

BICYCLING MAGAZINE Presents

2.50 U.S. 2.95 Can.

Mountain **BIKE**

Vol. IV, No. 1 February 1988

FOR THE ADVENTURE

CHOICE PASSAGES

Great Escapes to Arizona,
Baja, Costa Rica

CLICK SPRING LOOKS

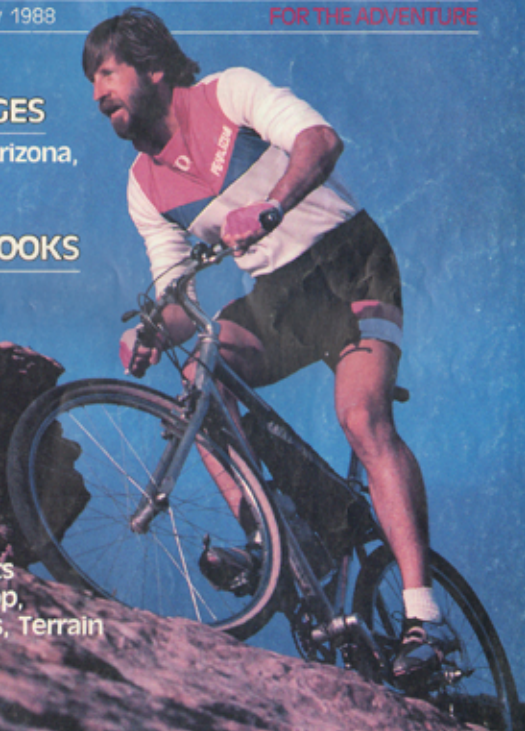
'88 Apparel Guide

RACE WARS

On the Mud Circuit

PLUS

9 New Departments
including Skills, Shop,
Basics, Tests, Goods, Terrain



BEFORE YOU A MOUNTAIN

Ask any cyclophile what makes a custom bike worth a month's salary, and he'll tell you it's the frame.

But in today's market, bikes are getting further and further away from the custom philosophy which bred mountain bikes originally.



Large Prestige tubing is Japan's premier tubing.

And to keep prices from soaring out of sight, a lot of our competitors have cut corners where they didn't think you'd notice. Like the frame. A saddle here. A pedal there.

WHAT'S IN A FRAME?

The major difference in frames and tubing is you. How serious you are about things like handling.

And how much you appreciate the skill that's required to turn TIG welding into an art. Without your understanding that Tange tubing is probably the

tubing in the world, then all bikes are the same. More or less?

	1980 (country)	1976-1980 5-yearly average (group)	1980 Business	1980 Private	1980 Public	1980 Total
Country of origin	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan	U.S.	U.S.
1976-80 Japan share of total value added in fishing	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES (U.S. 4.3%) No other value-added share available	YES (U.S. 4.3%)
Weighted factor available	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Japan's share index	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Three country of origin	Japan/Taiwan/ Taiwan/Japan	Japan/ Soviet Union/ USSR/Japan	Japan/ Taiwan/ USSR	Japan/ USSR/ USSR/Japan	Japan/ U.S. 1	NO
Factorial	20 x 1.0	20 x 1.0	NO	20 x 1.0	20 x 1.0	20 x 1.0
Handbook	Japan	NO	NO	Japan	Japan	Japan

does not interact with domain-based IT components

We have made every attempt to compare specifications and similar computer models with retail price points similar to the Diamond Back Adventure Series models. All of the specifications and price comparisons listed on many features, specifications, components have changed during September/October, 1992 on 1993 product lines. We have gathered the chart information in good faith and cannot be responsible for errors or specification changes based on our competitors' specification sheets.

**THE ADVENTURE SERIES
MEANS YOU'RE SERIOUS.**

After 15 years of building race ready bicycles we're still uncovering new ways to improve performance.

The Arrival and Axis (not pictured) combine a 71 degree head angle with 1 3/4 inches of fork offset, 73 degree seat tube angle, and short 16 7/8 inch chainstays. The geometry makes them full blown, aggressive, NORBA level race machines. And it's going to take a lot of extra pedaling to make up for their obvious advantages.



Precision TIG welding
like this adds superior
strength.

Diamond Back bicycles are distributed exclusively by WM (None of Centurian, Arner and Diamond Back products) and are found at authorized professional bicycle dealers nationwide.

FORK OUT MONEY FOR BIKE. READ THIS AD.

	HS 6202	SPECIALIZED Textiles Group	Chemicals & Plastics	STAINES Textiles & Lace	Woolens & Silk	ACRYLICS & Others
Country of origin	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan	U.S.
HS 7, Tariff (Japan made Chemicals Exempt category)	YES	NO	YES	U.S.	NO	NO (U.S.)
Japan Tariff Rate	YES	NO (Exempt)	NO	NO (Exempt)	NO (Exempt)	NO
Class - country of origin	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan
Excludes - Chemicals Exempt	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Class - country of origin Excluded	Japan/US govt Excluded Japan 26 x 1.5	Japan/ Specialty Excluded 26 x 2.7	Japan	NO	Japan	NO
United States Excluded	YES (Exempt)	NO (Exempt)	NO (Exempt)	NO	NO (Exempt)	NO
Real residential city rate	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Excludes Chemicals Exempt Excluded	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO (Exempt)	YES

discovered, resulted with dramatic, long-term

[illegible]

After months studying with Thomas, I was conversant with French and had a

The Apex and the Ascent EX share the same attention to detail. With a 70 degree head angle and two inches of trail, they steer crisp and track straight.

