were a good match and the ride was actually possible, would Mike even fit in the Bootlegger's cargo bay?

So on a sunny afternoon in May, less than one month before the start of the 2016 Death Ride Tour, Mike, his father John, and father-in-law Rudy made the 90-minute drive north from Mike's home just outside Denver to Zach's shop in Fort Collins.

Zach watched as their silver van pulled up to the open bay doors of his shop. After John and Rudy slowly lowered Mike and his wheelchair from the lift-equipped vehicle, Zach walked over to introduce himself. He thought he knew what to expect, but seeing Mike jarred him. He was so fragile. An inert body in a chair sustained by tubes and accompanied by the constant whoosh of a machine doing the work that lungs used to do. It was startling and he knew his initial hello sounded awkward. Still, he was determined to get to know

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HE CLARIFIED WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR:
A BIKE THAT COULD SAFELY
CARRY A GUY ON ***FULL LIFE SUPPORT***
FOR THREE DAYS OVER FIVE MOUNTAIN PASSES
AND 16,500 FEET OF CLIMBING.


WILD IDEA
No. 48
Ride 205 miles over four mountain passes with 27,200 ft. of climbing with your best friend.
This is How We Liv.
Liv's Langma Advanced is named after Mount Everest for good reason. With a lightweight and aerodynamic composite frame designed specifically for women, you'll have the power to fly to the summit and go back for more. Climbing the elevation of the tallest peak in the world in just two days? Piece of cake. Learn more at Liv-Cycling.com/Langma
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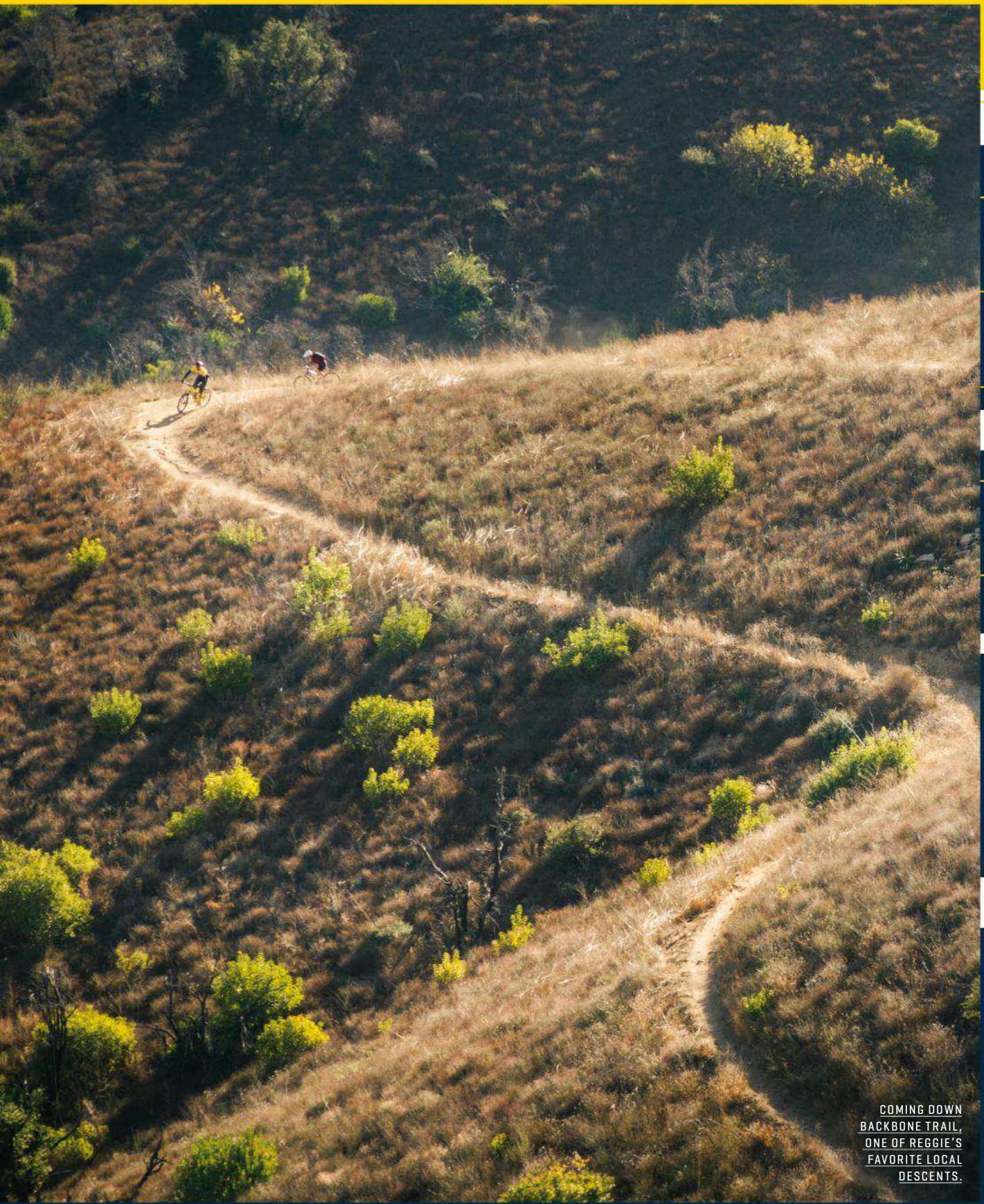
BY GLORIA LIU
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL DARTER

SHREDDING WITH REGGIE

How mountain biking has given the NBA Hall of Famer a second chance to go all in

REGGIE MILLER CALLS MOUNTAIN BIKING HIS "NEW MUSE."



COMING DOWN BACKBONE TRAIL, ONE OF REGGIE'S FAVORITE LOCAL DESCENTS.

REGGIE MILLER SAYS HE HAS ARRANGED PERFECT RIDING WEATHER FOR US.

It's a joke, of course. This is Malibu. It's always a beautiful day. It's the first of December, and 73 degrees. The sun bathes us in dry, uncomplicated warmth. A light ocean breeze promises to cool us on the climb.

Still, it's not hard to imagine Reggie Miller having some direct line to a higher power that he could occasionally call on. He is, after all, Reggie Miller—one of the NBA's all-time best long-range shooters, who had the league's record in career three-pointers when he retired. Reggie Miller, the former Indiana Pacer who once scored eight points in 8.9 seconds to crush the New York Knicks' 1995 championship dreams in Madison Square Garden. A colleague of mine who was at the game recalls the stunned silence that followed: "And then the wailing began."

The Knick Killer is no longer in the business of making strangers cry. These days—13 years since he retired and six years since his Hall of Fame induction—Reggie, now 52, can be found hamming it up on TNT as one of the cable network's NBA analysts or playing with his son and daughter, ages 4 and 2. The rest of the time, as one Reddit commenter puts it, "Reggie Miller eats, breathes, and shits bikes."

Go to his Instagram feed, and you'll see that every other post is about riding: a GoPro video of a techy descent he just conquered; a photo of him grinding up a dusty Southern California fire road, #EmbraceTheBurn. He even races and has a coach—pro mountain bike racer and 24-hour world champion, Sonya Looney.

When I learned of Reggie's passion for mountain biking, I was intrigued. It's not surprising for a pro athlete to seek another competitive outlet after retirement. But how did he find and fall in love with the fringe sport of mountain biking? Even more interesting, he didn't appear to be blowing people out of the water immediately with his superathlete talents—he had only recently won his first local XC race, in the Beginner class. Still, he was clearly all in. What did an Olympic gold medalist hope to gain from becoming an amateur mountain bike racer?

There was only one way to find out, really. I asked Reggie to go for a ride.

AS WE KIT UP IN THE PARKING LOT AT Point Mugu State Park on this made-to-order morning, I think cycling is clearly treating Reggie well. His 6-foot-7 frame is still trim. His caramel skin is marble-smooth. He's aged so gracefully, he doesn't so much look like an older version of himself, as he makes the Reggie Miller I remember from my youth—when my parents, sister, and I spent so many evenings curled up on the couch watching NBA games—look like a kid by comparison.

Reggie, who identifies as a classic fastidious Virgo, had arrived 15 minutes early. His size XXL Santa Cruz Tallboy, the only production full-suspension bike he's tried that fits him, is meticulously clean. His yellow and blue "BoomBaby" jersey—a collaboration with Castelli to raise money for the Dropping Dimes Foundation, which helps American Basketball Association players who have fallen on hard times—matches his bike and his yellow argyle socks. When you look good, Reggie tells me, you ride good.

Strava shows that he routinely posts 4-plus hour rides, so I'm secretly relieved to learn that we'll do one of his favorite shorter routes: Guadalasca to Backbone, a 13.5-mile loop that rises 1,500 feet into the Santa Monica Mountains and features ocean views. As we start up the well-maintained fire road that leads to Guadalasca, he calls out an enthusiastic "Good morning!" to everyone we pass.

Reggie's first ride was in 2002, when Rage Against the Machine bassist Tim Commerford recognized him at a restaurant and invited him to come along on a ride that included renowned big-wave surfer, Laird Hamilton. On a heavy bike borrowed from Commerford, not clipped in, Reggie found himself huffing and puffing to keep up. And he was impressed by his companions' athleticism. "To see [Laird and Tim] get after it," he recalls, "I was like, 'Yeah, this is what I want to do.'"

He bought himself a Giant with 26-inch wheels immediately after, but he was still playing for the Pacers. To injure himself could be a breach of contract, so he rode only occasionally until he retired in 2005.

At that point, Reggie turned to cycling as a way to stay in shape—he wanted to look good in his suits for TNT. Then he started going on longer rides, exploring the rugged canyons near his home in Malibu, and fell in love with getting way out there, to the middle of nowhere. The adventures got bigger. A few times, he even left a car for himself at the beach, arranged a ride home, and rode over the mountains from his house to the ocean.

But the real game changer happened about two years ago when George Mota, a local racer, reached out to Reggie via Instagram and invited him to be his partner for a six-hour endurance relay. "I didn't want to finish last," Reggie recalls. "I didn't want it to be like, 'Oh


BOOM BABY

BEING BACK ON THE BIKE AND STARTING ALL THIS NEW AGAIN BRINGS BACK MEMORIES OF THE GRIND. IT'S THE BEST.

I'M A LITTLE BIT MORE FORGIVING AND HUMBLE ON THE BIKE. GROWING UP PLAYING ON THE STREETS, YOU MADE YOUR NAME BY TALKING MESS. OUT HERE, I SEE MYSELF LENDING A HAND MORE.

God you had Reggie.'"

To his relief, the duo finished mid-pack—and he found himself hooked. Now he competes in individual cross-country and endurance events. This past season, he won two races in the Beginner 50+ category, so for 2018 he's upgraded to Sport, the mid-tier level of amateur racing. He's worried, he tells me. "The 50+ guys are really fast. I have to do a lot of work." (It seems he needn't have stressed too much—at press time, Reggie was already racking up mid-pack finishes in his new field, and most recently a fourth-place result.)

