

Fat-Tire Flyer

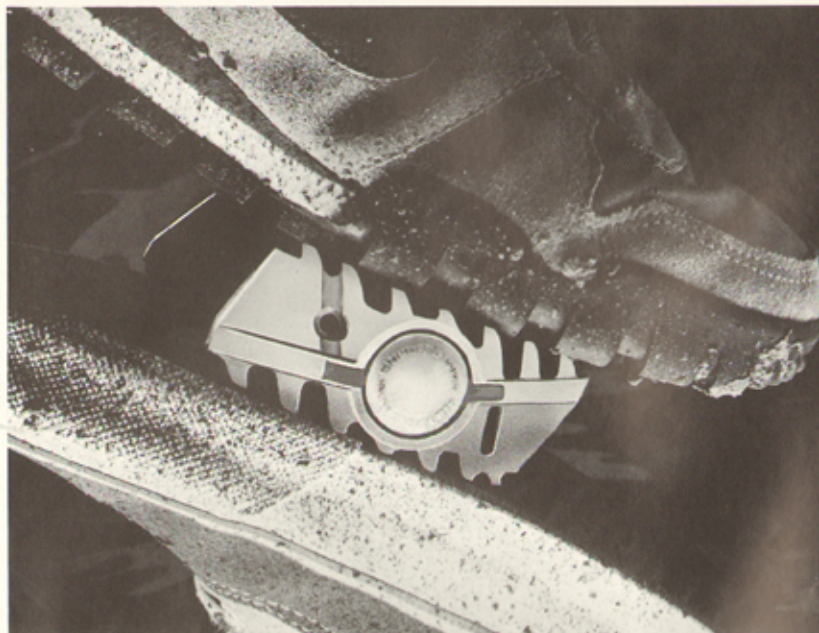
MAGAZINE



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1985

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4

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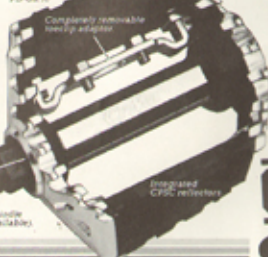
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Fat Tire FlyerTM

MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1985 • VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4

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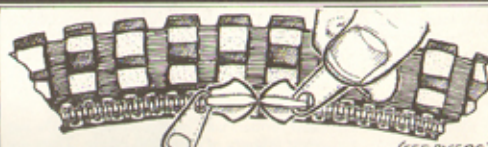
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Editorial

Regular readers may have noticed a generation gap in issues. This is of course inexcusable, and can only be explained by the fact that we have made a few changes in the FLYER offices. Our new publisher is Don Mertle, and Denise Caramagno has left to make a fortune in another part of the fat tire world. Art Read has signed on in the art and funny stuff department.

With these changes it is inevitable that the FLYER will change, and our plans include an expanded format, with more emphasis on the fun and sometimes downright insanity of mountain biking. There are already enough boring, dull bike mags in the world. Get ready for the New Improved FAT TIRE FLYER!



photo by Charles Kelly

New publisher, Don Mertle, balances responsibilities.

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NOTICE

To any and all Fat-Tired, creative persons! In order to provide a complete, well-rounded and objective publication, we need your help. Photographers, writers or just plain readers/riders, send us your stuff! Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs are always welcome as are letters or comments. Photographs should be in black and white.

We cannot return any material that is not accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope, so if you need it back...S.A.S.E.

Address all correspondence to:



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PRO/AM CONTROVERSY

by Richard Cunningham

A quick look at most publications featuring all-terrain cycling will convey the idea that racing is the glory of the sport. Page after page reveals mud-splattered he-men emblazoned in colored Lycra, laced with commentary describing the duel between men and mountain. Usually, toward the end of the feature, there are a few words about Alice B. Navratilova and some of the other women who raced.

Next in frequency are the articles warning of land closures and other forest fiction stemming from the fear of those with wheels by those who walk. Less frequent are articles about the real sport, touring, trail riding and trekking, the heart that beats, however faintly, within every all-terrain bicycle and cyclist.

All three of these aspects are of major importance to the health and growth of all-terrain cycling, but because of its dominant role in the media, it is racing that will determine the future of the sport. Presently, the future does not look bright. The reason for this can be traced to a shift in the format of racing from a race/tour event to a Pro/Am spectator event.

The race/tour is usually a fifteen to thirty mile loop or point-to-point course that is both interesting and

challenging. The race/tour attracts the greatest number of participants, and the serious competitor is given a chance to pit skills against almost every type of terrain. The less serious contender can finish out of the money and still be rewarded with scenery and a fun ride. For the sponsor, the race/tour may not look like a good return for the advertising dollar due to the lack of spectators. A closer look shows that the inclusive nature of the event draws in many participants with junker clunkers. Surrounded by the ultimate, these novice enthusiasts are prime customers for new equipment. The best feature of the race/tour is that it represents the off-road experience, and in doing so it fosters camaraderie between different factions of the sport.

The glamorous pro-am spectator event offers the prospect of winning a grueling, action packed race in front of a capacity crowd with the sponsor's logo pasted on the track, your Lycra, and the check which rewards the winner. You and fifty others of the world's best ATB riders have completed fifteen laps over a two-mile course. During the entire race you vaguely remember the announcer blaring your name over the PA system, in between commercials and brief descriptions of the "dangerous and exciting sport of all-terrain cycling." The pro/am spectator



photos by Philip Vercos

event provides the sponsor with name recognition, and showcases the sport in a simplistic way to the first time viewer. Everybody comes out ahead, right?

A closer inspection reveals a different story. Five riders have won checks from the promoter and sponsor of the race. The other forty-five are losers. Thirty miles over a two mile bumpy circle is hardly rewarding. And the spectators? Not too many first time viewers are going to watch the spectacle and want to join the fun and buy a mountain bike. The disparity between the pro and the first timer is too extreme to provide understanding of the sport.

Those newcomers who are drawn into the sport via the pro/am race are more likely to cause problems when they take this race mentality into the wilderness without an understanding of the greater sport. Using the pro/am spectator-type event to sell the sport is equivalent to the industry building a bull and asking the conservationist to take it into his wilderness china shop.

Maximum visibility for a product is the prime mover for many forms of racing. The promoter needs the sponsor to provide financial support necessary for a first-rate event. In return the sponsor expects representation for its products. This is an important and positive business relationship. Unfortunately, the often overlooked third party in the relationship is the sport of off-road cycling.

Because the sport is relatively young, it hasn't developed a persona of its own; conventional cycling is antique by comparison. It is here we find the major cause of the off-road racing dilemma.

As the racing focus shifted out of the hands of the original mountain bike enthusiasts into the hands of the major forces in the industry, the already groomed forms of conventional USCF cycling began to dominate the off-road scene. At a time when we were still settling on a name for our sport, major companies started fielding teams that included national class road racers. With them came the sometimes stated, sometimes unstated pressure for events that catered to the professionals. We embraced the arrival of the heavyweights because they lent validity to the races, but little by little the racing scene transformed into the very thing the majority of off-road cyclists joined the sport to avoid!