And, like the Axis and Arrival, they owe their superior paint and finish to the quality craftsmanship that comes from Japan.

**WE WARRANTY
OUR FRAMES FOREVER.***

When you put this much quality into a bike, you're not afraid to stand behind it for a long time.

Like forever.

That's right. We warranty every Diamond Back frameset to be free of defects in manufacturing or

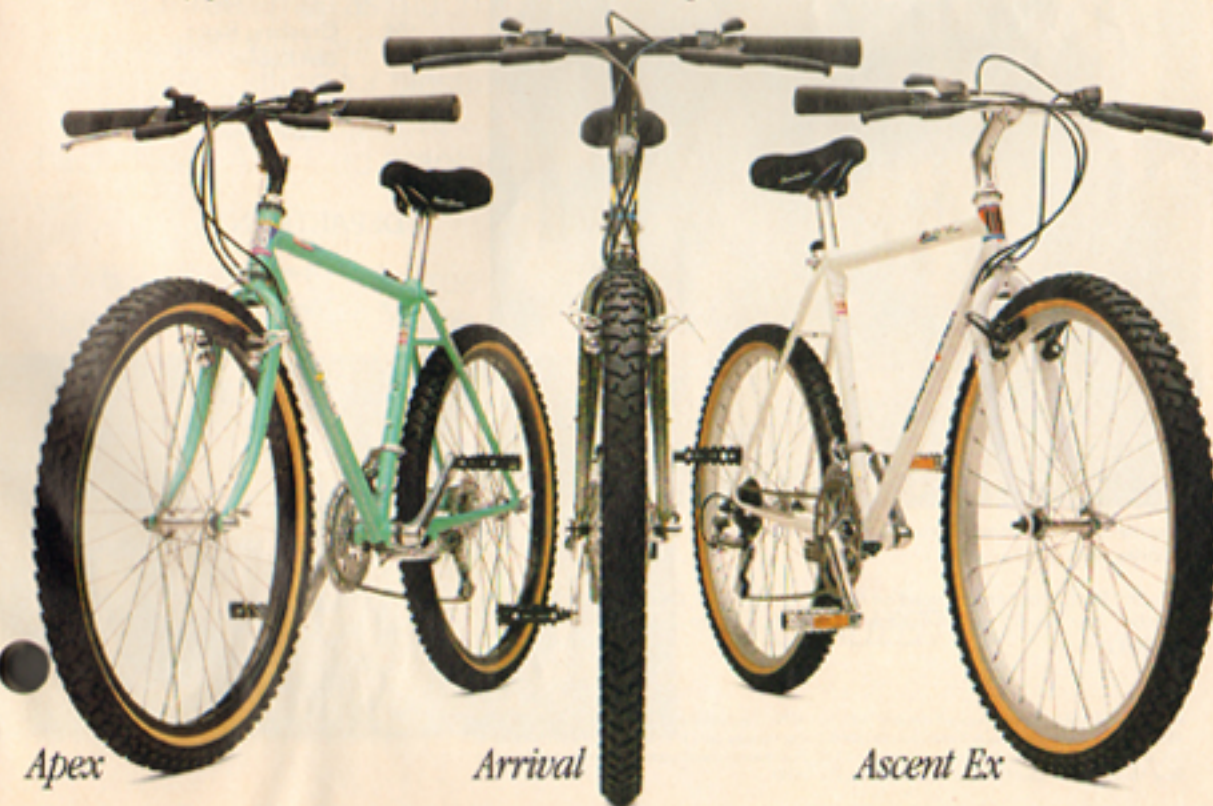
materials forever!

That makes a Diamond Back a smart buy today, as well as tomorrow.



*Arrival frame warmer: limited to 5 yrs

DIAMOND BACK
RATTLE THE COMPETITION



Apex

Arrival

Ascent Ex

The large diameter crown of the Axis front fork works like a shock absorber when you're pounding the trail.

The *Asio* (not pictured) frame is hand built of Tange Prestige double-butted chromoly, meticulously air welded in Japan. And it really goes down the competition two *Asio* models are available. One with an automatic freewheeling shift system that works like a transmission. Besides never missing a shift, you can shift under any load.

The other Axis (the Axis XT) comes with all Decore XT components.

The Arts bar can add a bonus. Its incredible good looks. Head to toe we're given both Arts results a paint job that until now only a custom frame painter could provide.

The Am. d) guaranteed
to smoke 100

Mountain BIKE

FOR THE ADVENTURE

Jan.-Feb. '88

Vol. IV, No. 1



They're off. Overend and Tomac sprinting out to a fast lead in the nationals. Charles Kelly photo.

Cover: Todd Wagner balanced on the edge, Shickrock Trail, Moab, Utah. Clothes are Pearl Izumi's Fieldsensor short and zip T-neck top. John Laprad photo.

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FULL TILT BOOGIE.

Last year, the Specialized Hardrock made plenty of noise.

This year, we turn up the volume. Our '88 version delivers the punch of bikes costing three times as much. It's equipped with SunTour XCD Index shifting for blasting up hills and jamming right back down. And loud graphics on fast colors.

Call us toll-free at 800/634-9188, ext. 13 for a free Specialized '88 Bike Catalog. And your nearest Hardrock Dealer.

