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IN THIS ISSUE

- 2023-2024 EVENT CALENDARS!
- BIKE ADVOCACY
- PARIS-BREST-PARIS
- 4 WAYS TO GET KIDS RACING
- SPIRIT WORLD GRAVEL

- BELGIAN CYCLOCROSS
- OFF-SEASON WEIGHT GAIN
- BIKE FIT
- BICYCLE ART
- SLOW ROAD TO TEHRAN
- BEAUTY IN AGE

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Cover Photo: Steve Wasmund and Amy Andrews in the 2023 Paris-Brest-Paris event. They finished in 69:00:34. "One of the professional event photos taken in front of one of the many quaint churches along the route. I can't place the town, but our sunken eyes suggest our return, Tuesday afternoon... possibly Tinteniatic."

Photo by Maindru Photo

RANDONNEURING

In Search Of: Reflections on Riding Paris-Brest-Paris



Staging at the start of Paris-Brest-Paris 2023: A triplet ridden by 3 brothers is right behind us. They finished! Photo by Steve Wasmund

By Stephen Wasmund and Amy Andrews

You were likely in search of something when you picked up this issue of Cycling West. Information or maybe just entertainment. Presumably you're a cyclist, or keen on becoming one, whatever your definition of 'cyclist' might be. Whether a racer, tourer, cyclomuter (bike commuter), or simply one who rides a bicycle, you immediately start searching for the 'next'... the next mountain biking destination, next exciting road race, or better cyclomuting route to work; the next level of fitness; lighter or blingier racing parts; a next bike; a next type of bike; next horizons. Eventually your search leads to the next big challenge, and often after that, to reason.

Paris-Brest-Paris is one of the ultimate bookstores in that search. Once one has decided to take on this event, the list of 'nexts' starts growing rapidly. The 1200 km ride across northwestern France is most likely a new destination. Even if you've been

there before, most cyclists visiting France will head for the mountains! I suspect it's uncommon to voluntarily vacation in the 'Wisconsin of France'. In addition to the new destination, a big brevet on the other side of the ocean provides endless opportunity for new equipment. I don't care how much cycling equipment you have, an event like this will require something new. There is definitely a physical challenge in pedaling the 300-600km (180-370 miles) a day, over the course of 4, 3, or for some really fast folks just 2 sunrises. This challenge is tracked closely by the search for the reason so many people have been participating in this historic event for well over 100 years. Amy and I are far enough into our cycling quest to appreciate that search for reason.

Our search begins on Sunday at 5:15pm. The most ambitious riders have been heading out in waves at 15-minute intervals since 4pm. Their time cut-off is 80 hours! The waves of '90-hour riders' start at 5:15 and will continue into the night. The waves will begin again early Monday morning for riders who

don't want to start their epic ride into the night after a long and restless day of trying to prepare. These riders trade a morning start for a time limit of 84 hours. This means thousands of cyclists are spread across western France for the next few days.

There was always someone to pass, always someone passing you, and always someone to ride with if you desire, and often someone riding towards you, as the route is, for the most part, out and back.

Our 5:15 'F wave' is for 'Special Bikes' including tandems, triplets, tricycles, recumbents, and velomobiles (there are restrictions, but basically anything human powered, with 2 or 3 wheels, which can be steered with a handlebar). 'Special Bikes' are special in part because their rhythm is a bit different than standard solo bikes. A bit harder to get going, a bit harder to slow, pretty fast going downhill, and a bit slower climbing. The wild velomobiles are even more special in that regard. They can pass you like an owl in a low dark canopy of trees. Imagine a barely audible 'whoosh', with nothing to see, because they're only 24 inches above the ground. They climb like sloths. So, starting a long ride with a bunch of nervous energy and a bunch of special bikes is an adventure. We didn't have any mishaps but did spend a lot of that nervous energy chasing the sunset with several other tandems and continually leapfrogging the swooping and very slow climbing velomobiles. Unlike any riding we'd ever done. Unlike any roads we'd ever traversed. Unlike any challenge we'd ever undertaken. The search begins.

Moments:

Italian Pack Riding
On Monday afternoon we were schooled in Italian pack riding. We'd

Continued on page 4

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Paris-Brest-Paris - Continued from page 3

been cruising along by ourselves and slowly rolled up on a pack of 8 older Italian gentlemen. I didn't quite want to expend the physical energy to pass them quickly and ride off, nor pull slowly to the front, have them slide into our slipstream and then expend the mental energy required to be a good engine (a tandem's lot in life). So, we eased off a bit and started cruising about 10 meters behind them to catch a little break.

I think the captain of the Italian pack started talking about us. This is based on repeated looks over shoulders, foreign words spoken, and my guilty conscience. We eventually decided to be good citizens and rolled by smoothly on the gauche (left) leaving easy opportunity to hop on our wheel if they wanted to continue at our pace. The captain promptly came around, got right in front of us, slowed slightly, said more Italian words, and proceeded to pull us up the gentle climb at a very controlled pace all the while looking in his bar-end mirrors making sure we didn't drop any of his pack.

When the road turned downward the captain pulled off and let gravity have its way with us while leaving a large slipstream. Their entire pack tucked expertly into that draft and followed us across the next valley. When we started up the next hill, he promptly pulled back in front of us and kept us in check until the next downhill. This continued for the next few miles until the control point in Carhaix. I felt both wrapped on the knuckles, and greatly honored.

Crêpes

We were in search of the famous crêpes. You can survive PBP only buying food and hydration at the official Control Points, but we'd been advised by local PBP veteran Ken Moss that we needed to get a crêpe from this one particular family who handed them out freely in exchange for a postcard sent from the rider's hometown. We'd forgotten which town the famous crêpe stand was located, so ended up stopping at several stands along the way and paying 1€ for a fine crêpe, but it wasn't *the* crêpe.

It wasn't until about 12:30am Wednesday that we were peaceful-



Staging at the start of Paris-Brest-Paris 2023: Note the triplet ridden by 3 brothers. They finished! Photo by Steve Wasmund



The very beginning of the ride: Tandems, recumbents, and velomobiles in Group F. Tiny French villages. Paris-Brest-Paris 2023. Photo by Steve Wasmund

ly cruising along when we see a couple folks sitting in lawn chairs at an awning covered folding table in front of a house just off the road, chatting, sipping coffee, and eat-

ing something. We decided a quick break was in order, so I hop off and inquire about their wares.

Crêpes! I'll take one. When they ask what topping I want I give my



Our second sunrise. Idyllic. Paris-Brest-Paris 2023. Photo by Steve Wasmund standard answer of, "I'd like the topping that you like." It's usually fraise (strawberry) jam which is fine with me.

When I try to pay, I'm handed a little slip of paper with an address and asked to send a postcard. I'd completely forgotten about that! We'd found Ken's stand. Interacting

with families in their front yards in the middle of the night is definitely a joy and a reason for doing this event.

Update: As I'm writing this, I see a story in a blog by a tandem couple that I follow (link below) mention

Continued on page 6



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Paris-Brest-Paris - Continued from page 4

a different famous postcard crêpe stop... so maybe others had taken up the tradition of free crêpes for postcards and we hadn't found the stop Ken had recommended, but I'm ok with that.

Intervals

We took part in early morning training intervals. It was about 6am on Wednesday. We'd been pulling 4 or 5 bikes for the last 45 minutes. The sun had come up and we were on our last couple hundred kilometers of the event. Life, although tired, was good.

A group of about 6 Frenchmen rolled up quickly behind us. One of them must have fallen asleep, forgotten his schooling, or wanted to play hijinks because instead of rolling by smoothly like they easily could have, things got a bit jumbled for a minute.

The road captain barked some orders, they got themselves organized again, and by the time they were back to making forward progress we decided... well, conscious decisions weren't really being made anymore, but we still ended up sliding on to their wheels hoping we might get a good draft for the next little while.

For the next 30 minutes we hung on as they, in turn, attacked, and pulled, and sprinted, and surged between 40 and 45kph, and all the other inefficient moves completely inappropriate after 1000 kilometers of riding. We sat at the back as our momentum made it impractical to match all their rapid movements, but we still had the opportunity to roll around their captain when he'd been dropped and pull him back up to the tail of the pack. I think he got a kick out of that.

We bore down and hung on for one final climb (tandems *can* climb, on occasion, if the grade is just right) as a couple more of their team fell off the back. At the crest everything eased up and we all traded breathless laughs as we rolled into the checkpoint at Mortagne au Perche.

What was the reason for that? We may never know.

Why We'd do it Again

There are countless more recountings to be had after a ride this long. We experienced the magic of riding



A fun stop not at a control point. Enjoying a Paris Brest pastry at a patisserie in Carhaix de Plouguer. Paris-Brest-Paris 2023. Photo by Steve

from one tiny French village to the next, and the next, and the next. We had fun conversations with riders from around the globe, ate many baguettes and drank many coffees and Cokes, and had plenty of time to wonder why we were doing this and why we'd likely do it again.

We finished in 69 hours and 34 seconds. That included 5 hours of sleeping in a dorm bed at the turn around control point in Brest after the first 28 hours of riding and then 42 minutes of sleeping on a bench in front of a church in Sougé-le-Ganelon at about 4 am Wednesday. We spent about 13 hours and 45 minutes eating and sitting at the various control points and two different shops that were not official stops but had fresher baguette sandwiches and pastries. Those stops were the best.

We discussed while riding that this is probably not the healthiest thing to do to one's body. Nerve damage to hands, feet, and bums can result from this much riding induced sleep deprivation. We discussed how touring is likely a better way to visit new lands, with longer eating breaks and setting up camp for relaxed evenings. We also discussed how it's quite possible the visiting of all the new lands makes the pain more bearable and the pain makes all the geographic and social interactions more memorable. Maybe this is the reason 39,722 have taken part in this event since its inception and why randonneuring has such a dedicated membership worldwide.

This event, not to mention a trip to Europe, had been on Amy's and my radar for years. It finally happened and was all we hoped for and more. The preparation for a ride of this grandeur, not to mention preparing for an overseas vacation, made this entire year one we will never forget. Thank you for reading along as I get to recount these amazing memories. Now go search for some

memory making events of your own.

In search of info on PBP

Paris-Brest-Paris, or PBP, is a 1200-kilometer brevet that was first run in 1891. The next 4 editions were spaced out by 10 years due to the presumed stress it put on the riders' bodies. World War II disrupted the timing a bit with the 1941 event canceled. It happened again in 1948 and then realigned with its 10-year schedule in 1951. For some reason (maybe better roads), it fell into a 5-year interval for 4 editions and has then occurred every 4 years since 1971.

While it originally started within Paris, urban growth and logistics (6749 riders started in 2023) necessitated moving the circus outside the metropolitan traffic and the ride now starts at the beautiful and sprawling chateau of Rambouillet about an hour west of the city. The course changes on occasion, but always covers the approximately 600 kilometers due west out to the port city of Brest and then turns around and heads back to Rambouillet.

While some riders are 'in search of a time' (attempting to finish as quickly as they can), most are working to finish before the maximum time cutoff of 90 hours. In 2023 the first rider in was American Nicolas Dehaan who finished in an amazing time of 41 hours 46 minutes and 30 seconds. PBP is not a race and professional teams do not take part, although they have in the past.

The full history of this event is fascinating, and you should search it out. I would also encourage you to track down an issue of Bicycle Quarterly No. 84 and read Jan Heine's write-up on this same ride.

Salt Lake Randonneurs

I encourage you to investigate Salt Lake Randonneurs, the small but very friendly chapter of Randonneurs USA, administered by Ken Moss, challenge yourself to realize that 100 miles can be a short ride, and maybe even start your search for a reason to ride PBP in 2027! Amy and I know we'll be searching for one.

In search of the Parisian cycling scene

The French love bicycles. You've likely watched at least brief clips of the fans at le Tour de France. You've seen plenty of French bicycle art or wine bottle labels. We experienced

it to our bones when families and bar patrons would cheer us riding through their sleepy village at hours suitable for neither roosters nor owls.

Paris, however, is a large metropolitan city with business to conduct and plenty of people with places to be. The streets are narrow and decidedly not laid out on a logical Utah grid system. Like the language, street navigation was entirely foreign to us.

Also like the language, watching and listening to Parisians navigate the streets was like watching art. A horn honk serves a purpose: "Excusez moi. Move forward 6 inches so I can move my tail out of this intersection so the 3 other directions of traffic may pass through, s'il vous plaît." Merging cars, scooters, bicycles, and pedestrians were an exquisitely choreographed dance.

An entirely integral part of this orchestrated and choreographed cacophony was the bicycle. Business dressed, parents w/ 2 kids, errand runners, and presumably plenty of tourists either more experienced or braver than I, were omnipresent.

For the past few years, the city of Paris has been on a mission to increase bikeability. More dedicated bike lanes. More controlled intersections. More bike share bikes. More bike parking. Bicycles filled the separated bike lanes, utilized the narrow streets, riding both directions, and on both sides of traffic on one-way streets, pulling up in front of cars at lights, never on sidewalks, never getting honked at. It was impressive to see, and it seemed to work!

It should be noted that our taxi driver told us there were, indeed, many accidents in Paris, but we didn't see any. I should say that we did ride a few kilometers on bike-share rides during our stay and it scared the digested pain out of me, but it was still beautiful to watch and with some practice, I think I would enjoy it more than riding on Beck St north of Salt Lake City.

Resources:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-22/how-paris-will-become-100-cyclable>

<https://rusa.org/pages/PBP-short-history>

<https://www.pbprezults.com/>

<https://thedailyrandonneur.wordpress.com/2023/09/02/pbp-2023-on-tandem-trusting-the-plan/>

<https://www.saltlakerandos.org>



A common sight in Paris. She's only missing the baguette and bottle of wine in her panniers. Photo by Steve Wasmund



Paris. Bikes everywhere. Photo by Steve Wasmund



Velib Paris bikeshare was ubiquitous. Photo by Steve Wasmund



View of a typical Paris intersection. Always busy, always bicycles, always flowing. Photo by Steve Wasmund



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BIKE RACING

Four Ways to Get Kids Racing Bikes in America



One of the youth races at VELO Sports Center during the USA Cycling National Track Championships in Carson, CA. Photo by Peter Abraham

By Peter Abraham

In July I drove 45 minutes South to the VELO Sports Center in Carson, CA to spectate at the USA Cycling Track National Championships. I wanted to root for local athlete and friend Chloe Patrick and watch World and Olympic Champion Jen Valente racing that night in the women's points race. It was a Saturday night, and given that this is the best track cycling facility in the US and the biggest event of the year, I was hoping to see a packed house of fellow cycling fans. Instead, I was greeted by a mostly-empty facility with maybe 150 spectators in attendance.

Moreover, I was surprised by not only the small field sizes, but the lack of local athletes particularly in the junior races. If we can't attract young people to race at the best facility in the nation, which is right in the middle of Los Angeles, how are we going to build a team for the 2028 Olympics?

This got me thinking about getting kids on bikes and into the sport of cycling. Are we, as a country, doing the best job we can building the sport? Or, in the cases where this is happening (on mountain bikes), how come we can't continue the momentum into other cycling disciplines? I spoke to my friend Scott Johnson, owner of the Serious Cycling shops and their extensive cycling team. We decided to start talking to stakeholders around the country who could help us understand best practices and pain points within the American youth cycling journey.

Scott and I started by talking to people who had a handle on youth cycling in the US. We wanted to understand the issues from those on the front lines, including Dale Hughes at the Lexus Velodrome in Detroit, Steve Westover of the booming Team Booger in Seattle, David Huntsman of the LA Velodrome Racing Association, Drew Kogon from the VeloSport Club and Damon Turner at LA Bike Academy. And previous to this, I'd spoken with NICA high school MTB league President Amanda Carey, Scott Nydam from Silver Stallion in New Mexico, Roy Knickman from the now-defunct but wildly successful Lux junior program, and the St Augustine's University HBCU cycling team.

Many of the solutions we sug-

gest below will require funding and staffing that don't currently exist. We're clear on that. How to come up with those resources is a subject for another post. So consider our ideas a starting point for discussion.

Here's what we learned:

Problem 1: Cycling youth development programs are fragmented and disconnected.

Any healthy sport needs a strong foundation to build from. While there are some success stories across the youth cycling landscape, there's nobody in charge of getting them working as a big system. Mountain bikes are currently the most attractive gateway for youth cyclists. NICA, the high school mountain bike league founded in 2009, has been a runaway success, with over 30,000 kids (counting the breakaway leagues) racing bikes in 33 states. NICA, as the world's largest youth bike racing program, has essentially taken over the top of the funnel in the US to get kids started in competitive cycling.

NICA gets kids started on their cycling journey, but the organization is not set up to serve young athletes who want to try other disciplines outside of MTB. And there's no path from high school racing into more competitive racing at the national and global level. This is not a bad thing; NICA is not trying to find the next Tour de France star. They're just trying to get as many kids as possible onto mountain bikes so they can try out the sport and enjoy the outdoors. Some NICA athletes eventually find their way to road success (Neilson Powless, Megan Jastrab, Kevin Vermaerke, Sepp Kuss) or to the MTB World Cup (Kate Courtney, Gwendolyn Gibson). But those success stories are incidental, often driven by motivated parents or happenstance.

However, given the sheer volume of high school kids racing mountain bikes, there should be a way to connect passionate young athletes to other parts of the bike ecosystem: gravel, road, cyclocross, BMX, and track. Where does USAC, the national governing body for the sport, fit into this effort? Where does their job start and NICA's stop? How does USAC collaborate with NICA (and other organizations) so that different programs are part of a national strategy? Given the USAC's limited resources, it's not possible for them to recreate what NICA has already built. But there are ways to work

together. There is currently a huge gap between high school mountain biking and other forms of cycling. So even though we have the world's biggest grassroots bike racing program, it's not fully utilized as a tool to develop a lifelong love of cycling.