Continued on next page

Eat Time Elvex 7

Fat Feedback

(A report from the Himalayan mountain bike expedition)

HEY SEEKAY,

Wish I was writing you from Lhasa. Not this time, unfortunately. Border closed on us as we waited for permission in the mountains. Only an hour away from China by foot, police there on the Nepali side detained us as they kept waiting for a reply from Katmandu to let us through. Closed, it was only open for maybe five weeks. A golden opportunity gone. I'll give you all the details when I see you in Crested Butte. Sorry, no great story.

Greg Vann

P.S. A friend of mine used to live in Lhasa. He says, "Tashi delay C.K."

DEAR CHARLIE:

Enclosed are a couple of copies of *DIRT RIDER* (motorcycle magazine).

Seems to be lots of interests in mountain bikes among the off-road motor-

cycle bunch! (Check out the "Cross Training" mountain bike story, by John Lehrer, on page 94 of the March issue and the Dirt Writer (editorial) on page 4.)

Everyone on staff here has picked up Puchs (due to a good buddy deal from the former motorcycle-industry distributor), and we're out there skinning our knees and having fun whenever we're not playing with motorcycles.

We've been anxiously awaiting JT's mountain bike pants (JT is highly regarded — the biggest in aftermarket apparel — in the dirt riding industry.) The photo in FTF was the first we'd seen. What a letdown! I'm trying to convince other motorcycle apparel makers to develop some new gear; hopefully with better results than JT's attempt. We'll see...

A bunch of us have signed up for the Bonelli Park Pacific States Series event...beginner's class. See you there!

Charlie Morey

Editor, Dirt Rider Magazine

EDITOR:

I think you should do a feature on the First Need water filter. These things filter out everything down to 2 microns, which means no Giardia. It weighs no more than an oversized water bottle full. At \$35 it's cheap peace of mind, a must for expedition types. FDA approved, available here.

Gordon
Back Country Bicycles
Pollock Pines, CA

FAT TIRE:

I am interested in receiving any materials you might have concerning the prohibition or regulation of the use of mountain bikes on trails, etc. in National Parks, National Forests, and other public lands. As a third year law student at the University of Utah, I am compiling an inventory of various local and regional administrative decisions regarding mountain bike use. Ultimately my hope is to write a law journal article on the topic summarizing the problems mountain bike use has generated if any, administrative responses, and predicting how these responses would fare under judicial

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review. The legal aspects of the issue are of particular interest to me.

In addition, any information on the increasing popularity of the mountain bike sport — sales statistics, increased racing activity, etc. would be helpful. If there are other sources you would suggest I contact, that too would be helpful.

Scott Havlik
665 Emporia Rd.
Boulder, CO 80303



photo by Mervyn Conner

DOOMED? FLUME TRAIL

by Larry Glickfield

During the silver mining boom of the Comstock Lode in the 1860's and '70's, a remarkable water supply system was built to service the needs of the Virginia City miners. Water was delivered to the Comstock from the Carson Range, east of Lake Tahoe, by means of numerous flumes and a siphon.

Critical to this system was the box flume constructed in 1873, leading north from the dam at Marlett Lake and contouring around the mountain-side, 1400 feet above Tahoe's east shore. Four-and-a-half miles later, the flume entered a 4000-foot-long tunnel which was blasted under the ridge,



photo by Gordon Burchette

As a rider follows the ghost of a silver boom water project past a pile of its carcass lumber, Lake Tahoe looms in the misty distance.

voir above Virginia City.

Today there is little left of the original box flume; occasional scraps of wood are the only signs. However, pipeline which was installed along some of the flume routes some 25 years ago, although partly buried, is a real eyesore on the Tahoe side. No longer in use, this aluminum pipe is for the most part scattered in disarray over the hillside. The trail is easily identified from Tahoe's east shore below by these haphazard pipe sections, which seem to be strewn about like toothpicks.

When the pioneers of the last century blasted and graded the flume routes through the rugged eastern Sierra, little could they have envisioned that over 100 years later their most popular function would be as a route for off-road cyclists. Connecting with numerous jeep roads, these flume trails are easily worked into a number of tours through the Carson Range.

While the flumes on the east side tend to be "freeways," i.e. wide, flat, straight-ahead fast stretches, the flume on the Tahoe (west) side is more of an obstacle course. Large boulders blocking the trail, exposed sections of the

slick aluminum pipeline, and sections of narrow "goat paths," perched on the side of the mountain across avalanche slopes, make this 4-1/2 mile section quite challenging. In its own way, this flat section can be as difficult as any of the surrounding 20 percent climbs in Max Jones' annual "Great Flume Race." But racing or touring, the Tahoe Flume trail is unique. It offers wide-open vistas of what Mark Twain called "the fairest view the whole earth affords" as it contours along the steep granite wall of Tahoe's east shore, often less than half a mile from the lake. Where else can you ride through such rugged mountains on a trail that's absolutely flat?

As with mountain biking in general, the issue of hikers vs. bikers has been brought to light in Lake Tahoe State Park, through which most of the flume runs. According to park ranger Mark Kimbrough, current regulations state that cyclists may ride only where specifically allowed, and that they must maintain reasonable speeds. Presently this means nothing more than common sense, i.e. controlling speeds on downhills, especially when

Continued on next page

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photos by Charles Kelly

Continued from preceding page

approaching blind curves, since hikers may be around the corner. Although no road use restrictions are currently in effect, this situation is to be reviewed this winter, and it's possible that the flumes and other back roads in the park could become off-limits to cyclists. The Tahoe Flume especially is being considered for restriction, since it is so narrow in spots.

I see no real problem regarding the hiker-biker issue on the Flume, but there is an imaginary one. On the more than a dozen rides I've taken over it's length, all on weekends, I've rarely encountered anyone, hikers or bikers, one reason I find the trail so attractive. Inaccessible as it is, with a 1000 foot climb to reach it from either direction, there is little likelihood of the trail becoming crowded. On the few occasions when I've encountered hikers, there have been no problems. Since it's flat, the rider isn't barreling downhill. While a good cyclist can pick up speed on the wider sections, the trail is open with good visibility, and there is plenty of room to pass. On the narrow sections you're off and walking as often as not. As I said, the problems are imaginary.

Imaginary until we're dealing with the authorities and the hiking interests, that is. Many of these people are still not used to bikes in the back country, and there are those who would like to keep them strictly on the pavement (conversely, motoring interests would

like to keep cyclists in the back country). So once again, off-road bicyclists, many of whom took up the sport to get away from the rules and regulations of the road for the freedom of the hills, are being forced to organize to secure their rights, if not their survival. Once again, this time in Nevada of all places,

it's time to get political and lobby, to let the authorities know that off-road cyclists are organized and numerous, basically decent folks and not a bunch of outlaw bikers.

The Flume Trail is special to me and I'd hate to lose the privilege of being able to ride it, not only because it's convenient to where I live, and not only because of its spectacular panoramic view of the lake, the first place I take out-of-town cycling friends, but because it's like going back in a time machine, so close to civilization yet so far. You can feel the era of the flumes and the Comstock Lode, as you look down on the noise and congestion of today's Lake Tahoe almost directly below.

If you have the opportunity, visit Lake Tahoe and ride the flume...find out what you may soon be missing. Most important, write or call the park ranger (or send a signed copy of this article.) Express your opinion that you would like this historic trail kept open for cyclists as well as hikers. You might find that the ranger is anxious for your input, and even sympathetic to your cause. The address is: Lake Tahoe State Park, Attn: Mark Kimbrough, Park Ranger, P.O. box 3283.