Already, within these first 30 minutes on the trail, I'm struck by Reggie's seeming lack of ego on the bike. Earlier, in passing, I had called him a "very good" rider, and he had quickly corrected me: "I'm okay—I'm trying to get better." It's hard to imagine that this affable, self-effacing guy is not only a world-class athlete, but also was one of the NBA's most notorious trash talkers, who owns the dubious distinction of having (on separate occasions) provoked both Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant into fist fights.

"I'm a little bit more forgiving and humble on the bike," Reggie acknowledges. "Maybe it's because I'm still new to it, but trail etiquette is a lot different than basketball court etiquette. Growing up playing on the streets, you made your name by talking mess and getting into people's heads. Out here, especially in the races that I've done, I see myself lending a hand a lot more. Everybody's lending a hand to me."

He feels gratitude to certain members of the community in particular. His relationship with Looney, who is based in Kelowna, British Columbia, began when Reggie started asking her questions about training and equipment via Instagram. He's also logged miles with pro riders like Red Bull Rampage winner Kyle Strait and his wife, Rachel, and pro enduro racer Lauren Gregg. Reggie sees them as mentors, similar to the ones he had in his NBA rookie days. "They're teaching me 'cause I really don't have a clue. I'm learning on the fly."

Looney, who communicates with Reggie nearly every day by text or phone, explains, "When Reggie says he's an 'okay' rider, he's comparing himself to the best person in the sport, because that's how Reggie is. When he started riding with pros, he saw how far he had to go. He knows how hard you have to work for that."

And even by pro athlete standards, Reggie Miller is very good at hard work.

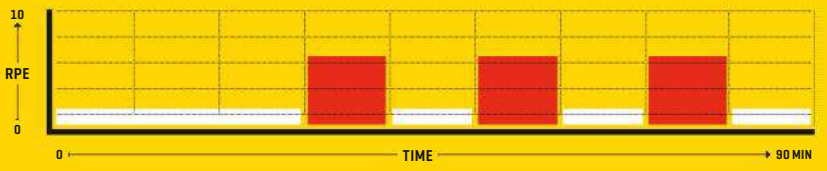
REGGIE STARTED WATCHING BASKET-ball as a kid, through his kitchen window.

The games were between his two big brothers, Darrell and Saul, and his older sister, Cheryl. Little, chubby Reggie—whose ears stuck out—wanted desperately to play too. But he couldn't. His legs were shackled in steel braces.

He had been born with deformed hips and splayed feet. As Reggie recounts in his memoir, *I Love Being the Enemy*, a doctor had looked at his twisted legs and said he might never walk. So while his siblings played, Reggie "lurched around" in those braces, and hung out with his mom, Carrie, in the | CONTINUED ON P. 74

REGGIE'S FAVORITE WORKOUT

"Reggie's goal is to become an endurance machine," says coach Sonya Looney. "Because he's been a fast-twitch athlete his whole life, we have some restructuring to do." That's why Reggie's favorite workout, she says, is Sweet Spot Intervals: At a slightly higher intensity than a traditional tempo workout, these efforts build the ability to go harder for longer periods of time.



DO IT Warm up for 30 minutes. For 10 minutes, ride at a rate of perceived exertion (RPE) of 6 to 7 out of 10, where 1 is coasting and 10 is a max effort; or, if you're tracking power, 85 to 95 percent of your threshold power (the maximum output you can hold for an hour). Ride easy (RPE 2 to 3) for 10 minutes. Repeat twice. As you get fitter, increase to 15-minute intervals.

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HILL, YES!

Learn why short, punchy climbs are so hard—and the monster workout you need to start crushing them like a billy goat **BY SELENE YEAGER**

BIG MOUNTAINS get all the glory, but anyone who's ever ridden across the country will tell you that it's not the towering Rockies that break you, but the relentless rolling hills of states like West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Here's why bumpy rides are such a beatdown.

SO. MANY. WATTS. It's easier to parcel out your effort on a long, moderate climb. But some hills hit a 10 percent grade or higher right out of the gate, and stay that way. That demands power—lots of it. For example, to climb my steepest local hill fast—which is 0.8 miles long, with an average grade of 8 percent and hits a bar-chewing 26.1 percent max—I have to hold 260 watts for six minutes. That's 10 percent higher than my threshold power (the highest output I can sustain for 45 minutes to an hour) of 240 watts. Rides with multiple punchy rollers force you into the red repeatedly—and even a few minutes spent over threshold takes a physiological toll that adds up.

MAXED-OUT MUSCLE FIBERS Pushing the pedals with all your might to propel your bike up steep ascents (about a 10 percent grade or above) can be akin to lifting weights—but without the luxury of resting between sets as you would at the gym.

ENERGY STORE RAID Fully loaded, you have between 400 and 500 grams, or about 2,000 calories' worth, of stored glucose and carbohydrates (glycogen) at your disposal. You burn about 1 gram a minute just riding along, about 2 grams a minute at endurance pace (you can have a conversation, but you're still working somewhat hard), and about 3 to 5 grams a minute at race pace, according to tests conducted by Iñigo San Millán, PhD, of the University of Colorado Sports Medicine and Performance Center in Boulder. Climbing out of the saddle increases that energy use by about another 10 percent.

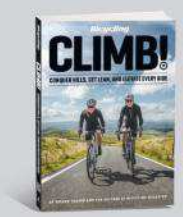
BRAIN DRAIN Anything that increases your heart rate—chugging up a steep hill, or even simply stressing out about the climb—causes you to burn glucose more quickly. When blood glucose dips too low, mental fog can set

Photograph by **GRUBER IMAGES**

in, which makes it harder to stay motivated. Also, a growing body of research reveals that fatigue comes from your mind as well as your muscles. Your brain runs solely on glucose—it requires about 120 grams of it a day, even if you're just watching *Seinfeld* reruns—and will take steps to protect its supply. If it senses that any of your body's metrics (such as temperature or fuel levels) seem off, you'll feel tired even if your muscles could continue.

CONQUER ANY HILL!

This piece was adapted from our new book *CLIMB!*, which is packed with workouts and expert advice to help you get fast, drop pounds, and make every ascent feel easier. Get it at BICYCLING.com/climb.



ONE CLIMBING WORKOUT TO RULE THEM ALL

This three-stage workout prepares you to meet the demands of both long and short climbs. The intervals are best performed on a steady climb that's about a 5 to 8 percent grade. Warm up for 10 to 15 minutes beforehand and cool down when you're done. If you're new to intervals, go through it just once. After a couple of weeks, you can do it twice, with 10 minutes of easy pedaling between sets. Otherwise, start with two sets. Do this workout once or twice a week on fresh legs.

STAGE 1
SIT AND SPIN

WHAT IT TRAINS Your aerobic capacity so you can rely on your cardiovascular system instead of muscling your way to the top, which fatigues you faster.
DO IT Shift into a gear that allows you to spin at a high cadence—aim for about 90 rpm—and climb at a rate of perceived exertion (RPE) of 8 out of 10 (1 = coasting; 10 = all out). Maintain for 5 minutes. As you progress, gradually extend this interval to 10 to 12 minutes. Recover for three to four minutes.

STAGE 2
POWER SURGE

WHAT IT TRAINS Your threshold power so you can better handle changes in pitch and intensity.
DO IT Climb at an intensity that is just under your threshold (RPE 6) for three minutes. Then push your intensity so that you're right at threshold (RPE 8) and hold for two minutes. Then, for one minute, push your effort above threshold (RPE 9). Recover for five to six minutes.

STAGE 3
FULL-THROTTLE CHARGE

WHAT IT TRAINS Your ability to throw down those max-effort turbo boosts that help you power through a steep switchback, crest a climb, or beat your pals to the top.
DO IT Climb at threshold (RPE 8) until you feel ready to attack—then push as hard as you can for 10 to 20 pedal strokes (10 to 20 seconds). Back off and recover for 10 to 20 seconds. Repeat four more times.

Are you a workhorse? Or a show pony?

These days it's pretty common to see cyclists looking pretty dang good out there. In some cases, extremely good. And sometimes, maybe too good. Because there's a fine line between kitting up to feel fast, confident and prepared - and kitting up for fashion. Begging the question, why do you really ride?

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NOURISHING YOUR BASIC NEEDS AND IRRATIONAL FIXATIONS

GARMIN VECTOR 3

THE PEDAL-BASED POWER METER YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

Photography by **MITCH MANDEL**

Garmin Vector 3

The previous-generation Vector was one of the most troublesome power meters to install and set up, but that changes with this iteration. Gone are the sensor pods, which you had to mount onto the pedal spindle. Their functions are now integrated internally. Just thread in the pedals, pair them with your favorite cycling computer, and go. They measure cadence and power. With the dual-sided version, you get Garmin's Cycling Dynamics metrics, which can tell you how evenly you're applying power throughout the pedal stroke as well as where on the pedal your power is concentrated. The new version is equipped with Bluetooth radios that pair with smartphones, computers, and smartwatches, but it's still ANT+ enabled, so it can talk to Garmin head units and other legacy devices. The four LR44 batteries are easy to change, and you can find them at your local supermarket. The compatible Look Keo cleats are another easy replacement part to find, and the axles are rebuildable.

