

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1986

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1

\$2.00

Fat Tire Flyer

THE ORIGINAL MOUNTAIN BIKE MAGAZINE

MAGAZINE

TRIALS ISSUE

IN THIS ISSUE!!
DAVID UP
RETURNS



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Moots' Rich cast caught 'logging' some miles at Crested Butte Trials, by Charles Kelly



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Editorial

This being our Observed Trials Issue, it seems reasonable to use this space to expound on what trials means to the world, and to the bicycle faction in particular. As of this writing, not much. Yet. Bicycle trials in 1986 is in about the same stage of development as BMX was in 1974, mountain bikes in 1979, or even Freestyle bikes in 1985. All of the above have come on strongly as competitive aspects of cycling, influencing the way bicycles are used, designed and marketed.

In its infancy, observed trials has already inspired special designs from Fat Chance, Fisher, Cunningham, Ross, Salsa, Ibis, Mountain Goat, Richman, Kuwahara, and no doubt a host of lesser known builders. Some manufacturers' standard products have the features and geometry sought by trials riders, which means that a bike "off the shelf" may be suitable for plenty of trials action with few modifications. Keep in mind however, that damage resulting from stunt or trials riding is usually excluded from any warranty on the bike, so you should weigh the risks before using your precious vehicle.

We are excited about trials because it is a natural extension of what we've been doing for years off the road. But trials gets plenty of attention from spectators, the media, and other riders because it is a perfect sport for presentation. All the action, and there is plenty, takes place in a relatively small area. Since agility rather than aerobic capacity is tested in trials, anyone who can ride a bike can compete. This is slow speed skill, the flip side of downhill bombing.

Now an observed trials is as common on the event card as coffee on the menu. The fact that time is not a factor permits observers to mingle with participants between rounds, a level of intimacy not seen at any other mountain bike event.

Outside of competition there is a vast amount of potential obstacle riding in the world. Everything from stairs to stumps to streams is a potential "section." Where a difficult part of a trail is familiar with local riders, it is often dubbed the "trials section." Each in his own way, we are all trials riders.

What all this has meant in terms of bicycle sales is to date very little. The key word here is "yet."



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TRIALS

SECTION

BEGIN



photos:statistatistics by John Rogers





...the trick here is to ride quickly and with confidence. —Seekay; see Tech Tips, page 18.



"It ain't the steep that gets you, it's the flat part at the bottom."

Walk...er, ride the plank, matey!



photos by Charles Kelly

Trials: an observed picnic!



NICOL SCOT

Among the apple trees in the front yard of Nicol's Ibis shop, FTF's Don Merle and Charles Kelly interview Scot from the saddle of his personal Ibis trials model. In between perusals, Nicol demonstrates his finely crafted trials tool in a manner that makes us believe his feet were born to average about a foot off the ground...and almost never touch down!

Scot: This is the current evolution here.

DM: Let's see: is there anything familiar on this bike?

Scot: If you look at this bike it looks really weird. You notice it has a 24" rear wheel? The 24" rear wheel does several things. It allows you to use very short chainstays: the chainstays on this bike are just over fifteen inches. A couple of other advantages are stronger and lighter wheels. Also, if you're coming off something really big, it has two inches less diameter that you can use to get your weight lower and further back, so you're not going to go

over as much. A 24" rear wheel, for reasons I haven't been able to figure out logically, gets superior traction to a 26".

DM: Maybe it's because of the shorter chainstays.

Scot: Partly, but you take a 24" bike with seventeen inch chain stay and a 26" bike with seventeen inch chainstays, same length, (and) the 24" bike is going to get better traction on the climbs. It must have to do with the weighting, the point of traction. Anyway, this bike does have excellent traction.

DM: It does have a different feel. I rode this bike in Reno at the NORBA (trials) demonstration area, and of all the bikes it was one I was least comfortable with. I didn't notice the rear wheel. These bikes obviously take

some getting used to.

Scot: Yeah, they are definitely different. I started out with my wife's bike, a small bobtail bike with a 24" rear wheel, and that bike worked really good except that the bottom bracket was only 12", a little low, and the wheelbase was a little long. Then I made my first trials bike, which was 26-26, but it was steeper and the bottom bracket was higher, all the things that you necessarily do for trials. That was a year ago. I rode that for a while, then I realized it didn't get as good trac-



4. Or, change 'slam dunk' in #1 to 'slam dance' and call it pogoing BOIMP... BOIMP... (same noise) ...into position for...



3...a 90° pivot wheelie up onto the side rail. Nicol keeps dribbling on this precarious perch: BOIMP... BOIMP... BOIMP... BOIMP...



2. Blocked by the cab, he dribbles his low-pressure tires until he finds the right position for...



1. Nicol slam-dunks his trials bike and self into Team Ibis pickup. Note 24" rear wheel.

tion as my wife's bike did. I decided to go back to 24" rear wheel, plus it gives me shorter chainstays. If you look at a motorcycle trials bike you'll notice that the foot pegs are really far back, and I tried to simulate some of the features of a motorcycle.

DM: So does that mean a longer top tube?

Scot: Actually it does mean a little bit longer. The reason you need a longer top tube is you need to have clearance here.

DM: Foot clearance from the front wheel?

Scot: Right. I could make the wheel base shorter but for two reasons. One is this: the foot would get in the way, and the other is coming down off really big things, 36"-high logs in a position like this, if you move your axle back an inch or two, it's that much further you are going to go before you hit. It's too bad I don't have my big log anymore, but I can show you some of the things I'm talking about on the pickup truck.

Notice how the handlebars are pretty high on this bike, because most of your time is spent up like this. You don't need the knee extension, the aero position, you don't need the downhill bomber position. I want it to be very comfortable; I want to be right there. Another thing is that you need to be able to really jump the bike. I made my biggest strides in trials riding watching the motorcycle trials national championship. Those guys still do things with motorcycles that just blow my mind. The national champion with his motorcycle did a complete 180 degree turn just with his weight and momentum. This guy can do a 180 with a motorcycle that weighs at least 200 pounds. Those guys just sit there when

they have to do something, when they get to a trials section, and they kind of bounce the bike around like this.

DM: Now on trials rules it gets kind of marginal; are you going back and forth or is that forward progress?

Scot: You may not stand still with your foot down, but if your feet are on



5...another ninety to get him off. Then it's a pogo or three and it's time to... 6...get DOWN! ...CLEAN!

the pedals and your body's not touching anything, you may stand still as long as you want.

DM: What else do we see here?

Scot: Steep head angle, 72 degrees, which is not too terribly steep, and not very much rake. I'm not going to get into any numbers here, but I made the whole front end of the bike steer ... predictably. I didn't make it so short for getting that tight turning capability. I didn't think that was nearly as important as having a bike that felt really

stable. All my bikes are seventy, except for my trials bikes, and they're seventy-two. I'm sold on it. I think it's great. If you get into some place where you need to turn sharp, you don't turn, you just go like this (bounces bike in a circle). The important thing is just being able to balance on it and move it around with your own body.

DM: It's not just a combination of numbers that seem right, it's also some feedback from how it feels. You're not just saying it has to be a tight, short bike.

Scot: It has to be an extremely versatile bike.

DM: You have to be able to ride it on the front wheel, you have to be able to ride it on the back wheel.

Scot: You have to do a variety of things with it. A lot of trials are set up so you ride a quarter of a mile between sections, and why make it miserable? So my bikes generally come with ten speeds; this one only has five here. They generally come with ten, and they have a chaining guard that looks pretty, where this one is my own bike, and I only use it for trials, and I only have five speeds.

CK: Two shifters though?

Scot: Sure, that shifter's dormant without the big ring, except to adjust the cage so it doesn't rub. That makes it a rideable bike; plus, you can use it as a normal mountain bike. It's a little steeper; I don't build my all-purpose bikes that way because I feel it's a little too steep to be predictable on steep downhill.

DM: Let's talk about some of the other details. What gears are you using? If somebody had to put together a one-speed for trials, what kind of gears would he be thinking about?



Continued on next page

Scott: For one-speed I would probably recommend using a 24-tooth chainring, and an eighteen or nineteen-tooth rear. That seems to be the standardized way to go. If you're really a good trials rider, you can climb just about anything with a gear like that. It gets to the point where if it's really steep, you don't have to pedal up, you can hop the bike (Scott does so). You can hop it up little hills, it's all legal.

Notice the clip for the scorecard (on the brake cable). Notice how the brake levers are mounted upside-down. Because if you have them rightside-up, and you're up here like this, you might hit your knee (on the clamp protrusion). Little things you learn from experience.

The shift levers, you notice they're not in a convenient place, but they're out of the way. No matter where you are on the bike, and you're all over the place, they're obviously out of the way here. You're never shifting in a section.



Photo by Chuck Kelly

No knee knockers! Scott mounts his shifters out of the way and his brake levers downside-up to make the trials contortions as painless as possible.

Check these brake levers out, the Tech-5s. They're Dia-Compe, they're called the Tech-5s or the 283s.

DM: What's that, a travel adjustment?

Scott: Yeah, if you have small hands, or if you want to keep the lever closer to the handlebar.

DM: What about that derailleur?

Scott: It's the L series from Shimano.