COOK BROTHERS RACING

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photo by Don Morris

by Citizen Cain

The event was the first of its kind. Mammoth Mountain ski resort promoted a downhill mountain bike event as part of the three day Plumline High Sierra Mountain Bike Rally that drew over two hundred participants and hundreds of spectators to the famous Sierra ski spa.

Day two of the fat tire competition was billed as the

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN KANKAZE

The course involved riding and racing down the dirt maintenance road that descends two thousand feet from the gondola at the summit of Mammoth (elevation 11,053'). The winding, steady gradient of the descent, lined with rocks, boulders and trees, created some intensely competitive performances in some of the racers. The crowd observing the race, the majority lined up on the last quarter of the four mile course near the parking lot of Mammoth Mountain Inn, rooted contestants downward to perhaps some of the highest speeds yet witnessed in organized mountain

Continued on next page

bike competition.

A unique feature of this extravaganza was the use of the mountain's lift service, a first in the mountain bike sport. Proprietors opened the gondola to bikes several days previous to the event, giving some contestants an opportunity to rehearse their high-speed descents. This made for some interesting competition between locals of the Mammoth area and the visiting hotshoes, notably the tied winners of the race, Jim Deaton (Pro-Am) and Brad Peatros (Citizen Class) finishing in 8:42 each.

Each gondola took two bikes and riders, and it was more than an hour before all 200 were assembled at the top. Once they gathered, another long wait preceded the beginning as final preparations were made on the course below. Threatening thunderstorms massed on nearby ridges and summits. Occasionally lightning shot out of clouds, which sometimes wisped in a light fog around the patient group of two hundred. Sporadic rain whipped by as a steady breeze chilled exposed skin.

Finally the signal was given to start the competition. Veteran race

timer and official Charlie Kelly worked as the starter. His task was to hold each rider's rear tire in place, and give the go signal at the starting time. Riders started at thirty-second intervals, first the sizable crowd of citizen classes, then the smaller group of experts, finally the Pro-Am bunch.

Most riders would probably agree that the most difficult turns in the course were the first three. After this warm-up it straightened out a bit, but continued with the steady descent that was spaced with exciting turns, lined with boulders and trees, and in the road itself, spiced with smallish rocks. Many riders later found their rims accented with side dents.

The competition called for some remarkable performances by experienced downhillers.

To some the race was the acting out of prior rehearsals, and to others it was sheer improvisation at high-speed route-finding. A few of the more uninhibited found themselves in a frenzy of extreme mountain biking; to the spectators it appeared that they were trying to embody the code of the Kamikaze themselves. Many crashed in spectacular fashion, usually winning the sympathy of the crowd when they landed rubber side up. The nature of the sport places full control and responsibility for the bike on the rider, so everyone racing earned the fate that was theirs to be found along the four miles. Conservative 12 minute plus'ers rode with high speed sub ten minutes in an event everyone will remember. A lot of expensive bikes bit the dust, and several racers crashed badly, notably on the bottom of the course where the dirt road emptied out into a parking lot.

Regardless of the loss of skin and bike equipment, organizers are calling the event a success, and plans are for a similar race next year, as soon as the snows melt.

OFF-ROAD OUTREACH

Larry Shaw of Hollywood has dropped a note that warms the little knobs on our tires. The Hollywood YMCA Adventure Trails program allows disadvantaged inner-city young people to get away from it all on mountain bikes. The program is aimed at the 12-17 year old age group and their families, as well as other target groups whose members might not otherwise have a chance to ride in the mountains. The program supplies bikes, bus transportation, leadership and nature guides. Sponsors include the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Olympic Torch Relay Foundation.

Anyone interested in learning more about the program should contact Larry Shaw at 213-467-4161.

STOP THE PRESSES, TURN OFF THE THUMBSCREWS

One of the hazards of doing research out of your files is that now and then you turn up something that's way out of date and you print it as though it were news. Accordingly we got a polite note from Bicycle Detours regarding our roundup of tour services in which we were informed (politely) that we had our head up our word processor. In order to set the record straight let us make it clear here that the name has been shortened from Bicycle Tours The Great Southwest to the infinitely more flexible handle, Bicycle Detours. Also, the archeological tours are, well, history. No longer offered. The Amazon Basin tour is on, price is \$1900, including air fare from Miami, bikes and equipment, guides, lodging and hotels and all meals except those eaten in Lima.

See fellas, when we screw up, you get your name in twice.

ALICE WAILS IN WALES

J.Q. Phelan, also known as Alice B. Tokelips, recently returned from Wales, where she cut a swatch considerably wider than a Fat Tire. Enter-

ing the famous-in-these-pages Llanwrtyd Wells "Horse vs. Human Race" on her trusty national Norbachamp steed, she lost to a horse but waxed the mountain bike element and all other entrants for an uncontested second place. Since the horse was female, the first male, a runner, finished third.

VVA SELLS OUT, NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!

We can't help noting with a trace of irony that the old curmudgeon, one of the gurus of off-roading, Victor Vincente of none other than America, favorite son of the son belt, has gone and hired himself a modrin Public (with an "L") Relations firm to tell the world all about him. We just got our first press release...is this just another

case of an ex-Olympian cashing in?

We can see it now. "Sorry Vic, we love ya, but the striped hair has to go; it's not the All-American image Wheaties is looking for, and I don't care if it is red, white and blue." Let us know what it's like working within the system, will you Vic?

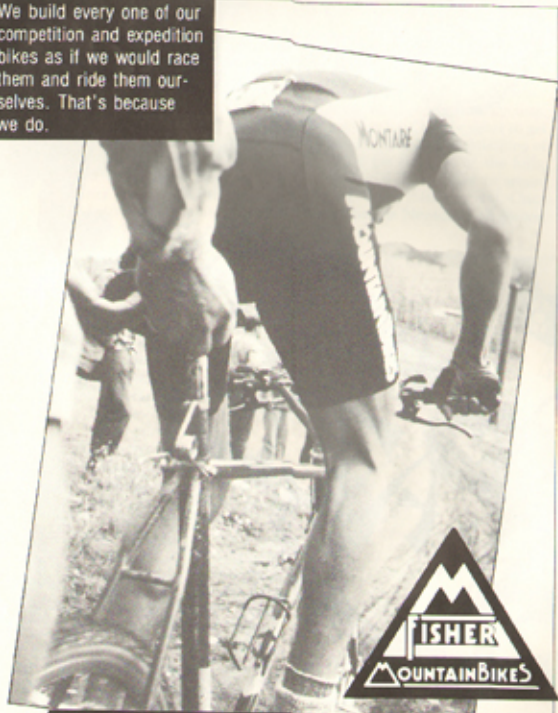
Anyone desire the latest PR on old Vic can check with his agent, Linda McCreery at 213-392-8268.

TEAM TREND

The Arizona Bicycle Sports Association (Abe for short) wants to encourage wider participation in off-road races, so they are offering a team prize at all Arizona events. To qualify, teams must have riders with matching jerseys in four different categories.