Then jump on a Hardrock and make every other off-road bike face the music.




SPECIALIZED

OPENINGS

A Sense of Place

I'm going to tell you everything I know about mountain biking. But first, let me welcome you to the new MOUNTAIN BIKE Magazine, which was recently acquired by Rodale Press, publisher of BICYCLING Magazine.

In this issue you'll find nine new departments, a new design, and a new format. You'll find a new level of advocacy and concern. You'll find better writing and better photography. In spite of these improvements, the heart of the magazine has not been touched. It still captures the spirit of the vanguard sport, still hears the voices. And the voices I hear in the editorial office in Crested Butte are full of adventure. So the magazine would retain its authentic link with the mountains and the environment, we decided to keep the office in the town that sits in the shadow of some of the best trails in the country. BICYCLING Magazine will visit but not move in, though, after twenty-four hours in this righteous place, I am sorely tempted.

Rodale Press will be in a supporting role. We will help raise the magazine to a high level of editorial and design excellence. We will vigorously promote the sport. We will use our good offices to help resolve the land use issues that could adversely affect the future of mountain biking.

Five years ago I conducted a contest in BICYCLING to find a consensus name of mountain bikes. The overwhelming favorite was all-terrain bicycles (ATB) which is about as interesting as a cobbler's awl. We tried our best to make the name stick but the new sport was stronger than we were. Mountain biking has grown faster than anyone imagined. Equally important, it has developed its own technology, rules and ethic.

I promised to tell you everything I know about mountain biking. I just did. The one thing I know for sure is that the sport has a special kind of majesty.

We'll make sure it stays that way.

James C. McCullagh

James C. McCullagh
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GO WHERE NO BIKE HAS GONE BEFORE



Welcome to cycling's outer limits. There are no rules here—only unriden terrain. The sport is trials. The bike is the Haro Response, designed by two-time N.O.R.B.A. National Trials Champion Kevin Norton. Go ahead—ride it up, over and through terrain that stops lesser bikes dead in their tracks. By combining ultra-low gearing, high

ground clearance, precise handling, aggressive braking and heavy-duty bash guard the Response boldly goes where no bike has gone before. The revolutionary, new Response from Haro—First in Freestyle—Now First in Trials.

HARO
DESIGNS

Haro products are distributed exclusively by West Coast Cycles.



NEW DEORE XT. THE TOTAL CONTROL SYSTEM.

Shimano, the technological leader in bicycle component design, introduces one of the most significant performance breakthroughs in the off-road category.

New Deore XT. It's based on input we gathered from some of the world's best off-road riders. Offering more of what has been missing from most off-road components. A higher degree of control.

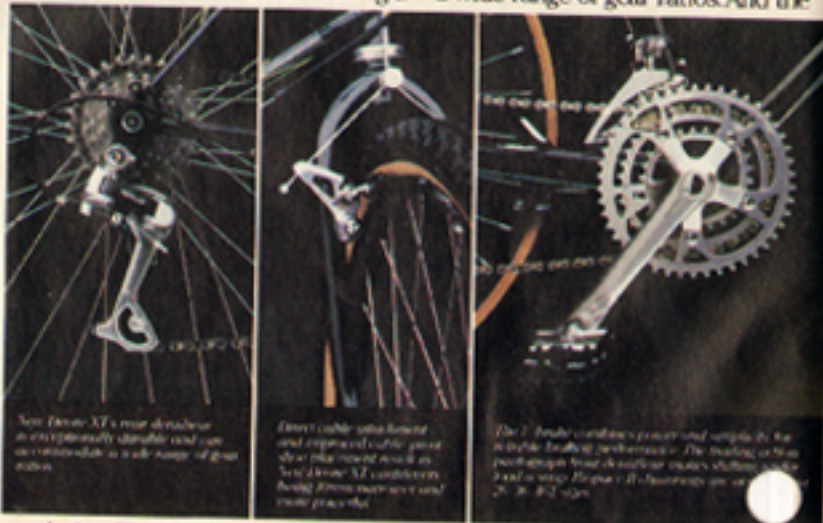
SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION THIS WAY.

New Deore XT precision starts with the most important innovation to bicycling in the last fifty years.

The Shimano Index System (SIS). A quick touch of the SIS thumb shifter, and you're in a new gear. That's because New Deore XT SIS offers the same level of performance as found on our road racing systems. All you do is shift it and forget it, keeping your attention where it should be. On the terrain ahead.

Should you want to shift out of the SIS mode, you can—without missing a

works smoothly and accommodates a wide range of gear ratios. And the



New Deore XT's rear derailleur is exceptionally durable and can accommodate a wide range of gear ratios.

Direct cable attachment and reinforced cable port allow the most secure fit. New Deore XT's cantilever brake offers more power and more precision.