It's funny, (Charlie) Cunningham uses them on his expensive bikes and they cost very little. It's pretty outrageous, it's the kind where you can shift before you pedal. It's one of the bottom of the line.

DM: There is a lot of steel in it.

Scott: It has more toughness. You can probably see that I've landed, look at this: this thing is broken off. I land

Team Ibis mascot, GoBo, takes a factory rig out for a bit-o'-tricky. Note the intense concentration, learned at the heels (and wheels) of a master.



have to get pretty far back. (Rides into and out of pickup truck.)

DM: What about tires and tire pressure?

Scott: For the front tire I'm using the Ground Control. It's not the fastest tire, and doesn't give you the most flotation, but it is the tire with the best traction, and they are really soft. I think it's a good rear wheel tire too, except that they don't make it in 24". IRC is coming out with a new tire made especially for trials, but the only people promoting trials on a big scale is Kuwahara, and they are doing them in 24", so that is all that is going to be available. I run really low pressures like twenty pounds; that's what you want. A little sponge is okay; it's not efficiency we are dealing with, but when you come up to a rough or funny little place where you need traction, get over a rock or log, you want to float over it. Number one, you don't want to have a lot of pressure that is going to knock you all over the place,

using?

Scott: I'm using 170's now because I find you don't need the torque advantage, there is more clearance. This frame is small, it has a sloping top tube. It's only a 15" frame but I have a X-C seatpost so I can get it up to normal riding height.

Now I'll show you what I mean about having the small rear wheel. You

and the lower the pressure, the better the traction.

DM: What about rim pinches? Does that happen?

Scott: You fix it; time is not a factor in these things.

DM: How about those rims?

Scott: The RM-20s here in the front, I put RM-25 on the bikes in production, but because I'm light on the bike I use the 20s, they are very strong. The 25s will be available in a 24" rim. The hubs are the Specialized QR front and rear; they are bombproof and no problem. I haven't seen much problem with these hubs, or any as long as you stay away from the cheap BMX hubs which tend to pull apart at the flange. Hubs aren't that critical.

DM: Does the headset take a lot of pounding?

Scott: It's something that you should probably replace every year.

For brakes, cantilevers work fine in the front but not in the back. When you have the short rear wheel you'd just be munching yourself (on the legs). These are the X-C sports and they are just as good as the other ones. The Sport brakes work great up front too. The stem is a Specialized team stem, it

"If you get into some place where you need to turn sharp, you don't turn, you just go like this:"
BOIMP...BOIMP

...BOIMP...

comes up high, it doesn't have a heck of a lot of extension, and there is a lack of protrusions. A stiffer fork on these bikes is probably better; you don't need the resiliency because you are not dealing with a long ride. You want a raked fork; it doesn't matter if it's straight or curved. That is most of it: high bottom bracket, 13-1/2 inches. Pedals, personal preference; these are X-Cs, the Shimano are also good.

DM: Final thoughts about trials bikes?

Spot: Any mountain bike can be us-

ed for trials. It doesn't take a special bike to learn balance and control—just a bit of coordination and practice. When you become skilled you'll need a better bike. Until then, the sections in the Beginner and Novice Classes are designed for people with stock bikes. That is, a 48 tooth chainring will clear all of the obstacles in all the sections. As you move up through the classes to Intermediate and Expert, the obstacles become much harder and a stock bike could be in for some crucial crunching.

So after you've mastered the art of hopping the front wheel, jumping the bike sideways and a few other tricks, then it's time for a real trials bike. The most important thing, though, is to go do it, and have fun.



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MR. CLEAN!

KEVIN NORTON

Kevin Norton glides over an obstacle with aplomb on his way to a national championship near Virginia City, Nevada. Section judge holds up zero fingers while scoring Norton, a recurring number in Kevin's competitive life.

We caught Kevin Norton on the winners' stand at the NORBA Observed Trial Championship, where we asked him about his background in trials and cycling.

KN: "When I was a little kid, I started BMX in 1973 with Dean Bradley, riding for Sea Schwinn (Costa Mesa, CA) at Escape Country for a long time. In trials, my first competition was in Mammoth, earlier this year. I rode motorcycles for about eight years, and I wanted to get a bicycle to get better on my motorcycle. I bought a cheap Murray, about the worst steel bike you can get, a 24-inch. I rode that 'til it broke, then I got a GT, and I rode that for a while, then Kuwahara (his current sponsor).

"Mammoth was the first trials I was in, and it was set up really easy, so everybody could do it. It was real hard to get ahead because it was so easy. Then I went back east to the Ross race

"I gotta ride really hard stuff to get excited. It's a lot of fun when you pull something off rad."

in New England and I beat everybody by sixty points. That was a tough course, but I cleaned every section at least once. I like it nice and hard, so I can get way ahead.

"After I came back I went to Santa Rosa and the California State Championships and I beat Scot (Nicol) by thirty points ... I had eight points, and he had thirty-eight."

FTF: So you like a course where you don't mind getting a few points, because you know other people will be getting them too?

KN: "Yeah, I like it really hard, because when I practice I ride really hard stuff. That's exciting. It's not exciting to go on some little cow trail. I gotta ride super hard stuff to get excited. It's a lot of fun when you pull something off rad."

FTF: I talked to Rich Cast today before the trials, and he just about conceded to you before the competition.

KN: "I've been at it a long time, and I think I deserve it, I've spent many years of practice for this day."

FTF: You'll get a few more shots at it, I'm sure.

KN: "Yeah, this is just the beginning."

FTF: So are you dialed in for a factory ride with Kuwahara?

KN: "Yeah, IRC tires and Suntour all the way. IRC, they're here, cheering me on, made me a new tire. Suntour, Sonny's delivered my brakes, driving, dropped them off, paying a guy to put them on my bike. Things happened quick. Howie Cohen, he's a great guy."

FTF: So Dean (Bradley) is your team manager?

KN: "Yeah, he's a great guy. Because I haven't been in the bicycle world, this is my first year. He really helped me out, because I don't know anything

"...I think I deserve it, I've spent many years of practice for this day."

about this bicycle world. It's so much more fun than motorcycles. The people are better. This is great. I should have gone to it a long time ago."

Piece a' cake!



Photo by Charles Kelly

"...when I learned that the sport wasn't a test of speed or recklessness I grinned from ear to ear..."



Photo by John Bagg

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

by

Nancy Earley

Women's Trials Champ, huh? That's a tough one to live up to. Riding a bike comes naturally to me, and has since I was six and learned how on an uneven sidewalk that turned into a bumpy dirt path.

Eventually my Schwinn stingray and I went everywhere together, two miles to school every day, a mile through the woods to the park, or even for a seven miler around the lake.

I've gone through lots of bikes by now, skinny and fat and I'm basically doing the same three things I always have: ride, ride, ride. I added fat bikes to my riding shenanigans about four years ago, starting off an old Schwinn three-speed that I equipped with alloy wheels and Snakebilly tires. I'd take that monster on trail rides complete with fenders and rack. It wasn't as quiet or graceful as I would have liked, but it was practical in the city and adequate in the woods; that is, until the day I rode a borrowed Fat Chance and realized that there are big differences.

I wasn't sure what to expect from my first trials competition, but when I learned that the sport wasn't a test of speed or recklessness I grinned from ear to ear and relaxed into it, coming in third. That was encouraging, so I took on trials as my area of natural expertise and started looking forward to every event.

There seem to be 20 to 30 people who show up consistently at every scheduled event in our area and three or four groups who lay out good trials courses, so we get a variety of sections to play/compete on. Events are the only times when we can all get together like this, so we spend the day riding trials, usually ending up with hand-printed t-shirts for prizes, a picnic and beer.

There are several good places to ride trials in and within, all supporting a good crop of New England rocks and boulders, standing and fallen trees, short, steep climbs, moss, and loamy soil that can be used to create great trials sections once you get the idea of what makes a good one.

Hearsay and magazine articles have given the impression that the East Coast is the trials capital of the country. I don't know about that, but I certainly prefer the terrain and variety of obstacles at home over what I competed on in the Nationals at Virginia City. With the popularity of observed trials growing in the last year or two, I wouldn't give credit to any particular neighborhood these days.

A few of us get together now and then to plan events or try and figure out a schedule for regular monthly events. We call ourselves NETHO—New England Trials Hotbed Organization. Someday we'll take the time to make it a serious "club" and get a network going; at least that's the plan. We would like to get some communication opened up and help make trials more important. Anyone interested should contact:

Mike Augspurger
92 Oak Avenue
Belmont, MA 02178



TRIALS PRODUCTS

Only one item on this page is a trials product per se. The bashguard is a nylon skid plate that absorbs some shock and slides nicely over obstacles because of its material.



BASHGUARD

The others are products preferred or suggested by serious observed trials competitors because they work. These carry pads from Fat Ware double nicely as nard guards by virtue of their wrap-around design. See your local BMX dealer for other padded clothing for your trials bike.



PADS

Dia-Compe make this Tech-5, or 283 model brake lever which features a travel adjustment knob that lets you adjust the play out of your system for close-in, fast twitch braking.