Continued on next page

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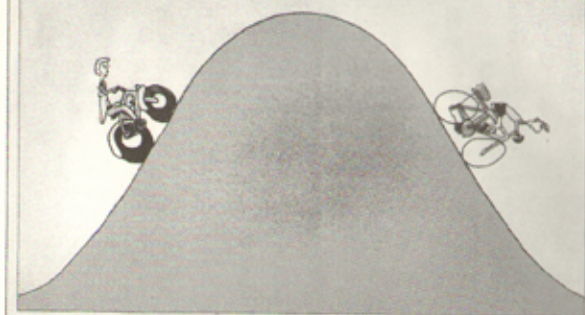
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HIS FINEST HOUR



David Neuhaus

HIS FINEST HOUR

While we're here we'd like to throw in a quick plug for a book by one of our contributors. *His Finest Hour* by David Neuhaus is a children's book in words and drawings, the story of the race between Dudley on his Fat Tires and Ralph on his fancy ten-speed. We won't give away the plot, but the price is \$10.95. Published by Viking Kestrel of New York City, New York.

JERSEY JUMPS FOR FAT TIRES

East Coast riders will be glad to know that there is now a New Jersey ATB newsletter. We think ATB's are something like mountain bikes, so we'll mention it here. The publication will be distributed free through various bike shops. Interested? Write:

NJ ATB Newsletter
P.O. Box 358

Roosevelt, NJ 08555.

And be sure to tell 'em who sent ya.

And while we're mentioning newsletters, our old friend VVA (see above) has been putting one out darn near as long as we have. \$5 a year gets you the Topanga Rider's Bulletin from:

VVA

P.O. Box 701

Van Nuys, CA 91408.

SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT

A couple of interesting stories have come out of Georgia lately. Of importance to all eastern and southern fat-

tire bikers is the vacuum created by the closing of John Koenig's Mountain Madness in Helen, Georgia. Mountain Madness was the center of the Georgia mountain bike community, sponsor of most of the mountain bike competition in that state, and a key stop for the Atlantic States Series. Gone along with Mtn Madness is also the touring service in the Chattahoochee National Forest and one of the most enthusiastic retailers of Fat Chance bicycles.

In a related story, we reported in our last issue a remarkable incident from a race sponsored by Mountain Madness, in which a rider started the race, broke his chain, returned to the start, fixed the chain, re-started the race, and eventually finished second. Various protests were filed, and in the absence of any visible precedent, the second place finish was declared valid by NORBA Honcho Glenn Odell on the basis that the competitor had indeed ridden the entire distance without outside help, since all such help took place on the other side of the starting line. Simple? End incident? Not likely.

The Incident has now entered round two. While the original intention of NORBA was to keep rules as simple as possible, nothing can escape Murphy's Law ("Whatever can go wrong will go wrong"). Gary Robertson, who filed the original protest, has continued it in a letter to NORBA written after Odell's decision declaring the ride valid. (This letter, by the way, is also outside the rules, since Odell's decision is supposed to be final.) Here NORBA is faced with a paradox: no decision will satisfy both

sides of the argument, because The Incident is in the dreaded "Gray Area" where rules do not apply. Like attorneys, both sides bolster their arguments by quoting from the NORBA rule book, which ain't that thick. Yet, Local NORBA Rep Tom Meyer agrees with Robertson that the rider should have been DQed, in direct opposition to the official word, and eyewitnesses are split along lines of team affiliation.

The Incident makes it painfully obvious that we have two choices with regard to the NORBA rules. We can attempt to write a rule covering every possible situation, or we can give someone the authority to make decisions on rulings and see if we can live with whatever comes down. The underlying question is one that has puzzled lawmakers and philosophers for millennia: What is fair? There is no doubt that the rider in question put in a magnificent ride to catch most of the field after starting considerably later. And there is also little doubt that the other competitors felt that he had been given an advantage denied them. Any suggestions?



HUFFY TOSS: RIDE AND FLY

While the western part of the country seems to be the stronghold of the mountain bike racing element, easterners have come up with a new form of competition that leaves the west in the dust: the "Huffy Toss." In this instance, "Huffy" does not always refer to a specific brand of bicycle; although this news will not delight the proprietors of that worthy company, "Huffy" in this case refers to a class of bicycles of a certain mass-produced quality, found in supermarkets and department stores and usually priced at less than \$100 out the door. (Parenthetical remark: the cheapest bicycles in the world are made in the United States.) Here is an excerpt from the flyer for the "Third Annual Huffy Toss" in Green Mountain, Vermont:

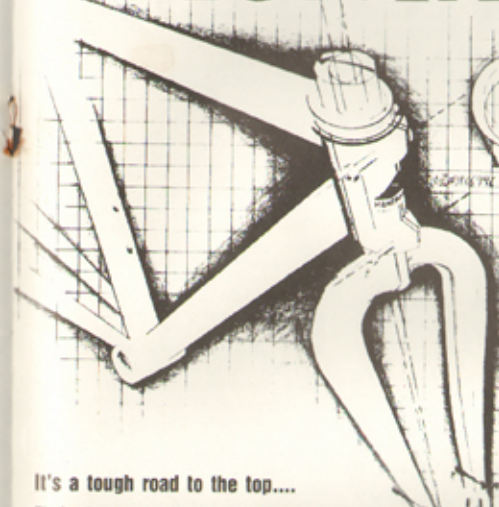
RULES

• Each individual or team must provide their own bicycles.

Continued on next page

MONTANEUS

The Mountain Bike with the "Adjustable" Head Bearing Unit!



Montaneus represents the leading edge of a bold new technological breakthrough in bicycle design and manufacturing engineering. A design that offers the best of both worlds; stability and quick handling, all in one handcrafted bicycle. The patented adjustable head unit allows the Montaneus to adjust to any terrain condition or rider characteristic.

The head unit is a foolproof system; loosen the Allen bolts, twist the bearing cups to your desired angle; allowing fork angle change, tighten the Allen bolts and go for it.

All components on the Montaneus are individually selected for the best all around performance. Durability and design of the Montaneus and its adjustability, are due to the adjustable head unit, making the Montaneus a "riders" bicycle.

Ride the new Montaneus and see what you've been missing.

It's a tough road to the top....

That's why our rear dropouts are made of the same 6061 T6 treated Aluminum that the rest of the frame is made of, 20% lighter than chrome-moly, yet just as strong.

The best and only the best was chosen for the Montaneus.

SPECIFICATIONS:

Sizes available: 19, 21, 23 (21 inch bike specified)

Weight: 28 pounds complete; frame 4 pounds 11 ounces, fork 1 pound 12 ounces.

FRAME: Aluminum 6061 T6 heat treated after welding.

Headset: ABM adjustable sealed.

Fork: Unicrown, tig welded chrome-moly, tapered tubular.

Brake-Ons: 2 water bottles, rear rack, fenders, cable stops, 2 rear drop outs eyelets, (Riv-nuts for Brake-Ons)

Wheelbase: 42.15 to 43.85 inches adjustable

Top tube: 23 inches

Chainstays: 18 inches

Head tube angle: 66.4 to 71.6 degrees adjustable

Seat tube angle: 71 degrees

Bottom bracket: 11 1/2 inches

Fork rake: 2 inches

Call or write for a FREE BROCHURE:

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Continued from preceding page

- Only "Huffy Class" bicycles will be allowed:
- Bicycle not to weigh less than 32 pounds.
- Bicycle not to have more than two aluminum parts.
- Bicycle not to have aluminum rims or crank.
- Bicycle must be of American or Canadian manufacture.
- All bicycles must be in original stock condition, i.e. no modifications.
- Bicycles must be completely operational (or as close to operational as the manufacturer intended).
- Pit crews will be restricted to the use of vise grips and oversized, dull screwdrivers (to be used for prying and changing tires only).
- Any competitor caught using a helmet will be disqualified.