In addition to its simple installation and superb functionality, the Vector has a low pedal stack height (12.2mm), good battery life (claimed 120 hours max), and low weight compared with other pedal-based power systems, making it a smart choice for the rider who wants lots of features with little fuss.—*Matt Phillips*

PRICE
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WEIGHT
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▶ SEVEN EVERGREEN XX
Disc-brake bicycles can be heavier than their rim-brake counterparts, but Seven's XX option (a $995 upcharge on any disc-equipped SL or SLX frame) pares weight from 11 areas of the bike by using asymmetric chainstays, more aggressive bottom bracket machining, an internal seatpost binder, and more. The weight savings add up to a claimed 15 to 20 percent. This titanium gravel bike tips the scales at 17 pounds, placing it in the realm of similar carbon bikes. But you get the durability of ti, and that exquisite ride. $5,255 (frameset), 17.0 lb., as tested (54CM)—*Mike Yozell*

#BIKE CRUSH

ENIGMA EXTENSOR Made to order in Enigma's factory in East Sussex, United Kingdom, this Columbus XCR stainless steel endurance frame offers a ride that's distinctly metal, yet unique. You can feel the underlying spring of steel, but the ride is crisper and more complex; there are notes of aluminum's stiffness and bite and a slight hint of titanium's warmth. It's this alchemy that makes the Extensor's ride extraordinary. $3,600 (frameset), 17.0 lb., as tested (custom size)—*Matt Phillips*

Photography by **MATT RAINEY**

TREK PROCALIBER 6
I'm not a morning person, but I set a predawn alarm to hit the trails the day after this pink heartthrob of a hardtail rolled into my office. And its ride kept me sneaking out before the sun. The bump-absorbing IsoSpeed technology decouples the top and seat tubes with a pivot and rubber joint, giving the frame a bit more vertical compliance than a traditional hardtail. This helps ward off fatigue on techy trails. Plus, a narrower bar than the men's version and a women's saddle add comfort for female riders. $1,890, 25.7 lb. (13.5 in.)—*Riley Missel*

▲ **PRIORITY CONTINUUM ONYX** This small, New York City–based brand builds simple, utilitarian bicycles designed for transportation. The Continuum Onyx, at $999, represents the apex of the brand's line, with a slew of commuter-focused features wrapped in ultra-stealthy, matte-black paint. A virtually maintenance-free Gates Carbon belt drive with a NuVinci rear hub handles shifting smoothly, and dynamo-powered front and rear lights never need a charge. Fenders keep you dry in wet weather and a rear rack is included, rounding out a bike that eliminates just about any excuse for not riding. $999, 33.8 lb. (M)—*Lydia Tanner*

SPECIALIZED S-WORKS TARMAC DISC

R.I.P., RIM-BRAKE RACE BIKES

Photography by **MITCH MANDEL**

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WITH THE LAUNCH of the new S-Works Tarmac Disc, we've arrived at a tipping point: This disc-brake road-racing bike is so good, it squashes every one of the complaints and compromises that have dogged its category. So good, the way we look at road-race bikes could be forever changed. So good, there's little reason to consider buying a road-race bike with rim brakes ever again.

Certainly, disc-equipped road bikes have come a long way from the first models that debuted just a few years ago. At the time, they were impressive first steps, but in all areas except braking, they lagged behind their rim-brake counterparts. Even as they got better, you could still feel that you were on a disc-brake bike: They were at once overbuilt and too soft. The rim-brake road bike was still the benchmark for performance.

But this Tarmac Disc is light, lively, stiff, smooth, quiet, and exceedingly fast. The brakes are phenomenal, the drivetrain nearly perfect. Just saying it's "laterally stiff and vertically compliant" doesn't do it justice. It's really, really stiff in every good way, and it's also impressively smooth and damped for such an aggressive bike. But what makes it truly special is that it doesn't ride like other disc-brake road bikes. Instead, it feels like the most well-rounded race bike you've ever experienced—that just happens to have disc brakes.

This is partially because we have arrived at another tipping point: This Tarmac Disc was not adapted from a rim-brake prodecessor like so many first (and even second) generation disc-brake road frames. It was developed from the start to use disc brakes.

While the frames look similar, there are some differences in carbon layup and structure to accommodate the brakes while maintaining the same handling and stiffness. Disc-equipped bikes have traditionally been

PRICE $11,000
WEIGHT 15.5 LB (54CM)

less aerodynamic than rim-brake bikes, but in the wind tunnel, the rim and disc Tarmacs are equally aero at all wind angles, says Specialized. Frame stiffness and vertical compliance are almost identical as well, despite the differences in axles (the rim-brake bike uses quick-releases; the disc bike, thru-axles) and where the brakes attach.

The weight is impressive, too. Our test bike landed on the scale at a scant 15.5 pounds. That's with paint (the black finish is lighter), an electronic drivetrain, hydraulic disc brakes, 50mm-deep clincher wheels, a power meter, thru-axles, aerodynamic tube shapes, and bottle cages.

If you're a gram counter, yes, the Tarmac with rim brakes is lighter still. But not by much. The disc frame is within a few grams of the rim-brake bike's (claimed) 800g frame weight; the disc fork is about 10 grams heavier than the rim-brake fork. With Shimano Dura-Ace Di2, the top-of-the-line S-Works Tarmac Disc weighs only about 300g more than the rim-brake bike. The additional weight comes almost entirely from the shifters, disc rotors, and disc-compatible hubs, says Stew Thompson, Specialized's road product manager.

Its low weight is likely one reason the new S-Works Tarmac Disc is so lively. We found it to be a quick-feeling bike—even more so than previous generations. But there's something different about this Tarmac. It's quick, but it's not a handful, because the handling is intuitive and predictable. We'd attribute at least part of this sensation to the bike's supreme ability to absorb bumps and road irregularities, which grants it excellent traction, feedback, and composure when cornering. It's a tad mind-warping, actually. The Tarmac is reactive and turns quickly, but it's also very stable feeling.

Of all the tipping points this Tarmac Disc represents, this is the most significant: No longer is the benchmark for road-racing bikes embodied by a rim-brake bike. Right now, the S-Works Tarmac SL6 Disc is the gold standard. From now on, the best road-racing bike in the world will have disc brakes.—*Matt Phillips*

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COLNAGO C64

WE DIDN'T THINK IT COULD GET BETTER

Photograph by **MATT RAINEY**

PRICE $6,200 (FRAMESET)
WEIGHT 14.5 LB (50S)

I HAVE A THING FOR Colnago's top-end carbon frames. There's a magic to them: Their ride and performance hold their own against anything. Yes, they are undeniably expensive, and sometimes quirky. And, yes, I'll admit to having misty-eyed nostalgia for the fact that they're made across the street from Ernesto Colnago's house in Cambiago, Italy. But every time I get on a high-end Colnago, I swoon.

That streak continues with Colnago's latest flagship race bike, the C64. With this frame, the brand's product team completely redesigned the C60. The C64 frame is a claimed 186 grams lighter and has better tire clearance (up to 28mm, officially, but wider may fit) than the C60. It's also a touch more aerodynamic, more vertically compliant, and slightly stiffer as well.

Despite these upgrades, the C64 looks very similar to the C60. The seatpost is the biggest giveaway. In a move to save weight and improve ride comfort, Colnago borrowed the D-shaped post from the V2-r (the brand's lightest frame, which is made in Taiwan) and stuck it into a complementary seat tube with a hidden binder. The brakes are also different, with the C64 adopting the two-bolt, direct-mount-caliper standard.

The C64 has the heart of the C60, but the new frame is unquestionably better. It's more reactive, jumping quicker when you change tempo and climbing up hills with a bit more float. It feels more alert, too. It hops farther when you juke and is a bit faster to turn. Still, its handling is on the staid side for a race bike. It requires less attention than many similar models. It's calm and totally confidence-inspiring, even when you're in a deep tuck at eye-watering speeds. The ride is damped and more compliant than before. There are fistfuls of road feedback at the handlebar, but not stinging jolts or soul-sucking buzz. The ride is sporty, not plush, which is as it should be.

Perhaps the most important trait this bike shares with the C60 is its substance. It feels built to last: strong, tough, and durable underneath you, without the fragile and brittle notes that many high-end race bikes have. And that, in combination with all its other strengths, is truly magical.—*Matt Phillips*

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T-LAB R3

The ti bike for carbon lovers

I'LL CONFESS TO a pang of sadness when Guru Bicycles folded in 2016. The Montreal-based bikemaker was known for its stunningly light and smooth-riding carbon bikes, and an underrated line of expertly made titanium frames. Turns out I needn't have worried. Out of one company came two.

While Guru's old factory equipment decamped for Little Rock, Arkansas, to become Allied Cycle Works, a small group of former Guruians, including founder Tony Giannascoli, was busy creating a new company, T-Lab, and rethinking what a modern titanium bike should be. Rob Rossi, cofounder of T-Lab's parent company, Visceral Performance, says that T-Lab is not "a phoenix rising from the ashes" of Guru. The link is personnel and experience, not machinery or frame designs. And T-Lab's answer to the question of what modern ti looks and rides like—the R3—is nothing like Guru's traditional aesthetic.

Rossi says T-Lab's goal was to create a ti bike that would appeal to riders who see carbon as the performance benchmark. The R3 comes in two standard geometries (race and endurance), with a custom option available for an upcharge. It features heavily flattened sections on the top, seat, and down tubes, meant to increase lateral stiffness and optimize power transfer. The seat tube has a curious sideways curve at the front derailleur mount; the tube is flattened so wide at that point for stiffness, says Rossi, that the slight zig to the non-drive side is necessary to line up the derailleur over the chainrings (the tube is straight on frames made for a 1x drivetrain).

Up front, a conical head tube flares to accommodate the 1.5-inch-lower headset bearing. It's time-consuming to make, but the payoff is the additional torsional rigidity of an oversize steerer tube and extra real estate for welding a larger-diameter down tube, at a lighter weight than a straight tube. (It's also quite fetching, with the fork crown sloping cleanly away in an unbroken silhouette.)

So: How does the R3 stack up to a top carbon bike? Titanium frames are often described as "lively" as a compliment, or "springy" as a slight. But much of that ride quality comes down to the builder, not the raw material. T-Lab's tube selection, frame design, and shaping result in a bike that retains a hint of those characteristics—a bit of windup under power, for instance. But it's minor, as the bike snaps sharply forward under sudden acceleration.

Perhaps thanks to that head tube, the R3 is a dauntless descender, holding a sure line on pavement or dirt without the torsional warp that causes flexier bikes to turn less sharply. And yet the ride quality is refined, especially given the bike's eager, raw-edged feeling when you stomp the pedals or dive hard into a switchback. On long dirt rambles, the frame and carbon fork gobbled up road chatter and blunted bigger washboard hits.

Photograph by **MATT RAINEY**

PRICE $8,100
WEIGHT 17.1 LB (S, RACE GEOMETRY)

T-Lab wanted to future-proof the R3 as much as possible in the face of rapidly shifting standards. The proprietary rear dropouts are convertible from quick release to 142mm thru-axle, the brand offers the R3 in disc- and rim-brake options, and the bike has tire clearance up to 30mm. These options mean the bike is well equipped to last you for years.