Solution:

USA Cycling should have regional staff whose only job is to serve as community managers and connectors who work hand in hand with organizations (NICA, college cycling) and events (CX, road, BMX, gravel, MTB, criteriums) with the goal of getting more young people into more cycling events. Someone needs to be "The CEO of Bike Racing" in the US.

Problem 2: Velodromes around the country are underutilized.

One thing I've learned in decades of youth sports work is that intentional onramps must be built that reduce the friction of getting new athletes into a program. The two best onboarding platforms for getting kids on bikes are 1) Mountain bikes (see above), and 2) track cycling. They both offer safe, closed course riding separate from cars and often in groups of other kids. Importantly, this is a scenario that parents are ok with; they can drop off their 12 year old without worrying about a distracted driver killing their child on the road. While youth MTB riding is growing, due to the thriving NICA league system, velodromes often sit empty. The 27 tracks in the US (here's a map) are mostly owned by cities or counties that lack staffing, funding and expertise to build thriving youth programs at the tracks. These are also mostly outdoor facilities, so they're unusable in bad weather or during the winter. The only indoor, wooden track that meets UCI guidelines is the VELO Sports Center in Los Angeles. It's owned by Anschutz Entertainment Group, the world's largest owner of sports teams and sports events. But the velodrome is an afterthought for them, just an add-on to the LA Galaxy soccer stadium next door. There's nobody who has the job of filling the facility with kids and events seven days per week.

Solution:

Velodromes need full time community managers. Any track that wants a thriving community of riders needs someone who can build programs and reach out to schools, NICA leagues, parents and cycling clubs. Additionally, USA Cycling should have a national office sharing best practices in velodrome management to all of the different velodromes. They could coordinate across facilities for sponsorships, events and relationships with governing bodies.

Problem 3: The cycling development pathway for young riders is broken.

This is related to problem #1 above: there are a bunch of bridges missing between the various levels of the sport. In particular, getting from a NICA high school league to a travel team in either MTB or road is not an obvious transition. It's possible, but oftentimes kids (and their parents) don't know how to do it or who should guide them in the



The start of a NICA race in the Los Angeles area. Photo by Peter Abraham

process. If a young athlete gets really good and wants to try racing internationally or at the U23 level, it's another gap that's hard to get across. Young bike racers are often asked by USA Cycling to fund their own trips to Europe, so the system is immediately biased against athletes without resources at their disposal. One very talented young professional cyclist told me that she had to choose between paying rent and taking a national team trip to race in Europe. So she stayed home. Road racing in particular is a sport that mostly happens in Europe. I would compare it to baseball, which is largely based in the United States. A young bike racer has to travel across the Atlantic to learn the sport. That's expensive, time consuming and takes guidance. There is currently a lack of mentoring and education as it relates to racing in Europe, with just a few teams and programs that focus on that opportunity. USA Cycling has restarted their European development program, but it needs to grow much bigger to get enough kids learning and riding internationally.

Problem 4: College cycling needs a reboot

As a veteran of college cycling myself (UC Davis), I have seen how fun this sport can be: you're with your friends, learning a sport together and traveling to races. The social nature of cycling aligns with being in college, where spending time with friends is often the most important thing in your life. And riding for a university team is a great next step for kids (like me) who got started racing in high school and want to keep going with the sport. There are 22 varsity (funded) teams in college cycling. These schools have some resources, maybe scholarships, paid coaches, equipment and are set up like a proper sports program. Mostly these are small colleges that have used their cycling team to build a national profile for the school: Lees-McRae in North Carolina, Milligan College in Tennessee, Marian University in Indianapolis and Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, Colorado are examples.

Then there are another 200 or so universities with club programs. These schools have no paid staff, no budget to speak of and no equipment. Many of the famous destination universities you've heard of — Stanford, UCLA, University of Colorado — have club cycling (all volunteer) teams. They're entirely dependent on donations and the labor of their

own athletes to keep the program going. I recently spent a couple years working with the new St Augustine's University HBCU cycling team, and I saw how much work it is to get a program going from scratch. It takes fundraising, recruiting, event management, collaboration with university staff, equipment, transportation, and more. For college students, who are "just passing through," to build and maintain a sports program is a huge ask. Often it's too much. So club teams come and go depending how motivated the current group of athletes are. This DIY model in the non-varsity programs has set up college cycling to fail.

Solution:

As the existing governing body for college cycling, USAC should lean into this sport with greater involvement, more mentoring, and some fundraising help. In addition, more universities should build varsity programs. For a tiny fraction of the cost of a traditional college sports program, a school could build a thriving cycling team. They need continuity of staffing and some budget for travel and equipment. In addition, there needs to be a bridge built between NICA and college cycling, so high school kids know that riding is an option at the university level.

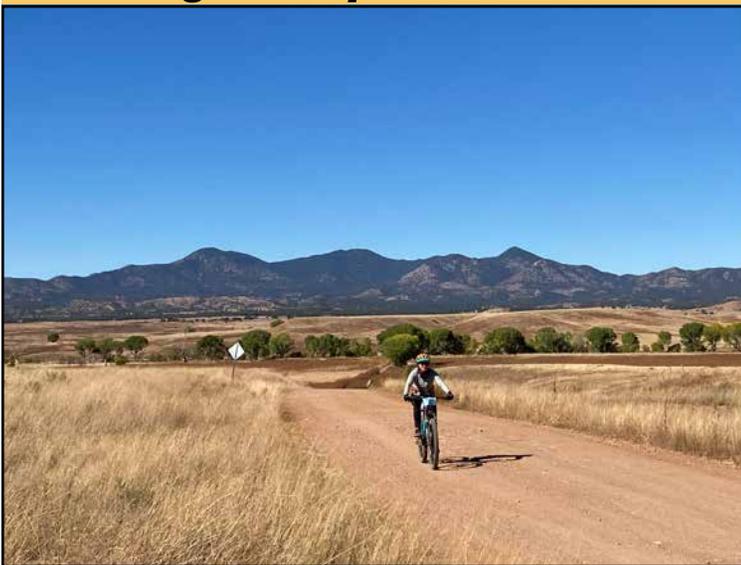
If we prioritize these solutions (along with many other things) we can get many more people outdoors and on bikes.

Please feel free to reach out with ideas or comments.

Peter started racing bikes in high school and has continued to ride his entire life. He also runs the Abraham Studio (ABRHM.com), which works with purpose-driven brands in sports, technology and health-care to find their voices and tell their stories. He lives in Los Angeles, California.

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GRAVEL RACING

Entering the Spirit World: An Arizona Gravel Event

A rider in the midst of the Arizona Serengeti. Spirit World Gravel Venture 2023. Photo by Don Scheese



The start at the Patagonia Lumber Company. Spirit World Gravel Venture 2023. Photo by Don Scheese



Harshaw Canyon, Patagonia, AZ. Spirit World Gravel Venture 2023. Photo by Don Scheese

By Don Scheese

“The Spirit World 100 family has been referring to this breakthrough as “entering the spirit world...”. There are many ways of describing this journey. When it happens you truly do enter an altered state...The Spirit World 100 is a community centric and self-supported gravel venture, meant to share the beauty of the Borderlands region with all those who choose to join us.” From the Spirit World 100 website.

How does one go about choosing a gravel event to participate in? For me, the important criteria are: proximity to home (say, within a day’s drive); the physical challenge of the course (at least several thousand feet of elevation gain & anywhere from 50-100 miles in length); the aesthetics of the route (ecologically diverse, visually interesting terrain); the amenities of the town in which the event is held (some good restaurants, interesting shops); and that indefinable element referred to as the “Vibe” of the event. I’ve done a bunch of races since the Gravel Craze began (for me) in 2014, from the Midwest to the Southwest to the Rocky Mountains to the Northeast, and I can honestly say that the Spirit World 100, held the first weekend of November each year out of the town of Patagonia, Arizona, ticks off all

my boxes.

I’ve done the 50-mile version of the Spirit World the past three years (the first one was held in 2019). This event, initiated by Heidi and Zander Alt, a lovely young neo-hippie couple and creative entrepreneurs, seems to get better each year. Occurring over three days, it features meals both before and after the race, shakedown rides, live music, aid stations, and a choice of three overlapping routes (50, 80, or 100 miles). Because Patagonia is a small town (population around 900), the entry list is deliberately kept small (250 riders), and all festivities and meetings are now held out of the funky complex of buildings known as the Patagonia Lumber Company, which serves local coffee, beer, and wine. Riders come from communities as close as Tucson and as far away as California, the Midwest and Northeast, as well as Canada. The cultural diversity of the riders is one of the feature attractions: bros, dudes, hipsters, MAMILs, fashionistas, skinny-legged cyclists & wide bodies, mingle with cowboys, cowgirls, ranchers—a veritable potpourri of people. As word has gotten around about the Good Vibe of this event, it has become increasingly harder to get into, but Heidi and Zander have kept the numbers down to ensure it remains an intimate, fun, as well as challenging experience.

And make no mistake: the routes are challenging. After the first 5 miles on paved roads heading out of town south into the Coronado National Forest (a neutral start led by the local fire department), the gravel roads become, at times, dusty, rutted, rocky & washboarded. The routes traverse three distinct ecological zones, ranging from 4000-5000 feet above sea level: the cottonwood and sycamore lined, ruggedly beautiful Harshaw Canyon; the thickly canopied oak-juniper-pinyon pine forest of the higher elevations; and the Serengeti-like high desert grasslands of the wide-open San Rafael valley. Once in the valley, the view is incredible: far-off vistas south towards the mountains of Mexico, east towards the Huachucas, north to the Santa Ritas, & west to the Patagonia range, all part of what ecologists call the “Sky Islands,” isolated cordillera that harbor unique fauna and flora.

It’s 41 degrees, clear calm and cold in downtown Patagonia, where Zander counts down the seconds to the 7 am start of the race. Clothing choice is always an important consideration, as temperatures will heat up to the mid-80s by mid-afternoon. Some riders are in shorts & short sleeves, while others (like me) layer up in tights, multi-layers, wind-breakers, gloves, and cold weather hats. As we head off into the narrowing confines of Harshaw Canyon, like a large school of colorful fish swimming upstream, it only seems to get colder upon entering the dark, shady canyon. It’s a 12-mile and 1000-foot gradual climb to start the race, and inevitably riders are stopping along the way, warming up

and shedding layers. I soon find myself at the back of the pack, falling into a familiar grinding rhythm, and like at all races the riders sort themselves into various packs and pelotons. As the road climbs the canyon alternates between rocky defiles and open meadows where the sun pours down like honey, a welcome warm contrast to the mostly shady cold canyon.

Finally, after twelve miles of steady climbing, we top out onto the high desert plain with incredible views of the Borderlands mountains. A sharp right takes us up, over, and down into Apache Canyon, where the oak-juniper-pinyon forest predominates. It’s along this stretch that Heidi and Zander’s admonition to “not bomb the descents” comes to mind, for the past dry monsoon season has left arroyos rocky and rutted (later we will hear of numerous flats, snapped-off rear derailleurs, and even a cracked frame resulting from reckless descents). Endless rollers ensue, and I find myself constantly shifting between big and small chain rings (no, I’m not a 1x aficionado). On the bottom of yet another steep pitch I stop to help a fellow cyclist fix a flat who doesn’t know how to use his CO2 cartridge (violating the cyclist credo, Know thy gear before setting out). Numbers of riders find themselves hiking their bikes up the 10-15% punchy climbs. Sand traps occur around Mile 20, and if encountered unawares some riders will fly over their handlebars, not having kept their weight back and center of gravity low. Fortunately, there are few vehicles to be concerned with; by ride’s end I will have counted only around 12-15 civilian SUVs (others, driven by the county sheriffs and Border Patrol, serve as SAG

helpers for any stranded riders).

Eventually we come to the border community of Lochiel, marked by a few scattered ranches. An historical monument causes me (ever the history nerd) to pull over, a towering cement cross commemorating the exploits of Franciscan missionary Fray Marcos de Niza, who explored this area in 1539 following legends and rumors of a “City of Gold” said to exist somewhere in the Southwest. Of course, neither de Niza nor Francisco Coronado and his expeditionary force the following years ever located this fabulous metropolis, but the history of the Americas was changed forever by their discoveries, much to the regret of the Indigenous cultures who had inhabited the region for thousands of years in more sustainable fashion.



De Niza Memorial. Spirit World Gravel Venture 2023. Photo by Don Scheese

A couple of miles farther on we cross the cottonwood-lined dry watercourse of the Santa Cruz River, the golden leafed trees lending some brighter color to the otherwise tawny landscape. At Mile 28 comes the first aid station, staffed by Heidi and some other volunteers, where cold water, cookies, chips, and M&Ms serve as welcome snacks (but no more Skratch Labs hydration mix, which has run out). This is also the “Drop-off” spot, where riders can



Boomshakalaka. Spirit World Gravel Venture 2023. Photo by Don Scheese

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discard heavier layers to be retrieved back at the race start later in the day. Here's where the expansive views really open up, and for the next 20-some miles we will never tire of the endless vistas.

Given the proximity of the southern border to the route of the Spirit World, one might legitimately ask: Is it safe to ride in this area? I'm told that there has never been an incident involving migrants and riders during the event, but this sign adjacent to Aid Station #1 gave me pause:



Near the Mexican Border. Spirit World Gravel Venture 2023. Photo by Don Scheese

No wonder that Heidi and Zander at the riders' meeting Friday night emphasized the strictness of the 5 pm cutoff rule, saying that all riders had to be at the finish line by sunset so as to avoid riding in the dark anywhere near the border.

A few miles later we arrive at the junction of Forest Roads 58 and 61, where 80- and 100-mile riders will turn right, while us 50-milers hang a left and follow a shorter counter-clockwise loop back to the Harshaw Canyon split. For the rest of the way we're occasionally passed by speedy 80- and 100-milers, but no matter—you can race, or you can ride this event, and many of us are choosing to do the latter, conversing, laughing, and stopping to take pictures of this incredibly photogenic landscape. I pause to re-lube my cranky chain, as the dust coats my drivetrain, frame, and body. Sprawling ranches, occasional out-buildings, and scattered cattle herds mark this stretch. As temperatures climb into the 70s and 80s, I keep sucking down water from my Camelbak and silently sing the lyrics of that old Western tune:

"Ol' Dan & I
with throats burned dry,
and so's our cry for water,
cool, clear water."

The wind picks up out on the open plains, first a headwind, then a tailwind as we angle back north, and one of Heidi's favorite expressions, "teeth to the wind," comes to

mind. What else is there to think of while grinding away across this High Lonesome Land?

Rollers and more rollers, Chunky, white-knuckled descents. Short, granny-gear grinding ascents. Finally, after one last ascending pitch, I can see in the short distance ahead Aid Station #2, otherwise known as (Heidi's term) the "Boomshak-a-laka Bar," where, legend has it, tequila shots were once served back in the day. I happily settle for an ice-cold Coke, complements of Pivot Cycles, a small boutique bike manufacturer out of Tempe (check out their gravel-specific Vault). I look around, perusing faces and bodies: some are grim and red-faced, overheated, looking doubtful as finishers; others are smiling and dancing to the decibel-straining tunes of rock 'n roll.

Inspired and rejuvenated, a number of us plunge back down Harshaw Canyon, twelve miles of bumpy, dusty, twisty descent—what a great course design, to finish with a long downhill! I take the bends and arroyo crossings at a reasonable speed, mindful of the occasional vehicle coming in the opposite direction around a blind corner. The higher afternoon sunlight illuminates the gorgeous yellowing sycamores and cottonwoods. Eventually spilling out on the canyon bottom, back onto pavement (nothing like riding on pavement again after miles of gravel roads). I enter into time-trial mode the last 5 miles into a hot headwind, and rounding the last corner back into town I can hear Zander belting, "Here comes a lone rider finishing strong!" That would be me, happily completing my third Spirit World 50 (actually 58, but who's counting?).

Post-ride pizza, beer, band, babes, and bros...war stories and rehashes of the route...a good way to end a truly satisfying event.

As we grow older and events like these accumulate over the years, rides become rituals, rites of passage, barometers of our bodies and levels of fitness. Whatever the distance, whatever the speed, the important thing is always just to Keep On Riding.

Don Scheese is an avid cyclist and retired professor of American Studies who once taught, among other things, courses on Lance Armstrong and Sport in American Culture.

MECHANIC'S CORNER

Beauty in Age



The grey paint on this frame was once a rich, deep grey. Now faded from a decade of summer rides in the high mountain sunlight, it serves as a reminder that some things really had more color years ago. Photo by Eric Ramirez

By Erik Ramirez

The beauty of a mass-produced mountain bike has little to do with the nature of the construction, or the build. Most of our mountain bike frames and hardware are built elsewhere on the planet. Much is produced by machines. Frames still require quite a bit of human involvement, h.

Beautiful lines are rarely created anymore. If you're lucky enough to get a hand-built frame, then you can witness the hard-to-attain perfect welds of a steel or titanium rig. Carbon doesn't fit much into this discussion.

Is time passing too quickly for us? Are the exquisite beauties of hand-made machines fading into the ether?

Recently, I was working on a bike that has been ridden consistently every season since it was purchased, having serviced it each of those seasons. I have watched the fresh paint fade, seen scratches appear, heard creaks as they've come and gone, and rebuilt every component.

This most recent service I had the wheels, fork, and shock off the frame. With the frame hanging by the saddle, I was able to inspect the rarely seen under-side of the machine. Specialized ran the brake hose along the bottom-side of the downtube, and despite having initial concerns about rocks crushing or cutting the line, this never happened. In addition, a short, but small, groove from the hose has been worn into place from the years of microscopic movements.