The U-Brake combines power and control for the ultimate braking performance. The braking action is powerful and direct, making shifting while braking a snap. Biopace II chainrings are 28, 36, 48, 52, 58, 64, 70, 78, 84, 90, 96, 104, 110, 116, 122, 128, 134, 140, 146, 152, 158, 164, 170, 176, 182, 188, 194, 200, 206, 212, 218, 224, 230, 236, 242, 248, 254, 260, 266, 272, 278, 284, 290, 296, 302, 308, 314, 320, 326, 332, 338, 344, 350, 356, 362, 368, 374, 380, 386, 392, 398, 404, 410, 416, 422, 428, 434, 440, 446, 452, 458, 464, 470, 476, 482, 488, 494, 500, 506, 512, 518, 524, 530, 536, 542, 548, 554, 560, 566, 572, 578, 584, 590, 596, 602, 608, 614, 620, 626, 632, 638, 644, 650, 656, 662, 668, 674, 680, 686, 692, 698, 704, 710, 716, 722, 728, 734, 740, 746, 752, 758, 764, 770, 776, 782, 788, 794, 800, 806, 812, 818, 824, 830, 836, 842, 848, 854, 860, 866, 872, 878, 884, 890, 896, 902, 908, 914, 920, 926, 932, 938, 944, 950, 956, 962, 968, 974, 980, 986, 992, 998, 1004, 1010, 1016, 1022, 1028, 1034, 1040, 1046, 1052, 1058, 1064, 1070, 1076, 1082, 1088, 1094, 1100, 1106, 1112, 1118, 1124, 1130, 1136, 1142, 1148, 1154, 1160, 1166, 1172, 1178, 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VIEWS

The Shambles Within

HANK BARLOW

PROFESSIONAL MOUNTAIN bike racing is almost a shambles. Support from the industry, pro racers, and grassroots riders is fading fast for the National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA), ostensibly the organizing body for off-road racing. Too many sanctioned and unsanctioned events have been run with little promotion and poor organization. The top racers are in an uproar. They want to be paid for their efforts, and they want this pay to reflect their having given up regular jobs in favor of racing.

"Who cares?" you say. Nobody's forcing them to race. You work five days a week, and you're lucky to get out for a ride once a weekend—assuming it's not raining or the relatives haven't dropped in for a surprise visit. So what's all the fuss?

The fuss is that we—you and me and the rest of the mountain biking public—need pro racing. Man is a competitive animal. It's part of our lives whether we like it or not. And short of a global lobotomy, this isn't likely to change.

Racing tests equipment to the max, and beyond. Components that can survive the abuses of racing ought to last the rest of us for years. And in the search for the elusive winner's garland, racers will try just about any piece of promising equipment. If it doesn't work, it's dropped. If it does work, you'll see others adopting and adapting to gain the same advantage. Nothing generates innovation like competition.

Besides, watching a field of mudders roar by is incredibly exciting. These grime-caked gladiators pressing for ever more speed, fighting to control bikes thrown about by rocks, gravel, dirt, and mud get the rest of us jacked up, inspiring us to ride closer to the edge than we'd ever considered. This alone is ample reason to support pro mountain bike racing.

Who picks up the tab for professional racing? You and me—the consumer—and everyone, except sponsored riders, who enters a race. Sure, companies sponsor races and racers, but they do so for marketing purposes. The costs are passed through to the very consumers the companies want to attract. If such costs weren't billed to us, the companies would go belly up. The race promoter is

also in it to make a buck. It's a business. So this leaves us paying the bills, and that's why mountain bike racing is such a mess.

We've been ignored. In their scrambling for prize lists, race promoters have addressed themselves to the industry's understandable need for large spectator turnouts. Consequently, races are built around those elusive spectators and designed to showcase the industry's pro riders.

Only there aren't any spectators, or precious few at any rate. Even those races held in the midst of urban America, events that are little more than large-scale BMX races, draw few spectators. Mountain bike racing, as far as numbers are concerned, is Neanderthal compared to triathlons and running.

Even worse, these spectator-oriented races do little to promote mountain biking. Going around and around in a circle is not what these fat-tired flyers are all about. It's like trying to promote golf by holding PGA tournaments on miniature courses, windmills and all.

Adding to the confusion are the pro racers who expect that a winning, or top-ten, performance should be generously rewarded. Unfortunately, they're dreaming; the money's not available. Most bicycle companies are small, their budgets tight, and what dollars they do spend are more likely to end up in road racing, where the opportunity for marketing returns is greater.

The upshot of all this has been too many races that finished with sponsors ragging about the lack of spectators and publicity, pro racers carping about prize lists, promoters moaning about everyone's lack of appreciation for their having put on the race in the first place, and the rest of us, the ones who finance all this, bummed out with lousy courses, zero recognition, and high entry fees.

Everyone loses. Mountain bike racing needs to return to its roots—participation. Off-road racing doesn't attract pure spectators, not yet. It may never attract them for the same reason ski racing doesn't: potential spectators are more interested in doing it than watching others do it.

Instead of attempting to lure spectators, promoters and their industry sponsors ought to court participants by creat-

ing mountain bike events, not just mountain bike races. Give the rest of us something to participate in and we'll eagerly watch the pros race. We might even race too if we know we're going to get a quality ride. If we do join the fray, we want to hear our names broadcast no matter how far back we finish. The pros aren't the only ones who want some recognition. But first and foremost, the event had better be full of pure old fun with lots of hot riding.

We mountain bikers are doers, not watchers. We want to get away into the hills and ride. But we also have our heroes, and watching them duke it out is incredibly exciting. Give us the opportunity to ride our brains out, add a generous dollop of quality racing, throw in great courses through off-road wonderlands, and promoters will have to start limiting the fields instead of apologizing for small ones.