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...AND BIKES

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photos by Charles Kelly

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4. RICHMAN



ADDRESSES for most of the products on these 3 pages and on page 23

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Cunningham
Mountain Transport
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Fat Chance
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Somerville, MA 02143

Fat Ware
Rumney Survival
Box 31, Rumney NH 03246

Fisher Mountain Bikes
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Ground Control Tire
WTR Specialized
(see Mountain Transport
under Cunningham)

Bis Cycles
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Richman Manufacturing
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Martin Mfg.
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Mountain Goat
(see Mountain Transport
under Cunningham)

Olympic Lube Wax
Olympic Mountain Products
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Ritchey Quad Tire
Ritchey U.S.A.
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La Honda, CA 94020

Saba Stem
Saba Cycles and
Saba a la carte
132 Howard St.
Flatlands, CA 94952

Specialized Stem
(see Mountain Transport
under Cunningham)

Sushi Bars
(see Cook Bros.)

Tan Tips
WTR (Wilderness Trail Bikes)
(see Cunningham)

2. CUNNINGHAM



Digital static stabilization device, as shown in these two photos, must be supplied by customer.

3. IBIS



1. This Fisher Mountain Bikes trials unit was built so the racing team would have one for the trials stages of combo stage races.
2. This Cunningham, the Ross and Mountain Goat (bash portions of which appear on next page) were produced for the same reason. Good luck trying to get your grimes on a Ross or Fisher just yet; though Charlie Cunningham, and Jeff Lindsay of Mountain Goat could be persuaded to build you one of theirs.
3. This Ibis is in Scot Nicol's info sheet. Both definitely Richman appears on Richman's info sheet. Both definitely available. Other builders we know about that are building trials bikes include Moots, Fat Chance and Salsa.
5. This Torpado 20-incher, shown gettin' rai'd at the Long Beach show in the clever hands of an Italian compatriot, is a production model. So is the 24-inch-wheeled Kuwahara "K.N." (as in NORBA Champ, Kevin Norton -- see page 12), but you may have trouble locating a showroom that has either one for fondling and drooling purposes.

BASH PLATES

photos by Charles Kelly

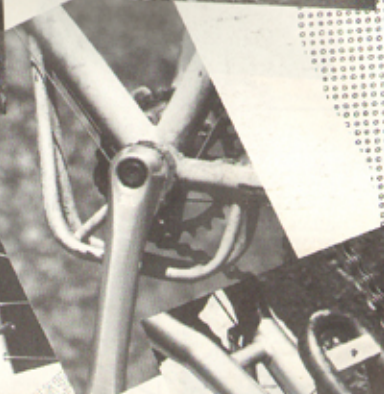


The Mountain Goat.



The "grind one, don't grind the other" method.

The Ross.



The Kawasaki K-1.



Here's a batch of bike muzzles. Such a variety of improvised and built-in hardware, just to prevent dentist bills when cog bites log and sprocket chomps rock! Also see page 14 for the over-counter model.

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RIDE WITH THE TREND
SCHWINN

Tech Tips

by Seek Kay

Observed Trials (are?) coming on strong as the newest branch of fat-tire competition. The reasons for the newfound popularity are an enthusiastic cadre of riders and sponsors: the former see it as a great test of skill and the epitome of "showing off" on a bicycle while sponsors are catching on to it as an attractive spectator sport. Because all the action takes place in a relatively confined area, spectators can watch the experts all the way through the competition rather than seeing them leave, then come back hours later. Because even a specially prepared trials bike can be relatively simple and inexpensive when compared to a bike made for distance racing, the rider does not need to invest a lot of money in his equipment to be competitive.

If any evidence is needed that sponsors like trials, consider this: which fat-tire competitor has the only "signature" model bike? Kevin Norton, sponsored by Kuwahara, has shown at the bike shows the prototype for his version of a mass-produced trials bike with his initials on it.

If there are any losers in the new popularity of this branch, it is the long-distance specialists whose trials skills are a little rusty. Because most off-road stage races now include a trials competition, lack of the basic skills can cost placings in overall results.

Although advanced moves in trials defy adequate description, there are a few rudiments that must be in each rider's arsenal if he or she is to be successful in competition. The rudiments reflect the situations one is likely to encounter in any trials, or for that matter in the woods.

The most obvious trials move is riding over an obstacle. These obstacles can be as large as a three-foot diameter log, or for show only, an automobile. The first trick is just to get up onto it. Look at the sequence of Rich Cast riding over the Road Warrior; as he approaches, he pulls the front wheel up into an extreme wheelie. In the first shot you can see that he has already raised his body weight above the hood of the car, preparing to push on the bars to bring the back wheel up.

Once the weight is on the car, it's no trick to ride over, but it's still a good trick to ride off. This can be done two ways; either the rider can wheelie off and land on the rear wheel, or ride down with the weight far behind the saddle and jerk the front wheel up just as it contacts the ground to keep from stuffing it. Since riding down steep surfaces is a required skill, it bears practice.

Obstacles of this size almost require that the bike be equipped with some sort of bash-guard to protect the chainring and to give the rider a solid pivot point for rocking over logs. Cyclo-cross style chainring guards are a little passe now, because riders don't need a large chainring for this slow-speed event. Now there are on the market a number of frame-mounted guards to protect a small chainring, and all good riders use them.



Another basic skill is riding a narrow track. Riders are often required to ride the length of a log or a plank where the slightest deviation will cause a fall. Although it's hard to do, the trick here is to ride quickly and with confidence. Riding fast you ride a straighter line, and by covering the distance more quickly you have a better chance of keeping "on line" by shifting body weight.

Many courses include turns in which

the rider must completely reverse direction in a small area. The move here is borrowed from freestyle, as the rider "pogos" by standing on the pedals and jumping the bike around in a circle.

"Since riding down steep surfaces is a required skill, it bears practice."

cle: a track stand in three dimensions. An option less frequently used is a nose wheelie, with the rear wheel swinging in an arc to complete the turn. (In video tape of European trials riding, a



Rich Cast of Moots encounters the Road Warrior (see text for details).

rider uses this method to reverse directions while riding on a log.)

One diabolical trick of trials promoters is to space small logs exactly a wheelbase apart, which makes it hard to pull the front wheel up and over the log. Here riders must find the rhythm and bounce both wheels over logs at the same time, then set up for the next pair.

Of course, promoters are required by the rules to lay out courses that are humanly possible to ride. If one rider "cleans" a section one time, it must be possible, n'est ce-pas? But while the

competitors must ride sections without practicing them, the promoter or his or her designated rider can practice at length before the competition in order to prove the course is rideable.

Generally the better the rider, the better he will like a course that is impossible for anyone to "clean." National champ Norton likes a course that he can't ride clean, because he figures that will widen the gap between him and the next rider.

It's almost a given that trials breeds its own bikes. Forget any kind of high-speed handling; what you're looking for here is slow-speed agility. There



Obviously, one doesn't need a car crashin' "Big Foot" to pay one's respects to the automobile; just a couple healthy dollops of skill and some kind of trials bike.

aren't many production versions, although nearly every custom builder has put together one or two either as experiments or as team bikes for stage races.

In general the trials bike will have a very short wheelbase, which in turn gives it greater ground clearance. A high bottom bracket with a small chainring and a bashplate will get it over anything. The saddle is just there to prevent injury, and riders will want it as low as possible, perhaps using an extremely small frame. A smaller bike is lighter also, which lends agility: Kevin Norton won his championship with a 24" wheel bike.

Even those who favor drop bars for

general riding are likely to prefer flat or upright bars for trials. A higher handlebar gives the rider a little more leverage against the frame for tough moves such as yanking the rear wheel up onto a stump, and makes it easier to pull the front wheel up into a wheelie to climb obstacles.

Some expert riders prefer a fork made of straight oversize tubing, which allows them to perform moves that would be likely to damage a lighter-duty racing fork.



For example, not many curved forks would stand up to repeated pogo-ing on the front wheel. Also, since the rider constantly risks stuffing the front end on a steep drop-off, a tough fork seems like a good idea.

"...to ride the length of a log or a plank...the trick here is to ride quickly and with confidence."

Stock models of trials bikes are hard to find, and although they should be appearing eventually, manufacturers still see this as a small market. Custom builders Jeff Lindsay (Mountain Goat) and Scot Nicol (Ibis) have their own trials models, and as mentioned, Kuwahara sells the Kevin Norton model with 24" wheels. From Europe comes the Torpedo, a 20" trials bike,

although this will be hard to find (distributed by Agrati-Garelli Crop of Lexington, SC 803-359-5145).

Trials freak Tom Hillard has made his own trials bike from a cheap Univega that he modified for shorter chainstays. He recommends carving up cheap bikes because they are easy to find and because you don't need the fanciest tubing to go three miles an hour. Besides, with a cheap bike you don't have to get bent out of shape if your bike gets bent out of shape.

For those who aren't NORBA members, here is the 1984 version of the Official Rules for Observed Trials. (Some of the procedural rules have been edited.)

INTRODUCTION

An Observed Trials is an event conducted over a course including natural hazards such as mud, rocks, water, etc., and consists of any number of observed sections. The object of the contest is for the rider to conduct his/her bicycle through the various sections in their proper order, while incurring the minimum loss of points.

7.0 OBSERVED TRIALS COURSE REQUIREMENTS

7.1 — The number of observed sections and number of laps as well as the course closing time must be announced before the start of the event.

7.5 — The course must neither contain impossible turns, ascents or descents, nor be too hazardous.