The owner has always been friendly, and willing to keep the bike running at 100% condition, but she makes her visits short. My relationship with this bike is older, more intimate. I've taken it apart and read

the story from a perspective that only mechanics ever see or appreciate.

It's unique. I have known the quirks and intricacies of this bike longer than I have owned any of my own rigs, whether road or mountain. The emotion is fondness, tenderness, strangely like that of an old friend who can only come around occasionally.

When I look at the grease coming from the lower bearing of the headtube, I pull the fork and clean it up. The bearings are nothing special. They are the low-grade factory bearings that came with the bike. We all know that only the top-tier equipment from any brand is exclusively served up with aftermarket quality headset bearings. But the bearings on this bike have been pulled every year with the fork service, cleaned, greased, reinstalled, and sent away ready for the next season of riding.

The chain seems loose. It flops up and down and side to side when I bounce the bike, despite the stiff spring of the SRAM rear derailleur. Sure enough, it measures long and it's time for a new one for this season.

When I compress the fork, it collapses. The left dust-wiper pops up a little more from its seat in the lower. This telltale failure is primarily from blown air-spring seals. The fork needs a full overhaul. Some shops offer an "overhaul," but often they're only servicing the lowers, which does not include air-spring service, but if luck prevails you get a damper bleed, whatever that means.

The grey paint on this frame was once a rich, deep grey. Now faded from a decade of summer rides in the high mountain sunlight, it serves as a reminder that some things really had more color years ago. Like the wrinkles of the aged, this bike has traded glossy, deep color with rich miles and experience; its rider claim-

ing memories that cannot be replicated nor replaced.

Recalling all those rides, the frame weeps small rings of light grease from the pivot hardware. With the rear shock removed, the pivots move freely, unencumbered by binding resulting from worn and pitted bearings. I can keep those bearings satisfied for another season by removing the seals and inserting the tiniest bit of waterproof grease.

The rear shock goes back on with blue Loctite and some elbow grease. With the frame hardware reassembled, polished and new seals installed, the bike starts to resemble the original machine again. The wheel spin lightly and smooth, but the brakes need to be serviced in a bad way.

Mineral oil has a lot of additives. It breaks down readily with heat and pressure, and this bike has that kind of system. As I purge the old, blackening mineral oil from the reservoirs, lines, and calipers, each brake hungrily consumes 40cc's of new, translucent pink fluid. At first test they already feel better: smoother, lighter actuation, and firmer.

No matter how many times I do this, the brakes will eventually fail. Although we have kept them operating well through regular maintenance, eventually that will not be enough. They will have completed their journey.

The modern mountain bike is relatively new in the grand scheme of cycling. This frame may last several more decades. And as long as the frame maintains integrity and I continue to see it from service milestone to service milestone, it could outlast us all. Replacement parts are relatively easy to find. Frame parts, not so much. However, this bike's retirement seems imminent. That I must lament.

The machines we create and maintain to experience this strange mélange of exercise and pleasure tell many stories. Mechanics know the language that goes unheard and unread. Like the friend you've made at the coffee house, someone you only see there. You talk, discuss the world, get to know one another but that is all. This is the only place you ever meet. Then one day, your friend just stops coming. And you never see them again.

For a professional mechanic, this is how it feels when a bike is retired, but there are always more bikes to service, and more memories to make.

Eric has over 20 years experience working on bikes, starting in Park City. He has recently opened his own business with the aim to teach people about bikes and how to work on them, while still offering some mobile repairs. www.insightbike.com

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CYCLOCROSS

We Are Big Fans! - A Trip to Watch Cyclocross in Belgium

Don Haywood, Kathleen Strong, and Peter Streve on their trip to Belgium to watch cyclocross racing. Wet is best for watching Belgian Cyclocross. Photo courtesy Don Haywood

By Don Haywood

“Well, I’m Her Mom” or We’ve Already Booked to Belgium for Next Winter’s Kerstperiode

We are on the train and the fellow sitting in front of us is sporting a beanie with the word “Sweek” emblazoned on it. He is also wearing big rubber boots.

It isn’t much of a guess that he’s going to the same race we are.

“Hi! Are you on the way to the cyclocross race?”

He looks up, studies us for a second, smiles and then offers, “Yes. You too? Are you for Pidcock?” The Belgians all seem to think we are British. And that we must be here to cheer for British cyclocross racer and world champion, Thomas Pidcock.

“We like him,” Peter says, “but we’re Americans. My favorite is Michael Vanthourenhout.”

“I like Eli Iserbyt,” Kathleen says, “He’s shorter like me and a bad-ass.”

I chime in, “Sweek has been my favorite for some time. He’s really doing well this year. I’m Don.”

I nod towards the others, “This is Kathleen and he’s our friend Peter.”

The friendly conversation contin-

ues. It turns out the Belgian fellow knows the Sweek family because he used to work in their bike shop. And he has known Laurens Sweek’s wife since she was a child.

For three years, we’ve been trying to get to Belgium for the “kerstperiode” – when there are 10 races in the two weeks surrounding Christmas & New Year’s, almost all on classic courses. All the best racers show up.

COVID killed our chances two years in a row but this time, we’ve made it.

Now, six races in, we are pretty much seasoned spectators. And we’ve learned some tricks to do it right.

We buy all our CX race tickets on-line in advance and store them on our phones. That gets us into the venue fast. They cost around twelve Euros per race.

Our Antwerp AirBnB is only a five minutes’ walk from the Antwerpen-Centraal train station. In Belgium, you would be crazy to rent a car. The trains are cheap, clean and go everywhere. They are also a great place to mingle with the Belgians.

We leave early for the races each

day. We buy our train tickets at the kiosk and catch an early train. We may need a transfer, but trains are so numerous and timely that it’s no big deal. We hardly ever wait for more than a few minutes. Our goal is to get there before the Juniors race and before the crowd’s peak. That way, we can scout out the best place to watch. That’s important because, unlike our US races, it’s impossible to move around the course once the pros start. You move, you lose your spot and then the Jumbotron is the only way to watch the race.

Getting there early also has another huge advantage. One can wander among the team vehicles and meet the racers. Unlike at the 2022 CX World Championships in Arkansas, the team vehicles in Belgium are parked randomly around the neighborhood roads. There are no restricted access areas. For example, behind the massive Ineos van and in front of the Jumbo-Visma van might be a little VW Golf toting a bike on the back and owned by a single, self-supported racer.

We didn’t realize it at the time while in Arkansas but we experienced a tiny preview of how fan friendly the top racers are in Belgium. When walking back along the cordoned off team area we spotted Sven Nys. He was just talking to one of the Trek crew members. We stopped and asked for a selfie. He agreed, then walked over to the police tape and posed with us. Peter informed him that his dog is named Sven (we’re big fans). Sven smiled (we are not sure he actually liked the idea). We were elated and felt really lucky. I mean, Sven Nys is a legend we only dreamed of meeting in person! Little did we know that in Belgium, getting a photo and meeting cyclocross legends is easy. You just need to be polite and know when and where to ask.

We experience another glimpse into the friendly Belgian Cyclocross atmosphere at the long stairway obstacle that the Arkansas promoters have included for their World championship race. We are watching the racers warm-up at that big flight of stairs – about halfway up. Eli Iserbyt and his best friend and

teammate Michael Vanthourenhout are running up the stairs with their bikes on their shoulders. As they pass, Kathleen yells, “I love you Eli!” (We’re big fans). Eli and Michael stop, both riders look at each other and then turn around to see who yelled. I mean, Kathleen stopped them both in their tracks! Turns out, that’s not so unusual in Belgium.

The Belgian train has halted. As the train comes to a halt, we get off and file onto the platform with all the other fans. It’s New Years and the bus schedule is abbreviated. We’ll have a little longer walk to get to the race venue, today.

After walking a bit, we decide it would be nice to find a coffee bar. It’s early and no one has had their coffee. Kathleen checks Google and discovers there is one just up the road.

We get to where the place is indicated on the Google map, but don’t see anything that looks remotely like a coffee shop - just a big building. Well, maybe it’s around the back?

Nope.

After some more exploring, we find a door that’s unlocked and walk into a big, narrow hall. At the other end is a glass door and we can see people. Maybe, that’s it?

We walk in to see a modest bar, a few simply decorated tables and a small group of patrons. All eyes are on us and we sheepishly say hello and ask, “Coffee, please?” There’s a small, white screen to one side, a little digital projector and a glass enclosed area full of all kinds of electronic gear.

The fellow behind the bar comes over and serves us our coffee. We thank him and explain that we are on our way to the cyclocross race. He responds with interest and asks, “Are you for Pidcock?” You must like Pidcock?”

I hear the word “Sweek” from the table across from us and I say, “Yes, he’s my favorite!”

Several people nod their heads in agreement.

It turns out those Belgians at the table are going to watch the race



Inge Van Der Heijden. Belgian Cyclocross. Photo courtesy Don Haywood

inside because, “...why should we stand out in the cold?” Kind of hard to deny that reasoning. But, that’s why we are there. It’s the only time we’ve hoped for bad weather during a vacation because this usually makes for the most exciting cyclocross racing.

We’re big fans.

One other thing - about that glass enclosed room. It’s the studio for one of the most popular Belgium Internet stations- Radio Utopia. I look it up later and it turns out the fellow who served us is one of the DJs.

We get to the venue. Perfect! We are nice and early. The juniors are racing shortly and that means the course is closed for warm-up. All the pros are returning to their vans. The elite women will soon be warming up on their stationary trainers or rollers. It’s the perfect time to meet them. It’s also a good time to find the elite men, too.

The team vans are all parked on the neighborhood roads, in parking lots – all over the place. There is no police tape designed to keep people away. There are some lightly taped areas in front of the vans but not many. The crowd is not too bad, yet, and it’s easy to explore.

The first van we notice is Anna Marie Wurst’s. It’s obvious because her photo is plastered all over the van’s side panels. That’s normal. Any racer who is anyone has their own van with their photo and name on it. Her bikes are just sitting out, so I take a photo of her top-tube with her name on it. I think, “It looks my size.”

Anna Marie comes out and jumps on her trainer and begins pedaling. I motion to her and point to the phone, and she nods “OK.” I take the video and then say, “Good Luck, Anna Marie!” She looks up and flashes a million dollar (er- Euro) smile.

Nice!

The next van in line is her teammate’s - Inge Van Der Heijden. She’s now on her trainer, too. I’m a little braver and ask if she would say “Hello!” for the video. She agrees, smiles and says, Hello!” Her mechanic comes over and we have a little conversation. He’s very interested to know if Americans are fans. I point out that we are big fans and there are many of us in Northern Colorado. I also tell him that if he can get the 777 team to come over for our big race - Cross of the North - I promise to provide all the power bars they can eat. He actually laughed.

We do more wandering. Unexpectedly, we see Michael Vanthourenhout pedaling his bike



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Felipe Nystrom. Belgian Cyclocross. Photo courtesy Don Haywood

through the team van parking area. We follow and he stops at Eli Iserbyt's van and goes inside. A few seconds later, they both exit. Naturally, we ask for a selfie.

"Sure."
The photo is taken, and they pedal off.

We're pretty amazed.
We are big fans.
But then, it gets better.

We find Sanne Cant's van. She's Peter's favorite female pro so we decide to hang out for a while and see if she's around. Her van, besides having her photo on it, also has a long list of the many championships she has won in her career. It's impressive. Her mechanic is going through all the pre-race things a mechanic does. There must be five bikes. And they all look like they would fit me.

After about 15 minutes we decide that we should move on. We don't want to be seen as stalkers.

Two vans down from Cant's van is Puck Pieterse. We're pretty sure she is inside her team van because we've watched a young lady ask the mechanic if he'd be kind enough to ask Puck to sign a photo. He disappears inside the van and a few minutes later returns and hands the signed picture back to the girl. She smiles widely and walks off.

Sure enough, the van door opens and it's Puck. Kathleen asks politely for a selfie. Puck enthusiastically runs over and puts herself in the middle of us, wraps her arms around everyone and smiles honestly. I start to take a video of the affair. Kathleen begins to take the selfie and then decides the left side isn't quite right. So, she asks, "Can we move over there where I can take it from the other side?"

Puck nods yes, ducks under some tape, and follows Kathleen to a better area. The selfie is snapped. Meanwhile, I'm still videoing the whole thing and, after the selfie shoot, I ask Puck if she might wave to the camera while saying "Hello, Colorado!"

Now, this is kind of a running joke between us. Every time we see Puck on EuroSports/GCN, when they are showing the frontline CX racers, Puck will always, always, wave to the camera. So, getting her to do the same for our video would be really fun.

Puck listens to my question, flashes a big smile, and then waves and says the line. She is SO personable.

We then notice some activity over by Sanne Cant's van. We walk over and there she is. And there, also, is

her kid. She's holding an infant and talking to some people. Sanne Cant has a kid??? Yes, indeed. Who knew?

Just as patient and polite as the others, it's no surprise that Sanne also grants us a selfie. She has been Peter's favorite for years and I have never seen him smile quite so broadly. So, no surprise, we get a selfie with her. She's seems really nice, too.

=====

We decide it's time to stake our place at the race. The Juniors are nearly finished and it'll be time for the women to begin racing soon.

While walking to the entrance, we pass the Jumbo-Visma van of Wout van Aert. It's mobbed with fans standing around trying to get a photo or, really, anything. The Jumbo-Visma staff are passing out Wout's autographed photos. We decide it isn't worth the effort (we're spoiled by now) and continue to the entrance. On the way, though, we notice a lone cyclist picking his way through the ever-growing crowd. It's Mathieu Van der Poel. We're not sure where he is going but he rides slowly past us, carefully avoiding the mob of pedestrians who are also working their way towards the entrance. No one else seems to even be aware of him. Or, maybe it's because he's Dutch and not a Belgian favorite and they are ignoring him. Or maybe the fans are used to this casual intermingling with the athletes.

By now, we are, too. We're big fans.

Then, another cyclist happens by. This time, it's a crowd favorite - the Costa Rican champion, Felipe Nystrom. He finishes in the rear of the pack and often gets pulled before the last lap, but he makes up for it with his golden personality and positive attitude. He's better than 95% of everyone who does CX worldwide, though. We identify a lot with him because his goal is not to get lapped - just like us.

We first saw and met Felipe while at the World's in Arkansas. Since we have been in Belgium, we've already had a few encounters with him as he attends almost all of the races. At the last race, he was one of the few pros who could actually make it up the wicked steep, long hill without dismounting. The whole crowd were encouraging him each lap. Everyone chanted his name as he struggled up the incline. Each time he reached the top, a hearty cheer always erupted. On his third lap, though, he rolled a tire in the corner below the hill, ending his race.

"Felipe!"
He sees us and pedals over. "What happened last race? You were doing so well?" I ask.

He furrows his brow and goes on to explain how he rolled a tire and, since he's self supporting, he didn't have a spare wheel and no one would loan him one. And, he explains, he may need to leave early because he's working remotely and his work may require him to be home. We express our heartfelt remorse over his situation, talk for a little while longer and then part.

On the way to the entrance we discuss his situation - how he's such a great guy, how any wheel manufacturer would kill to get the coverage he gets - since he is often featured on Eurosport and GCN as the Costa Rican [Champion](#). We decide that, maybe, we might be able to help out.

After all, we're big fans.

=====

We arrive at the entrance, scan in our phone tickets, and walk through.

First things first, now. We need to buy our food and beverage debit cards. At most races, you can't buy anything without the vendor's debit card. We usually load ours with about fifty Euros. That's enough for a few beers and at least one load of Frites covered in the ubiquitous Pauwels sauce for each of us. Yummm!

By now the party tent is already going full blast, pumping out techno beats and plastic cups full of Jupiler beer. It's a full-sized event tent with a wooden dance floor and a DJ "spinning" everything from the latest dance music to traditional Belgian sing-a-longs. Beer is everywhere (this IS Belgium). The party goes until at least 9pm - long after the actual racing is finished.

We check the course map and explore the venue, finally deciding to plant ourselves on the big hill, next to the giant, yellow, inflatable duck. We pick that spot because it's on the toughest hill and also right near one of the TV cameras. We have learned that to get on the TV, so our friends can see us, we need to be directly in the line of sight of the cameras. Better, we should pick a spot next to a big sponsor's ad. Even better, stand next to some cute kids. Cameras love cute kids.

=====

About the race course(s). I will never, ever knock one of our local CX venues again. I have been known to accuse the organizers of creating a course better suited for mountain bikes than CX bikes.

But the truth is, those courses - compared to the ones in Belgium - are wimpy. The Belgian courses are a million times harder. It's impossible to see that truth on TV. The 2D camera image flattens the terrain and conceals how steep and technical these courses really are. The hills are wicked, the off cambers are impossible and everything else, even the "easy" places, are ALL harder than anything we race on.

=====

There's some time between the end of the last race and the beginning of the next and the elite racers are taking a few final warm-up laps.

We watch Pidcock try to dial in one section over and over and fail. We see Wout fall down the off camber and then sit back to watch how the other riders deal with it. And there is Ceylin del Carmen Alvarado standing at a tricky corner checking out the best line. She's carrying on a conversation with the crowd and, it turns out, with my wife who is asking for a selfie. Alvarado explains she's warming up but if we come by later, she'll pose for us. She gladly does so later.

We're big fans.

=====

Of course, the racing is spectacular. The beer is great and the frites are yummy. We get on TV. We know that because our friends text us so. Also, in our apartment back in Antwerp, we cast Eurosport and watch the race again. That way, we can watch the race from start to finish and see what happened on the other parts of the course not visible from our viewing location. We are also checking if our giant foam finger waving and duck hats are caught by the TV cameras so we can spy ourselves in the crowd.