In the meantime, pro racers have to back off. They may be deserving of more money, but mountain biking needs a broader interest base before this can happen. The pros, possibly through some sort of racers union, can help by giving mountain biking clinics, visiting bike shops, going to bike shows, and talking to the rest of us after races.

In turn, the bicycle industry needs to make a long-term commitment to mountain bike racing during these lean and formative years, even if this means signing racers to year-long contracts. Companies cannot expect promoters—and thus the rest of the participants—to subsidize sponsored racers through prize lists. Nor should they soon expect dramatic returns from their participation. Potential marketing returns from mountain bike races are limited, no matter how professionally events are run. (Despite claims of "racing to improve the breed," companies also need to increase sales. Otherwise, there wouldn't be any need to field winners, just finishers.)

The plain truth is that we mountain bikers are small in number, and the spectator population even smaller. This won't change overnight. But mountain biking is also hot and getting hotter. If race promoters and the industry will only remember those of us who are already riding these magic carpets, mountain bike racing will quickly regain its vitality.

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MAIL

Re: Crested Butte

Your analysis of Steve Cook in the September/October issue makes him unhappy with the direction the sport is going. Dropping out of a race because it is not "fun," criticizing the race layout because it allows spectators to share the event, accusing race promoters of pocketing most of the entry fees, and deriding the top racers for being motivated by prize money are not words from the mouth of a winner. Earlier paragraphs point out how much of a "loner" he is, trying to bring the sport to the ultimate challenge. He is more of an elitist than a sportsman. It is this type of antisocial behavior that hurts all organizations when they try to promote the sport to the masses.

Mountain biking has made tremendous strides towards the education of the masses... It no longer is the sacred sport of the Gods of Marin; in fact, they have seen that it has been passed on for all to share. This required modifying the original format of races and has brought greater competition to the arena. Is he afraid of them? To castigate the race that Steve didn't like and to label him as refreshing because he personally didn't care for the layout is delegating too much power to his minimal participation in today's sport. He is sour grapes and I don't find his comments refreshing—they are the sounds of one who is losing contact with the sport. He does not have to agree with the direction, or like it, but he has no right to accuse some of the best competitors I have ever met of being mercenary just because they don't march to his tune.

Al Farrell
Beverly Hills, CA

I'm astounded at your interpretation of Steve Cook. Evidently you must have read the piece in a hurry. How you arrived at the opinion he's an "elitist" escapes me. You're the one referring to the "masses," not Steve. He was also not alone in his criticisms of the race course; every competitor I spoke to expressed the same opinion. Choices to race or not were made according to individual priorities. Steve races for fun; the course was not fun, so he dropped out. His problems with most race courses have nothing to do with spectators but with the course itself. Again, he's not alone amongst racers in his thoughts on

promoters' prize lists, distribution of money, and course qualities.

You call him a "loner" (your word, not mine) and equate that with antisocial behavior. When he rides alone, he does so out of concern for dragging others into situations in which they may be decidedly uncomfortable, as was clearly stated. That's anti-social? You also seem to think he's a detriment to promoting the sport. Is going out and discovering new trails, hauling tools along with which to improve trails, marking them so others don't get lost, and finally producing maps of those trails for those who would like to follow in his tracks detrimental to the sport's promotion? That's being out of touch with the sport? If you're ever in Crested Butte, spend a day riding with him and I guarantee your eyes will be opened to a whole new world of mountain biking and to someone who is working hard to expand people's perceptions of what mountain biking is. HB

Re: Born in America

I'm sorry to be a disappointment, but I apparently don't have the right stuff to be a Mountain Bike reader.... My sense of patriotism doesn't demand that I buy hard-to-find all-American bikes and parts at hefty prices when I can purchase similar quality imports for substantially less. I do own a number of U.S. made mountain bike products that offer superior quality at a reasonable price. No one said competing is easy, but it can be done.

For another, I always wear a helmet. I realize this practice flies in the face of fashion rules for the so-cool-I-can-hardly-stand-myself crowd. Years of bicycle and motorcycle riding, with the requisite number of close-calls, keep me helmeted and definitely un-cool. You set your examples, and I'll set mine.

Finally, while I fully intend to try Crested Butte trails, I'm not sure I'd be welcome in town. It seems I just can't get the hang of sending or receiving signals of "unspoken acknowledgement," and my "post-ride strut" makes me look like Mick Jagger chicken-walking.

So if it's all the same to you, I'll continue buying quality and value and practicing sensible riding habits. I'll also warmly speak my acknowledgement and do my chicken-walk for anyone who's

got the good sense to hop on two wheels, even if they only spent "under \$800 or so." You see, I think that's "what this crazy sport of mountain biking is all about."

B.J. Nicholls & Fish
Salt Lake City, UT

There you are, our kind of reader: astute enough to weigh a product's value vs. its cost and able to recognize those American "products that offer superior quality at a reasonable price." As I quite clearly stated, no reasonable argument against the wearing of helmets can be mounted. I'm sure you agree with this. And as far as strutting is concerned, it's not how you do it but your attitude. Obviously, you are a mountain biking aficionado and you'd be completely at home in CB. I agree that's "what this crazy sport of mountain biking is all about." We've said so from the beginning. HB

I have gotten your magazine on several occasions. It is a good magazine but I must take issue with several articles in the September/October.