7.6 — No section shall be included in the Trial which has not been test ridden by either the Event Director or his/her designee to determine that deterioration or weather changes will not render the section too dangerous or impossible to be ridden.

7.7 — No observed section may be

Continued on next page

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Continued from preceding page

deleted until each competitor has had a try at the section or no scores will be recorded for that section. No section may be closed, altered or deleted without the express consent of the event Director.

7.8 — The section boundary markers (typically surveyor's vinyl tape) designating the right boundary of the section shall be red, the left boundary markers shall be blue. Marker flag supports shall not present an increased hazard to the rider in the event of a fall. Exposed ends of flag supports should be padded...

7.9 — Sections must be clearly marked. Minimum marker flag spacing of 10 feet is recommended. Sections under 24 inches wide shall utilize continuous marking. Typical minimum section width is 42 inches.

Rich Cast shows his Moots fender design while riding over Crested Butte traffic.

7.11 — Two sections may be continuous. In this case, riders may not stop after the first section without incurring a failure in the second section. However, a failure in the first section does not influence the score in the second section.

7.12 — Sections may be separated by a short distance called a "neutral zone" in which the riders may stop only briefly, but not leave their bicycles to inspect the next section. Such sections are termed semi-continuous sections. Continuous and semi-continuous sections shall be clearly marked as such.

7.13 — The trails or roads used for the lap shall be clearly marked so the least intelligent competitor can find the sections.

COMPETITION RULES

8.2 — At the Director's discretion, riders may begin the event at any section.

8.3 — Sections are to be separately numbered, and riders are instructed to ride them in that designated order only.

8.4 — At the Director's discretion, sections may be ridden once per lap for multiple events, or multiple times per lap for single lap events.

8.5 — Sections may be inspected on

foot prior to riding. Altering the course while walking the section, such as moving rocks, making a path with feet, hands, etc., will result in disqualification.

8.6 — Competitors will ride only their designated "class" sections and practice in any of the sections before or during the event is strictly prohibited and will result in disqualification.

8.7 — If a rider is severely distracted, or his line blocked by spectators or other riders, he may claim a "balk." The rider may then elect to re-ride the section.

9.0 — (Deals with helmet and safety requirements)

10.0 CLASSES

10.1 — First time riders may enter the Novice or Intermediate class according to their choice. The novice class is intended for beginning riders and/or those without a special trials prepared bicycle. Examples of a special trials prepared bicycle are: having a single chainring with fewer than 40 teeth, or, a wheelbase under 41 inches, or, a bottom bracket centerline over 13 1/2 inches, or, a skid plate.

11.0 SCORING

11.1 — Scoring will be based on the points lost (marks) system as listed below:

ERROR	POINT LOSS (MARKS)
None (clean section)	0
1 dab	1
2 dabs	2
3 or more dabs (footing)	3
Failure	5

11.5 — Scoring shall start when the front axle passes the start markers, and shall end when the front axle passes the finish markers (front axle in; front axle out).

11.6 — A rider may elect not to ride a section, which will be scored as a failure.

11.7 — A rider shall be penalized only for that error he commits which carries the greatest number of penalty points. That is, penalties in any given observed section shall not be cumulative, except for the first three dabs.

11.8 — In the event of tie scores, the competitor with the most cleans or zero (0) points lost will be declared the winner. If there is still a tie, go to the most "1"s and so on. If scores are identical, there will be a ride-off.

11.9 DEFINITIONS

Clean section — no error to incur point loss.

Continuous progress — purposeful travel within the course, without regard to direction of travel.

Course — the area between but not including the boundary markers. When the boundaries are not marked, riders may ride where they choose unless instructed to the contrary...

Dab — any contact which provides support between the rider's foot (or any other part of the body) and a supporting surface or object, while maintaining continuous progress toward the section end.

"...with a cheap bike, you don't have to get bent out of shape if your bike gets bent out of shape."

Failure —

1. Out of bounds — see #5 "gate foul."

2. Stop — a complete, unquestionable loss of continuous progress toward the section end by the rider/bicycle unit. However, unassisted balancing (track stand) is permitted.

3. Dismounting — both feet on the same side of the bicycle.

4. Walking — Both feet on the ground simultaneously or pushing with alternating feet. Multiple dabs exclusively with the other foot does not constitute a failure.

5. Gate foul — failure to negotiate a gate in sequence or passing to the right of a blue or left of a red boundary marker.

Footing — more than two dabs or dragging a foot.

Gate — the plane between two pairs of red and blue boundary markers through which the rider must pass.

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"You're never too young to perfect your endo."

This Junior Novice Class lad launched it during trials at the Canaan Mtn. Series in Davis, N.Y. last May 18-19. —from Ray Miller

photo by Ray Miller



A OUT TO LUNCH

walked before. What made me walk was either a lack of horsepower, a lack of cleverness or some combination of the two. More riding built both of those departments; but after Tom Hillard infected my brain with this trials stuff I know I spent more conscious thought on the handling aspects. I no longer just wanted to ride the hard parts, I wanted to clean them! I found myself going out of my way to ride quirky portions that could easily have been walked, or even ignored altogether.

Sure, the physics of the situation is different when you're bombin' a race course rather than dinkin' a trials section. But I think that the practice with balance and the improved confidence carry over, at least.

If visualization helps you improve your handling, think of trials as low-speed ride-throughs of similar high-speed situations. As a bonus, you get to practice your visualization technique at observed trials while you watch others ride the section and imagine how you'll clean the same set of ribbons.

There's only one drawback I can see to using trials as a tool to improve your handling skills. You might just love it too much for its own self, and eventually have to scare up a trials bike to round out your stable.

Darn!

WHAT DOES TRIALS HAVE TO DO WITH THIS PAGE?

by A.J. Are

What are the gentlemen in these two photos doing? Besides the obvious, they are both riding through the same not-all-that-tricky zone in a beginner's race at China Camp.

Barring what we can't see off camera, the kindest answer to the question, "Why are they assuming these perilous poses?" is probably that being a beginner's race, they didn't have much experience and were therefore ripe for a launch. What's "tricky" is relative to a rider's skill, and there's nothing like lots of hours in the saddle to improve your bike's handling characteristics.

Also, a little dab of trials, so to speak, will do a body a lot of good towards becoming more adroit with the bike.

When I first started riding the fat ones, I'd usually try to ride as far as I could through the zones I'd

photo by Mountain 1980 Photographers



WRECK TIPS

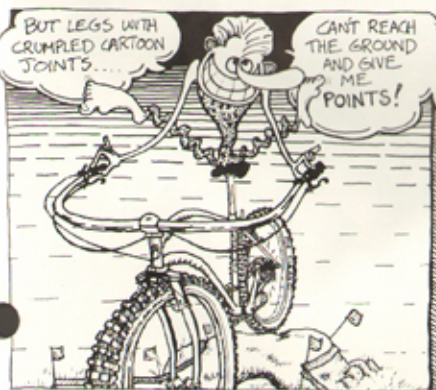
BY FEWE BALLOUT

HONDY FOLKS

CRACK-ATTACKED YAK, YAK, YAK FROM A MIND THAT'S STACKED OUT BACK



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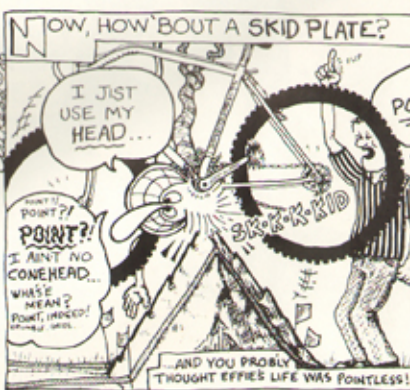
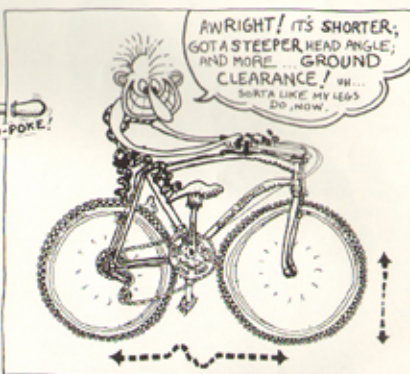
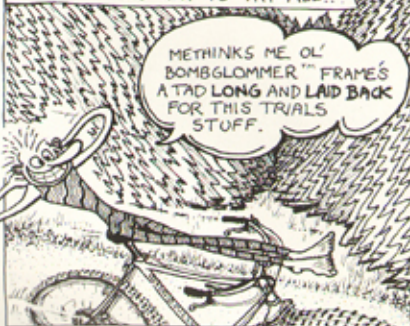




photo by Gary Grupp

by GARY GRIPP

How far can you push your mountain bike before you have to get off and do the pushing? That question was on my mind all through the summer as I thought ahead to winter. How will the bike ride in ice and snow? What conditions will force me off the seat and onto my feet? John, who sold me my Trek 850 said he'd never ridden his on snow. "But try it out and let me know."

"Sure will," I said, handing him seven big bills. "By the way, do you think she'll go with a heavy load?"

Handing back three small bills, he said, "Downhill fast, uphill slow."