Wout van Aert and Mathieu van der Poel. Belgian Cyclocross. Photo courtesy Don Haywood

What a great time! It's hard to imagine it getting any better.

We are walking back after the race, cutting across the course, making a bee-line for the exit through an open field with hardly anyone else around. Kathleen is about five meters ahead of Peter and me. She wants to be sure that we get on the earlier train. Peter is just behind me. I lift the course tape up for him, he passes under it, turns around, grabs the tape and lifts it up for the next person.

"Here you go, Fem," he offers reflexively.

"Thanks" and Fem van Empel pushes her bike under the tape and walks past him and me.

(Peter later explained that when he saw Fem the words just came out automatically - much to his own surprise).

She's covered head to toe in all black, warm stuff with just a small Jumbo-Visma logo on it. Her bike is a snazzy one, though. I do not realize it is her until Peter taps me on the shoulder and tells me.

"That's Fem!"
She walking with another lady and carrying on a conversation.

My wife, Kathleen, is a little impatient and looks back to see what's taking us so long.

We don't want to attract the attention of other people and, besides, it would be pretty rude to shout out, "Look! It's Fem."

So, we start gesturing hard and mouthing "Fem."

Kathleen, at first, has a very quizical look on her face. Suddenly, though, she recognizes Fem and waits for her. Naturally, she asks her for a selfie. Naturally, Fem agrees.

We all line up and the selfie is taken. Fem hops onto her bike and pedals off.

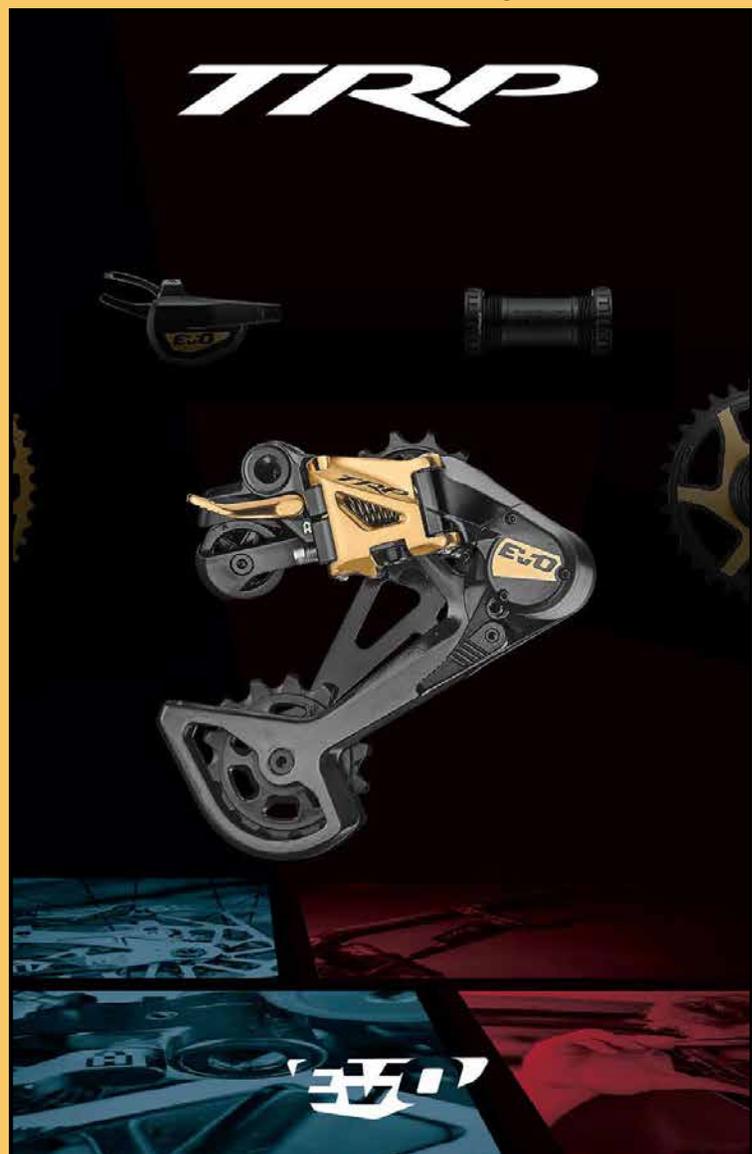
We walk back towards the exit. Kathleen is talking to the lady who was with Fem.

At some point Kathleen asks, "So - what's your association with Fem?"

The lady pauses for a second and then explains, "Well, I'm her mom." !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We've already booked to Belgium for next winter's kerstperiode.

We're big fans.



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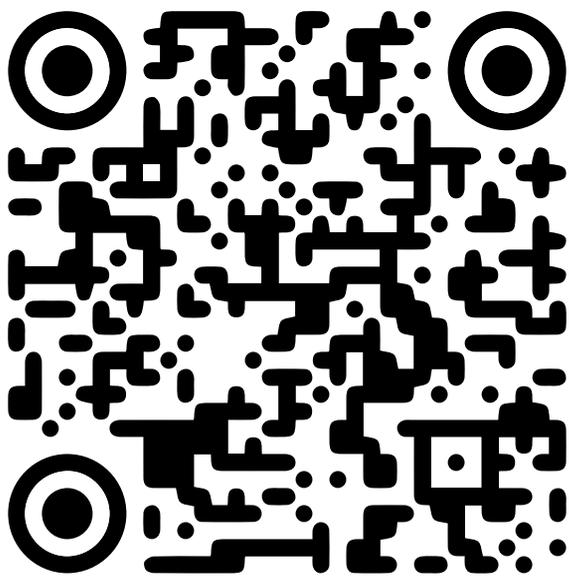


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COACHING

The Unexpected Perks of Off-Season Weight Gain for Cyclists and Triathletes



Embracing a small increase in weight, especially in muscle, can be surprisingly beneficial. Photo courtesy Heather Casey

By Heather Casey

In cycling and triathlon, the off-season is traditionally viewed as a period for athletes to rest and rejuvenate. However, embracing a small increase in weight, especially in muscle, can be surprisingly beneficial. This guide delves deeper into how this approach, though counter-intuitive, can significantly enhance recovery and boost overall athletic performance.

The Strength and Power Edge: Embracing Muscle Gain

Elevating Performance:

During the off-season, cyclists and triathletes can leverage muscle gain to enhance strength and power significantly. This is not just about

adding bulk but building functional muscle that translates directly into improved endurance and speed during races. Such gains can be particularly noticeable in disciplines requiring bursts of power or sustained strength.

Shield Against Injuries:

By increasing muscle mass, athletes provide greater stability to their joints, significantly reducing the risk of common injuries. This is crucial, as injuries can be setbacks in an athlete's career. Stronger muscles also ensure better alignment and posture, critical during long, grueling races where fatigue can lead to poor form.

The Psychological Upside: Easing Off Rigid Routines

Mental Unwinding:

A slight increase in weight during the off-season can offer a mental break from the often rigorous and demanding diet and training regimens. This mental break is essential for preventing burnout, ensuring athletes return to the new season with renewed vigor and a fresh perspective.

Healing the Body:

The off-season is an ideal time for the body to heal from the continuous strain of intense training and competitions. Gaining a bit of weight, particularly muscle, provides the body with extra recovery resources. This healing process is not just physical; it also includes mental and emotional recuperation.

Navigating Diet and Training with Flexibility

Dietary Freedom:

The off-season allows athletes to enjoy more freedom in their diet. This offers a psychological break and an opportunity to explore different nutritional strategies that might be beneficial during the competitive season. A varied diet can also replenish depleted stores of essential vitamins and minerals.

Prioritizing Strength Training:

With the reduced pressure of upcoming races, athletes can focus more on strength training, often relegated to a secondary role during the season. This shift in focus allows for a more holistic approach to fitness, addressing areas often neglected during race-focused training.

Laying the Groundwork for the Season Ahead

Smooth Transitioning:

Muscle gain in the off-season is

SPEAKING OF SPOKES

Park to Park Pedal Century Ride: A Post LOTOJA Event

By David Ward

October 7 of this year found me in Nevada's Kershaw-Ryan State Park, just outside of Caliente, Nevada, trying not to shiver in the 40°F temperature and awaiting the start of the Park to Park Pedal Century Ride. I chose this event as motivation to maintain my LOTOJA fitness for a while. This is always my best cycling fitness of the year, even though I now ride the annual LOTOJA as part of a relay rather than solo. This year I hoped to avoid an immediate dive into my post-LOTOJA/winter cycling fitness slump.

I really enjoyed this ride. The format was appealing, taking in four Nevada State Parks. Beginning in the Kershaw-Ryan State Park, the course takes you to Cathedral Gorge State Park, through Echo Canyon State Park, to the turnaround point at Spring Valley State Park and then finishes back in Kershaw-Ryan. And we had ideal weather: Clear blue skies with temperatures ranging from the aforesaid 40°F to mid 80'sF, but never uncomfortably warm, and very little wind.

Though advertised at a total ascent of 5600', my computer logged "only" 4500'. Though short of what was advertised, that is still a lot of elevation gain for most of us amateur, recreational riders. Additionally, the climbing is not harsh. There is a long, 11-mile climb early on from Cathedral Gorge to Pioche in which you gain about 1600', another good climb after the lunch break at Spring Valley about two miles long and 600', and the final climb back to Pioche and a little beyond of 500'. And even these climbs are not extremely daunting, the steepest sections being around 6%. The rest of the climbing was gradual uphill and small rollers, mostly between Echo Canyon Dam and Spring Valley. Frankly, it was a perfect post-LOTOJA ride for me, challenging in both distance and ascent, but not too overwhelming.

It is also a beautiful ride. Make no mistake, this is desert, and you are pedaling alongside a lot of sagebrush surrounded by other desert

a strategic step for smoothly transitioning into pre-season training. This added muscle strength can be fine-tuned and integrated into race-specific skills as the competitive season approaches.

Adapting to Muscle Mass:

The body's adaptation to additional muscle during the off-season can be a significant advantage. As athletes return to a race-focused training regimen, this extra muscle can enhance endurance and power, offering a competitive edge.



A rider on the road to Pioche, NV in the Park to Park Pedal Century Ride 2023. Photo by David Ward

flora including an abundance of a yellow-flowering plant that covered the landscape. (I have tried to identify this plant, but with no success.) Born and raised in rural southeastern Idaho, this landscape felt like home to me, a landscape that I love. And the ride alongside the lush Meadow Valley Wash with its rising canyon walls from Echo Canyon Dam to Spring Valley is simply desert gorgeous.

But my loudest raves for this event are for the organization and support. Preceding the ride is a rider's breakfast of muffins, fruit and/or oatmeal. There are five food stops along the way, the stop at Pioche technically being two stops, first on the way out and a very welcome stop on the way back. Each stop is well-stocked with treats, fruit, colas and other canned soft drinks, energy drinks and plenty of water. The lunch stop at Spring Valley is a true lunch stop, serving up sandwiches made with your choice of meat and cheese, and self-serve condiments, as well as chips, fruit, and other snacks. The only thing I would have appreciated but which they didn't have was pickle juice.

At the end of the ride, we were served up a Dutch oven dinner I would have been willing to pay good money for. But I didn't have to: It was included in my registration fee.

Concluding Insights

Incorporating a modest weight gain, particularly in the form of muscle, during the off-season can be a strategic move for cyclists and triathletes. This approach not only aids in comprehensive recovery and injury prevention but also sets the stage for enhanced performance in the upcoming season. Maintaining a balance is essential; the focus should be on controlled muscle gain, complemented by a nutritious and varied diet, alongside targeted strength training.

Also, and a very much appreciated perk, at both Cathedral Gorge and Pioche stops you can take off extra clothing. It is put in a bag with your number on it and you pick it up at the finish. This solves a common early morning dilemma for me: Do I dress so as not to be too cold (especially on an early, very cool fall morning) and later find someplace to stuff the extra gear, or do I suffer in the cold for a goodly time before I finally warm up? Problem solved.

This ride has a lot of support staff. Local police and park rangers patrol the roads keeping an eye out for, protecting, and helping riders. There are plenty of folks staffing the food stops, and they are cheerful and helpful, making the stops enjoyable as well as refreshing.

And finally, and one of my pet peeves, they didn't give out water bottles. Maybe others like getting these, but I have way too many cheap plastic water bottles. I have taken to refusing them at registration. Instead, with the registration came a quality long-sleeved t-shirt instead of a cheap short-sleeved one of which again I have way too many.

So, I give this ride an excellent rating and high recommendation. It met and, indeed, exceeded all my expectations, both for the ride itself, its organization and support, and what I was looking for at this time of year. A great post-LOTOJA ride.

Heather Casey and her husband Pat own Peak State Fit Performance Center located in Salt Lake City, UT where they specialize in bike fitting, coaching, and nutrition services. Heather is a 5 X Ironman finisher including Ironman World Championships in Hawaii. Heather's professional experience includes NSCA, Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, Precision Nutrition Master level sports nutritionist, 500-hour Yoga Instructor, PNOE Metabolic Health Specialist.

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BIKE FIT

Why Winter is a Great Time for a Bike Fit



Pat Casey performing a bike fit for Melisa Rollins. Photo by Heather Casey

By Pat Casey

In case you hadn't noticed, winter is upon us. For those of us in higher elevations, normal training roads are probably becoming questionable and wet. The days are getting shorter, and many of us are transitioning to indoor riding until that long-awaited desert training camp. Maybe you're adding some strength work to pre-

pare for ski season or to lay the foundation for long winter base miles. As you migrate inside, the nature of your riding will change from the dynamic, terrain-driven variability that the road presents, and riding becomes a bit more static and stationary. It's not uncommon for riders begin to notice new sensations when they transition to being indoors.

As you're making changes to your training, and you're allowing

space to adapt to new stimuli, you might consider getting your bike fitted, or re-fitted this winter. Let's discuss why getting your bike fitted this winter is a smart move and how it's all about you – your body, your style, and even those annoying previous injuries that might affect your movement and patterns more than you realize.

1. What does it mean to be 'optimized'?

a. There is not a template or a formula for a great bike fit. Each bike fit session should consider an athlete's goals, history, and most importantly, the quality of their movement, and current limitations.

b. Optimized for what? Comfort? Aerodynamics? Endurance? Are you racing IRONMAN, or local Sprint and Olympic distance races? Are you racing hill climbs, or criteriums? Do you want to race gravel, or just explore on gravel roads with your friends? These are questions that we hope to answer as you and your fitter embark on the road towards a more appropriate position for you, your body, and your goals.

2. Gearing Up for the 2024 Season

a. Improve your capacity by helping you produce more watts without placing more demand on your metabolic or musculoskeletal system.

b. Improve your technique through improved biomechanical accuracy. This allows you to home in on the purpose of each session, especially as you target different cadence ranges in your training throughout the winter.

3. Why Winter? Why Not!

a. Time spent on indoor training can feel more arduous than it needs to be if you're not comfortable. Getting your fit dialed in over the winter will make training feel much more attainable.

b. Adjust and Adapt: Most fitters encourage a follow up as part of your bike fit service. After a month or two of riding a new position, you might want some tweaks to the position. They expect to see you again and especially appreciate adherence to the movements suggested to address your limitations identified in the first session.

4. Long-Term Riding Comfort

a. Along with your dynamic measurements like knee extension, reach, and knee tracking, the major contact points take precedent in the fitting process as well. This means saddle selection, insoles, and possible shims to accommodate anatomical characteristics, and handlebar interfaces like how your hoods are positioned, how the tape is layered around your shifter, and where your hands like to land while riding.

b. Posture, balance, and stability are three overarching themes to fit, and not only will you leave with a renewed sense of what this means for you, but adhering to a consistent routine of exercises and movement will help you adapt to any changes in position, as well as manage issues you might be experiencing.

5. Fitting Tools and Applied Technology - No "Eyeballing"

a. There are several reasons why

fitters leverage technology in a fitting process. Mainly, this is meant to help objectify measurements, and collect pre-fit data to help guide the process. Measurable data points in knee tracking, hip stability, and pelvic rotation are not visible, even to the most trained eyes. So, utilizing data to analyze details is crucial to a great bike fit.

b. Bike fitting should be driven by objective measurements, an honest movement screening, and subjective feedback to help drive the process forward. Rather than a "one size fits all" philosophy which might try to force you into a riding position that might look good in a vacuum but is not conducive to your goals or for long term growth as a cyclist or triathlete.

Ready to Get Dialed In?

Winter doesn't have to be a downtime for your cycling. Consider getting a fit if you're looking for some marginal gains this off season, and especially if you're looking to manage aches and pains while riding and hoping to enjoy riding even more when Spring rolls around!