Those "Born in America" slogans never impressed me much. American business, especially the auto industry, has ignored consumer needs and produced shoddy merchandise for years. Meanwhile, the Japanese have been more responsive to consumer demands and produced high-quality items at reasonable prices. They have beat us at our own game in terms of producing technology such as autos, audio-visual, bicycles, etc.

No doubt American craftsmen do build superb custom framesets and can produce other fine components, if cost is not taken into consideration. Your suggestion to build bikes up from custom framesets and components reeks of an elitist, snobbish attitude. It is generally acknowledged that building up a custom bike from frameset and components isn't very cost effective.... Adding American components could add substantially to the cost. How many can afford the custom route? I purchased a good-quality production bike with Japanese components. I couldn't justify the expense of a custom bike in the \$1,300 price range.

I read magazines such as yours for some light entertainment and as a diver-

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MAIL

sion. I don't need my political consciousness raised by an article such as Mr. Gillis's.

I don't care for your attitude on helmets. I've worn one for years. This move followed the death of a friend who sustained head injuries in a bike crash. He didn't wear a helmet. He was just out for a ride. I doubt if he was thinking of "acceptable risks" at the time. A helmet would have probably saved his life.

Adam Weisman
Los Angeles, CA

After reading your Editor's Note in the September/October issue, my hairs were on end. I sat down to pound out a curt reply because I saw that ubiquitous sentiment about the high cost of American labor rear its head. I'm calming down as the first page I banged out crinkles lightly in the trash can at my feet.

Sure, American labor costs more than labor in many other countries, but it always has. Since our country began, labor here was more expensive yet more productive. And now they say our productivity hasn't increased enough to defray the competition.

Is it labor's fault that we are now scrambling over one another to get jobs as retail clerks? I wonder where our manufacturing industry's Research and Development budgets have gone for the last 20 years. Could it be overseas investments, takeovers, buyouts? Why do British, German, and Japanese investment groups own so many of our old American family businesses? These are businesses they sometimes know nothing about and later dump on the market for cash assets to gain a larger piece of the action.

While I'm off on a tirade: Is it for the best to employ one engineer and a retired military staff consultant for the design of a PC board in yet another missile, or is it a better choice for our future to employ a teacher, a welder, a carpenter, and a day care person for the same price?

Well, who knows? Maybe someday we Americans will turn this boat around and instead of our engineers sitting in morning traffic on the way to the defense plant, they'll be cruising along a beautiful bike path, right next to the new transit system, on their way to work at the bicycle plant. They'll be riding Salsas, of course!

Mike Howard
San Diego, CA

We at Shimano read with interest your editorial in the September/October issue.

We thank you for your constructive criticism. Listening to the needs of the off-road enthusiast, and then having the resources and ability to create products which satisfy those needs, is something Shimano has always worked diligently for.

You mentioned in your editorial that you feared a lack of future product innovation may result from too much current product success. Of course, no one can guarantee future innovation, but it may be of interest to you and your readers to know that it is a Shimano corporate policy that no less than 10% of our employees at the head office be involved in R&D activities. I believe this kind of commitment will ensure that Shimano continues to strive for product innovation for many years to come.

Gary Marcus
Communications Manager
Shimano American Corporation
Irvine, CA

Re: Wilderness Areas

Giving credit where credit is due? I find it hard to believe that your magazine agrees with Mountain Bike Action in regards to MBA's stand against the proposed California desert wilderness areas. I've been mountain biking for quite a few years now, and if I had a choice of places to mountain bike, the Death Valley and Mojave Deserts would probably be one of my last choices. MBA's wrecking crew (wrecking mountain biking for all of us) know better places to mountain bike in, too. Their thin facade of supporting mountain bikers in the fight against the desert wilderness areas is quite transparent to me. High Torque Publications, the same company that publishes Dirt Bike magazine, also publishes MBA. It's these off-road motorcyclists and 4-wheel

drivers that really use (and abuse) the California deserts. As you can probably tell, I happen to support this bill that takes land away from the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) and protects it for future generations. I urge people to support this bill and spend time fighting for access to land worth mountain biking on.

Daniel Hankins
Lakewood, CA

I was disappointed to read your July/August editorial. Environmentalists and others who oppose wilderness for any reason are falling victim to the strategy by the Motorhead Mining-Redneck coalition to diffuse wilderness support...the "divide and conquer" tactic. Because so little of the U.S. is designated wilderness and because the U.S. Forest Service continues to build logging roads, I doubt that mountain bikers are in danger of running short of terrain. In rides around Crested Butte, I noticed the local mountain bike population would sacrifice very little of the proposed wilderness areas were actually designated as such. Certainly this would involve a much more trivial sacrifice than if some of the opposition's plans (Mt. Emmons mine, for example) were realized. Until Mountain Bike magazine and NORBA adopt a more progressive stand on this issue they will be ineffective in seeking my support.

Thomas Noll
Salt Lake City, UT

Re: Getting organized

I agree it's time to organize! Down here in the Bay Area, San Mateo County, things are getting worse, trail-wise, but now the rangers know what bike shops we work at and what trails we



ride, even when we go potty! We've taken up night riding (fun stuff) and are getting a scanner. A few anarchist mountain bikers have little political pull compared to the multi-million-dollar horsemen we try to share the trails with. What I am trying to say is, go for it. Start this national organization! Good luck, happy trails.