The only place it lags behind carbon is weight. At 1,280 grams (claimed), the R3's frame is 300 grams heavier, or more, than best-in-class carbon frames. But frame weight has a way of disappearing into a good bicycle, and the R3 never felt sluggish on any terrain. Will it lure a rider away from a Specialized Roubaix or Trek Domane? Maybe not. But if you want something different and durable and dependable without sacrificing performance, the R3 should be on your list.—*Joe Lindsey*

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2 GORE BIKE WEAR MEN'S OXYGEN CLASSICS GORE WINDSTOPPER BIBTIGHTS SHORT+ This combination bib short and base layer features a full Windstopper membrane on the bottom sandwiched between a durable water-repellent-coated outer shell and soft inner fabric for increased warmth. A multidensity chamois and extra Windstopper panel in front add coverage to sensitive areas. $250—*Mike Yozell*

3 SHOWERS PASS CROSSPOINT WATERPROOF KNIT GLOVES These (seemingly) simple gloves have a waterproof barrier membrane between a CoolMax knit liner and a robust knit outer shell to keep hands dry in the wettest conditions. Silicone dots help you maintain your grip on a slippery handlebar. $45—*R.K.*

4 PEARL IZUMI P.R.O. BARRIER WXB SHOE COVER A double layer of Velcro at the rear makes these snug-fitting covers easy to slip on and adjust around the heel and calf. They have a fully seam-taped construction, generous openings for cleats, and durable, rubberized toe patches. $55—*M.Y.*

5 PACTIMO TORRENT JACKET The Torrent's DWR-coated, four-way-stretch fabric with fully sealed seams is wonderfully soft to the touch. Pactimo utilizes a fabric created by performance material developers at 37.5 Technology, embedded with microscopic particles made from volcanic sand and activated carbon from coconut shells, upping the surface area of the cloth and allowing it to lift moisture away from the body. Available in men's and women's versions. $195—*M.Y.*

6 ENDURA HUMMVEE SOCKS A breathable waterproof membrane between two knit layers keeps your toes dry even when your shoes are soaking wet. These layers result in the Hummvees being less fitted than most athletic socks, but not outrageously bulky. $45—*R.K.*

7 CRAFT SHIELD ARM AND LEG WARMERS A DWR-treated material blocks the rain while brushed fleece and flatlock stitching offer next-to-skin comfort. Silicone grippers on the inside and outside of the upper cuffs keep the warmers in place without uncomfortable tightness. $50, arm warmers (shown); $60, leg warmers—*R.K.*

8 VELOTOZE HELMET COVER Velotoze's wind- and waterproof latex cap is awesome because it fits (almost) any helmet, packs down to the size of a flip phone, and comes in five colors. Bring it on, Mother Nature. $22—*R.K.*

Photography by **MATT RAINEY**

SCOTT GENIUS 920

Now with more *whee!*

PRICE
$4,500
WEIGHT
28.8 LB (M)

SCOTT COMPLETELY redesigned its mountain bike line for 2018. The newest version of the Genius 920 blends a rowdy get-it-happening attitude on rough terrain with a ride that is efficient and precise on undulating singletrack, and especially sharp when climbing.

Changes to the frame include a vertical shock and the ability to accommodate both 27.5+ and 29-inch wheels. Tire clearance on the 150mm-travel frame is substantial: You can fit tires up to 29x2.6 inches or 27.5x2.8 inches. The 700-series and 900-series bikes use the same frame (700s come with 27.5+ wheels, while 900s get 29-inch hoops).

Scott sticks with a single, handlebar-mounted TwinLoc trigger, which adjusts the fork and shock simultaneously: When you toggle through the three TwinLoc positions, you're not only changing the compression damping of the Fox Performance 34 fork, you're also changing the air volume and compression damping settings of the shock. This allows the bike to ride higher in its travel in the middle and lock settings, which keeps the angles steeper and the bottom bracket higher. It provides better midstroke support and makes the steering sharper, all by changing the ramp of the air spring. And it's easy to use: When you crest a climb, a flick of the lever is all it takes to change the bike's attitude—no more fumbling around at the shock or on the fork. My only complaint: The TwinLoc lever is easier to access than the control for the dropper post, which I use more frequently; the cockpit would be better if these controls were switchable.

At almost 30 pounds, the Genius 920 is no lightweight, though it does fall in line with other bikes in its travel and use range. And it rides lighter than its weight suggests. It pedals crisply, and thanks to its ability to rapidly change shock settings, behaves better than similar bikes on all-day rides and longer transitions. On rough ground, both ends of the suspension work well together. In the wide-open setting, the bike gobbled up huge hits, while small-bump compliance was amazing in all settings. The wide tires span gaps and notches in rock gardens for really good traction and fewer sudden dismounts. The frame is stiff and responsive, reacting well to body English. I was able to thread through trees in tight sections with little wander and no awkward course corrections.

Redesigning a great bike doesn't always improve the ride experience, but with the Genius 920, Scott delivers.—*Mike Yozell*

Photograph by **MATT RAINEY**


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The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) is the leader in mountain bike advocacy, and the only organization in the United States focused entirely on trails, access, education and experiences for all types of mountain bikers in all parts of the country.
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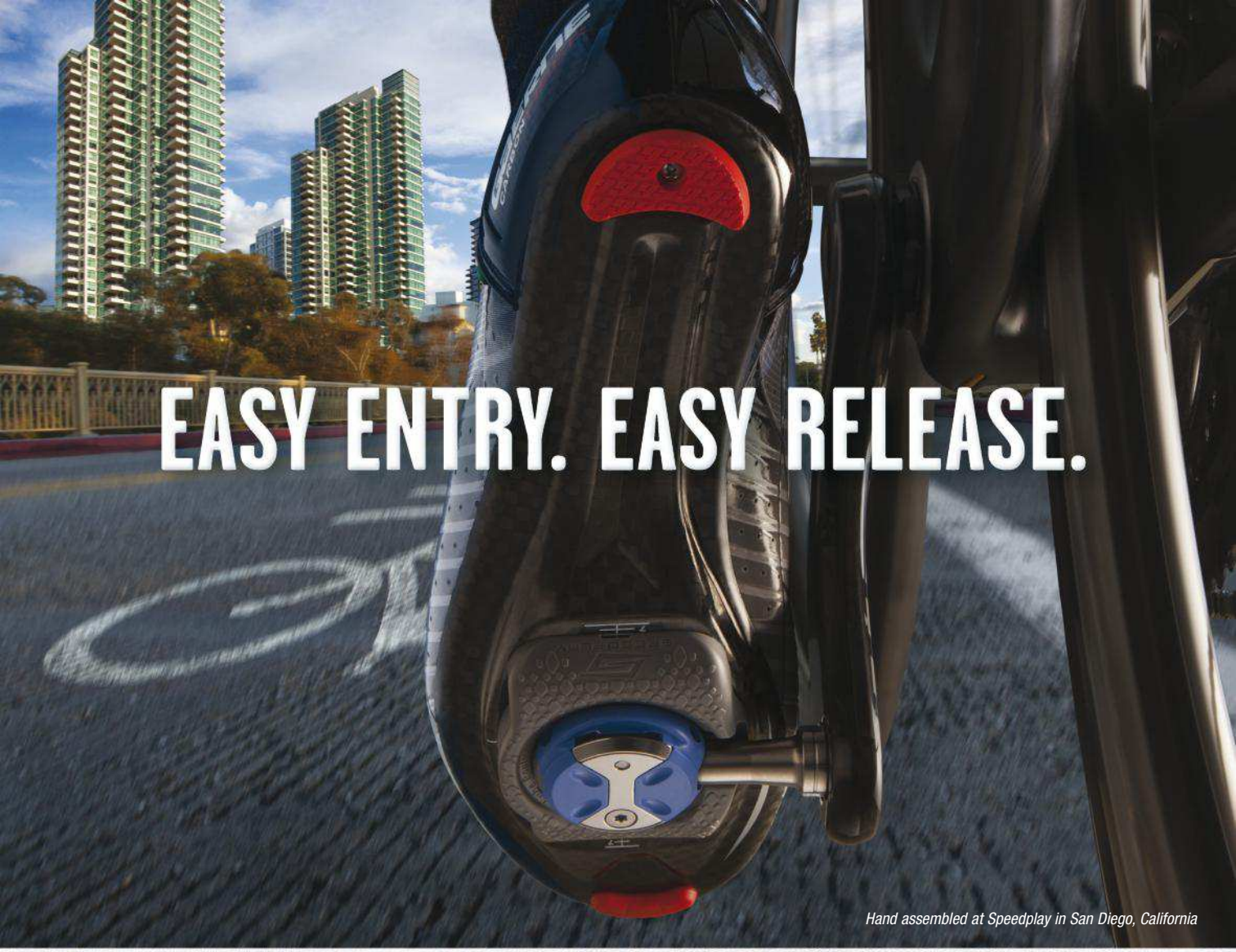
Photograph by **MITCH MANDEL**



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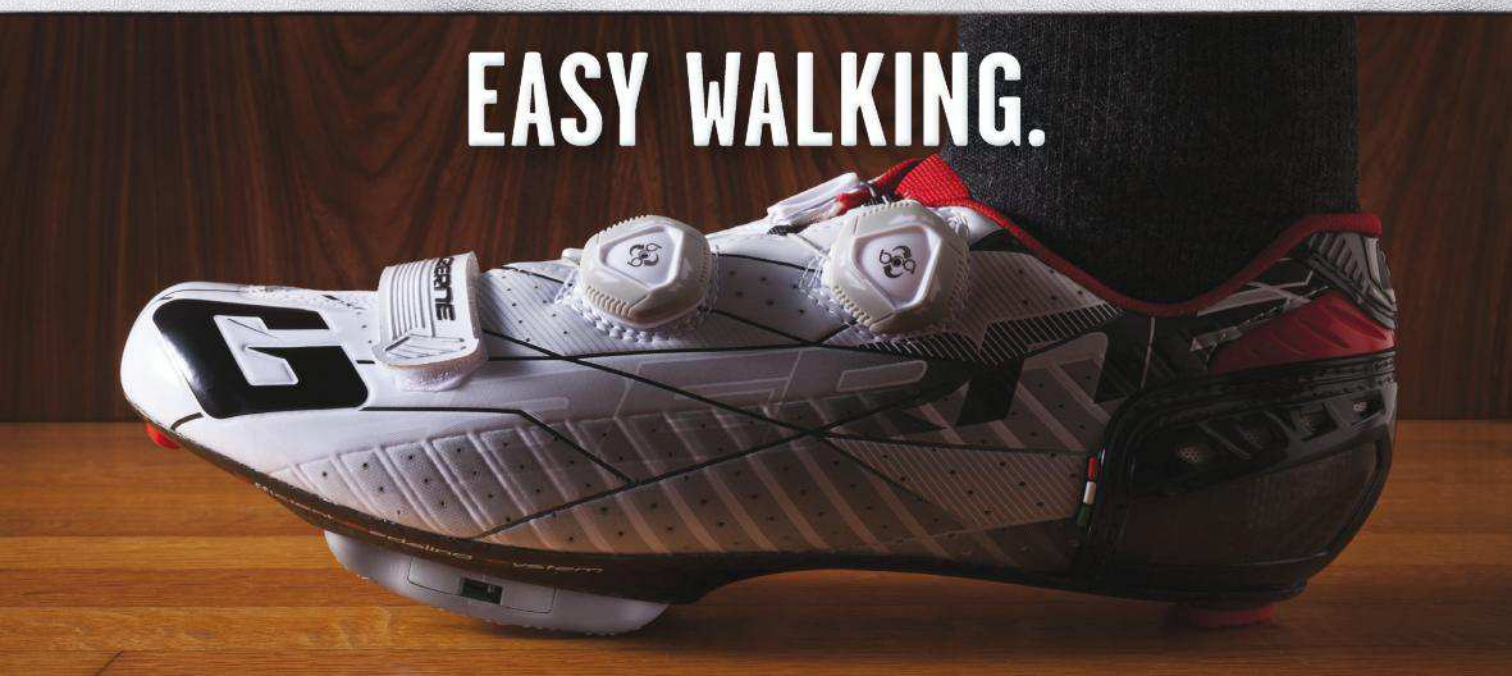

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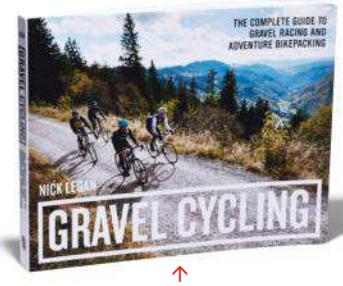

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PRICE $3,200
WEIGHT
840G (REAR),
734G (FRONT)

ZIPP 303 NSW DISC TUBELESS

MORE AERO, MUCH BETTER

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a one-sentence summary of Zipp's newest 303 wheel, I've got one: This is the best version yet.