Pat Casey is a USA Triathlon Level 2 Coach, CSCS, Team USA Age Group Coach, an author for Cycling West, and is co-owner of Peak State Fit in Salt Lake City, Utah. Pat's background as a Cat 1 cyclist sparked his consulting and coaching career. He uses his skills and knowledge to improve people's quality of life and realize their athletic potential through endurance sports. Find them at peakstatefit.com

Study: Cycling Benefits the Common Good

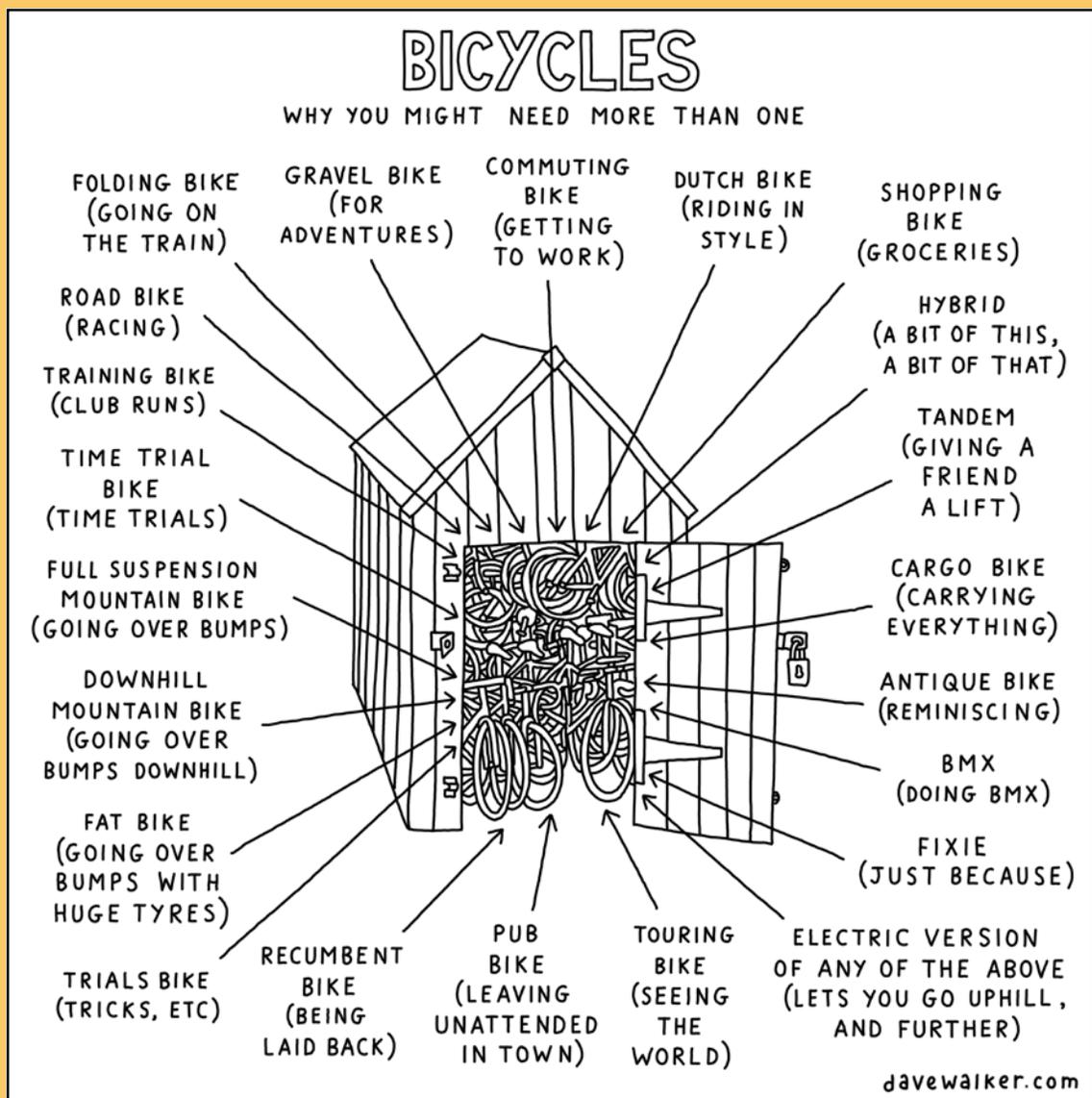
A new study by Schuster, H., Van der Noll., & Rohmann, A. in Hagen, Germany examines how cycling plays a role in the orientation toward the common good. Orientation toward the common good describes how people feel responsible and willing to help others, as well as abide by basic rules and participate in social and political life (Schiefer and Van der Noll., 2016). In this particular study scientists hypothesize "that in an urban context, people who use bicycles experience a greater orientation towards the common good than those who use cars." To test this hypothesis a sample of 410 participants in Germany surveyed from 2014-2019 were asked how often they biked vs drove, as well as questions that rated their political and social participation, local helpfulness, and neighborhood solidarity.

Cycling as opposed to all other variables recorded in the study — home-ownership, personal income, education, and sex — was the only variable that showed a positive effect and was significant in all four models tested. The authors conclude, cycling rather than driving is associated with participatory activities, helpfulness, and solidarity in the neighborhood. Cars reduce an individual's direct contact with their environment. The direct experience that cycling has to the neighborhood environment leads to a stronger emotional bond within society. This emotional attachment of people to their neighborhood is considered a mediator for civic activities (Stefaniak et al., 2017). And thus, cycling gives rise to connectivity and orientation toward the common good in cities.

-Savannah Cottam

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Jerks Bike Shop

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(801) 261-0736
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Level Nine Sports

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801-973-7350
levelninesports.com

REI (Recreational Equipment Inc.)

3285 E. 3300 S.
Salt Lake City, UT 84109
(801) 486-2100
rei.com/saltlakecity

Trek Bicycle

247 S. 500 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84102
(801) 746-8366
trekbikes.com/us/en_US/retail/salt_lake_city_downtown

Salt Lake Ebikes

1035 S. 700 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84105
(801) 997-0002
saltlakeebikes.com

Saturday Cycles

230 S 500 W.
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
(801) 935-4605
saturdaycycles.com

SLC Bicycle Collective

2312 S. West Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
(801) 328-BIKE
slcbikecollective.org

Level Nine Sports

2927 E 3300 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84109
801-466-9880
levelninesports.com

Sports Den

1350 South Foothill Dr
(Foothill Village)
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SportsDen.com

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Driggs, ID 83422
208-354-7669
ridethetons.com

Peaked Sports
70 E Little Ave,
Driggs, ID 83422
208-354-2354
peakedsports.com

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Bill's Bike and Run**
930 Pier View Dr
Idaho Falls, ID
208-522-3341
billsbikeandrun.com

Dave's Bike Shop
367 W Broadway St
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
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Idaho Mountain Trading
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Jackson, WY 83001
307-200-6144
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Jackson, Wyoming 83001
307-690-4715
tetonbike.com

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974 West Broadway
Jackson, WY 83001-9475
307-284-1938
REI.com/stores/Jackson-Hole

Teton Village Sports
3285 W Village Drive
Teton Village, WY 83025
tetonvillagesports.com

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307-733-5228
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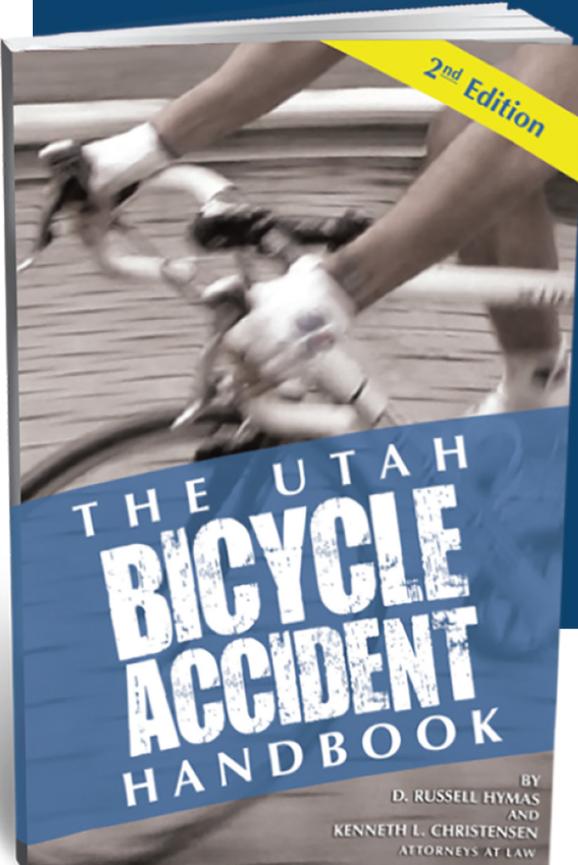
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March 1-3, 2024 — BetterRide MTB Camp. San Mateo/San Jose, CA. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Gene and Ise Hamilton, 970-261-1869, 435 260 7696, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

March 8-10, 2024 — Sedona Mountain Bike Festival. Sedona, AZ. Held in the heart of Sedona next to trails, bike park, and downtown. Main Expo/Festival area at the beautiful Posse Grounds Park; Bike Demos, Shuttled Rides, a Beer Garden, great Bands, and endless singletrack., Sedona MTB Festival, 928-282-1106, info@sedonamtbfestival.com, sedonamtbfestival.com

March 8-10, 2024 — BetterRide MTB Camp. Sedona, AZ. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

March 15-17, 2024 — BetterRide MTB Camp. Moab, UT. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

March 22-24, 2024 — BetterRide Enduro MTB Camp. Moab, UT. Multiple camps, see the website for dates. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

April 5-7, 2024 — Hurricane Mountain Bike Festival. Hurricane, UT. Ride with us on world-class singletrack at the foothills of Zion National Park. Join us for 3 days of bike festival shenanigans, awesome demo bike & gear, Expo with great food and shopping, bike shuttles, skills clinics, Zion Brewery beer garden, dinner, prizes and more!, DJ Morissette, 435-635-5455, humbfestival@gmail.com, hurricanemtbfestival.com, qtesports.com

April 5-7, 2024 — BetterRide Women's MTB Camp. Moab, UT. BetterRide's Women-Only Mountain Bike Camp, Clinic and Skills Coaching covers the same core skills as the co-ed camps in a supportive, non-judgemental atmosphere. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

April 12-14, 2024 — BetterRide MTB Camp. Moab, UT. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

April 26-28, 2024 — MECCA MTB Festival. Green River, UT, 38th Annual. Held at the Buckhorn RV Resort, Huntington, Utah. Registration begins Friday at 1:00 p.m. followed by a warm up ride, refreshments, games and a prize drawing. Saturday is full of all-day guided rides, ranging from beginner to advanced followed by a yummy dinner, games and more fun. Finish up on Sunday with a guided (or on your own) scenic ride. Family friendly., Terri Bennett, 435-749-0755, 435-749-2386, meccabike01@gmail.com, biketeheswell.org

April 26-28, 2024 — BetterRide Women's MTB Camp. Fruita, CO. BetterRide's Women-Only Mountain Bike Camp, Clinic and Skills

BICYCLE TRIVIA

Fall European Classics Trivia

By Dave Campbell

The curtain was brought down on the Professional Road racing season in early October. The two final major races were Il Lombardia and Paris-Tours ... and they could not be more different! Lombardia, which loops along Lake Como is the only truly mountainous Classic with over 4400 meters of climbing. Paris-Tours, one of the oldest Classics dating back to 1896, is a very flat race that caters to the sprinters and now includes some gravel sectors. Both events this year had historic results that beg some questions!

Q1. On October 8, American Riley Sheehan, at just 23 years old, became the first ever American to win the Paris-Tours classic! Prior to Riley's result, what was the best American finish in "The Sprinter's Classic"?

Q2. Riley Sheehan's father Clark was an American pro cyclist from 1990-2002, but his European racing was limited. What was his best result in international competition?

Q3. What is the best result by an American in Il Lombardia (previ-



Costante Girardengo, seen here in 1921, was the first man to win the Giro di Lombardia 3 times. Agence de presse Meurisse - Bibliothèque nationale de France. Public Domain

Q4. By winning Il Lombardia for the third consecutive year, Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, joined an exclusive list that includes Sean Kelly, Gino Bartali, and Costante Girardengo. However, the 25-year-old still has a way to go for the all-time record. Who holds that record and how many "races of the falling leaves" did he win?

Q5. Pogacar also completed an extremely rare double by winning the cobbled Tour of Flanders in Belgium in April and the mountainous Lombardia in Italy in October. Very few riders today even ride both of these vastly different events. Had anyone prior to Pogi, achieved this double?

See the answers on page 21

Dave Campbell was born and raised in Lander, Wyoming and now resides in Bend, Oregon. A retired High School Science and Health teacher, Dave won four Wyoming state cycling championships before moving to Oregon to attend the U of O in Eugene. While there, Dave was a collegiate All American and went on to win six Oregon State Cycling Championships as well as a Masters National Road Title on the Tandem. He started writing Trivia in 1992 for Oregon Cycling News and continued the column with the Northwest Bicycle Paper. Dave also writes cycling history at "Clips_and_Straps" on Instagram and announces at cycling events throughout Oregon.

Coaching covers the same core skills as the co-ed camps in a supportive, non-judgemental atmosphere. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

May 3-5, 2024 — BetterRide MTB Camp. Moab, UT. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

May 7-October 5, 2024 — MTB The Maze Mountain Bike Tour. Moab, UT. Deep in the heart of Canyonlands National Park. 4 trips to choose from, 4 days 3 nights. Small Groups of 7 or less. Outfitted by professional guides. Camp at the Maze Overlook and hike down into the Maze while viewing vertical uplifts and plunging gorges., Karen Johnson, 800-624-6323, 801-266-2087, karen.holidayriver@gmail.com, Natalie Osborn, natalie.holidayriver@gmail.com, bikeraft.com

May 17-19, 2024 — BetterRide MTB Trail Domination MTB Skills Course/Camp/Clinic. Moab, UT. Take your skills to the next level by investing in yourself! Learn the skills to greatly improve your riding and drills to master those skills. Increase your confidence, skill and efficiency with the most experienced (20 years), effective and sought after coach in the sport, Gene Hamilton!, Ise Harms, admin@betterride.net, betterride.net

Utah Weekly MTB Race Series

April 10-July 31, 2024 — Weekly Race Series. WRS, Sundance, Wasatch County, UT. Wednesday nights, April-August. Venue alternates between Wasatch County sites and Sundance, 5:30 pm Racer check-in and 6:30 pm prompt start time. Pros/Experts 1hr race time, Sports 50mins, Beginners 30-40mins., WRS Races, 435.565.4602(Wasatch), 801-223-4849 (Sundance), races@weeklyrace-series.com, weeklyraceseries.com

Regional Weekly MTB Race Series

May 29-July 17, 2024 — Sturgis Music On Main Mountain Bike Series. Sturgis, SD. Experience the warm summer evenings out on the local bike trails by participating in the 7th Annual Music on Main Mountain Bike Race Series each Wednesday evening starting at 6:00 PM at Harley Davidson Rally Point, no entry fee, Joe Etzkorn, 605-720-4046, xtremedotkotabicycles@outlook.com, officialsturgisvents.com/mountain-bike-race-series

Utah Mountain Bike Racing

March 16, 2024 — True GRIT Epic Bike Race. National Ultra Endurance Mountain Bike

Series (NUE) 100 and Marathon SE, Santa Clara, UT. Epic ultra-endurance mountain bike race with 100 and 50 mile options over tough and technical terrain. Course is a 50 mile loop. Finish with live music, vendors and beer garden., Cimarron Chacon, info@groraces.com, groraces.com

March 23, 2024 — Rampage in Green Valley ICUP. Intermountain Cup, St. George, UT. The XC opener on the traditional Desert Rampage course, with approximately 6 mile lap at Green Valley., Margaret Gibson, 435-229-6251, margaret@redrockbicycle.com, intermountaincup.com, ridesouthernutah.com

April 6, 2024 — 6 Hours of Frog Hollow. Frog Hollow Endurance Series, Virgin, UT. 13 mile long course in the UT desert combines sweet single track, with some technical sections, and great climbs. Great introduction to endurance racing or a great trainer for bigger races. Categories from solo to 3 person, including single speed categories., Cimarron Chacon, info@groraces.com, groraces.com

April 6-8, 2024 — Moab Rocks. Moab, UT. Embark on a thrilling 3-day MTB journey through the rugged beauty of Moab. Epic trails, breathtaking views, unforgettable adventure, Kevin McDonald, 866-373-3376, info@transrockies.com, transrockies.com

April 20, 2024 — The Cactus Hugger ICUP. Intermountain Cup, St. George, UT. The race will utilize much of the well renowned Jern Trail, which is a rider favorite in Utah for its fast, flowing nature, as well as sections of the Cryptobiotic and Hurricane Cliffs trails all linked together with some sections of BLM dirt road for an 8.5 mile lap of rippling terrain., Margaret Gibson, 435-229-6251, margaret@redrockbicycle.com, intermountaincup.com, ridesouthernutah.com

May 18, 2024 — Three Peaks Classic ICUP. Intermountain Cup, Cedar City, UT. Utah State Championship. Endurance XC, 25-50 miles. 1700' per lap. 7.8 miles and 500 feet of elevation per lap on dirt roads and the fun singletrack that laces its way through Juniper and Pinon trees, Margaret Gibson, 435-229-6251, margaret@redrockbicycle.com, intermountaincup.com, ridesouthernutah.com

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 2023 EVENT CALENDARS!
- BIKE ADVOCACY
- BIKE TOURING ICELAND
- CYCLING AND AGING PART 2
- GIRO CYCLING TRIVIA

- SEA OTTER TAKEAWAYS
- LA BEACH TO BLANCHARD
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January 13, 2024 — McDowell Meltdown. McDowell, AZ. Challenging XC race with pump tracks for everyone to enjoy. Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, mbaa.net

January 19-21, 2024 — Southwest Regional Gravity Championships, DH Enduro, and D5. DVO Winter Gravity Series at Bootleg Canyon, Boulder City, NV. Open practice on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Trails hand built by the late Brent Thompson, gnarly on the top half and fast open ridge tops for the 2nd half. Free on-site camping with bathroom/shower facility. Cash purse for the pros and prizes from our sponsors for all amateur categories and age brackets for placing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd., Downhill Mike, 518-524-9805, info@downhillmike.com, bootlegcanyonracing.com