COMPETITION

- Rider will begin at a signal, ride his or her bicycle approximately 100 yards, dismount, and throw his or her bicycle into a designated scoring zone.
- Points will be awarded on the basis of overall time, length of throw, number of parts lost on impact, and style.

PRIZE LIST

- 1st Place - The Coveted Huffy Throw Trophy.
- 2nd Place - The Walid 17th Anniversary Gruppo.
- 3rd Place - A Department Store 10-Speed Racer.
- 4th Place - Two Department Store 10-Speed Racers.

We understand that in pursuit of the ultimate in Huffy launches, conspirators at the Fat Chance factory have built a catapult and achieved impressive hang times along with uncertain landing zones. "I shot a bomber in the air, it fell to earth, after a satisfying interval, I know not where..."



CORRECTION DEPARTMENT

In the June July issue we ran a couple of pictures from the Himalayas that were incorrectly attributed to Greg Vann. Forget it, Greg, Craig Moffat took 'em. You can't believe anything you read, especially here.

USCF NORBA

(Colorado Springs) The National Off-Road Bicycling Association and the United States Cycling Federation have concluded an agreement to cooperate in the development of mountain bike racing. Serious negotiations began in January between USCF Technical Chairman Les Earnest and NORBA president Glenn Odell. The agreement was concluded with the approval of the Articles of Alliance by the USCF Board of Directors at their April meeting, and their subsequent signing by Odell and USCF president Phil Voxland at their meeting.

♥ "The alliance provides for USCF race permits to be issued for NORBA events, so that USCF riders may freely compete in these races and still be covered by USCF medical insurance while doing so."

The Alliance provides for USCF race permits to be issued for NORBA events, so that USCF riders may freely compete in these races and still be covered by USCF medical insurance while doing so. The NORBA events will continue to be run under NORBA rules. In other respects this agreement parallels existing Articles of Alliance between the USCF and the International Human Powered Vehicle Association, concluded in 1980.

Articles of Alliance

These Articles of Alliance between the National Off-Road Bicycle Association and the United States Cycling Federation were approved and signed by both parties on April 13, 1985.

1. Purpose. The United States Cycling Federation (USCF) and the National Off-Road Bicycle Association wish to cooperate in the development of the sport of bicycle racing and to ensure the fair treatment of individuals who participate in the activities of both organizations.

It is understood that each party to this alliance sanctions, or issues race permits to, different forms of bicycle racing not handled by the other. USCF bicycle racing typically permits a high level of technical support to riders while in NORBA bicycle racing no technical support is permitted.

2. Participation. The USCF desires to maintain the welfare of its membership. A benefit of that membership is medical insurance, which is available only in races with a valid USCF race permit. The USCF requires a valid race permit to be in effect at any event in which its licensees compete. The USCF agrees to accept its minimum race permit fee for NORBA events regardless of its prize list. The USCF acknowledges that USCF licensees will abide by NORBA rules at NORBA events.

3. Amateurism. For athletes who claim to be amateurs, both parties to this alliance shall be guided by International Olympic Committee Rule 26 for evaluating and maintaining their amateurism, including IOC Bylaws to that rule, subordinate Technical Regulations of the International Amateur Cycling Federation, and the amateurism regulations of the USCF. The value of prizes in excess of the USCF maximum earned by USCF licensees at NORBA events will be forwarded for processing to the USCF National Office by the NORBA event promoter through the NORBA National Office.

4. Releases. NORBA agrees to indemnify and hold harmless USCF from any and all liability, claims, costs, and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising directly out of any NORBA sanctioned event or events for which a race permit has been issued by NORBA. NORBA will also require each applicant for a sanction or race permit to sign a statement releasing USCF from these liabilities, claims, and expenses.

5. Liason. Each party to this alliance

Continued on page 23

BIG WINNERS

Congrats to Jacquie Phelan and Ned Overend for their twin killing in winning the WINNING Magazine Super Prestige Trophies. The trophy and associated prizes were awarded on the basis of points garnered in a series of specified races across the country, including the Rockhopper, Pacific States Series, Rocky Mountain Series, and Atlantic States Series; the NORBA National Championships, New England Stage Races. No doubt, the awards took a liberal travel budget to pick up, so perhaps we should also congratulate their sponsors, respectively Sun-tour/Wilderness Trail and Schwinn, for picking up those plane tickets.



Jacquie Phelan

Ned Overend

JACQUIE AND JOE REPEAT AS CHAMPS

To no one's surprise, Joe Murray and Jacquie Phelan repeated as National Champions at the NORBA championships held September 29 in Santa Barbara. Joe was challenged considerably harder than Jacquie, taking the lead for the first time on the eighth of the ten laps. Principle rivals Ned Overend and Max Jones were both out of the action early with mechanical problems, and Roy Rivers led most of the distance until caught by Murray.

TNT TANDEM TERROR

Lake Tahoe in the Sierra is a great place for races, and the locals are enthusiastic. This year has seen a number of events in that area, some of them noteworthy. The TNT is held on a fast course, and the 1985 winners, plural, rode a fat-tire tandem. Roy Rivers and Joe Peterson blistered the field and beat local Max Jones by two and a half minutes.

RACE WARP

MAMMOTH MEMORIES

Close Finish of the Year goes to Roy Rivers and Joe Murray at the Plumline 7500 50 mile race. After climbing and dropping 7500 feet over the distance, they arrived at the finish together and had to sprint it out across fifty yards of lawn. Rivers took it by a tire width, his first big win and one of Murray's infrequent losses. Because the big prize was for performance in observed trails, downhill and distance, overall winner Scot Nicol took it without a stage win, showcasing his expertise in all phases of the sport. Nicol isn't a big name in racing, but the field included a bunch who are.

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ATTACK OF THE WESTERN RINGERS

You can take mountain bikes out of California, but you can't take California out of mountain bikes. Scanning the results of the New England Fat Tire Stage Race, we see only one rider in the top ten who isn't from the Golden State. The one exception is Max Jones, and he lives only ten miles across the line in Nevada and breathes California air. According to the P.R. over three hundred riders took part. This is a good argument for keeping the Championships Out West.



NATIONAL OFF-ROAD BICYCLE ASSOCIATION
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WE WUZ FRAMED

Frame designs for mountain bikes exhibit a much wider variety than the designs of their skinnier cousins. Road bike design has a long history, and it has settled into a well defined pattern, a reasonably standard geometry that in custom bikes is modified only slightly to fit individual riders or to perform under special conditions, such as criterium or cyclo-cross. For the purposes of this discussion we'll ignore the radical new bikes designed only for time-trials.

Mountain bike design evolved through the efforts of a number of custom builders, each with his own ideas, terrain, method of construction and riding style. With little to go on in the way of "traditional" geometry, builders have experimented with different sized wheels, a variety of geometries, handlebar designs, forks, and so on ad infinitum. Imported bikes do not generally show radical treatments because they reflect trends rather than establishing them, and it is inefficient to commit large production runs to untested designs.