The new model retains its 45mm-deep cross section but flattens the sides slightly and widens the rim bed to 21mm (internal) for better aerodynamics. Zipp says a 28mm tire is the fastest choice for the wheel shape—good news, as that size provides a cushy ride in most situations. The wheels are disc only, which allowed Zipp to move the dimpling pattern on the rim closer to the edge, something the brake track prevents on rim- brake versions. The dimpling mimics some of the effects of the sawtooth pattern of Zipp's pricier 454 and 858 wheels, which both have a molded rim profile that helps promote stability in crosswinds. Another update: The graphics are printed directly on the rim to keep the dimpling clean and unblocked by decals. Laced to Zipp's Cognition hub set—with its smooth-rolling magnetic freehub mechanism and CenterLock disc interface—this 303 is ready to rip on nearly any surface.

All that tech is great, but it's hard to quantify lab results in the real world. So, do these wheels live up to the hype? The answer is a resounding yes. On the road, the 303s were steady in all conditions. There was little feedback from crosswinds, and the generous rim bed added volume, enabling me to run lower pressures for better grip and less rolling resistance. Swapping in a set of cyclocross tires for off-road riding highlighted the wheels' stiffness—I dove into turns at the local 'cross course without flex or wobbliness.

With these smart updates, Zipp has made the 303 one of its best wheelsets, period.—*Mike Yozell*

Photograph by **MITCH MANDEL**

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kitchen of their Riverside, California, home. But his mom reassured him. "Don't worry, honey. You'll be out there soon."

She was right. Reggie got the braces off when he was 5 years old and jumped straight into those backyard games. Cheryl, who was taller than he was and fiercely competitive, had never taken pity on her little brother, and now she took no mercy. "Remember that game, Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots?" says Reggie. "I was her human Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robot." Reggie learned his trash-talking skills in the backyard. It was one of his few weapons against his bigger, more skilled siblings.

"He would just talk—nonstop talk," Cheryl says in the documentary *Winning Time: Reggie Miller vs. the New York Knicks*. "He would never shut up."

The Millers were a special family. Darrell went on to play baseball for the California Angels. In high school, Cheryl became an All-American basketball player who once scored 105 points in a single game. Her career points record—3,018—at the University of Southern California still stands, and her jersey is retired there. She went on to help the US women's team win its first Olympic gold medal in 1984, and to beat Reggie to the Basketball Hall of Fame (she is also in the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame).

Reggie was in awe of his sister, but he hated always losing to her, always being introduced as "Cheryl's brother." On top of that, he didn't hit his growth spurt until his sophomore year. His high school coach hadn't wanted to start him until the day one of the regular starters forgot his jersey at home.

Reggie practiced like hell to prove himself. He'd take 500 shots a day in the backyard, working on his long-range shot because Cheryl always blocked him when he drove. He simulated high-pressure plays, throwing himself the ball for hours: *Three, two, one; game's on the line.* To him, it was a simple calculation: If he had a 50-50 chance of making it and being the hero, more practice would make it 60-40. More gym work would make it 70-30.

Even as he moved up the ranks, Reggie was never physically the strongest, the most hyped, or (in his view) the most gifted. He says he got recruited to UCLA only after the school's preferred players went elsewhere. Pacers fans booed when he was drafted to the team (they wanted home-state hero Steve Alford). So Reggie honed a strong mental game, became an analytical player. He studied videos of his opponents, memorizing their habits, learning their insecurities.

These experiences shaped him as an athlete. Reggie believes he made it to the Hall of Fame because of his hard work and determination, not because he was the most talented.

It's natural for him not to be the natural.

REGGIE HAS A NEMESIS ON THIS RIDE. As we pick our way up a steeper, more eroded 4x4 track, he points toward the shrubby ridge where we're headed. A near-vertical trail called Hell Hill cuts straight up the fall line to the top of that climb. Reggie's never made it all the way up, but when Looney came to visit last fall, she proved it's rideable. "That's my goal," Reggie says. "When I can do that, I'm ready for anything."

I'm okay with skipping this test of character today. Instead, we turn left up Guadalasca, the more gradual singletrack ascent.

Looney prescribes Reggie a plan, including interval and skills work, for the four days a week that he rides during basketball season (he travels the other three days for games). She says he does everything she says, exactly as she assigns it. He also does strength work in the gym, something he started after a bad crash last year left him with a fractured scapula and black eye, taking him off the bike all summer.

"Actually, the crash was the best thing that happened," he says, ever analytical. "I was taking shortcuts. I had to get in the weight room." He says that his height, which was such an asset on the court, makes it more difficult to get into the low position for confident descending. So he works with a trainer two days a week to improve his core strength and overall balance. He's also learning more about equipment and bike setup, tire pressure, and suspension settings.

"Being back on the bike and starting this all new again brings back memories of the grind," he says. "Pee Wee basketball, high school basketball, waking up at six or seven in the morning to go to the gym and work on my game." It's a feeling he likes but had lost touch with as a pro. "It's the best," he says. "The whole Drake song, 'started from the bottom, now we're here.' I like it."

"Mountain biking is such a very small community," he continues. "I just want to put the hard work in so people don't think I'm a slacker. I want the hardcore mountain bikers to respect, 'Okay, well he did it the right way.'"

Descending is Reggie's biggest challenge. He's cautious, and sometimes that frustrates him. He admires the easy style of great enduro and downhill riders. "I want to kick up dirt, be a shredder, do all that," he says. But Reggie knows that means learning technique and taking some risks. "You have to practice. And if you practice, you're going to crash," he says. While Reggie sees crashing as a badge of honor, he doesn't know if he's willing to crash over and over. Commentating is his job, it takes priority, and having to go on TV every week, he can't injure himself or mar his face. Plus: "Bones don't heal like they did when you were 22," he says. "If I was younger without two kids, probably, but I don't know if I have time to really learn."

At the top of the climb we pull over to enjoy the panoramic views of the chiseled mountains. Two white-haired gentlemen ride by on identical carbon, full-suspension Treks. Reggie says "great job" to both of them, then turns to me, energized, once they're out of earshot. "See, Gloria, this is what I love about mountain biking. Doesn't matter how old you are. These guys are out here shredding it."

I ask him if it ever struck him that cycling is such a white sport. "There should be more brothers on bikes, more brothers in races," he says. "As kids we all wanted a bike. But a lot of people don't have that opportunity, especially in the inner city. Hopefully, when people see me riding bikes and trying to do this at 52, they'll see that there are other avenues besides baseball, football, basketball. I wish I would have been doing this when I was younger."

Reggie's family wasn't poor when he was growing up, but money was tight. More important, he simply wasn't exposed to mountain biking. So Reggie's son has a bike, which he loves. But he also plays basketball, and soccer, and does karate, gymnastics, and swimming. It makes Reggie happy that his son is having the experiences he wishes he'd had as a kid.

He hasn't been as successful getting his NBA pals on the trail. "I'd love to see big Shaq out here. Love to see Charles [Barkley]," he says. "They think I'm crazy. They're like, 'Retired means retired. It's not doing all that working out.'" He gets a little louder. "I'm like, 'No, retired means still being fit, looking good.' When you retire, you don't get fat and old. C'mon, it's like a shark. Sharks never stop swimming, that's when they die. You gotta keep moving."

REGGIE PLAYED 18 YEARS FOR THE Pacers, and helped lead them to 15 playoffs. But he never won a championship.

The closest he ever got was in 1998, when they battled Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls to Game 7 in the Eastern Conference Finals. Reggie can point to so many plays that he wishes had gone differently, but one stands out.

With just over six minutes left in the game, the Pacers lead 77-74. There's a jump ball—Jordan versus Pacers center Rik Smits. Smits loses the tip. Out of the ensuing scrum, Bulls forward Scottie Pippen gets the ball, slings it across the key to teammate Steve Kerr. Kerr sinks the three. Tie game. From that point on, as Reggie tells it,

the Pacers lose their momentum.

Reggie thinks about that game to this day. He thinks more about the losses than the wins. They came so close to that trophy for so many years.

Most of us remember the high points. We think of Reggie as the clutch player who shined brightest when the pressure was turned all the way up. Like the 1994 play-off game when he scored 25 points in a single quarter against the Knicks. In the YouTube video, he shoots wildly from every angle, the ball firing from his fingertips like an electrical impulse, his legs still churning as it swooshes through the net. In those moments, Reggie says, he felt like he left his body. Everyone else was moving in slow motion. He was going 100 miles per hour.

Reggie has yet to experience that on a bicycle. But he's patient. "It's coming," he says. Until then, he stays in his body, rides within his limits. Before we start the descent, he warns me about the views. "You're gonna be caught wanting to look around, but if you fall, you're going over." The first portion of Backbone drops quickly from the ridge top into a bench-cut trail that swoops and turns like a roller coaster, popping us out of each banked turn like a pinball. Reggie stays low in the berms, but slips around corners with the fluidity of someone intimately familiar with the trail. He catches a little air over a bony rock cropping.

The sensation of buttery speed makes me smile all the way down, and by the bottom my teeth are coated in a fine film of dust. We pump through a small trough and skid to a stop on the fire road, bursting with adrenaline. "How cool is that?" he whoops, and we high-five. I feel a little wistful that the ride is coming to an end. It's fun riding with Reggie. As we pedal back to the trailhead, I ask him about Game 7 against the Chicago Bulls. Has he made peace with it?

"I don't know if you ever really make peace with [those moments]," he says. "Wouldn't we all like to have do-overs in our life, in anything, in relationships and schooling and any type of adventure? But that's what life is about, it's about moving forward and learning from those mistakes, and getting better."

With bike racing, Reggie's not out to win the championship he never did in the NBA. "I'm too old for that," he says. "I just want to have fun. The best thing that has happened has been the racing. It brings back those juices, you know, your name being called in the starting lineup, and you're competing. It's a different discipline, but still those juices are there."