January 27, 2024 — Estrella Hedgehog Hustle. Goodyear, AZ. Cross Country Race at Estrella Mountain Regional Park with a scenic venue for both spectators and racers. Remember sealant and tubes! Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, mbaa.net

January 28, 2024 — McDowell Circuit Race. Fort McDowell, AZ. Carlos O'Briens Racing / Racing@ProConCyclingAZ.com, azcycling.org/event/mmc, proconcyclingaz.com

February 3, 2024 — DVO Mojave Meltdown XC MTB Race. Boulder City, NV. Cross Country race, Downhill Mike, 518-524-9805, info@downhillmike.com, bootlegcanyonracing.com

February 10, 2024 — White Tank Whirlwind. Waddell, AZ. White Tank Regional Park is a fun course, mixed with a smidge of technical riding. Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, mbaa.net

February 10, 2024 — Rock Cobbler. Bakersfield, CA. The World Famous Bianchi Rock Cobbler is a stupidly hard, mostly dirt ride, bordering on a race. There are two routes offered: the Rock Cobbler which is between 80-90 miles and the Pebbler which is between 40-50 miles., Sam Ames, sam@sambarn.com, rockcobbler.com

February 10, 2024 — Tennessee Pass Night Jam. Leadville, CO. Cloud City Wheelers, cloudcitywheelers@gmail.com, cloudcitywheelers.com

February 16-18, 2024 — 24 Hours in the Old Pueblo. Tucson, AZ. Riding sinuous single track in the Sonoran Desert, the 24 Hours in the Old Pueblo Presented by Tucson Medical Center is one of the largest 24 hour events in the world. Come join the event the mountain bike community has been raving about for years! Epic Rides, 520-623-1584, info@epicrides.com, epicrides.com

February 16-18, 2024 — DVO Mob n Mojave DH, DS, and Enduro. DVO Winter Gravity Series at Bootleg Canyon, Boulder City, NV. Open practice on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Trails hand built by the late Brent Thompson, gnarly on the top half and fast open ridge tops for the 2nd half. Free on-site camping with bathroom/shower facility. Cash purse for the pros and prizes from our sponsors for all amateur categories and age brackets for placing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd., Downhill Mike, 518-524-9805, info@downhillmike.com, bootlegcanyonracing.com

March 1-3, 2024 — DVO Reaper Madness DH ~ D5 ~ Enduro. DVO Winter Gravity Series at Bootleg Canyon, Boulder City, NV. Open practice on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Trails hand built by the late Brent Thompson, gnarly on the top half and fast open ridge tops for the 2nd half. Free on-site camping with bathroom/shower facility. Cash purse for the pros and prizes from our sponsors for all amateur categories and age brackets for placing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd., Downhill Mike, 518-524-9805, info@downhillmike.com, bootlegcanyonracing.com

March 2, 2024 — Mineral Belt Mayhem. Leadville Winter Mtn Bike Series, Leadville, CO. Cloud City Wheelers, cloudcitywheelers@gmail.com, cloudcitywheelers.com

March 8-10, 2024 — Cactus Cup. Fountain Hills, AZ. Arizona's Original Mountain Bike Stage race, its history dates back to 1991. This is 3 days of racing to crack open the season featuring a Short Track, XC and Enduro event. To chase the Cactus Cup and capture the overall title, all 3 days of the stage race must be completed. STX, Enduro, XC40, kids race. Held at McDowell Mountain Regional Park, Sage, sage@thecactuscup.com, thecactuscup.com

March 16, 2024 — Echo Red 2 Red XC MTB Race. Pendleton, OR. 12, 24, 32 miles, sponsored by Echo Bike & Board, Stephanie Myers, 541-289-2444, 541-376-8500, ehored2redxc@hotmail.com, Brian CimminyOHI, 541-371-3303, 509-374-8424, scottscycleand-sports@gmail.com, ehored2red.com

March 16, 2024 — Fatty Patty 50K. Leadville Winter Mtn Bike Series, Leadville, CO. Cloud

City Wheelers, cloudcitywheelers@gmail.com, cloudcitywheelers.com

March 16, 2024 — DVO Mojave Meltdown XC MTB Race. Boulder City, NV. Cross Country race, Downhill Mike, 518-524-9805, info@downhillmike.com, bootlegcanyonracing.com

March 23, 2024 — Havasu Havoc. Lake Havasu, AZ. XC race with awesome views, a fun trail and good local beer., Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, mbaa.net

March 23-24, 2024 — Bosque MTB Stage Race. New Mexico Off Road Series, Las Lunas, NM, Jan Bear, 505-670-4665, janbear@gmail.com, Hawke Morgan, 505-259-8885, hawke@bcdracing.com, bcdracing.com, nmoris.org

March 30, 2024 — Roost the Ridges Enduro. Farmington, NM. Shred some of Farmington's 3 finest ridgelines in timed top to bottom fashion. These three stages will be fast, smooth, and follow 3 different ridgelines to the bottom. All competitors will pick up their number and park at Lions Wilderness Park. Then you will follow a marked course 8 miles (not timed) to the first stage of the race. This is where the racing begins. 2 stages will have the same finish line while all of them have different starting points. Please see the map and trail fork link provided to get a better idea of the courses. Neil Hannum, 970-759-2126, aztecadventures01@gmail.com, William Farmer, 505-402-3959, glarmer360@gmail.com, aztec-adventures.com

April 6, 2024 — Tommy Knocker 10. Silver City, NM. 10 hour race, Seth Bush, 505-554-0059, ElCapitan@ZiaRides.com, ziarides.com

April 6, 2024 — East Side Epic. Leadville Winter Mtn Bike Series, Leadville, CO. Cloud City Wheelers, cloudcitywheelers@gmail.com, cloudcitywheelers.com

April 12-14, 2024 — NW Cup Downhill Series (Dry Hill #1). Northwest Cup Downhill Series, Port Angeles, WA. Downhill race. Held at Silver Mountain Bike Park. Friday will be open practice. Saturday will be split practice by category. Pro/JuniorX seeding Saturday evening. Sunday racing all categories. Scott Tucker, 360-797-4288, scott@nwcup.com, nwcup.com

April 13, 2024 — Prescott Punisher. Prescott, AZ. Prescott is a great place for mountain biking. The Whiskey 50 will be 2 weeks later so consider racing and staying for a pre-ride the following day., Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, mbaa.net

April 13, 2024 — DVO Mojave Meltdown XC MTB Race. Boulder City, NV. Cross Country race, Downhill Mike, 518-524-9805, info@downhillmike.com, bootlegcanyonracing.com

April 26-28, 2024 — Whiskey Off-Road. Epic Rides Off-Road Series, Prescott, AZ. Starting on Prescott's historical (and lively) Whiskey Row and climbing into the beautifully distracting views of Prescott National Forest, riders will connect some of the area's most exhilarating (and challenging) pieces of singletrack, double track, gravel roads and the occasional paved segment., Epic Rides, 520-623-1584, info@epicrides.com, Dave Castro, dcastro@epicrides.com, epicrides.com

April 27, 2024 — Coyote Classic. Kobby Tire Series, Avimor, ID. 15th annual - This is real mountain bike racing, not for the weak. High speed rolling double and single track with a ton of climbing. Tight, technical sagebrush single track, water crossings, quick steep drops, nasty little granny gear climbs., Alex Phipps, 208-841-4120, alex01phipps@gmail.com, twistedaturleracing.com, brokenspokecycling.com

May 3-4, 2024 — 18 Hours of Fruits. Fruita, CO. One of the most beloved endurance events in Colorado with the famous midnight start. With a fast and fun single-track course located 10 minutes northwest of Fruita, Colorado, within the "posh environs" of Highline Lake State Park with its green grass and warm showers. This is a great race to kick off your riding season., George Gatsos, 970-858-7220, info@otefruita.com, 18hoursoffruita.com

May 4, 2024 — Flagstaff Frenzy. Flagstaff, AZ. The 2021 MBAA finals. Anthony Quintile, 928-779-5969, flagstaff@absolutebikes.net, Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, Denise Barron, 928-530-0868, mbaa.net, absolutebikes.net

May 4-5, 2024 — Big Mountain Enduro. Big Mountain Enduro Series, Mt. Nebo, AR. BME Stop #1: Mount Nebo State Park is a 1,750 ft mountain escape in the heart of the Arkansas River Valley and is part of the Monument Trails system., Robert Herber, robert@bigmountainenduro.com, bigmountainenduro.com

May 11, 2024 — Arizona State MTB Championships. Prescott, AZ. Arizona State MTB Championships (USAC Sanctioned) at Emmanuel Pines, Tim Racette, 480-442-4229, info@mbaa.net, mbaa.net

May 11, 2024 — Sarlacc Attack 50K. Fruita, CO. Ride the Edge! This is not just the name of the trail but a description of the Sarlacc Attack 50K course which combines the Edge and Sarlacc trails to make up an epic adventure. You'll ride on the edge of cliffs and your limits. World class singletrack, uphill grinds, and flowy descents are abundant on the Edge Loop. The Sarlacc trail section is some of the most fun singletrack on the course and riders will be there on the season's opening week. This race is part of the Adventure Fest at 18 Road, Reid Delman, 303-249-1112, reid.delman@geminiadventures.com, Kyla Claudell, 303-249-1112, kyla@geminiadventures.com, geminiadventures.com

May 11, 2024 — 12 Hours of Mesa Verde. Cortez, CO. Race course is 16.4 miles of Phil's World singletrack and stages from the Montezuma County Fairgrounds, 12 Hours of Mesa Verde, 970-394-1212, info@12hoursofmesaverde.com, 12hoursofmesaverde.com

May 11-12, 2024 — Big Mountain Enduro. Big Mountain Enduro Series, Ride Rock Creek, NC. BME Stop #2: Robert Herber, robert@bigmountainenduro.com, bigmountainenduro.com

May 17-19, 2024 — NW Cup Downhill Series (Dry Hill #2). Northwest Cup Downhill Series, Port Angeles, WA. Downhill race. Held at Silver Mountain Bike Park. Friday will be open practice. Saturday will be split practice by category. Pro/JuniorX seeding Saturday evening. Sunday racing all categories. Scott Tucker, 360-797-4288, scott@nwcup.com, nwcup.com

May 18, 2024 — Pocatello Pedal Fest. Pocatello, ID. Cross Country Races. Beginner, Sport, Expert & Open Classes (12, 17, 27 miles). Awards, prizes, raffle, music, food & fun., Alex Phipps, 208-841-4120, alex01phipps@gmail.com, pocatellopedalfest.com, twistedaturleracing.com

May 18, 2024 — Royal Gorge Six and Twelve Hour MTB Races. Canon City, CO. Six and Twelve Hour MTB Races, Seth Bush, 505-554-0059, ElCapitan@ZiaRides.com, ziarides.com

May 24-26, 2024 — Iron Horse Bicycle Classic. Durango, CO. 52nd Annual. Road Race and Tour from Durango to Silverton. Both are on Saturday 25th and are a 50 mile ride from Durango to Silverton. Take off with the train, traveling over two 10,000ft mountain passes enroute to the historical mining town of Silverton. Sunday 26th we have a Kids Race and Kids Village, Mountain Bike Race, Gravel Race and vendors., Ian Burnett, 970-259-4621, director@ironhorsebicycleclassic.com, ironhorsebicycleclassic.com

May 25-26, 2024 — The Original Growler. Gunnison, CO. The challenging singletrack is on some of the finest trails Colorado has to offer., Gunnison Trails, info@gunnisontrails.org, originalgrowler.com, gunnisontrails.org

Fat Biking

January 7, 2024 — Rat Bike Face... (a Fatbike Race). Glenwood Springs, CO. Calling all fat tire fanatics! Sunlight Mountain Resort is bringing back fat bike racing to Glenwood Springs for the 2021/22 season! We are working with our local fat bikers on the course right now! The course will incorporate everything you love about fat biking. Groomed trails, gorgeous aspen groves, heart pounding uphill's, white knuckle descents and fun... tons of fun! Stay tuned for course maps and such. We strongly encourage costumes and we will have a prize for the best one! We will also be holding a raffle at the end of the race so all participants have a chance to walk away with something sweet! Oh ya and for all you fast men and women out there we will be giving away lift tickets and custom schwag to all of the top finishers., Steven Novy, 970-309-2023, snovy@greenlinearchitects.com, rungsingup.com/race/CO/GlenwoodSprings/RatBikeFace

January 12-14, 2024 — JayP's Backyard Fat Bike Pursuit 200km or 200 mile. JayP's Backyard Series, Island Park/West Yellowstone, ID. 2 Distances- 60 km or 200 k. These endurance events take on an expedition feel and you will need to have outdoor winter camping skills. Jay Petervary, 307-413-2248, jaypetervary@gmail.com, fatpursuit.com

January 13, 2024 — Bristlecone Birkebeiner Winterfest. Ely, Nevada. Fat bike races, ski races, and more, Ward Mountain Recreation Area, North Trailhead, Ely Outdoors, elyoutdoors@doorenthusiasts@gmail.com, elyoutdoors-thusiasts.org/bristlecone-birkebeiner.htm

January 26-28, 2024 — Borealis Fat Bike World Championships. Leadville, CO. 9th annual Borealis Fat Bike World Championships. Join us for 3 days of races, demos, great beer, and excellent times! Cloud City Wheelers, cloudcitywheelers@gmail.com, Fat Bike Worlds, info@fatbikeworlds.org, fatbikeworlds.org

February 17, 2024 — Stanley Winterfest 40 Fat Bike Fondo. Stanley, ID. This challenging 30k or 40k event winds through exciting and varied terrain located within the beautiful Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Come for the event, stay for music fun and food. CJ Sherlock, 208-412-8343, 208-774-8343, whitecloudcad@gmail.com, stanleyfatbike.com

February 17, 2024 — Frisco Freeze Fat Bike Race. Frisco, CO. Join us for the 7th Annual Frisco Freeze Fat Bike Race at the Frisco Nordic Center. This is your one chance this winter to ride your fat bike on the Frisco Nordic trails for this 14k course., Linsey Joyce, 970-668-9133, linsey@townoffrisco.com, townoffrisco.com/event/nordic-center-events/frisco-freeze-winter-bike-race/

February 24, 2024 — Fat & Flurious Fat Bike Race. Center, ND. Kick off your cycling goals with the Fat & Flurious and celebrate the winter cycling season with us. New for 2024 we will be utilizing the cottonwood covered trails along the Missouri River at the Cross Ranch State Park, which means packed groomed trails., Melissa Marquardt, 701.221.9833, melissa@701cycleandspori.com

March 8-10, 2024 — The Drift Fat Bike Race and Ride. Pinedale, WY. Run, fat bike or ski 13, 28, or 100 miles. Held on a groomed trail in the Wind River Range in the area of the Continental Divide Trail, 100 Mile race starts March 10th. 13 and 28 mile on March 12th., Kerri Hull, 907-306-9806, kerri.koger@gmail.com, thedrift100.com

March 16, 2024 — 28 Below Fat Bike Race and Ride. Spearfish, South Dakota, 50 k race,

ride, tour, Perry Jewett, 605-641-4963, ridg-eriders@blackhills.com, 28below.com

Utah Weekly

Road Race Series

Salt Air Time Trial Series — Utah Crit Series. Salt Lake City, UT. Every other Thursday April - September, I-80 Frontage Road West of the International Center, Marek Shon, 801-209-2479, utahcritseries@gmail.com, utahcritseries.com

DLI (DMV) Criterion — Utah Crit Series. West Valley City, UT. Weekly Training Crit at the Driver's Training Center, 4700S, 2780W., A flite - 6 pm. B flite between 6:45 and 7:05. Call for information regarding C flite. Wednesdays April - August, Marek Shon, 801-209-2479, utahcritseries@gmail.com, utahcritseries.com

Emigration Canyon Hillclimb Series — Utah Crit Series. Salt Lake City, UT. Starts north of Zoo 7.4 miles to top of Emigration. First rider off at 6:30. Every other Thursday April through August, Marek Shon, 801-209-2479, utahcritseries@gmail.com, utahcritseries.com

Logan Race Club Thursday Night Time Trial Series — Logan, UT. Thursdays. TT series consisting of 18 races on five difference courses, with weekly and end-of-series prizes. Check the website for the location of the weekly course., Stephen Clyde, 435-750-8785, swc@mdsc.com, Ben Keford, benkfof@hotmail.com, Travis Dunn, travis.dunn@usu.edu, loganraceclub.org

Utah Road Race Series — Utah Crit Series. Salt Lake City, UT. Fridays, June 10, July 22, Aug 12, Aug 26, Marek Shon, 801-209-2479, utahcritseries@gmail.com, race2wheels.com

Utah Road Racing

March 23, 2024 — WattFest. tentative, UCA Series, Tooele, UT. Held at the Utah Motorsports Park, circuit race, Troy Huebner, 801-427-0852, troy.huebner@tealdrones.com, cyclingpointseries.com

April 20, 2024 — Traverse Ridge Hill Climb. Utah State Hill Climb Series, Draper, UT. The final climb of this series will feature the Back Side of Suncrest, this climb is fast but steep as riders will test their sustainable power output at the end of the season. This climb will be held in time trial format with a rider starting every 30 seconds., Dirk Cowley, 801-699-5126, dcowley@comcast.net, utahcycling-events.com

April 27, 2024 — Goshen Circuit Race. tentative, UCA Series, Goshen, UT. 5.7 mile loop with a couple of punchy rollers and about 375 feet of up and down each lap on paved farm roads in southern Utah County., Troy Huebner, 801-427-0852, troy.huebner@tealdrones.com, cyclingpointseries.com

May 4, 2024 — Moab Fondo Fest. Moab, UT. Mass start timed road cycling event on the beautiful La Sal Loop road, 60 miles with 5500 feet of climbing. Not a sanctioned race, but you will get a time, awards, and placing., Kevin McDonald, 866-373-3376, info@transrockies.com, granfondomoab.com