.....
"With little to go on in the way of 'traditional' geometry, builders have experimented with different sized wheels, a variety of geometries, handlebar designs, forks, and so on..."

"Hey! I just said that!"

Road frame builders usually use lugs for construction, but during the infancy of mountain biking the available lugs were unsuitable for experimentation because they were made only for the limited possibilities of road bikes. Lugs come with specific angles which can be modified only slightly, and if the builder wishes to use other angles or sizes of tubing he must find another way of joining the tubing. The two methods commonly used were lugless bronze welding ("brazing") and Tungsten Inert-Gas or T.I.G.-welding. (In the interest of keeping things simple, this discussion ignores the use of

aluminum tubing, since it represents a very small percentage of custom frames. This should not be considered an indictment of the use of aluminum tubing for bicycles.) There are lugs now for mountain bikes in the most popular sizes and angles, which admits a third possibility to the modern builder who is satisfied to work within these modest limitations.

Some of the first American moun-

tain bike builders used as a starting point of design various models of old Schwinn balloon frames, one popular model being the legendary "Excelsior X." The Excelsior had a fairly slack head angle of about 68 degrees, 70 degree seat, 12" bottom bracket and overall wheelbase of 44-45". Exact wheelbase was always subject to how hard the forks had been pounded, and had a tendency to get longer. Now American mountain bike builders have designs with head angles from 67-72 degrees, 69-74 degrees seat, all kinds of wheelbases, different fork offsets, non-level top tubes, different sized wheels, you name it and they'll build it. For comparison, typical road frame geometry would be 72-74 degrees head and seat angles, 10 1/2-11" bottom bracket and 39-40" wheelbase.

One reason that mountain bike designers have created such a variety of products is the fact that bicycle performance is impossible to quantify; there is no way to hang numbers on it for comparison. Automobiles and airplanes can be subjected to tests which show exact measures of performance, but the same bicycle may perform differently under different riders because of the variety of riding styles, skill levels or body dimensions. Even measurements can be misleading and there may be subtle differences between bikes that look the same on the tape measure. For example, two bikes with identical wheelbases, bottom bracket heights, head and seat angles, may differ in fork offset or chainstay length and thus feel completely different.

Some builders believe that unique local conditions demand a unique approach. In general this takes the form of a complaint about the "California style" mountain bike, which is the style of most mass produced bikes. Regional adaptations include the preference in Crested Butte for drop handlebars, or Angel Rodriguez' contention that because the trails in his area of Washington are exceptionally tight and littered with logs, a bike must have a 14" bottom bracket and very short wheelbase, making it in effect a trails bike.

Now and then a manufacturer will claim that his new design "climbs better," "has more traction," or is "...is more stable at speed." The implication

is that you can improve one area without affecting the others, but bicycle design is all a series of trade-offs. Short of introducing different methods of construction or exotic materials, in order to improve performance in one area the designer will usually have to give something up in another. A bike built for lightness may lose something in durability, a bike built for quick climbing may be less stable in descents. For most riders the ideal is a bike that is balanced in its characteristics, one that is adequate for all types of riding. Now, if we could only agree on what that meant...

THE INNER CIRCLE

There are a few tips that you have to repeat now and then just because they can surprise people who haven't dealt with them before. Such a tip is the Rule of the Inner Chaining.

Depending on riding conditions the inner chaining may wear quickly. Riding conditions that would produce this are found in areas with steep hills and lots of mud or sand with an appetite for metal products. The wear can be insignificant and almost invisible to the inexperienced eye, so don't bother

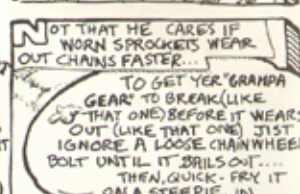
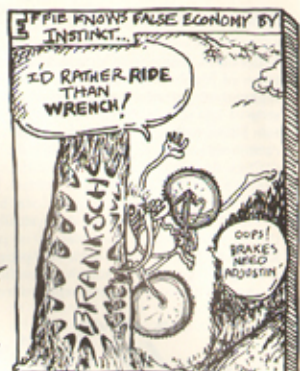
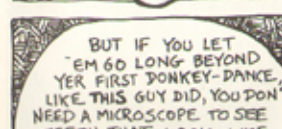
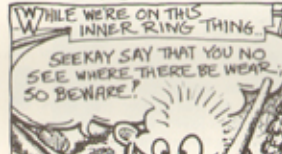
.....
"...inching my experienced hand down her seat tube toward her bottom bracket, I noticed that her inner ring had totally lost its composure..."

"What I just said that!"

to inspect. If there is a problem, it will introduce itself. Thus:

You will be grunting up a steep little pitch in your lowest gear, your only company the cheerful chirping of your

un-oiled chain, when suddenly the chain will catch on one worn tooth of the small chainring and ride around, jamming into the chainstay and bringing your pedaling and your ride to an abrupt halt. Smart riders will confine this experience to one time per inner chaining, replacing the little beggar on first warning. Others will think it is just a fluke, and it won't happen again.



by Todd Campbell

Up on the sun-seared slickrock domes behind southeastern Utah's town of Moab there is what appears to be the work of road crew highway-striper who succumbed to paint fumes. This Mobius center strip of line rock is called the Moab Slickrock Bike Trail. For mountain bikers willing to hazard the entire 10.3 mile loop, this sensuously contoured rockscape offers the ultimate in precision gruntwork.

Once the exclusive haunt of enduro motorcyclists, it has also seen use by endorphin-crazed skateboarders. Now it seems to have become a sort of initiation rite among the local bikeheads. Laid out somewhat like a rollercoaster, the route is physically grueling enough to humble the strongest rider. The rider is in perpetual confrontation with kneebusting knob climbs, which get progressively more demanding on waning energy. The cumulative elevation change seems to make the course half again as long as it would if ironed flat.

Photos by Todd Campbell



Moab Slickrock

Situated 500 feet above and a couple of miles northeast of Moab, the trailhead is a good warm-up ride's distance from Main Street. By following Sand Flats Road past a cemetery, then a dump, and up a switchback, the rider arrives on Bureau of Land Management property, where a sign just off the side of the gravel road states:

MOAB SLICKROCK BIKE TRAIL

- Experienced riders only
- Do not travel alone
- Please register

Good advice, intended for motorcyclists, it is especially relevant to mountain bikers. It is also imperative to carry repair tools, as well as two or three quarts of water, the nectar of the desert.

The rumpled mesa which the Slickrock Trail winds over is almost entirely an exposed sandstone surface. Its easily eroded (for rock), yet abrasive texture is networked by deepened runoff channels. Some of the more resilient sandstone layers cause draining water to carve gorgeous pothole basins, and some of these natural cisterns support aquatic plant and animal life. In one pool at Shrimp Rock, a designated feature along the

route, there are fairy shrimp which look like a cross between a horseshoe crab and a catfish. You may also see the eyes and digestive tract of a transparent fish, a tiny freewimming clam, or flies that walk on algae floats like logrollers on a lake full of timber. The grass spears lining the basin make a nice foreground for a view of the nearby Colorado River.