Skyline Screamer
C/O Velo Club Bike
Shop
San Carlos, CA

Re: Women & Racing

I am continually irked by individuals—and especially news articles—who...delete half of the racing field! I am hoping to change this attitude in the future. Besides, we're better looking than them! (Just kidding.) The following is a letter to the National Off-Road Bicycling Association.

To: Directors of Operations

The September NORBA News was labeled "World Championships—Largest Mountain Bike Event Ever!" Alright, let's read about the coverage! Well, what about the women? Were there any women in the race? Maybe they weren't allowed to enter? Who knows?

The women's field will never be as big as the men's, but do you think it helps when we aren't even mentioned in "World" events...especially those we participated in? I realize that NORBA is a pristine organization and it takes time to get organized. I would like to see NORBA get started on the right track. NORBA representatives need to be at every NORBA-sanctioned race to see that promoters are being fair and equal to all the racers involved—men and women.

Finally, women are starting to unite in the sport. We have goals and interests that parallel with the men. The top men in mountain bike racing are making a living at it...why can't we? If we support NORBA, it would be helpful if you could support us!

Sara Ballantyne
Breckenridge, CO

If letters must be signed and include name and address of the writer. Send letters to MAIL, Mountain Bike Magazine, P.O. Box 989, Crested Butte, CO. 81224. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.



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SHORTS

CHARLES KELLY

RIGHT NAME, WRONG GUY

We noticed in the Police Bust column in the Marin County paper that Charles Cunningham, 38, of Fairfax, was arrested for allegedly dealing bad stuff out of a bar. We know Charlie Cunningham, 39, of Fairfax, and at the price he sells his aluminum mountain bikes for, who needs to sell drugs? Turns out there are two men in Fairfax with the same name and similar age but with considerably different interests. One Charlie Cunningham still sells only bikes, and the other Charlie Cunningham is innocent until proven guilty.

WHOSE IS BIGGEST?

Several people have laid claim to having the "biggest" mountain bike race. As it turns out, "biggest" depends on the criteria used to measure. The Mammoth Kamikaze was the biggest because the field of 500 was the largest number of riders ever to participate in a mountain bike stage race. The Ross/Swatch race was the biggest because the budget was on the order of \$150,000. A Gant Challenge race in '84 drew about 1,200 participants, making it the biggest mountain bike event in history. About 40,000 spectators saw the off-road bike race held between motorcycle heats at the L.A. Coliseum, giving it the biggest attendance. Also last March, the Mountain Bikers of Alaska put on the 200-mile Iditabike, obviously the biggest distance of all.



Fisher team rider Mike Kloser, second at the World's.

WAIT A MINUTE... WHOSE WORLD IS THIS?

Those who follow the cycling press carefully might be aware of a "world championship" mountain bike event held recently in Europe. This raises an interesting question: Who decides where the world championships are?

We asked Clayton John that very question. Mr. John is the CEO and otherwise boss of the National Off Road Bicycle Association (NORBA), and he told us he had proceeded with plans for the world championships in California unaware there would be a race in Europe with a similar claim. Obviously, it's uncomfortable when communication breaks down like this. Mr. John said he plans to include discussions of agreements among mountain bike bodies when he speaks to the U.S. Cycling Federation regarding cooperation between that body and NORBA.

"We think that because mountain bikes came from

the U.S., we should have plenty to say about where the world championship is held," he said.

Some 15 countries were represented in the European worlds, while the U.S. and Canada split the rest of the world in California. Fortunately for some semblance of sanity, Ned Overend won both events and left no doubt as to who is the male champion of Earth. Ned's fellow Durangoan, Mary Lee Atkins, won the distaff side of the Euro-contest. The way things are going, Overend should see if he can also claim the galactic title.

Actually, the event in California was called The Raleigh Technium World Mountain Bike Championships, so the winners there are to be identified as Raleigh Technium World Mountain Bike Champions, while the European winners are just the plain old world champions, a relatively boring title.

HAND-TO-HAND WOMBAT

Although semi-retired from racing, Jacquie Phelan has not run out of projects, the latest of which is her Women's Mountain Bike and Tea Society, acronymed WOMBATS. WOMBATS is a state of mind as much as a restriction to a single sex, although it has a pair of team sponsors in Bread and Chocolate Bakery and Bellwether. The acronym seems to call for spinoff organizations, such as Teenage Outlaw Mountain Cruising and Toasting Society (TOMCATS), Older Ladies' Discreet Bicycle and Tippling Society (OLDBATS), Fraternity of All-Terrain Cyclists and Traveling Salesmen (FAT-CATS), and Competitive Mountain Bike and Trials Squad (COMBATS).

TV COVERAGE

For those who missed the mammoth Mammoth event (I've been waiting to spring that one) in October, ESPN ran a half-hour program covering the highlights, such as three separate shots, with stop-action and slo-mo, of the same hairy crash. Give 'em what they want.

We got it on video tape, which was fortunate because the program will not be sold. Here's a review of how a national sports network covers mountain biking: The narrative was obviously being read by someone who learned about mountain bikes at the library. The text was accurate enough but the enthusiasm rated a -10. An absence of color commentary or even

race noise made the subject seem remote, as though the program was a description of a particularly interesting experiment with paramedics. How would football come across if its sounds were replaced by elevator music and a detached commentary?

The trials footage was the best part, since the sport doesn't need much explanation. After a half-hour about the four men's events, there was a quick shot of Cindy Whitehead and this afterthought: "Oh yeah, some women raced too."