In the heat of summer I couldn't be sure what the bike would do in the cold of winter. I only knew what it had to do: get me where I had to go. Now it's winter going on spring, and I can report that the bike has gotten me everywhere I needed to go, except once, and yes, I have done some pushing. Uphill, of course.

It was an unusually cold and snowy winter in western Oregon (usually it just rains) and biking conditions have been, in a word, slippery. But slippery with variety. Not one kind of snow but seemingly all kinds from powder to slush to crackling crunch, and ice in all shades of slidey.

BIKING ON ICE AND SNOW

(Sometimes it's nice and sometimes no)

When the unseasonably early snow started I was primed to try my bike. After the first week's semi-success I figured the bike and I could handle anything short of a monsoon blizzard. A half foot and more of fresh powder rode nicely, though breaking trail was a workout, especially uphill. Then came cold, clear days of crusted fluff, which at first slowed me down. It was quite similar to riding an exercise cycle: lots of good wholesome sweat, but darned little ground-gaining. If I didn't sink, I'd spin the rear wheel. Downhill was better, but still more hassle than fun, until I got into the groove.

Most of us hate getting in a rut, but it makes things go so much easier in snow. Once you're in it, you groove right along. A six-inch four-wheel dinosaur track compacts the snow so you can go. When the surface is crusty and cracks under your tire, traction is usually good, you're moving smoothly, even uphill, oblivious to the dying breed that has blazed your way.

But there is such a thing as getting into a rut that is too narrow and deep. Pedals scrape and you cease moving in the groove. In this case it is time to take measures which may lose you style points but will keep you from getting hung up on the upper crust. Once such technique is the Single Leg Extension. The extended leg (your choice, but I prefer the right) may be used as a prop for stability, as a foot brake (literally), or if things are going badly indeed, as the main thrust propulsion. If the other foot is resting on the lowered pedal (and what else would you do with it? Hold on, I'm coming to that) it will be necessary to ride the opposite edge of the rut. This is tricky, as it is extremely easy to catch an edge, or rather for the edge to catch your front wheel and pull you off-balance, slamming you and your

bike, just like that, onto the frigid rigid. Also, be careful not to bang your extended shin against the unyielding spikes on your upper pedal. It isn't a pretty thing to see a big, bruisin' mountain biker dissolving into tears. And it's bad for our image. This technique, while not without its drawbacks, makes a semi-cyclist of you at least, which is one leg up on being a pedestrian, or heaven forbid, a pusher.

Two other techniques I have found useful in keeping the upper crust from nipping at my rat-traps include the "Half pedal/back pedal/half pedal" maneuver (not your perfect image of

Continued on next page

"Most of us hate to get in a rut, but it makes things go much easier in snow."



photo by Gary Grupp

poetry in motion but effective), and the "Double Leg Extension, in which you make an incongruous isosceles triangle of yourself, with nerve center and Mission Control at the acute angled apex. The triangle is well-known for its rigid stability, but do not for a moment imagine that you are guaranteed an upright position. It is quite possible to be riding triangular and fully in command, then hit a slippery slick and find yourself parted from your bike. If you manage to remain upright, you are at this point no longer a cyclist, but a skater. If you were caught leaning too far forward, you are not a skater, but very briefly a diver, then a slapstick comedian. In the space of five long/short seconds I have been all of these.

For a week I perfected these and other snow biking techniques all in the spirit of fun, then a grim realization came to me. I was running out of fuel ... I mean food. No more

"Bringing home the bacon is serious business when it's twenty five miles to the nearest store and your bike is all the wheels you have."



playing around on an unloaded bike. Bringing home the bacon is a serious business when it's twenty five miles to the nearest store and your bike is all the wheels you have. And there isn't anyone to help out if something goes wrong. But I had been practicing. I was ready. And besides, it was almost all downhill.

The trip down was a breeze. It demanded total concentration, but that is one of the things I like about the sport. A single lapse can cost you dearly and you simply have to pay attention. No mind-drifts. No ho-hum attitudes. It's fun, but it's serious fun. The best kind.

I was convinced that nothing could stop me. A new storm blew in, bringing one of the heaviest snowfalls I've ever seen. And I rode through it grinding the whole way. I even rode five highway miles through it at night, downy flakes sifting through my bright halide light. The experience was euphoric, never mind what the odd stray motorist might have thought when he saw someone on a bicycle appear in his headlights from the vast whiteness of the storm. It is possible that some of my exhilaration stemmed from being freshly bathed in a rented shower after a week's accumulation of woodsmoke and grime. It felt great to be clean, but it was more than that. By all reckoning I should have been miserable riding a bike at night in a snowstorm (that guy must be crazy), but instead the ride was enlivening and exhilarating to a high degree, spiritually as well as physically. I know I won't soon forget how good it felt.

Although this was an undisputed high point of my biking morale, the low point came the next day. During the night the snow had changed to rain, turning fluff to mushy slush. I tried riding and right away it was clear that the bike didn't like the stuff and the stuff didn't like the bike. I couldn't hold to a course. The slush concealed a million-tentacled monster which took perverse delight in pulling my front wheel off track, robbing me of balance and momentum, and converting me to a pedestrian pusher. Of all the things I like least, fangy, venomous snakes, itchy-bitey things like mosquitos, ticks, spiders and no-see-ums, frostbite, poison oak, fenders that don't keep the splatter off your back, and shoulder-hugging log trucks, well slush was now at the top of the list. I hated it because I loved the illusion of being unstoppable, and

sloppy, slurpy, slogging, sluggish slush stopped me cold and laughed in my face. I don't like slush.

Fully loaded with two weeks worth of groceries, my bike now weighed eighty pounds. Ahead of me were twenty-five uphill miles through slush. I didn't like it, but I had to admit defeat. The once unstoppable high-roller now couldn't roll at all. The best I could do was wait for conditions to change, so I decided that this was an excellent time for me to visit friends in town. We are fortunate here in Lane County to have a bus with bike racks; for a mere buck and a half the bike and I rode fifty

"After a night in the deep freeze, snow and ice are sparkly-hard and crunch agreeably under knobby tires, giving a measure of traction."

miles to town. In time the slush would melt; either that or freeze and make travel really interesting. This time it melted off and was soon replaced by fresh snow, which meant I could ride back up to my camp, freshly supplied and ready for ride unencumbered.

Since the last big snow more than a month ago almost nothing has fallen. At elevations below 1500 feet the pavement is clear. But up where I am the roads are locked in a deep freeze. It has been the driest and coldest January (1985) in western Oregon's recorded history. The snow that fell to give us a white Christmas in the mountain still clings to the upper roads in early February. It's the same snow, but it's not the same snow. Day by day it has deteriorated, and so have the riding conditions.

Routinely running the ruts, I have learned to read the road, and have come up with a rule or two, although no rule is true all the way through. In general, new ice and snow is better than old, hard is better than soft, and warm is worse than cold. But time and again I have found the margin between negotiable and non-negotiable slender and unpredictable. Sometimes what looks possible is not passable (at least as a rider), and conversely, an unlikely looking stretch may let you through easily.

Biking on ever-older snow and ice, I have found morning conditions better than afternoon. After a night in the

deep freeze, snow and ice are sparkly-hard and crunch agreeably under knobby tires, giving a measure of traction. As the day warms to above freezing, snow and ice grows unsoftened, shiny and slick as greased glass. The compacted icy snow of the ruts thaws on top, leaving a thin layer of water on the surface. Of all riding conditions this may be the most treacherous, likely to lay you down suddenly with a smack. It's like riding on millions of buckshot BBs rolling in oil; I mean slippery-slidey-slick.

The various stages of frozen to thawed offer a variety of riding challenges. But other factors affect surface conditions also, such as exposure and surface disturbance by vehicles. For instance, the upper section of the road I ride has never been plowed but has been driven, and in a month's time the six-inch track has widened to a foot and a half. Through the days and weeks these tracks have frozen and thawed again and again, pooling in the afternoon and then locking up tight at night. Every tire that has touched the track has left an impression at one level or another. When the pooled water glazes over it follows every contour and impression left behind. This isn't flat ice, but a surface with hills and valleys, ridges and ruts, and every rut wants to pull you off course, throw you off balance. Going downhill on this stuff I sometimes employ the Double Leg Extension. Going up I sometimes find it easier to walk and push.

The middle section of my road has been privately plowed to allow passage for log trucks, but in many places the blade has not made it to the pavement. What is left behind is a patchwork of asphalt and bumpy sheets of ice. You may be sailing along on bare pavement, enjoying the cool breeze on your sweaty chest, riding out a grin, with coattails flying, when you round a bend and find an ex-



photos by Gary Gage

panse of ice in your path. It may be foolhardy, but I just blink and blast through, running a bluff on a beeline, straight as an arrow and sober as a judge, through a minefield of icy disaster. And I'm happy as a cat when I'm back on black.

I don't suppose that ice biking will surpass skiing in popularity as a winter sport. I'm not so sure I'd do it myself just for sport. But it can be fun and exhilarating. Most mountain bikers don't choose winter as their time for riding in the mountains, but if you head for the high country in the spring, you'll likely find ice and snow. And likely you'll find as I have, that sometimes it's nice and sometimes no.