Regional Weekly

Road Race Series

May 14-July 16, 2024 — SWICA Fairground Criterion Series. SWICA Criterion Series, Boise, ID. Local training crit series at Expo Idaho West lot (Glenwood Street south of Hawks Stadium). Every Tuesday, John Rogers, 208-284-9671, obccwebdesign@yahoo.com, idahobikeracing.org

Regional Road Racing

ID, WY, MT, NV, AZ,

NM, CO, MT, OR, WA,

CA and Beyond

January 6-7, 2024 — USA Cycling eSports National Championships. Wahoo, RGT, Chuck Hodge, 719-434-4200, chodge@usacycling.org, usacycling.org

January 7-February 4, 2024 — Early Birds in Fremont. Livermore, CA. Sundays (clinics/mentoring / training races), Robert Leibold, 209-604-1354, veloprol@gmail.com, velopromo.com

February 3, 2024 — Race Against Time. San Manuel, AZ. Race will begin at 8:00 a.m., Joey Luliano, azcycling.org/event/race-against-time-2/, azcycling.com

February 11, 2024 — Flapjack Flats TT. Picacho, AZ. Time trial will take place at Picacho (Bowlín) with an address of 16098 Camino Adelante, Picacho, AZ 85141 from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Terry Jenner, 402-983-6195,

escapefrommexico@yahoo.com, azcycling.org/event/flapjacks-tt/

February 16-18, 2024 — Valley of the Sun Stage Race. Phoenix, AZ. 32nd annual. Racing begins on Friday with a 20k time trial, Saturday brings a 40-90 mile road race and finishing on Sunday with a criterium at the state capitol., Eric Prosnier, 602-381-3581, eric@wmrc.org, Brian Lemke, 602-692-6790, brianlemke@wmrc.org, vossstagerace.com

February 17, 2024 — Cantua Creek Road Race. Coalinga, CA. This USAC licensed, out and back race will be held on a well paved, old section of Highway 33 in central California., Robert Leibold, 209-604-1354, veloprol@gmail.com, velopromo.com

February 18, 2024 — Pine Flat Road Race. Piedra, CA. Robert Leibold, 209-604-1354, veloprol@gmail.com, velopromo.com

February 23-25, 2024 — Tucson Bicycle Classic. Tucson, AZ. 3-day USA Cycling stage race featuring a challenging 3.2 mile prologue, a 20.5 mile loop road race and 5.6 mile circuit circuit race. Time Trial Prologue - Friday Road Race - Saturday morning. Circuit Race - Sunday morning. Marco Colbert, Info@tucsonbicycleclassic.com, tucsonbicycleclassic.com, azcycling.org/event/tbc/

February 25, 2024 — Copper Valley Road Race. Copperopolis, CA. Robert Leibold, 209-604-1354, veloprol@gmail.com, velopromo.com

March 2, 2024 — Snelling Road Race. Snelling, CA. 35th Snelling Road Race: classic gentle road race in the Central Valley of California on country roads; this year on an altered course due to bridge reconstruction. Meets at Henderson County Park. Starts at 8:15 a.m. USAC, Robert Leibold, 209-604-1354, veloprol@gmail.com, velopromo.com

April 20-21, 2024 — Cobb Lake Oval Criterium & Road Race, Fort Collins, CO, The CSU Cycling Spring Race Weekend starts with one the longest running and most iconic road races in Colorado, on an 8-mile course. Races start at 8 am, and continue with collegiate and open categories throughout the day. Located north of Fort Collins, starts at the Anheuser-Busch plant. Preceded by the equally iconic Oval Criterium which was brought back onto the CSU campus Oval drive last year and will include a new course renovation this year! This Crit includes many technical turns and a speedy finish around the tip of the oval. Lucas Huesman, 208-389-8651, csuramscycling@gmail.com, coloradocycling.org

April 24-28, 2024 — Tour of the Gila, Silver City, NM, 5 stages, UCI men, UCI women, amateur categories, great spring racing! Jack Brennan, 575-590-2612, brennan5231@comcast.net, tourofthegila.com

May 2-5, 2024 — Tour de Bloom Stage Race (Omnium), Wenatchee, WA, The event features a road race in Waterville on Friday, an out and back 10-mile TT, a twilight criterium in historic downtown Wenatchee on Saturday, and a road race in Plain Washington with an uphill finish on Sunday. \$20k equal payout Pro M&W, Ace Bollinger, 509-679-5003, acebollinger@nwi.net, wenatcheevalleyvelo.com/current-event/tour-de-bloom/

May 4, 2024 — Capitol City Crit, Bismarck, ND, This one is for all you roadies out there! The Capitol City Crit is the only road race in Bismarck/Mandan! Gather the family, pack some chairs or a blanket and come down to the State Capitol lawn for this exciting and engaging event. Simply put, it's the NASCAR of cycling. This race might not be for everyone, but it's going to be fun to watch! Melissa Marquardt, 701.221.9833, melissa@701cyclingandreport.com.

May 14-19, 2024 — USA Cycling Professional Road, ITT, and Criterium National Championships, Charleston, WV, Chuck Hodge, 719-434-4200, chodge@usacycling.org, usacycling.org

May 18-19, 2024 — Marsh Valley Omnium, UCA Series, Marsh Valley, ID, Great circuit race, start and finish at Marsh Valley High School. This is the old Gate City Grind Course., Dirk Cowley, 801-699-5126, dcowley@comcast.net, Bob and Kris Walker, bobandkrisw@yahoo.com, Tony Chesrow, 435-671-2506, hebermetsports@yahoo.com, utahcyclingevents.com

May 24-26, 2024 — Iron Horse Bicycle Classic, Durango, CO, 52nd Annual, Road Race and Tour from Durango to Silverton. Both are on Saturday 25th and are a 50 mile ride from Durango to Silverton. Take off with the train, traveling over two 10,000ft mountain passes enroute to the historical mining town of Silverton. Sunday 26th we have a Kids Race and Kids Village, Mountain Bike Race, Gravel Race and vendors. Ian Burnett, 970-259-4621, director@ironhorsebicycleclassic.com, ironhorsebicycleclassic.com

May 25, 2024 — Wards Ferry Road Race, Sonora, CA, Robert Leibold, 209-604-1354, velopro1@gmail.com, velopromo.com

Utah Road Touring and Gran Fondos

March 9-12, 2024 — Moab Skinny Tire Festival, Moab, UT, Road cycling tour in iconic Moab, Utah. The four routes of the Festival highlight Moab's different riding opportunities. Two days follow the mighty Colorado River corridor, both up-stream and downstream. The other two days leave the valley and climb the beautiful canyon roads into red rock country visiting Dead Horse Point State Park and Arches National Park. Live music, beverages, great food await you at the post-ride party on Saturday. All routes have SAG vehicle support, Aid Stations, and 5 Star Event Communication volunteers. A portion of your registration is given as a donation benefitting cancer research and survivorship programs. Cycling Teams and individual groups use the event to inspire their fundraising for large and small foundations making a difference in cancer treatments and survivorship beyond. Ask how your beneficiary can be included., Beth Logan, 435-260-8889, 435-260-2334, info@skinnytireevents.com, skinnytireevents.com

April 13, 2024 — Spring Tour of Hurricane, Ride Southern Utah Road Gran Fondos, Hurricane, UT, Did you enjoy the Fall Tour? Come see the rest of southern Utah on your bike as we take you on the other half of our two-part tour of the southern Utah scenery. Fully supported Gran Fondo., Margaret Gibson, 435-229-6251, margaret@redrockbicycle.com, ridesouthernutah.com

April 20, 2024 — Salt Lake City Marathon Bike Tour, Salt Lake City, UT, Ride the closed 26.2 mile marathon course through the most iconic sites of Salt Lake! All abilities welcome! Start at 6:00am, just north of the Legacy Bridge on the University of Utah Campus., Steve Bingham, 720-608-1783, stevebingham@highaltitudeevents.com, Jennifer Nelson, 801-455-9623, marketing@saltlakecitymarathon.com, saltlakecitymarathon.com

May 4, 2024 — Moab Fondo Fest, Moab, UT, Mass start timed road cycling event on the beautiful La Sal Loop road, 60 miles with 5500 feet of climbing. Not a sanctioned race, but you will get a time, awards, and placing., Kevin McDonald, 866-373-3376,

info@transrockies.com, granfondomoab.com

May 11, 2024 — FrontRunner Metric Century Ride, Salt Lake City, UT, 13th Annual Point to point metric century (62.5 miles) bicycle ride from Salt Lake City's Intermodal Hub to Ogden. Return to Salt Lake City via the UTA FrontRunner train service. Your bicycle will be transported via private truck to SLC. Registration opens Christmas Day! We sold out for the last few years, register early and don't miss out. Only 640' of total climbing, Matt Storms, 801-230-9270, staff@forthewinning.com, frontrunnercentury.com

Regional Road Touring and Gran Fondos ID, WY, MT, NV, AZ, NM, CO, MT, OR, WA, CA and Beyond

February 10, 2024 — Tour de Palm Springs, Palm Springs, CA, One of the largest cycling charity events of its kind in America. Every year, we entertain 6,000 to 10,000 cyclists from 46 different states and 4 countries. Since 1998, and with the help of 2,000 volunteers, the Tour de Palm Springs has distributed nearly 4,000,000.00 to over 150 local nonprofit organizations., Cody Shelton, 760-674-4700, info@tourdepalmsprings.com, tourdepalmsprings.com

February 17, 2024 — Camino Real Double Century & Power Run, Irvine, CA, The Camino route is shaped like a dog bone, with loops on each end of an out-and-back course, Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

February 24, 2024 — Death Valley Century, Death Valley, CA, Half, Metric and Full Century options. Entry includes fully stocked checkpoints along the route with water and a great selection of food and snacks; roving SAG support; tech tee and finish line award, Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

March 2, 2024 — Solvang Century, Solvang, CA, Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

March 15-October 5, 2024 — HeartCycle Tours, Various, HeartCycle Touring Club has 15 road cycling tours available for registration. Tours vary from 4-14 days length, fully supported with 2 sag vehicles, overnight in hotels and volunteer tour leaders. Spring Training in Fredericksburg, TX; Belgium Bike & Barge; Underground Railroad Adventure Series (Mobile, AL-Nashville,TN); South Bay, CA; Over Hill & Dale, VT; Black Hills, SD; West Virginia, Tuscany, Italy are a few examples. HeartCycle is a 45 year old non-profit club offering multi-day cycling tours throughout USA and Europe, Judy Siel, 720-519-9401, tourdiretor@heartcycle.org, heartcycle.org

March 16, 2024 — Pedaling for St. Pats 50K Bike Ride, Colorado Springs, CO, Choose between Challenging Course (31 miles) or Intermediate Course (21 Miles). Ride through world famous Garden of the Gods Park, on towards Blodgett Peak, through the Mount St Francis area, down the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail through Monument Valley Park, and then onto Midland Trail back to Trails End Tap Room for the after party! Start and Finish at Trails End Tap Room, 2925 W Colorado Avenue, Colorado Springs CO 80904. Total elevation change is 2,036 feet., Carol O'Donnell, 719-271-4610, carol@odonnell2.com, csstpts.com/event/pedaling-st-pats-50k-and-50k/

March 21-24, 2024 — El Tour de Zona, Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Tombstone, AZ, Enjoy three-days of destination loop bicycle rides on paved roadways mixed with post-ride festivals featuring live music, great food and a local craft beer/wine gardens. Veteran's Memorial Park in Sierra Vista will serve up to three nights as your basecamp with day loop rides to great destinations like the free-spirit, picturesque town of Bisbee and the wild west of Tombstone. The Town Too Tough to Die!, El Tour de Tucson , 520-745-2033, info@el-tour-de-zona.org, el-tour-de-zona.org

March 23, 2024 — Solvang Double Century and Double Metric Century, Solvang, CA, 200 miles or 200 kilometers in Southern CA's most scenic and popular cycling region. A perfect first time double century., Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

March 25-31, 2024 — Solvang Spring Tour, Solvang, CA, Early season warm weather training in Sunny Southern California. 50-100 miles per day in Southern California's most popular cycling region., Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

April 1-30, 2024 — Yellowstone Cycle Days, TENTATIVE DATES, Yellowstone National Park, MT, Ride free in Yellowstone National Park before the roads open to the public. This is a unique way to enjoy the beauty of the park. Opening day depends on whether the road is plowed. Check for park service website to see if the roads are open., Toni , 406-646-7701, 307-899-3367, westyellowstonecycletour@gmail.com, nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/

spring-fall-bicycling.htm, cycleyellowstone.com

April 6, 2024 — Party Pardee, Lone, CA, Come Party with Us and Ride the Rolling Green Hills of the Gold Rush Country. The 26 and 62 mile bike tours travel along the fields of poppies and the gentle rolling hills of Amador and Calaveras Counties., Larry Robinson, pinkdoglarry@gmail.com, www.bikehikers.com/partypardee

April 13, 2024 — Mulholland Challenge & Double Century, King of the Mountains Century Challenge, Agoura Hills, CA, The toughest Southern California Century with over 13,000' of climbing in the Santa Monica Mountains. Fully supported / Chip Timed. 100 and 200 mile options, Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

April 13, 2024 — Levi's GranFondo, Windsor, CA, Whether you're just getting into riding, or an elite athlete seeking the ultimate challenge, our ride was inspired by, and can be as hard as some of the biggest stages of the Tour de France., Clemence Heymelot, 707-560-1122, info@bikemonkey.net, levi-granfondo.com

April 20, 2024 — Tour de Summerlin, Las Vegas, NV, 20th annual 80, 40, 20 mile routes, which circumnavigates Las Vegas., Tour de Summerlin , info@teammamc.net, tourdesummerlin.com

April 28, 2024 — Wildflower Century, Chico, CA, 7 route options, festival on Saturday, ride Sunday, Chico Velo , 530-343-8356, info@chicovelo.org, wildflowercentury.org

May 4, 2024 — Wine Country Century, Santa Rosa, CA, 50th Annual! Enjoy riding in the gorgeous Sonoma County springtime! 35 miles, 100k, and 100 miles with extravagantly stocked rest stops and welcoming volunteers, Steve Saxe, 707-332-5142, wcc@srcc.com, srcc.com

May 4, 2024 — Breathless Agony Century, King of the Mountains Century Challenge, Redlands, CA, Deborah Bowling, 818-889-2453, embassy@planetultra.com, planetultra.com

May 5, 2024 — Grizzly Peak Century, Moraga, CA, Road 30, 50, 75, 100mi, Gravel 60mi - Ride up, down, and around the East Bay hills with hundreds of your fellow cyclists on beautiful and challenging routes with ever changing scenery! Riders get logo socks, rest stops with tons of fresh fruit and home baked goods, clothing drop, basic mechanic service, SAG, AND our fabulous post-ride BBQ lunch including local beer! Proceeds support nonprofits that work to provide broad and inclusive community access to the economic, environmental, and health benefits of cycling!, Bonnie Goldsmith, (510) 847-3948, CenturyReg@grizz.org, Daniel Stoops, stoopsd@gmail.com, grizz.org/century

May 5, 2024 — L'Étape Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, Gives amateur cyclists the legendary Tour de France experience in the legendary city of Las Vegas! Cyclists, from seasoned veterans to beginners, can compete for an authentic Yellow Jersey; 75-miles, elevation +6,464 ft, 45-miles, elevation +3,035 ft, 25-miles, elevation +2,260 ft, 10-miles Family Ride , Kids Race, MB Events , info@mbevents.ca, lasvegas.letapebytourdefrance.com

May 17-19, 2024 — Santa Fe Century and Gran Fondo, Santa Fe, NM, Century (106 mile tour), the Gran Fondo (106 mile timed ride), the Half-Century (54 mile tour), Medio Fondo (54 mile timed ride) or a 20 mile route. A scenic course that highlights the landscape of northern New Mexico, starting and finishing in downtown Santa Fe. Riders will pass through the Ortiz Mountains and the Galisteo basin, Santa Fe Century , 505-490-6387, ride@santafecentury.com, santafecentury.com

Multisport Races

March 23, 2024 — Icebreaker Sprint Triathlon & 5K, Tri Utah, American Fork, UT, Kick-off the Utah Triathlon season at the American Fork Rec Center. The IceBreaker is for athletes of all abilities! Post race breakfast and pictures with the TriUtah Yeti, Dan Amodt, 385-228-3454, race@tricutah.com, tricutah.com

April 5, 2024 — Antelope Island Duathlon, Syracuse, UT, Run Bike Run on the causeway, Joe Coles, 801-335-4940, joe@onhillevents.com, legacyduathlon.com, onhillevents.com

April 13, 2024 — St. George Triathlon, St. George, UT, Beginner, Sprint, and Tuff Kids races, starting between 9 am and 2 pm. Indoor swim, outdoor route for run and bike legs. Cap of 300 each category., Aaron Metter, 435-627-4054, aaron.metter@sgcity.org, sgcity.org/sportsandrecreation/races

April 27, 2024 — RAGE Triathlon, BBSC Double Down Series, Boulder City, NV, Featuring an Olympic, Sprint, Relay, DU, Aquabike, 10k and 5k. Located less than ten miles to famous vacation destinations, including the Las Vegas Strip and Hoover Dam. This race sells out at 1,300 athletes and is a favorite in the southwest, as it attracts athletes from all over the globe!, Craig Towler, 318-518-7303, info@bbsctri.com, Michelle Lund, michelle@bbsctri.com, bbsctri.com, bbsctri.com/rage

May 4, 2024 — Ironman 70.3 St. George North American Championship, St. George, UT, Start: Sand Hollow reservoir. Bike through Snow Canyon State Park, Finish Downtown Utah Gravel Series, ironmanstgeorge.com

Report: Bicycling Surged in Metros During Pandemic

The COVID pandemic not only triggered a surge in bike riding but also confined the surge primarily to metropolitan areas, especially suburbs, as suggested by a new report. Rural states, on the other hand, experienced declines.