From several vantage points both along the trail and on trail spurs, the Colorado River can be seen meandering along its ancient path. Too thick to

drink, too thin to plow, the sediment-laden water, which flows a sheer 500 feet beneath the edge of the trail, is the lifeblood of the Colorado Plateau and of the countless creatures downstream. Other grand overlooks include a view into a sheer chasm called Negro Bill Canyon, and another into the Moab Valley, where both portals of the Colorado can be seen as it bisects the valley. Still another viewpoint offers the opportunity to scamper down to a pothole arch. Visible from any of the trail's higher elevations are the nearly 13,000 foot La Sal Mountains to the south, and the magnificent rock playgrounds of Arches National Park 180 degrees opposite.

But these are only idle amenities, compared with the trail's unique ride. With 2,125" knobbies deflated to as little as 20psi, the slickrock affords total traction. Even these petrified sand dunes, which in places slope steeper than 30 degrees, are ascendable. On the steep climbs the rider's knees nearly hit the handlebars, and the eyes can sight-line the bottom bracket through the head tube. On some climbs slight traverses may be necessary, as a straight route may slow the rider to a track stand. After all, the course was designed for motorcycles. So riders cheat a little, widen the course, and taste the success of perseverance. In a sport which is capable of marring the very land we marvel in, it's refreshing to be able to choose any line without

environmental consequence. The skid marks will dissolve, and the painted lines will peel up and blow away. Only the memories of fun will remain.

Although the panorama of slickrock humps looks as smooth as the various stages of melting ice cream, there are tiny ridges and fractures along its surface, and navigating these correctly is crucial on steep descents. You find yourself nearly sitting on your rear tire, chest on the saddle, arms fully extended, brakes cranked hard. When descending these modest steps a delicate lessening of the brake pull is necessary in order to keep the rear tire on the rock.

The paint can be slippery, especially if you're really grappling for traction. There is always room to avoid a stripe, but if you hit one on a steep climb, the adrenalin rush from spinning in place is usually sufficient to bolt you back onto clean rock. Since the course is a collection of short hills, the rider soon learns how to conserve downhill momentum for the uphill approach immediately following. Similarly, each person finds his own steepness limitations, learning when to traverse and when to portage. Gear changes are kept to a minimum, because it is often hazardous to take a hand away from the vicinity of the brake. The gears most commonly used are the smallest churning with the two largest freewheel sprockets, along with limited use of the middle churning.

In a few places along the course the white lines are accented with yellow paint. What resembles a steamrollered fried egg is in fact the signal to exercise caution. Here the trail skirts the side of some steep draws. With a narrow, yawning slot on one side and a wall rising on the other, it is best to feign indifference to fear as you tightrope across in the most cavalier fashion. Ignore the angling treachery and have faith in friction: it's what got you here in the first place.

Yet there are places where friction is not a factor. Occasionally the trail dips into short corridors of deep sand. In these recessed gullies is deposited the sum fragmentation of an immense rock sculpture, channeling an impoverished sandy soil into basins which support sparse plant life; watch for the cacti and yucca if you have to dismount in one of these sand runways. With momentum, cadence, and balance you may be able to spin through to the rock ramp exit. When the sand is moist these runways can be ridden, but when

it is dry and fluffy, three of these stretches can neither be rocked, floated, nor powered through...at least with a bike. Or can they?

The critical moves on the trail occur when the sand gives way to rock. These ramps are steep and ridge-

"You find yourself nearly sitting on your rear tire, chest on the saddle, arms fully extended, brakes cranked hard."

ridden, and the already winded rider can only attempt precise lunges from the tractionless sand to climb out. The transition between such diverse elements can pose a hazard as well as a challenge. When knifing into deep sand

from a fast, steep rock slope it is important to keep weight back, or else the sudden loss of momentum will airmail you.

A series of extra-harsh climbs starts about halfway through the course, where the fatigue accumulates, the momentum slows, and the legs cramp. After this section the trail tops out with a view over Moab, then it's an easy ride back to the intersection with the first leg of the trail. By taking the loop in the direction opposite the arrow, you can avoid the most strenuous climbing, but those who are looking for a challenge can take two short spurts out to Colorado River overlooks, which offer some of the most challenging riding on the course.

Riders unsure of ability or strength may want to ride the practice loop at the beginning of the trail. Those seeking a more intimate communion with

Continued on page 23

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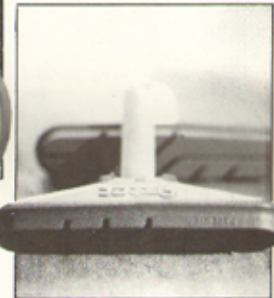
Clothing
from Plumline



Off-road clothing looks like the next big aftermarket for mountain bikers, and Plumline offers this version of mountain bike jersey with pockets on the 3/4 length sleeves. 100 percent polypropylene, with padded elbows and shoulders. The knickers are 85 percent polypropylene and 15 percent Spandex (tm), with padded knees and polypro crotch liner.

These brake shoes are one-piece bonded units designed as replacements for most cantilever sets. Although we saw these a year ago, the first models had a problem with durability in the post. This has now been solved, and from personal experience we can say that they give a very solid feel to the brakes.

Aztec
Brake Shoes



Mountain Bike
Handlebars and Stem

Ohio-based D K Products has a solution for those who find that the factory handlebars on their bikes are too low.

The D K handlebar has a 4" rise and 28" width. Material is chrome-moly in the standard 7/8" diameter, and the weight is given as less than eight ounces. Although the handlebar can be used with any stem with a 7/8 clamp, D K also supplies a stem made of aluminum alloy, complete with a threaded hole with adjuster for the front brake cable. Stem sizes are available in both standards, ".833" (American) or 22.2 mm (the rest of the world.)



Moab Slickrock

the desert canyonlands can try two National Parks, using multitude of jeep trails on these and other unheralded B.L.M. lands in the immediate area. Here the mountain bike's best use is as a satellite vehicle for transport to hiking trailheads where more extensive explorations begin. Those without bikes can rent them at Moab's only bike shop, Rim Cyclery.

"...the sudden loss of momentum will air-mail you."



Upon the completion of the Slickrock Bike Trail it is a downhill coast all the way back to Moab. The tribulations of the ride are very much worth it, especially in retrospect when discussed over the foam of one of Utah's cold ones. The experience is a well-spent 4-5 hours, an investment in spiritual wealth. It tests the design limits of both the mountain bike and the human frame. Your knobbies may be sanded down to nubs, but you'll be riding high.

Todd Campbell works for the Resource Management Division of Canyonlands National Park. He is the author of a study of the impact of mountain bikes in the Santa Ynez mountains of California, entitled "Mountain Bicycles: A Management Dilemma."



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USCF

shall appoint a liaison to maintain communication with the other party and to call the attention of his or her organization to any problems that may arise under this alliance.

6. Disagreement. In case of a disagreement between the parties to this alliance regarding any issue covered by these articles, it shall be submitted to three arbitrators, one ap-

pointed by each party and one by mutual consent.

7. Adoption. This alliance shall take effect when approved by the USCF Board of Directors and the NORBA Advisory Committee and when signed by the Presidents of both organizations.