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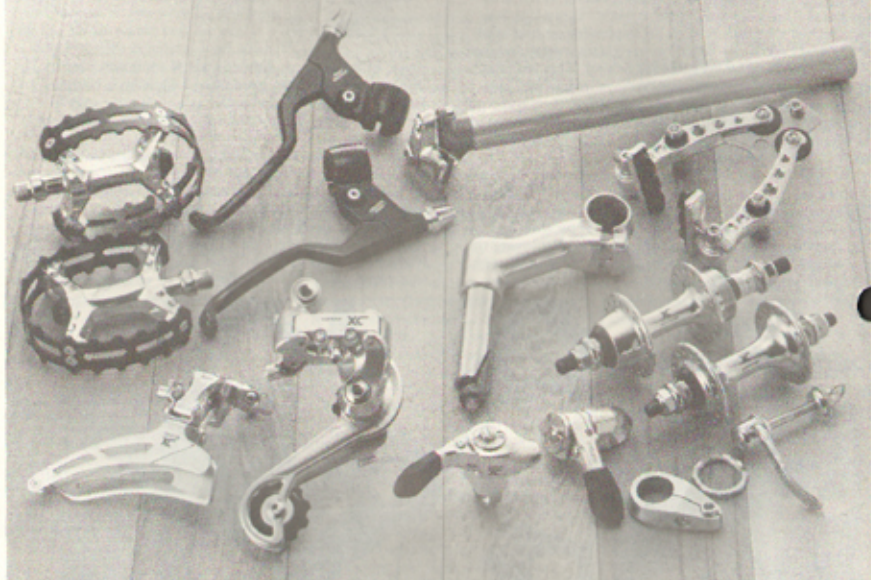
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photo by Don Martie

Rich Cast of Moots fords a creek section in style: wheel high past the far bank, wearing the Moots fenders he designed to lower his sog quotient.



photo by Charles Kelly



photo by Charles Kelly



photo by Rayne Selke

photo by Don Martie





photo by Charles Kelly



Is it true that trials has increased by a factor of ten in the last few years? If so, it's a pity that there should be a limit on the number of trials riders.

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MOUNTAINS IN MISSOURI?

by Mike McLain

Yes, Virginia, there are mountains in Missouri. The air is pretty thick at the summit, but there are mountains. Plenty of places to bust a lung climbing, and stop your heart descending. The best places are in the Ozarks in the southern part of the state, but since they are at least two hours' drive, those of us in St. Louis started looking for closer places to ride.

With suburban sprawl, most of the places where we used to hike when we were younger now ran into chainlink fences, "private property" signs, and over-excitable dogs with large teeth. That left gravel roads and a few beaten-down jeep trails for us to play on. Gee! That got to be as exciting as watching your sister's face break out. That left hiking and horse trails in a few close-by Missouri State Parks. A little discreet exploration, followed by a few informal inquiries, and we had a new place to ride.

By 1983 the Touring Cyclist, for whom I manage a shop, had been convinced to sponsor group rides at some of these parks. The first one at Babler Park went well, except for some rather sticky mudholes on the horse trails. That experience had us putting on the next ride at Castlewood Park, which has fewer horses and less chewed-up real estate. The trails here scale up and down the bluffs along the lower stretch

of the Meramac River, making for scenic views and the usual cardiac arrest descents.

Two rides were scheduled for 1984, another at Castlewood and at Cuivre River Park. At this point the rides were becoming big enough productions that the park superintendents suggested that we get letters of permission from the State Department of Natural Resources in Jefferson City. They weren't opposed to the ride taking place, but reserving group campgrounds and picnic shelters for our exclusive use required a certain amount of bureaucratic paper pushing. So we wrote a letter to the appropriate office stating usage requirements, and so on. We also offered help in maintaining existing trails we were using and in building and maintaining new trails in any lands being added to the state park system.

Imagine our surprise in late May when we received a letter from the state DNR office that said we couldn't ride ATBs in state parks any more. The letter said, "We do not have enough information on the impact of bicycles on trails designed for hiking. The limited amount of manpower available for trail maintenance makes it difficult to properly maintain the trails at their current level of use. We wish to avoid any possible conflicts that might arise between bicyclists and hikers or horseback riders on the park trails."

The letter closed with, "Your offer of assistance in building and maintaining bicycle trails is appreciated and will be retained for future consideration."

I discussed the situation with other ATB riders, other shop employees who had worked with the DNR before, anyone who had ideas. All summer we hashed out possible courses of action without coming to any real conclusions. Tom Yarbrough of the Touring Cyclist thought we could work out some kind of agreement with the DNR. Since he is also tour director of the St. Louis Bicycle Touring Society and had worked with the DNR before, I asked him to help me get an "audience" with Debbie Schnack, DNR Trails Director. He agreed to do so and we got an appointment in November. Still, neither Tom nor I had any real ideas about what we could do to reverse the DNR decision. Perusing back issues of the

"Tom and I walked into the meeting with no statistics, a little hope and a copy of the May/June 1984 Fat Tire Flyer..."

Fat Tire Flyer provided to me by other riders, I came across an article by John Ross about ATB riding in Point Reyes, and some thoughts by Glenn Odell, something about dealing with stated objections first and letting emotional objections take care of themselves. I plotted my presentation around the framework of Odell's ideas.

Tom and I walked into the meeting armed with no statistics, a little hope and a copy of the May/June 1984 Fat Tire Flyer with John Ross' article. What we proposed was an environmental impact study that would monitor trails conditions and experiment with mixed use trails. I pointed

Continued on next page

out to Debbie that so far as we knew, no one had yet conducted any such study on ATB impact. I again offered to organize ATB riders for trail construction and maintenance. After an hour of discussing possibilities, Debbie agreed to present the idea at the next staff meeting. The staff would discuss it and make a recommendation to the Director of Parks and Historic Preservation. It would be his decision, yea or nay.

By the middle of December we had our answer, and it was yes. The terms of the study were:

"The trial period for all-terrain bicycle use in Missouri State Parks will last at least one year. During that time we hope to see what effect such use has on the trail tread and how other trail users

"Pictures of riders, along with listings of group rides and races will be included in the state parks activities guide..."

respond to the joint use of the trail. Contact with trail users will be handled on an informal basis by the park superintendent."

The study is being conducted in two state parks at this time. St. Joe State Park at Elvins, Missouri is the site of an old lead mine and one of the larger parks in the state. Most of the existing trails are horse trails. The other park is Graham Cave at Danville, which has hiking trails. I asked Ms. Schnack if these were intentional choices.

"The trails ... were chosen for several reasons. They were within a reasonable driving distance of the users who were requesting the biking opportunity, they were trails which were receiving limited use, and they allowed for a comparison of user group compatibilities." Why had the DNR decided to do a study, when it seemed as though everyone else in the country was closing trails to use? According to Ms. Schnack, "The request by several individuals who desired to ride their all-terrain bicycles in one of the state parks prompted the department to evaluate the situation. The staff was not opposed to the concept ... in general, but they were concerned about opening existing trails to such use because of potential user conflict

and the unknown effect such use would have on the trail tread. Use of ATBs on a trial basis was deemed the best method of finding the answers to some of those concerns. There are certain heavily used trails in the state parks and certain areas of the parks, such as designated Wild Areas, that will probably never be open to ATB use; however, after considering the information gathered during this trial period, a reasonable decision can be made in regard to an ATB use policy in Missouri state parks."

So where does this leave us? Pretty well off for now. We have places to ride whenever we want to, with as few or as many riders as we like. How do the superintendents feel about it? Bill Bonnell at St. Joe couldn't be happier. Motorized off-road vehicles have a large area of the park set aside for their use. The area set aside for horses, which we use, is just as large, and I think we benefit from the comparison. Bill has fielded no complaints from any hikers or riders so far this year, and he says there hasn't been any negative effect on the trails. In fact, he is so happy that he is now actively promoting ATB use at St. Joe. Pictures of people riding ATBs in the park hang on the walls of

his office. And he has asked the Touring Cyclist if they would like to sponsor a race or observed trials event at the park.

Jim Bush at Graham Cave seemed more uneasy about ATB use there. But after a group ride put on by the Touring Cyclist he had no complaints. ATB use there has been much less than at St. Joe, so it's too early to draw conclusions on trail impact.

Some of us from the shop are now holding discussions with the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation about trail access. We have the okay for a race in December, and together with the possibility of another park opening up to us, this is very encouraging. We have a budding off-road scene that has semi-official approval. Pictures of riders, along with listings of group rides and races will be included in the state parks activities guide put out by the DNR. Thanks are due to Tom Yarbrough for his encouragement, to Donald Humphries for letting us do a lot of work on company time, and to John Karel, Debbie Schnack, Bill Bonnell and Jim Bush of the DNR for having open minds. Thanks to them, the future of trail access in Missouri is bright indeed.



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Newest Ritchey Quad



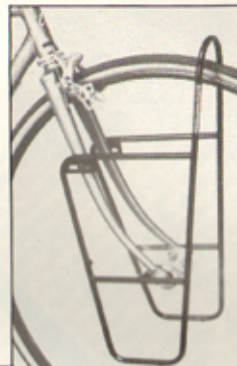
This is the re-release of the fairly new Ritchey Quad 1.9 tire. This edition features a different latex, an improved rubber compound and better distribution of the latex on the sidewall fabric. The new unit weighs in at somewhere near 100 grams lighter than the old.