An eBook titled "Bike Boom or Bust? Metro & Statewide Bicycle Activity Trends from Streetlight Data, Inc." concludes that nationwide bicycle activity in the continental U.S. substantially increased in 2020 and 2021 and remained steady in 2022.

The report estimates a 24 percent jump in the number of bicycle trips from 2019 to 2020, another nine percent increase in 2021, and a stable figure in 2022. However, the growth was predominantly observed in the East, while several largely rural Mountain West states, including Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, saw a decrease in bike trips. Nevertheless, 41 states witnessed an increase in the number of trips.

It's important to note that Streetlight's data included the District of Columbia but not Hawaii and Alaska. The detailed report can be accessed at <https://learn.streetlightdata.com/hubfs/eBooks%20and%20Research/Bike%20Trends%20Report/StreetLight-BikingBoom-US-Metros-States-Cycling-Activity.pdf>

-Charles Pekow

Congress' Best Bike Advocate to Retire

At the end of the current term, Congress will be losing its most ardent advocate for bicycling. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) announced he will not seek reelection. First elected in 1996, Blumenauer was known for commuting to work by bike and he founded the Congressional Bike Caucus, which now includes more than 130 members from 40 states.

He was largely responsible for the Bicycle Commuter Act, which passed in 2008 giving tax incentives to bike to work. The law was repealed in 2017 and Blumenauer has been fighting ever since to reinstate it in some form. In the current Congress, he introduced legislation to allow cyclists to get part of the pre-tax benefit that drivers can get for parking at work.

Blumenauer's home city of Portland constructed a bicycle pedestrian bridge over I-84 named after the representative, which opened in 2022.

Blumenauer pushed many other bicycle bills ranging from Safe Routes to School to tax credits for ebikes. Before being elected to Congress, he founded Portland's Bicycle Program.

-Charles Pekow

November Bike Racing Trivia Answers

(See the questions on page 19)

A1. Fourth! Greg Lemond achieved this result in 1983 while wearing the Rainbow Jersey of World Champion and while in hot pursuit of the Super Prestige Trophy for the year's best rider, which he would ultimately win. This result was equaled in 2013 by Tyler Farrar.

A2. A stage win in the Tour DuPont, a UCI 2.2-ranked event in 1995 ahead of some of the finest pros of the era such as Gianluca Bortolami, Viatcheslav Ekimov, and Lance Armstrong.

A3. Again, it's that Lemond guy and in his magical 1983 season! In an incredible photo finish with four riders all within a wheel of each other, Lemond finished a very close second behind Irishman Sean Kelly. It was Kelly's first Classic win, opening the door for many more in the coming years while sadly it was the closest Lemond would ever come to winning a Classic.

A4. Italian campionissimo Fausto Coppi won Il Lombardia five times including four consecutively from 1946-49 and again in 1954.

A5. Belgian legend Rik Van Looy known as "The Emperor" also did it, back in 1959. Van Looy is one of only three cyclists, all Belgian, who won all five monuments during their career.

-Dave Campbell

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BICYCLING BOOKS

Book Review: *The Slow Road to Tehran: A Revelatory Bike Ride through Europe and the Middle East*

By Lou Melini

This is my first book review for Cycling West in some time. The cycling themed books that I have looked at (briefly) in the past few years have been stale with sameness. Travelogues or, worse yet, an account of one's suffering and self-made adventure appear to be the current fashionable writing. As a result, I have had little interest in writing reviews of books that would have a review of rejection. Dave Iltis, editor and publisher of Cycling West asked if I would be interested in Rebecca Lowe's book *The Slow Road to Tehran*. After a quick scan of a couple of reviews, my curiosity was aroused so I accepted the task. A week later the book arrived from the distributor.

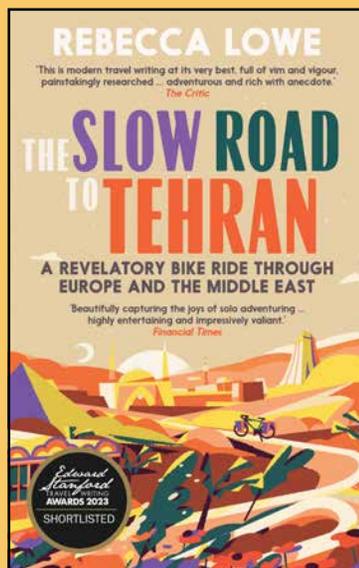
I will start my review by succinctly stating that Ms. Lowe's book is a worthwhile read. It will be hard to out-review many of the excellent reviews already given to *The Slow Road to Tehran*. The British cycling publication, [Road.CC](#), gave an excellent review and Momentum Mag (Canadian cycling publication, not to be confused with the Multiple Sclerosis publication, Momentum magazine), published a behind the scenes interview that was enlightening. Even the Financial Times did a nice review of the book.

Ms. Lowe is an accomplished writer. She is British with a BA degree in English Literature from Cambridge. She went to Stanford on scholarship earning a MA in Journalism. Prior to her writing *The Slow Road to Tehran*, she worked as a journalist for the International Bar Association as the chief reporter specializing in human rights. She also was a freelance journalist specializing in Human Rights and the Middle East. Her background heavily influences her book.

In 2014, Ms. Lowe was in Beirut, Lebanon "interviewing politicians, activists and aid workers to report on the worst refugee crisis the region has ever known". Despite dire warnings of trouble, she decides to ride a bicycle up the coast to Tripoli to "speak to the people living and surviving on the front line". Thus, the seed is planted, a London to Middle East bike journey.

Several of the reviews I look at started by stating: "In 2015, as the Syrian War raged and the refugee crisis reached it's peak, Rebecca Lowe set off on her bicycle across the Middle East". It makes me wonder if the reviewers read the book, or simply read reviews. The statement is true, though the Syrian War is only a very small focus of the book with descriptions of refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria and relatives going into the camps to provide aid. From London, Ms. Lowe cycled across Europe (UK, France, Switzerland, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Bulgaria) to Turkey. She continued on to Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Oman (and UAE) and into Iran completing 11,000 Km (~6800 miles) and one year away from home.

To say this her journey was remarkable would be a gross under-



statement. Oppressive heat, a few roads that left her pushing her bike, lack of water and the inopportune flat tire (all flats are inopportune) would push a lesser person to quit. On the other hand, 97% of her trip gave her joy and fulfilled the purpose of why she left London on a bicycle.

As I mentioned earlier, Ms. Rowe has a BA from Cambridge in English Literature. I consider myself well-read but I put a dictionary next to me reading the book. (Revelatory in the subtitle means "revealing, something hitherto unknown".) There were references from classical literature that left me feeling like a high school drop-out. She described herself before leaving London as "more Sancho Panza than Don Quixote, and arguably more Rocinante (Don Quixote's horse) than either."

On one page she described her host as having "puckish charm" (playful in mischievous way) and a couple of pages later a person she met had oleaginous charm (exaggeratedly and distastefully complimentary). There are several British terms, podgy being one, though easily translated to pudgy. I learned much from reading the book, though at times I just wanted to read. Culture, religion, politics and history are prominent features as Ms. Lowe travels through each region. Who knew that Terra Nullius is "land that is legally deemed to be unoccupied or uninhabited as happened in a section of land between Egypt and Sudan due to Britain creating two distinct borders perhaps a century ago. In Tehran there is a main road that has had numerous names depending on the ruling regime. Ms. Lowe summarizes the name changes by writing:

"Through this metamorphic identity, the road becomes not just schismatic but prismatic, wrenched not just between to polar extremes but scabbled over by tsarists, leftists and Islamists; chadoris, intelligentsia and nouveau riche; Basijis, Yarsanis and trendies."

Ms. Lowe was a cyclist before her journey, but she had never traveled on a bike except for one multi-day trip in which her gear was carried in a truck in 2009 and her Lebanon ride. Her bike, donated by Kona and henceforth named Maud, arrived approximately 24 hours

before her planned departure. Not counting "water and gin", but with a "ukulele" her bike weighed 10 stone. (A stone weight is 6.35 Kg or 14 pounds). There are no gear ratios, components or other bike gear mentioned in the book.

Ms. Lowe's self-deprecating and generally humorous writing in the book is a welcome style. For example, on the ferry to Sudan

Please watch out" he says. "There are many dangers'What dangers" I ask

Well, there are scorpions" he says finally. "And the insects are quite big". For a police state renowned for violent conflict, ruthless repression and homegrown terrorism, these concerns seem manageable

Thank you" I reply.

As a solo cyclist, and a female one these were more nuisances than serious dangers. She needed to wear proper attire in the Arab and Muslim countries. She had to register at police stations who sometimes followed her when she traveled. She had multiple inappropriate solicitations for sex and had her breast grabbed once (?) and her butt several times. She used [Couchsurfing.com](#) and acquaintances from her journalism career for a portion of her housing. In a few cases her hosts were taken in by the police and interrogated. She had to hide her past as a journalist.

I hope this review is published before the holiday season that is quickly approaching. Buy it for a spouse, significant other, friend or yourself. It is a good read that will entertain and educate you, wrapped in a year-long bike ride. The book will never cause you to neglect it for very long. Ms. Lowe brings to life the lives of many individuals in many countries, perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the book.

"Aisha, my host for the night, meets us mid-debate. Clad in a black niqab and abaya, she doesn't engage with the conversation. Back at her flat, Aisha transforms. Removing her cloak and veil to reveal a casual t-shirt, jeans and an open, inquiring face, she chats animatedly. She studied engineering before switching to medicine."

In the words of Rebecca Lowe, "If you are hoping for rousing tales of sporting prowess or pushing the limits of physical endurance — stop reading. If you're after an informed analysis of the difference between cantilever and caliper brakes, or the pros and cons of an internal gear hub, this isn't the book for you". However, if you want a well-written book by an adventurous journalist on a bicycle that delves into the heart and soul of Europe and the Middle East this will make a great book to read.

The Slow Road to Tehran: A Revelatory Bike Ride through Europe and the Middle East

Author: Rebecca Lowe
September Publishing; 2022
ISBN 13: 978-1914613029

Lou Melini is a lifelong bicycle commuter, tourer, and the former Commuter Column editor for Cycling West.

EPA Working to Enhance Safety in Bicycle Manufacturing

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is actively working to enhance bicycle safety not only for riders but also in the manufacturing of bicycle and parts. The EPA has proposed restrictions on work exposure to toxins in assembly plants, specifically targeting decabromodiphenyl ether (decaBDE) and phenol, isopropylated phosphate (3:1) (PIP (3:1)), under the Toxic Substances Control Act. The deadline for comments on these proposed regulations is January 8, and more information can be found at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-11-24/html/2023-25714.htm>

Workers dealing with these substances, commonly used as flame retardants and anti-wear additives in lubricants, would be required to wear protective gear. According to the EPA's draft economic analysis, the proposal could impact up to 378 manufacturers of new and replacement bicycle and motorcycle parts in the USA, with 366 of them classified as small businesses by the Small Business Administration. The EPA noted that workers exposed to the chemicals typically wear gloves but do not use respirators.

Additionally, the EPA is taking proactive measures "proposing to address the unreasonable risk of injury to human health presented by trichloroethylene (TCE)," a solvent and lubricant. The EPA aims to ban the substance in the manufacturing and importation of bicycles and parts within a year, with temporary exceptions in workplaces under strict controls.

"The EPA would also like to emphasize that alternatives are available for the vast majority of TCE uses. While some manufacturers may be required to reformulate their products to eliminate TCE if they haven't already, EPA emphasizes that TCE is highly toxic and that transitioning away from this chemical will help protect human health and the environment," EPA Environmental Protection Specialist Simon Regenold wrote in an email.

The full proposal can be accessed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-10-31/html/2023-23010.htm>

-Charles Pekow

Senate Bills Could Expand Mountain Biking Options in Colorado and Montana

Two Senate bills, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (S. 2149) and the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act (S. 1634), could expand mountain biking options in Montana and Colorado, respectively, but under limited conditions.

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources approved legislation that would save nearly 4,000 acres in Montana for mountain bikers and other recreational users. Specifically, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (S. 2149) aims to protect 3,835 acres in the Blackfoot River Watershed. Additionally, the bill proposes that the U.S. Forest Service consider developing trails through a collaborative process involving local citizens representing diverse interests.

As of mid-December, the bill had not yet been officially presented to the full Senate, and no companion bill was pending in the House. Updates on the status of the bill can be found at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2149>

The Committee also gave its approval to the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act (S. 1634), which proposes the designation of a Williams Fork Mountains Wildlife Conservation Area in Colorado. The bill outlines restrictions on mountain bikes in the area to "designated roads and trails." However, it explicitly permits biking in the Ophir Valley Area of a Proposed Sheep Mountain Special Management Area in Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison national forests.

For more details, refer to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1634>

-Charles Pekow

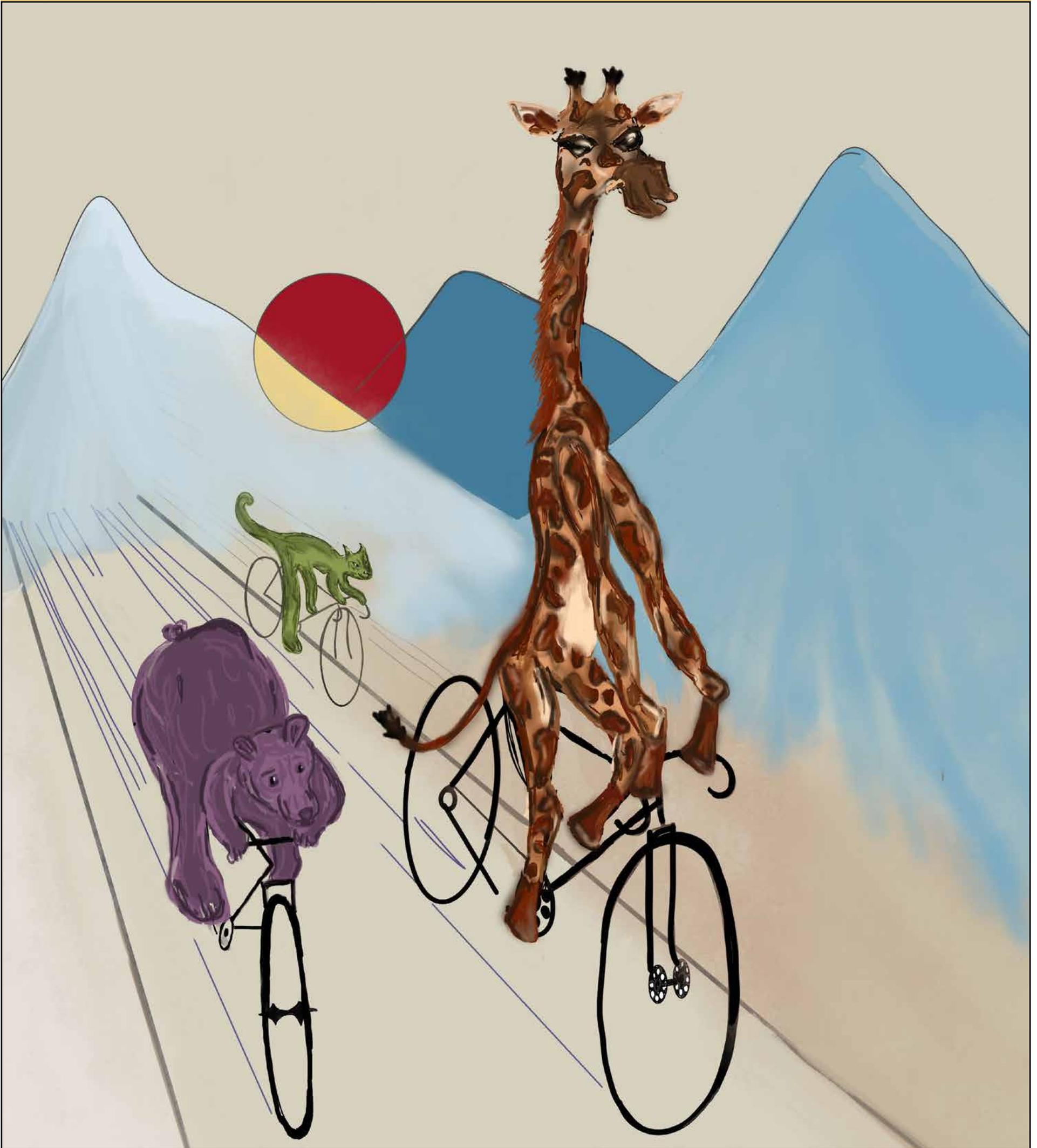
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BICYCLE ART

Anyone Can Bike — The Bicycle Art of Savannah Cottam



Name of artist: Savannah Cottam
About the artist: I'm a student studying film, art, and journalism at the University of Utah. I am very passionate about the environment and people's well being. My goal

is to do something that can make a difference in people's lives and help promote positive change.
Title of piece: Anyone Can Bike
About the piece: Biking in the US

has a type of stigma or "brand". People that don't fit this culture may feel uncomfortable getting on a bike. I want everyone to feel like they belong on a bike no matter what race, age, gender, or background.

Medium: Digital art
Artist's statement: My art is meant to transform the way people view biking.

Where can people find your art?: People can find and buy my art on Instagram: @savthecreator

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