EARLY ONE MORNING, A COUPLE OF MONTHS since my ride with Reggie, I'm scrolling through my Instagram feed when I see that he has posted a new GoPro video, a POV of him attempting a steep climb. I recognize that sun-baked fall-line trail immediately: Hell Hill.

He starts impossibly fast for such a stout grade, like only a superathlete could. The GoPro lends a hollow quality to all the background noise: his suspension knocking, his tires scrabbling on dirt. The climb gets steeper, but Reggie powers ahead.

It really kicks up now. The footage bobs as Reggie slows a bit, but he continues to lay down steady pedal strokes. He starts to cut right, across the trail. You can almost see the top, can almost feel it as he strains to turn over the cranks once, then twice more. Reggie is so committed, he doesn't even put a foot down. His yellow bike flashes into the frame as he tips over, still clipped in, into the brush.

The video stops here, but I know what happens next. Reggie Miller gets up, dusts himself off, and keeps riding.

He'll get it. It's only a matter of time. ***B***

CONTINUED FROM P. 38

this man as more than a body in a chair.

He had rolled the Bootlegger outside the shop so they could all see it and right away he knew "the dads," as he calls them, were impressed. The older men marveled over the fabrication and the machining and the suspension. Then the dads began to talk about Mike as a cyclist and a racer and Zach was relieved to learn they shared the same all-in, zero-fear riding style. But it was what they told him next that caught him off guard. The dads had noticed Zach's other passion project, his collection of cars and trucks parked outside the shop: his gold and tan lowrider 1964 Chevy Bel Air, his 1968 Ford station wagon custom painted with his business info, his burly two-toned 1977 Bronco. Mike had been a gearhead, too. He'd bought a used Harley-Davidson motorcycle and rebuilt the entire thing. Before he'd gotten sick, he and his father had been renovating a 1950s pickup truck for Mike's oldest daughter, Seide.

"You just don't meet a lot of gearheads who are also into riding bikes, it's like a special brotherhood of dudes who are into everything," says Zach, who is quick to laugh and often wears his long hair pulled back in a ponytail. "I thought, *This could be me in 15 years*. I had a one-year-old daughter and he had three kids and it was like, seriously, this could be me. A guy with projects and hobbies who loves the outdoors and working on old cars. This could happen at the height of my life, boom, suddenly I have ALS. So at that point, I was like, we're doing this. I don't know how, but we're going to figure it out."

He did not have long. The ride was less than four weeks away. Building a new Bootlegger was out of the question so the Prototype would have to be modified to safely carry a man who could not shift his weight or hold up his head and relied on a battery to breathe. Zach rushed the three men through a tour of his shop, making a path for Mike's wheelchair through the maze of extension cords on the floor, and brought them into his office. He started taking Mike's measurements—his height, his leg length, the width of his shoulders and hips. Within hours of meeting him, he was manhandling the guy.

"I guess I got comfortable with him real quick as I'm measuring his body and he can't do anything to resist," says Zach. "But I wasn't afraid to just jump right in, and I think Mike appreciates that and respects that. It's what I had to do, so I did it."

After Mike and the dads left, Zach and Carl got to work. Their task: build a strong, safe, and modular frame that could hold Mike and be easily removed in an emergency. They designed and welded an aluminum frame that attached to the cargo bay with just four bolts. They got a race car seat with a five-point harness and built a custom footrest. The seat and the headrest and footrest all had to conform with Mike's measurements and the angles adjusted to hold his body in the most comfortable position possible.

It was supremely complicated and there was no time for a test drive. The day before the ride, Zach got up at 5 in the morning and spent four hours welding the footrest to the Bootlegger. Then he packed everything up in his "party bus," a converted blue and orange school bus with a giant bike rack on the roof, and he and his parents, wife, and daughter drove seven hours to Silverton.

IT WAS 8 A.M., TIME FOR THE 2016 Death Ride Tour to start, and they were nowhere near ready to roll. Barry looked over at the scene around the Bootlegger. Mike's crew was gathered around him and Zach and the bike on the sidewalk in front of the historic Wyman Hotel in Silverton. It had taken four people to transfer Mike into the Bootlegger, two holding his body, and two guiding the tubes and hoses that kept him alive. Zach was crouched at Mike's feet, tweaking the angle of the footrest. Nicole and one of Mike's caretakers were adjusting Mike's body and securing his breathing tube. Periodically, Zach told everyone to stand back, apologized to Mike, then gave the Bootlegger a vigorous shake to mimic harsh roads. He had to see where everything—including Mike—would land. Would the joints in the ventilator hose stay connected? Did anything drift toward the spokes? Did the medical equipment below the seat shift? Everything was checked, adjusted, and rechecked. They'd been at it for nearly two hours.

Barry turned toward the roughly 130 riders assembled in the street. He always started his ride on time and as much as he wished they could all roll out together, it wasn't going to happen. Plus, it was chilly. The tiny mining town of Silverton sits at just over 9,000 feet and most of the riders wore arm warmers. They had a long day ahead of them, a hilly, 70.3-mile ride to Telluride. Barry walked to the front of the group, thanked them for riding, and sent them off. A few riders tried to convince him to leave Mike and Zach and the small crew of riders who were Mike's neighbors and friends. *They'll catch up,* they told him.

Barry shook his head. "This right here," he said, gesturing toward Mike, "is what this ride is all about."

It took another hour to get Mike and his medical equipment situated in the bike and the tire pressure and shocks adjusted for the added weight. Nicole, dressed in capris and black flip-flops, was doing her best to not look as nervous as she felt. Mike's six friends—all kitted up and leaning on their bikes—didn't mind waiting, they would wait all day if they had to, but they were feeling increasingly anxious, too. They didn't know Zach. Didn't know what kind of rider he was. They knew nothing about the Bootlegger. The ride featured mountain passes with 1,000-foot drops and hairpin turns and weather that could get real bad real fast. Mike Besser didn't think Mike would last much longer than 10, maybe 15 minutes at a stretch. Chris Baker didn't think Zach should go over five miles an hour.

"I said to him, 'If Mike gets tired you should probably stop, and going downhill there are some big drop-offs and he's probably going to get scared. We'll be there for you, whatever you need,'" says Baker, 54. "He just looked at me and nodded."

Finally, they were ready. Zach, in a pink helmet and a man bun, and Mike in a white jersey and covered by a white blanket, led the group in a brisk rollout from town then hit the gas and eventually dropped every last one of them. He might have had a 750-watt motor beneath him, but lean, 6-foot-4 Zach pedaled as hard as he could to preserve the bike's batteries. Their families followed in support vehicles—Nicole in the van, Zach's dad and Seide in the party bus.

Over the next three days the only things that slowed them down were weather (always unpredictable in the mountains), dead batteries (both on the Bootlegger's motor and Mike's ventilator), and stops to tend to Mike. Rain coincided with dead batteries toward the end of day one. Hail hit them halfway through day two. When it started to sleet on day three, they wrapped Mike in blankets, poked a hole in a garbage bag for his head, pulled it over him, and finished the day. They stopped at least once an hour so Nicole could stretch Mike out, suction him, or change the battery in his vent. The weather didn't bother Zach, who was working too hard to ever get cold, but the stops often made him brutally stiff.

When they were riding, though, things were always good. Zach blared the Cramps or Metallica or whatever else Mike had picked for the playlist, and if he saw something cool like a dune buggy, he'd point it out to Mike and when they were ripping down descents he'd narrate what he was doing and laugh about using Mike as a draft.

And all day long, for three bitterly cold days, they all checked in with Mike.

"Are you doing ok?"

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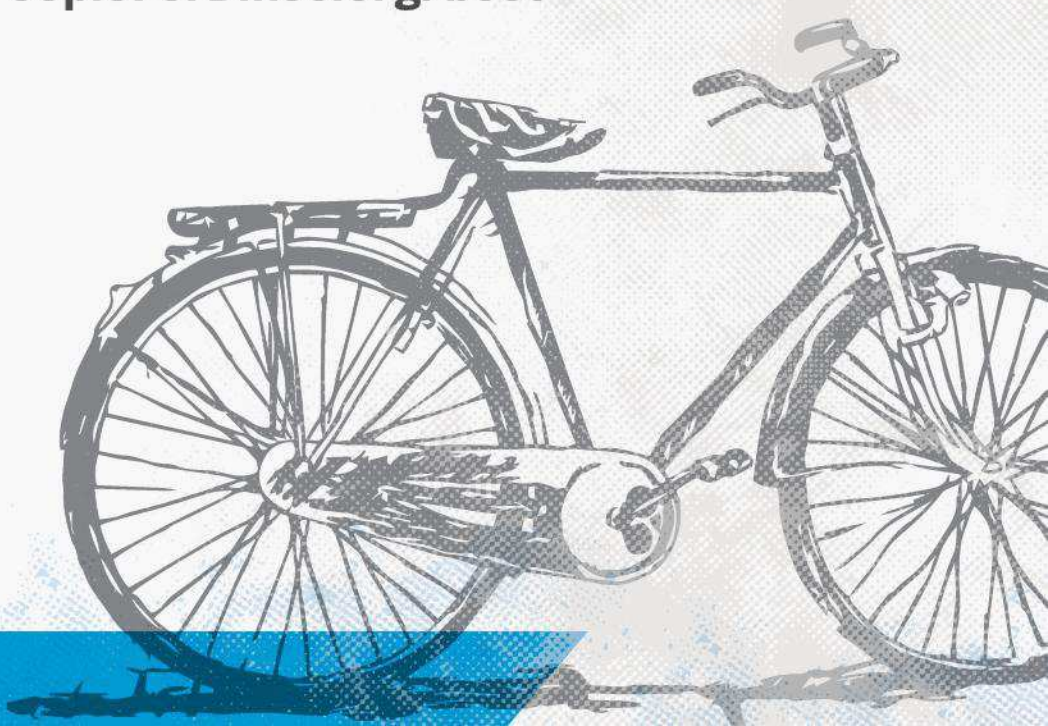


peopleforbikes

One blink. Yes.
"Are you cold?"
Two blinks. No.
"Do you want to stop?"
Two blinks.

THE RIDE WAS NOT COMFORTABLE. ALL those hours in the same position. The pressure ulcers that had started the month before after a brief hospital stay got worse and worse (months later, they nearly killed him when they went septic). But Mike didn't care. Time in the saddle was worth all of it. It gave him so much. An escape. His identity. A platform.

There is so much he and Nicole want people to know about the Beast: the realities, challenges, and financial miseries. Mike's care costs more than Nicole makes in a year and they do not qualify for Medicaid. His caretakers are paid out of a trust set up by family and friends, a trust that at press time, held enough for only two to three more months. They want people to know how underfunded the research is. They want federal approval for Right to Try legislation so that terminally ill people have access to drugs still in clinical trials. They want to raise money toward building a Denver-based residence for people with neurodegenerative diseases, that offers the best technology and care. Their dream is to ride across the country—from *The Ellen Show* in Los Angeles to the *Today Show* in New York City, hopefully next year—to support these efforts. If Mike is riding he is drawing attention, and if he draws attention, he can create awareness. If he creates awareness, perhaps there can be change.