Cook Brothers "Sushi Bars"

Only in California could a product like this exist. Sushi Bars are the latest in lightweight fiber/composite handlebar technology. Hey, wow, they look way cool, too.



Bruce Gordon Racks



The Bruce Gordon front rack rides a little higher than the more popular aluminum model, and is so solid you can stand on it. The advantage to the brazed steel construction is that it is more resistant to fatigue than a similar diameter of aluminum tubing, and the disadvantage is that these hand made racks are not cheap or as easily available.

Toe Flips



Like the ad next door says, these items get the pedal turned around for easy entry into the clips. If you've ridden off-dirt bikes with built-in flip tabs, you know the principle. Toe Flips work just as well, if not better. Sorry we have no photo; but the photo was down at the of f-stop, well into his fixer bath when we went to press. This illustration's probably worth 1250 words, anyway.

Olympic "Lube Wax"



From Olympic Mountain and Marine Products comes this wax-based lubricant for bike chains and cables. According to the press release, Lube-Wax is applied in a liquid state and dries to a thin film within a few minutes. The manufacturer says that it has a high load-bearing capacity, provides protection against corrosion, resists dirt and hangs in there under tough conditions. Sounds a little like my grandmother.

Olympic also says they have a non-flammable and non-toxic degreaser. Wonder if it works on cheap burgers.

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RATIO BANALITY

by SeeKay
(with assistance from
Mike Flanagan)

$$\frac{P}{C} \left(\frac{CP}{P?} \right) = \frac{1 \times \text{UNITY} \pm \text{Joe}}{\text{ASTPMZ Reggie}}$$

maybe it's
cosy on a 900 g.m. = 45/mi?
or 100 g.m. x 100/a.p.

65.4 RV UNITS?
or was it R/V?

RATIO BANALITY

FRIC = ?
TRAC = ?
PERF = ?
COMF = ?

C.K.
DIRT

RIDERS WITH EXTREME
PERFORMANCE VALUES
CAN PUSH THIS CLOSE TO
CEDED UNITY AND LIVED.

CRED 20049
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Ratios are everywhere in the bike world, starting with the basic "Miles-per-Hour." Percent of Body Fat and Pounds per Square Inch. One of the more mysterious "performance" ratios cited by everybody else's, although they can quantify this in any fashion that can be understood by the consumer. Speaking of "performance" ratios, see in their literature that features a better "performance" ratio than the one in the literature that another whole area of mountain bike performance is considered. Although the task once looked impossible, it looks as though we can now describe performance by developing ratios that explain everything.

First, what is "performance-to-comfort," or is it the other way around. I never know which part of the faction to put on top. For "comfort," perhaps rider picks a number very close to five, signifying Average. Uncomfortable. And Take This Back. This number is either divided or multiplied by the reciprocal of the Performance Factor, which is derived from Average. Which is derived from giving in most cases Travel Per Mile. Performance values with extreme close to 950, but no one has exceeded Unity and lived. On the other end of the scale, life has not been detected in anyone whose Comfort-to-Performance ratio is less than Reggie Jackson's batting average. Ratios explain everything. Ratios explain every trade-off, from speed to comfort to control to traction to grip to power. All you have to do to pick out the perfect bike for you is define what kind of performance you want and look for the bike that comes closest to the necessary ratios. Perhaps the government can set up a bureaucracy to enforce the standardization and accurate rendering of important ratios. Then when you go into a bike shop, instead of listening to some boring sales pitch, you can just glance at the stickers listing in order: Strength-to-Weight (149), Comfort-to-Performance (800), Reflectivity-to-Volulance (1479), and select the bike that is right for you as long as your Credibility-to-Satire Ratio is above average. Joe Montana's pass completion average.

PERHAPS THE GOVERNMENT CAN SET UP A BUREAU OF RATIOS TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY AND STANDARDIZATION OF RATIO RENDERING.

WHICH IS DERIVED
FROM THE AVERAGE
SIDEWAYS TRAVEL PER
MILE

Ed.
Note:

We don't necessarily recommend the activity that takes place in the following narrative, but we would be remiss in our journalistic duties if we didn't run it by our readers. After all, as the universal copout goes, we don't make the news, we just report it.

THE FASTEST FAT CHANCES IN THE WORLD

by Mark Forman

Mountain bikers are crazy. One of the most dangerous things they do is downhill bombing, especially when it hill drops 4700 vertical feet in a little over seven and a half miles on the side of Mount Washington in New

**"A long straight.
50, 55, 60 mph,
Star Wars!"**

Hampshire. Mount Washington has the worst weather on earth! The highest winds ever recorded were at the summit, 231 mph. The temperature can be below freezing any time of the year, and fog covers

the peak about 300 days of the year. Fortunately, on the day of our ride, conditions were perfect.

The auto road, which is open during the summer months, is about twenty feet wide and surfaced with anything from dirt and gravel to a few good stretches of asphalt at the most critically steep sections. A single section at the summit is closed to tourists. This 24 percent section was our start.

To eliminate the possibility of any altercations with other vehicles or being blown over into the valley, we got an early morning start. At 7:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 11, 1985, Two Fat Chances prepared for the mission: bombing Mount Washington. Brakes adjusted, checked and rechecked. Tights on, helmets on, goggles on. Some slow riding at first. Better check my Roller Cams. Okay, let's do it.

Stopwatch on, over onto the first 24 percent slope. Brakes feel good. A left onto the first dirt section. Feels good, let's up the speed to 40 or so. Here comes the first corner, down to twenty, instant 50 mph, lots of corners coming up. Lucky there is no wind, otherwise, forget it.

Pavement! My hands hurt! Oh well, gotta hang on, only six miles to go. Something's buzzing. It goes away if I keep my front brake lever slightly on. I wonder what's causing it.

A long straight, 50, 55, 60 mph, Star Wars! Very loud buzzing, can't hear, ears popping multiple times. Vibration throws my chain, can't look down! A corner! Another corner, this time pavement and dirt. A car! Slide, missed it, whew. My hands hurt. Got

ta change position. Gravel! Didn't even feel it. Almost terminal velocity now. I can see the bottom, about a mile to go, beginning to slow, the bottom stopwatch! Shake hands, Dan, made it. "Unbelievable, how fast?" "Fourteen minutes, forty-six seconds."

"Unbelievable." As it turned out, both brakes and tires were heavily. The rims on Dan Eisenberg's bike heated to boiling and his Aztec pads burned into

**"As it turned out,
both brakes and
tires were
heavily."**

uselessness on his rear wheel. My Tricross front tire expanded in diameter and caused the loud buzz as the knobs struck the Roller Cam plate. It was quite a ride, 14.46 of living on the edge of sanity.

Mount Washington is not to be taken lightly. There have been many deaths on this mountain. Road bikes are not allowed, and generally it is impossible to ride down due to weather conditions. The cyclist here is always at his own risk.

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THE BACK TIRE KICKS-OUT A FEW INCHES AS YOU FEEL FOR YOUR LEAN-UM? ON THE RIGHT-HAND SWITCHES — A MISCALCULATION HERE WILL BE MET INSTANTANEOUSLY BY A SLIDE INTO A SHOULDER OF SCREE AND BROKEN BOULDERS. THIRTY-FIVE MILES AN HOUR THROUGH TURNS THAT WOULD FLIP A 4-WHEEL VEHICLE AT THE SAME SPEED. THE POSSIBILITY OF UPHILL TRAFFIC INTERMITTENTLY FLASHES ACROSS YOUR BRAIN SCREEN — ESCAPE ROUTES? THERE ARE NONE... ALL THE SCENARIOS ARE DIRE... THEN, OH-NIT! OFF TRACK! THE CRUSHED ROCK — THE WALL — TOO LATE FOR BRAKES! JUMP! "C'MON BIKE — JUMP OUT OF THIS FRIGGIN' DITCH!"

OF COURSE, YOU SHOULD NEVER BRAG ABOUT YOUR DOWNHILL TECHNIQUE. IF YOU GET TO THE BOTTOM BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE LIFT YOUR CHIN TOWARD THE CLOUDS, RELAX YOUR EYES AND DRAW A DEEP BREATH — YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL HAS WITH YOU. IN FIFTEEN YEARS OF ADJUSTING YOUR "LOST IT" THREE TIMES ON HIGH-SPEED DOWNHILLS, I'DIVE ALOT TO WATERSKING — THIS WAS "MY SPORT" AS A KID IN MICHIGAN. BALANCE AND BODY-ENGLISH AS WELL AS ANTICIPATING THE WAVES AND RUFFLES AHEAD, ARE THE MAIN INGREDIENTS TO SUCCESSFUL SKIING — BUT THEN, IT HELPS TO KNOW THAT A MISJUMP IS MOST OFTEN MET BY A PLUNGE IN COOL, FORGIVING WATER. EVEN THOUGH, YOU'LL BE WISE TO LEARN THE "TUCK AND ROLL" CRASH TECHNIQUE. YOU CAN BE DANGLING LIMBS OR TENSING THE SPINE WHEN YOU HIT ANY SURFACE AT 35 MPH.

SHOULD YOU WEAR A HELMET WHILE RIDING YOUR FAT TIRES? ON WATER, NO. ON LAND...