8. Termination. This alliance may be terminated by either party with 60 days notice to the other.



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This is from the lyrics of "The Wheelman's Song," which was composed in 1883, before "Off-Dirt" was invented, and I take it from "The Wheelman," the magazine of The Wheelman, whom you probably know as a group that collects and restores very old bicycles, memorabilia, etc.

Erik Jensen

The Wheelman's Song

Roll, roll, roll
Over hill and dale
By the gleaming river,
Through the winding vale.

Roll, roll, roll
Til the day is done.
Then for home we'll journey
With the victory won.



BACK ISSUES

We couldn't possibly take the time to answer everyone individually who has asked about back issues, so we'll do it here. Some issues are out of print and out of stock, never to be seen again except by the fortunate few who subscribed early. We do have available copies of some of our back issues. You will be relieved to know that the price indicated includes postage, which costs us more than the bulk rate we use for your subscription copy. Price is \$2.50 per copy. Outside the U.S., add \$1.50 (U.S.) for each copy.

Since we know you would never cut your FAT TIRE FLYER, especially if this ad interests you, duplicate this page to order the back numbers.

	March-April 1982 (Cyclo-Cross, Rocky Cha, Mud-Pup)
	May-June 1982 (Resende to the Sea, Coyote Den, San Antonio Race, Rocky Cha, Mud-Pup)
	July-August 1982 (Race Reports, Camel Valley Clunker Tour, Here Come the Kids, Rocky Cha Mud-Pup)
	January-February 1983 (The Wheel Thing, Crested Butte Tour, Las Vegas Show, Tech Tips, Fat Tires Explode in America)
	March-April 1983 (Gearing, NORBA, Glossary, Boney the Frog, TechTips, Pro-ducts)

	July-August 1983 (Off Bikes and Men...and One Crazy Lady, Brake Review, TechTips, Flames, Why Custom?, MudPup, Shimano Grand Prix, Poetry Corner)
	January-February 1984 (Crested Butte, Race Results, NORBA vs. USCF, Wreck Trip, TechTips, Race Reports, Trail Etiquette, MudPup)
	July-August 1984 (Lone Murray Interview, MudPup, TechTips, Wreck, Trips, Whiskeytown Downhill, Teate to Ennsdale, Book Review)
	September-October 1984 (Fryer Jett to Japan, Mugsy Bell's Bicycle, Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival, Get Thee Behind Me, Mud-pup, TechTips, To The Top Down Under)
	November-December 1984 (An Elder of the Off-Road Tribe, Mountain Bikes in Mountain State, Uncommon Options, Pikes Peaks Update, TechTips, NORBA Nationalists)
	February-March 1985 (Call to Perspective, Poetry Corner, Race Reports, TechTips, Uncommon Options, FatNotes)
	April-May 1985 (The Tire Touring, Al Farrell, Guest Options, Products, Uncommon Options, Punk Bike Enduro, FatNotes)
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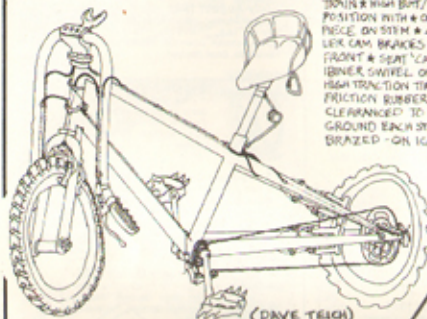
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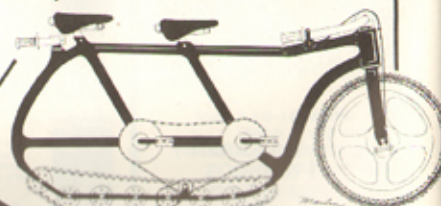
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SPORT RACIN'



that is the final obstacle.

After crossing the barrier from the paved road to the dirt, the race continues up a narrow trail into an area that seems to have been thrashed by a bulldozer or logging. The powdery dust is four to twelve inches deep, and this soft footing eats up dwindling energy as the tires slip, wallow and plow through. The grit kicked up in the process quickly coats the chain. As I grind along the 14th mile is a welcome signpost.

I reason that there should only be a mile or so of hard uphill before the five mile downhill to the finish. The last ascent is the steepest and I push ahead on foot, passing riders steadily. Oxygen debt dizzy, muscles stiff with lactic acid, now is my chance to use riding skill instead of strength of wind to pass a few more. One wild off-the-trail pass launches me off my rig momentarily but I jump back before losing a place. As the trail turns to road again I have some of my wind back and start pushing hard on my big churning. On the final flat to the finish one rider is in view. I pump hard to pass in high gear, but I can't maintain the sprint and downshift two notches to keep my cadence. I cross the line about 45 minutes better than last year, although most of the improvement is due to the absence of the flat tires that plagued me before. Other riders rated the dust section as a 5-10 minute handicap, and starting in the back row is another 5-10 minutes as the leaders are a quarter mile up the road before the back row moves at all and must be twice that far before the tail end gets up to speed.

The most certain reward in an off-road race is the experience. It is the University of Practical Bicycling if you want a detailed lesson about every component on your bike, whether it works, how long it lasts, and what the alternatives are. A race is a chance to see what everyone else is riding, what is good and what is junk. If you want to feel every part of your body and know how much you can take and what is right for you, a race will test you on every level. Races are a meeting ground where the newly initiated can meet the seasoned masters. Mountain bike races are cultural events for those who recognize the importance of the practical designs that are evolving; the evolution of production bicycles that rival hand-made ones may grow out of competition. If you want to be in on the action, try a race. Everyone else is already there.

by Don Merkle

In a class of 200 sport riders the top places are a realistic goal of only the fittest and fastest. The rest of the motivated mass of dust at the starting line seek some private personal accomplishment: bettering one's past record, beating a friend or enemy, or not being last-one-in. Some take the tourist approach, kicking back at an opportune spot to enjoy the day. Most have a noncategorizable inner emotion that draws them for scattered moments of fulfillment, to be part of it, to be there. Whatever the reasons, people are driven to great lengths to appear at some roadhead and plunk down their cash with the expectation of rewards physical, mental or otherwise.

Once enveloped by the massive start and traffic mayhem the rider is part of a group ritual. Shouts and whoops punctuate the inevitable foulups. With riders three and four abreast, fifty rows deep, a missed shift can be a major traffic jam; a thousand pounds of flesh behind is pounding forward on the assumption that you will be out of the way.

Separation and stratification soon stretch out the pack. The furious

weave and wind ahead, the faltering fall behind. The survivors begin to recognize and acknowledge each other with nods of the head or wave of a hand. Progress through the course becomes a shared journey with the stranger at your level. Private duels, passing in the rough, taking the hard line and making the corner better than the other guy, these are the instants of glory that are there for everyone.

The Rockhopper is one of the older Fat Tire events and is also the oldest such race to date. Popular with experts and newcomers alike, the course is well suited for riding in general as well as racing. The long level start and gradual first climb make it easy to get muscles and joints warmed up. The steady climb leads past a scenic lake and changes from a smooth fire road to a rock strewn track that gives the course its name. By this time the riders are more spread out than the tight column that left the parking lot, and now a missed shift doesn't immediately bring curses from a dozen pursuing pedalers who are gridlocked by the hesitation. The rough ride continues downhill to a paved section of the course which climbs a little and winds behind the hill

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