So they returned to the Death Ride Tour in 2017. This time, they put a seat in the Bootlegger that helped alleviate pressure points and protect Mike's fragile skin. A new headrest accommodated a full-face helmet and better secured Mike's head. The helmet was new, too. Mike had gone without one the year before and Zach had worried endlessly about keeping his head stable. Mike hated the helmet. The thing he missed most about riding was the wind on his face.

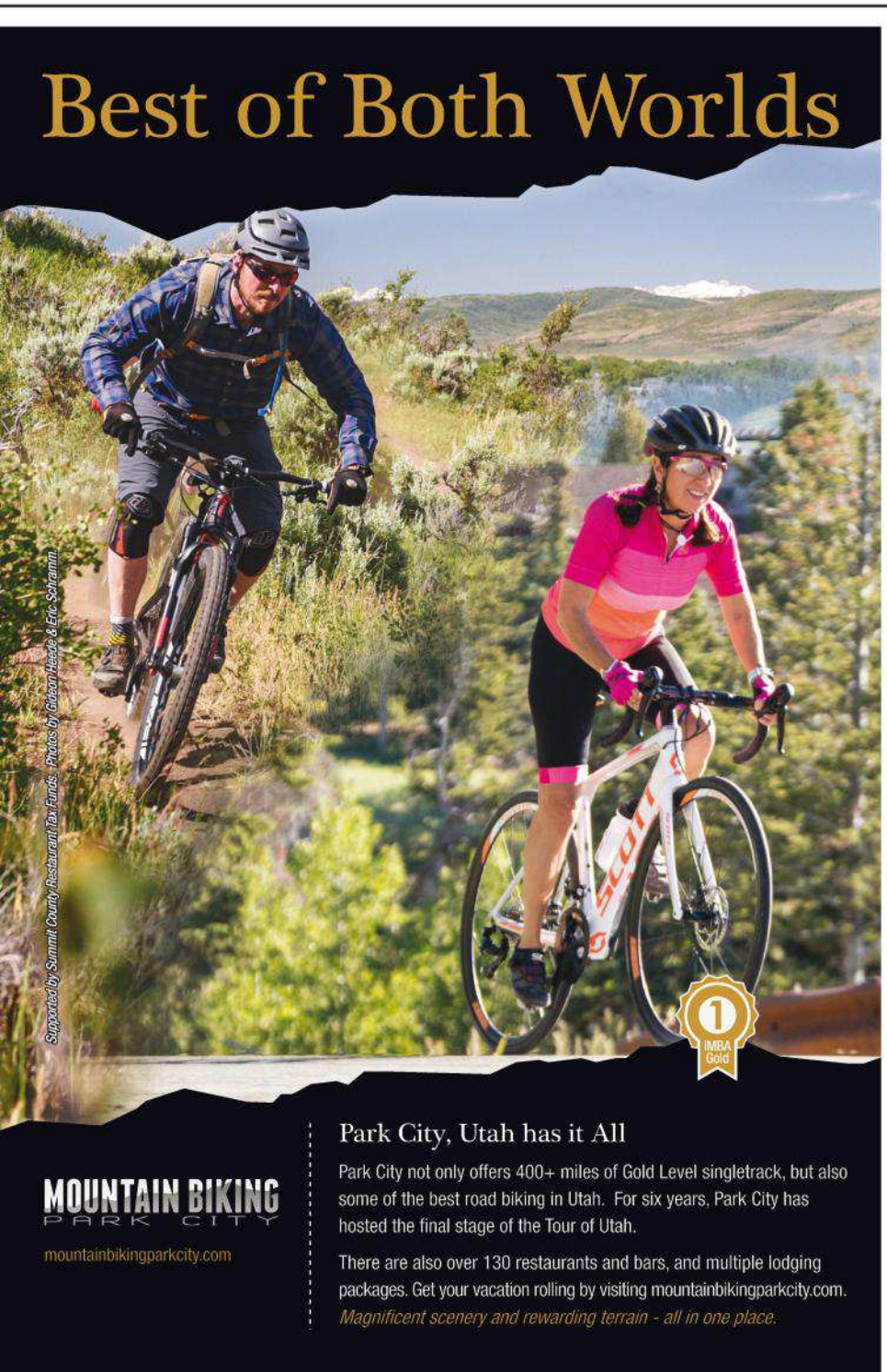
Zach got it. He got a lot about Mike. He understood that no matter how much pain the guy was in, it was better than lying in a bed staring at a screen. He knew that the worst part of the ride for him was the end. It was the worst part for him, too.

IT'S JUST AFTER 2 P.M. WHEN NICOLE wheels Mike out of their house and down the ramp from the front door. It's overcast and 50 degrees and Nicole has draped a heavy black coat over him. She backs his wheelchair into the garage, out of the wind, and faces him toward the street.

Who he was—who he is—is all around him. On the wall behind him hang cyclocross, road, and mountain bikes. Hanging to his right is the first bike he ever built, a paint splatter blue Stan Johnson; below that, a yellow Schwinn Stingray. To his left, tool belts droop from a hook next to a black motorcycle helmet. Beneath them are snowboards and skis and his beloved blue Harley with the white racing stripe. It's dusty and crammed behind a bed frame and plastic storage bins and the metal tower that is his tool box. Standing before him on the driveway are his fellow Death Riders: Chris Baker, Mike Besser, Glenn Levi, Scott Lawson, and Barry.

Before Nicole and Zach put Mike in the Bootlegger, they unbolt the seat from the cargo bay, slide it forward, attach Mike's ventilator to the back of the seat, then slide it back and rebolt it. Together they are efficient, practiced.

Nicole was a wreck before that first Death



Ride. She didn't know Zach. She duct taped every joint in Mike's ventilator tube because she couldn't be sure Zach would respond fast enough if the alarm went off. She thought Mike was going to die and so she drove every inch of the route behind them. The second ride, there was no duct tape. She didn't see the two of them tear down Red Mountain Pass (and she's kind of glad) because she wasn't behind them every second. Zach has become one of the reasons that Nicole still uses the word "blessed." When he is around, she can relax. She can laugh.

Nicole turns to Zach. "All right, ready to transfer?"

She turns to Mike. He's trying to say something.

"1...2...3...K...L...M...M? 1...A...what do you need?" She runs again through the series but she's stumped. The seconds tick by. The neighborhood guys debate the route. Chris wants to hit the trails, Glenn and Mike want to head toward Mountain Vista on the nice wide shoulder. The rhythmic whoosh of Mike's ventilator is always in the background. "N is correct? No headrest? Is it head? Is H-E-A correct?"

"Helmet?" says Zach. Three minutes and 19 seconds have passed.

"No helmet?" says Nicole, her eyes locked on Mike's.

One blink.

IT'S NOW 3:30. AFTER ADJUSTING FOR the vent, the headrest on the Bootlegger needed to be swapped out. Then the harness wasn't fitting right with all of Mike's layers. Eight hours after Mike's day began, he and Zach head out of the driveway. They roll out slowly, and one of the guys jokingly asks why Zach and Mike don't go that speed during the Death Ride.

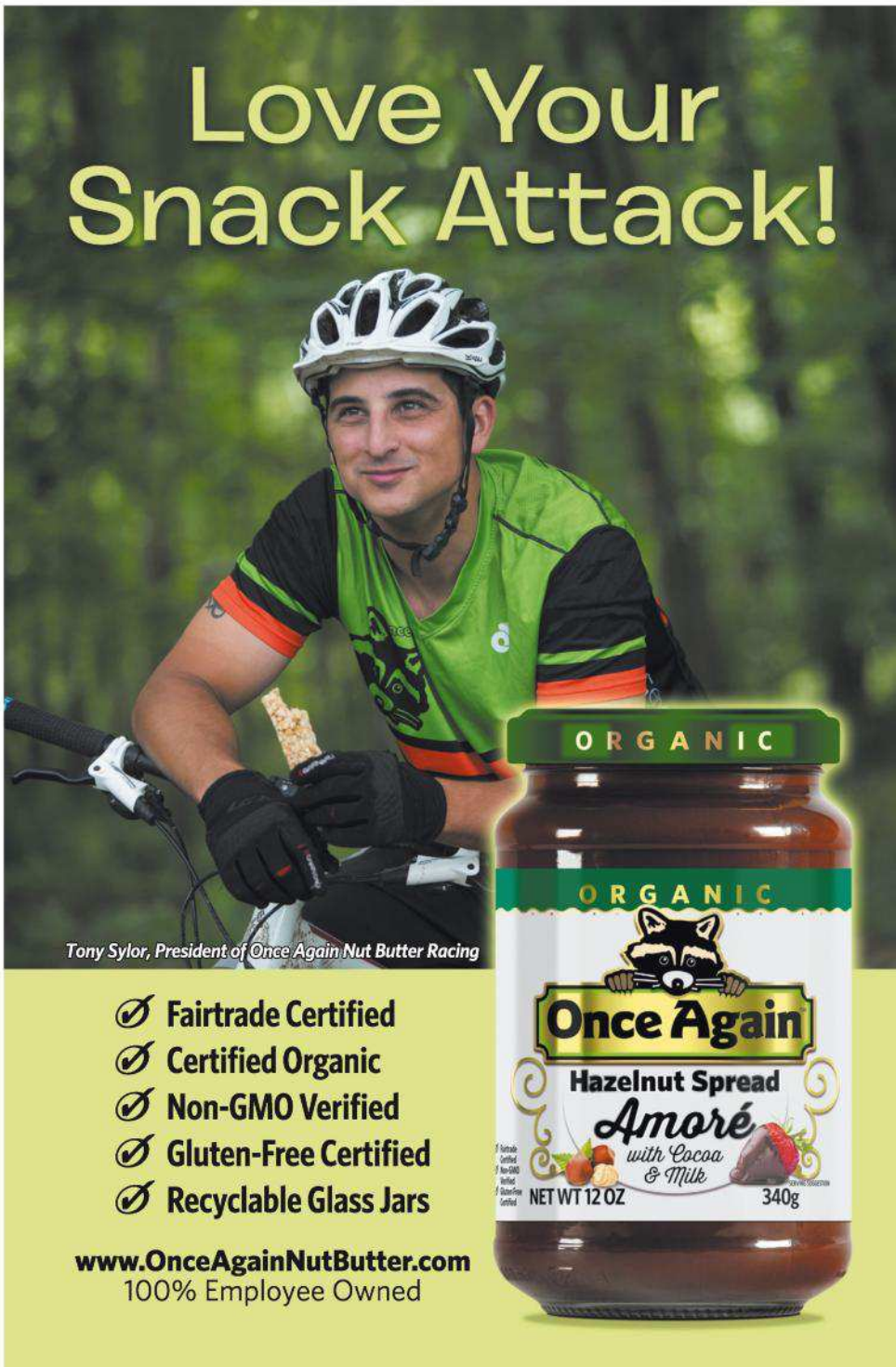
As they turn out of the neighborhood they start up the false flat and rollers of Wildcat Parkway. The group begins to string out. Zach, wearing a bright orange helmet and blue New Balance running shoes, begins to pull away.