...IT WAS A DITCH WITH NO EXPERIENCE, NO PERSONALITY — A FRESH DITCH THAT HADN'T YET SEEN THE RAINY SEASON — A CLUTTER OF SHARP ROCKS, ALL SIZES... A REAL MESS. WE JUST GRAZED THE FIRST COUPLE OF BIG ONES WHILE CRUNCHING OVER.

THE 6 INCH AND UNDER STUFF. I JERKED AT THE BULLMOOSE BARS AND PASSED OVER AN ANGULAR ONE FOOT ACROSS BLOCK OF GRANITE. BUT, THE BACK WHEEL MADE A DIRECT HIT AND THE WHOLE RIG STOPPED.

NEATLY LEAVING MY TOE CLIPS AT 30 MILES AN HOUR, I CONTINUED TO SCAN AHEAD FOR THE BIG STUFF THEN TUCKED... THE TOP OF MY BELL HELMET ZEROED-IN ON THE NEXT LARGE ROCK. I ROLLED AT LEAST TWICE BUT SOMEHOW TOUCHED VERY LITTLE EARTH BEFORE LIGHTING ON MY FEET, ARMS SPREAD WIDE AND PUNCHING UPWIND... A TWO AND ONE HALF GAINED WITH A THWIST I SUPPOSE. JESUS, WAS I LUCKY! I RAN BACK UP TO MY BIKE (MY BODY SEEMED TO BE WORKING RIGHT) AND BANGED IT TO ITS FEET, BOUNCED IT TWICE... AMAZING, THE PUMP, WATER BOTTLE AND CHAIN WERE IN PLACE, THE HANDLEBARS HADN'T TURNED — THE HELMET WAS BROKEN, BUT NOT BLOODY.

"NEATLY LEAVING MY TOE CLIPS AT 30 MILES AN HOUR I CONTINUED TO SCAN AHEAD FOR THE BIG STUFF THEN TUCKED..."

I DON'T BELIEVE THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A GRACEFUL BIKE CRASH. I'VE SEEN A FEW DITCH AND BEEN INVOLVED IN A HANDFUL AND CAN'T RECALL A SINGLE MOMENT OF GRACE OR SYMMETRY IN THEIR EXECUTION (YET, MY STUMP-JUMPING SHANI DIVE IN A LOCAL PARK IN FRONT OF 30 BKE CLUBBIES HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS HAVING A PICTURE-SUE BEGINNING... HOWEVER, LANDING ON THE CHEST AND CHIN WITH A THUD AND LOUD MOAN WAS UNDERSTANDABLY GIVEN LOW POINTS).

THE BARE TRUTH IS — IF YOU'RE GOING TO RIDE, YOU ARE GOING TO FALL, ON OCCASION AND YOU'LL HAVE LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT YOUR ROUTE THROUGH THE OBSTACLES BEFORE YOU. WEARING A HELMET IS A PERSONAL DECISION — A DECISION THAT YOU ARE STILL CAPABLE OF MAKING.

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FROM THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
BACKCOUNTRY!

JACQUE'S GENEROUS GESTURE

As part of her loot from the Pacific States Series, Jacquie Phelan collected a plane ticket to Reno for the Interbike Trade Show. Since the show coincided with the NORBA Observed Trails Nationals, Jacquie motored up to Reno and donated her ticket to an East Coast rider, Nancy Earley from Somerville, Massachusetts. Ms. Earley represents Fat City Cycles.

BYTES ON BIKES

Although bikes are our subject, we use a computer to crank out all the info, so we are necessarily tied to that instrument here at Flyer HQ. For any other bikies who are similarly equipped with a computer and modem for telecommunications, there is a computerized bicycle bulletin board service operated by Bicycle Forum in Missoula, Montana. Let me hear you bicycle bulletin board ten times fast. Membership is free, although there is a reference library online that is available for a \$20 a year subscription fee.

The system now has a mountain bike section, thanks to our online 300 baud input. If you want to check out the BBS, have your computer call 406-549-1318. If a person answers, hang up.

GOING UP?

We're not really economical, as most of our friends will also point out, but we know the economy when we see it. Here's a hot scoop known only to us and everybody on Wall Street. The dollar is sagging. What does this mean to you, the bicycle consumer? It means that the yen is as high as a thirty-foot Buddha's eye, which will drive up costs in the USA on imported consumer products from Japan such as your favorite flavor of off-road, fat tire rolling stock. Now that you know, get out there and prop up that dollar instead of wasting time reading.

ILL MANNERED BOORS

We peruse the other bicycle magazines to save you the trouble. In the "Letters" column of a mainstream

magazine we came across a complaint from a reader who had recently attended the Rockhopper, a popular off-road race in Santa Rosa, California.

The reader complained that although his experience with road cyclists was all positive, he found the majority of off-road riders to be "...so stuck on themselves that the only thing that compared to their egos were their swelled heads. Let me not forget the foul language or their urinating out in the open. I'm not talking about behind a bush, either! They ... weren't the kind of people I'd care to have my 12-year-old around."

Well, did you get that? I know he doesn't mean us, because we missed that race. We suggest that this reader attend a major European road race, because those guys don't use the bushes either. "Excuse me, ma'am. You better move your kid, 'cause he's getting wet."

BOYER TO BE SUBJECT OF NEW RUMOR

He goes by either Jacques, Jonathan, or Jack, but we'll use the initial to cut the confusion. J. Boyer, who cuts a wide swath with skinny tires, may be thinking about considering trying his hand as well as his legs at mountain bike racing. Fans of real racing know that Boyer was the first American to ride in the Tour de France, and his most recent accomplishment on the road was a win with a new record in the Race Across America.

Carefully orchestrated news leaks, which are one step below Informed Sources, have Boyer racing at least a few times next season for a well-known American frame builder. Perhaps he would like to add a NORBA title to his trophy shelf.

Nelson Vails, another big name in cycling, took on the fat-tire sport with a ride at the Los Angeles Coliseum, where a short fat-tire race was held on the motorcycle track between heats at the Supercross. Vails, you may recall, came from a job as a bicycle delivery rider in New York to take the silver medal in the Olympic sprints.

Although his power can't be questioned, Vails proved that there still may be something to learn about mountain bikes, as he stacked on the first jump of his first practice run. Yeah, you gotta steer these things.

Actually, Nelson was not alone in taking his lumps on the track. Stu Thompson, ace BMX hotshot main man, supernovamegastar and otherwise competent rider, also made eyeball-to-earthworm contact on the same contour line in practice and was forced to retire for shoulder realignment. One other Purple Shoulder Medal goes to Dano, who can now tie his shoes without bending over. The attrition was suitable to an arena called the Coliseum, and we ain't lion.

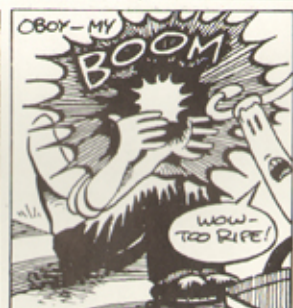
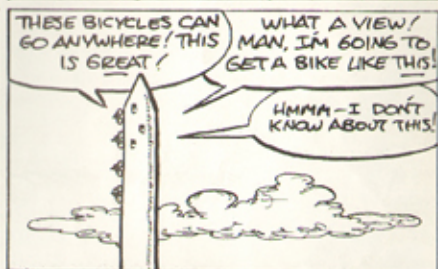
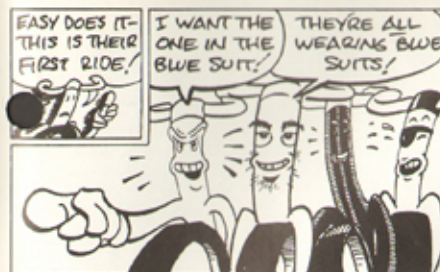
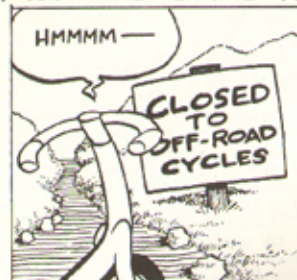
NATIONAL SERIES?

While we have no objection to company sponsored teams, we object to "contests" whose outcome is decided by money rather than ability. A case in point is the concept of a "national" award based on points garnered in specially designated competitions thousands of miles apart.

Mountain bike racing is as much a participant sport as a spectator sport, but the national award concept assumes that the entire racing scene is focused on the two dozen or so riders who have travel expenses picked up for them and therefore can afford to pile up Frequent Flyer coupons along with points for just showing up. To illustrate our position on this issue, let us ask the rhetorical question (do not send answers). "If athlete A beats athlete B by twenty minutes in two races, does that make athlete B a better rider if his sponsor sends him to four more national races in order to garner enough points to make up the difference?"

CORRECTIONS

We blew a few addresses last issue. Victor Vincente of America's is actually: VVA, 1582 Pride St., Simi Valley, CA 93065. At the end of the Flume Trail article, the address should have read: Lake Tahoe State Park, Attn: Mark Kimbrough, Park Ranger, PO Box 3283, Incline Village, NV 89450. Then, from the same town, state and zip, we blew Sierra Bicycle Touring Company's PO Box. It's 5453. Honest!



SPECIAL Thanks to D.M. and C.K. — Kevin Coffey

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