Before Mike, Zach was the guy who didn't do charity events, didn't much care for packs of riders in matching kits and "plastic bikes," or get why anyone needed a "reason" to ride. On the rare occasions he did do organized rides, he was the guy on the 1990 fuschia-pink Bruce Gordon with the wraparound handlebar, a six-pack in the panniers, and a Pabst Blue Ribbon in the bottle cage.

But he gets those charity riders now. And he thinks every such ride should have a Mike and a Bootlegger. A rider who reminds all the others why they are riding. A rider who is their reason. He will joke later, after today's outing, that the Death Ride was the first time he ever did anything nice for anybody. But then he will get serious. "I know this has made me a better person," he will say. "To have someone trust their life with you, and you can show them a damn good time and let them go real fast and do something that nobody else can do for them is pretty cool. I feel like I'm done, I don't have to live anymore because I've made someone's wildest dreams come true."

And that is why he took turns at 50 miles an hour down Red Mountain Pass on that brilliant sunny day last June. And that is why he is pulling away from the group today, his helmet a small bright dot against the gray sky. He is giving the ride back to Mike. He is giving him what the Beast tried to take away. ***B***

To contribute to the Cimbura family trust that pays for Mike's care, visit ***gofundme.com/mikecimbura.***



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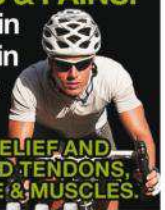

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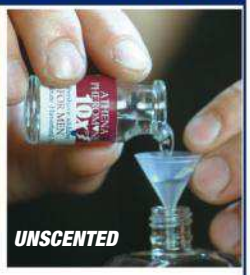

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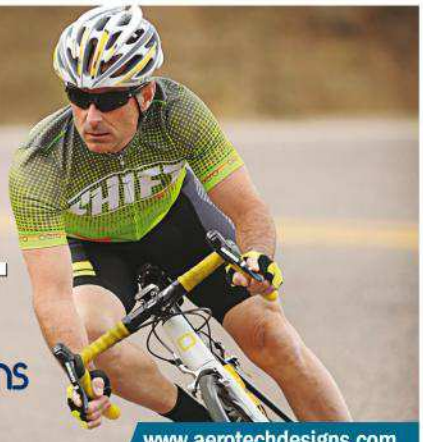

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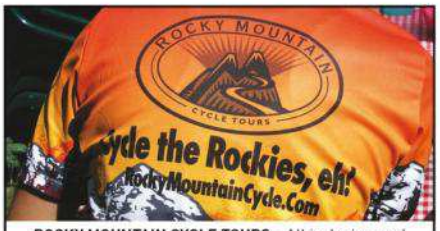

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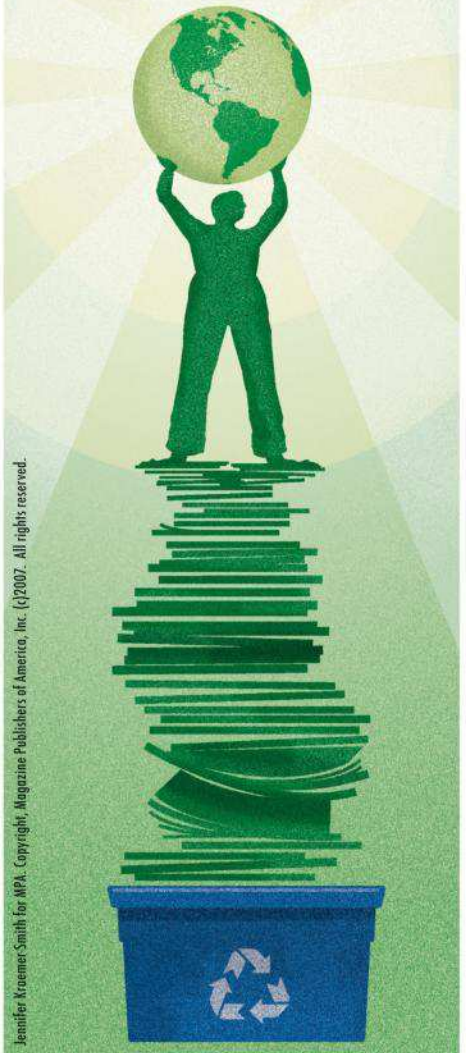

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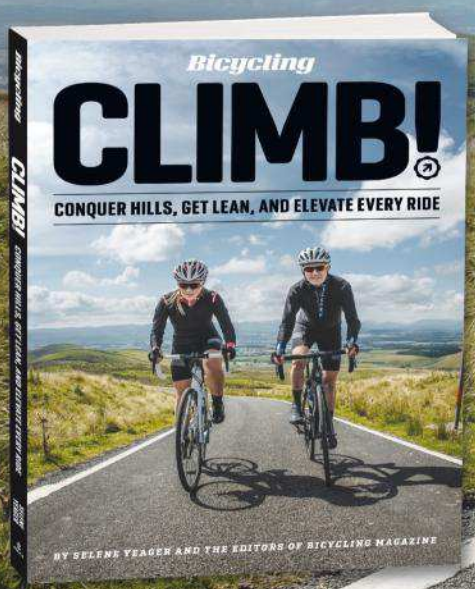

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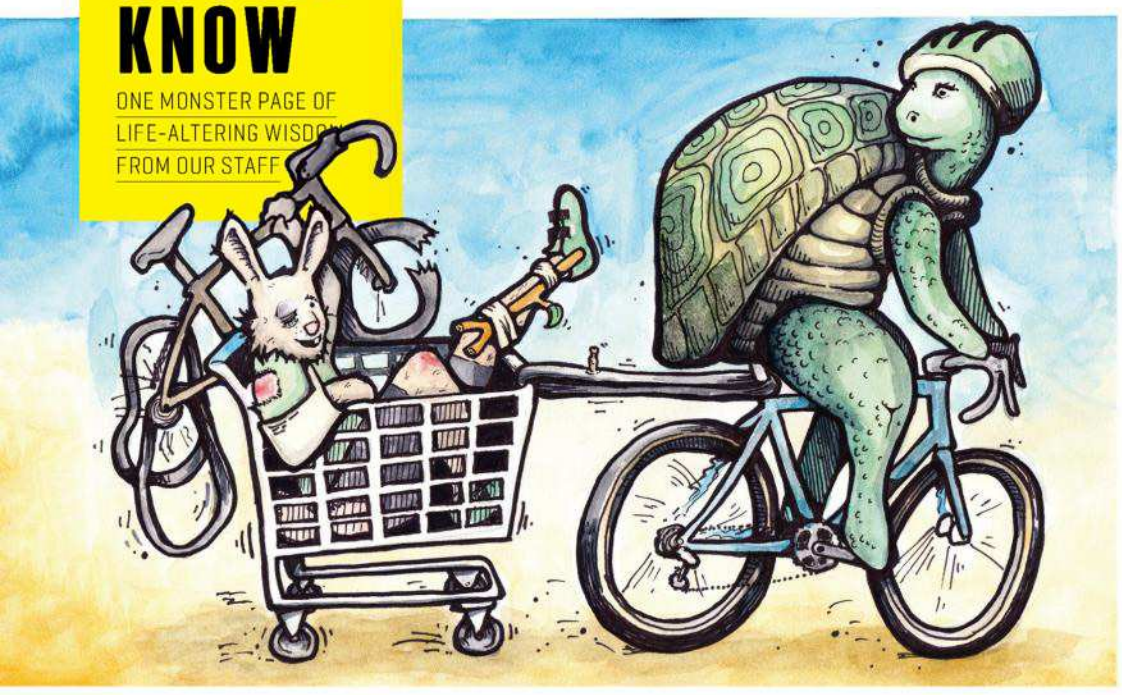
YOU SHOULD KNOW

ONE MONSTER PAGE OF LIFE-ALTERING WISDOM FROM OUR STAFF

11 PLACES YOU'VE GOTTA RIDE AT LEAST ONCE // A pump track // New York's Hudson Valley // The Whole Enchilada in Moab, Utah // Whistler, British Columbia // In the Paris-Roubaix sportive // Colorado's Mount Evans // Bentonville, Arkansas // Queenstown, New Zealand // The Mega Cavern in Louisville, Kentucky // A velodrome // Across the Golden Gate Bridge



Survive a Big Fat #RideFail

▶ **GOBBLE REAL FOOD.** "Six hours into a 24-hour mountain bike race, all my gels and chews had given me serious gut rot," says contributing writer Joe Lindsey. "I ate two slices of pizza and some chicken broth at the next stop and my stomach miraculously started to settle."

▶ **ASK FOR HELP.** "My buddy's wheel blew apart in the middle of the woods, so we borrowed a wheel from this random guy's Walmart bike and rode it a couple of hours to the nearest town," says contributing writer Daniel Sapp.

▶ **KNOW WHEN TO BAIL.** "My friend flatted on a night ride, and we couldn't get the CO_2 to work, not to mention it was 20 degrees," says senior associate editor Taylor Rojek. "The two warmest people went back to get the truck and the rest of us just went to the bar."

▶ **AVOID DRAMA IN THE FIRST PLACE.** "Do your research and be prepared, especially for a long ride in unfamiliar territory," says test director Matt Phillips. "Map it out ahead of time, and bring plenty of cash, extra food, water, and clothing."

5 WORDS OR LESS

"Accept bacon from a stranger."

Lydia Tanner—gear editor

CYCLING INVENTIONS WE'D PAY TO GET OUR HANDS ON

"A bike airbag that would inflate around my body if I was about to crash."
—Gloria Liu, features editor

"A device that creates a microclimate around me when I ride so it's always 55 and sunny."**—Joël Nankman, mechanic**

"A bicycle-powered helicopter."**—Mike Yozell, gear editor**

"A stylish sidecar on my bike for my nieces."**—Pat Heine, video producer**

"Grease repellent for my legs."**—Jen Sherry, managing editor**

"IF YOU LOOK BEDRAGGLED AND PATHETIC ENOUGH, PEOPLE WILL OFFER YOU FREE FOOD OR A RIDE."

—KATIE FOGEL, ASSISTANT DIGITAL EDITOR

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—SELENE YEAGER, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Illustration by **TAJ MIHELICH**


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