MAXIMUM INCENTIVE

For those who wonder what kind of living a pro mountain biker makes, the answer is not encouraging. There aren't many full-time pros yet; most work some other gig, too. Ned Overend works in a bike shop and is part owner of Mountain Bike Specialists. Joe Murray is a designer for Marin Mountain Bikes. Max Jones runs a cross-country ski area, and the Ross team lives frugally. Professional women racers have it tougher because their prize money is usually a fraction of what's offered to the men.

The Kid is the exception. John Tomac has an incentive clause in his contract with Mongoose that pays him \$20 for each entrant in races he wins. This also applies to the individual stages of a stage race. Tomac won all seven stages at the Ross/Swatch event, with 50 riders competing. That's 7x50x\$20! Add \$2,000 for first place overall, another \$1,000 for stage wins and prize prizes, and his earnings totaled \$10,000 for four days of mountain bike racing. Thanks to this performance, Tomac also won a truck from Mountain Bike Action magazine for being the most consistent rider during

the season. He'll need it to carry home his loot.

Tomac seems to have solidified his position in the industry by putting together an offensive line to keep the tacklers away. He has hired an agent, Charlie Litsky, who will deflect the distractions and enable him to concentrate on his real problem, Ned Overend.



Sara Ballantyne

OLD NAMES, NEW TEAMS

Some of the best-known riders in off-road racing will be sporting new jerseys next year. Now it can be told that Ned Overend will be moving from Schwinn to Specialized, as will Wilderness Trail Bikes rider Paul Thomasberg and Klein's former national champion, Cindy Whitehead. Already on the team is '87 women's pro champion, Lisa Muhich.

This heavy-duty lineup means that after several years of limited involvement with racing, Specialized is back in force and is the team to beat.

It appears Mike Kloser will be wearing the red-white-and-blue of the Schwinn team, attempting to fill Overend's toeclips. After John Tomac and Overend, Kloser (formerly of Team Fisher) was 1987's most consistent rider.

Kloser's departure leaves a

big vacancy in Team Fisher, but Gary Fisher has shown an ability to find and develop good riders. Before he moved on, Joe Murray also wore the red-yellow-and-black. Fisher rider Sara Ballantyne finished second in the '87 nationals and will be a top contender this season.

Murray will continue to lead Team Marin, but his teammate, Dave Turner, finished higher at nationals and looks like a rider on his way up.

PROHIBITION AT WHISKEYTOWN

One of California's venerable events, the Whiskeytown Downhill, had a rough '87. First, the date was changed from summer to fall to avoid conflicts with other big races. Then California caught fire and the volunteers who usually staff the long course weren't available. The race, which would have been the seventh annual, was cancelled.



Tomac's custom, aero haircut.

THREAT OR PROMISE?

In answer to your unasked questions, John Tomac cuts his own hair, and he says he wants to give me a haircut. As they say in Somerville, fat chance.

NEW NAMES, NEW TEAMS

Raleigh Bicycles is apparently going to take a higher profile in racing. Its new Technium mountain bike line was introduced with fanfare at the Raleigh Technium World Mountain Bike Championships, and it appears steps are being taken to form a team. During the Raleigh-sponsored worlds, Margaret Day and (Jungle) Jon Poschman were paid to wear the red-yellow-and-black company colors. Poschman immediately ripped the sleeves off his jersey, the better to flaunt his style.

COMPUTER STIMULATION

The sales rep at the big mountain bike event was enthusiastic about the computer analysis of his new line of off-road frames. "We put our bikes on the calibrated destruction machine, and they lasted twice as long as anyone else's before frame failure."

A Bay Area rider with a reputation for being hard on equipment spoke up. "Say, I'd like to test one of those bikes myself." Little did the rep know that this bike takes pride in rapidly finding the weak link (or spoke, lug, fork, etc.) in new equipment.

Sure enough, 10 minutes later he returned with what was left of the bike. The rep was incredulous. "What the hell did you do to it?"

"Well, I went out to the parking lot and just bunny-hopped and pogo-ed until something broke. It was the fork. Check out the way this butted steerer doesn't extend far enough for the right strength...."

The moral, if there is one, is that computers should learn how to bunny-hop. ★

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SKILLS

Starting on a Hill

HANK BARLOW

The chunk of wet deadfall you failed to notice shoots out from under your rear tire like a slippery watermelon seed. Your forward motion comes to an abrupt, crank-spinning halt. You flop forward, almost smacking your chest on the handlebar. Your right foot flies off the pedal and stabs uselessly in the air as the bike starts tipping over. All that saves you is a quick leg brace and a hard squeeze of the brakes. You're at a dead stop in the middle of a dishearteningly long, steep hill.

Three choices confront you. You can push or portage the bike to the top; you can go down and try it again; or you can continue the climb from where you are.

The first choice is probably the most popular. The second is the least, because few riders care to repeat work already accomplished. The third is the most tempting, but also the most difficult. It means remounting on the same terrain that just stopped you. Restarting

never fails to be harder than riding all the way up on the first attempt.

As you stand there you realize it should be possible to pedal to the top. The trail is a mix of bedrock, packed dirt, and loose gravel. Traction is thin and the slope steep, so to get going again you need an instant burst of power for forward momentum, but you also must keep a straight line—if you "saw" the handlebar you'll never get moving. There's also the little matter of an upside-down toe clip. How the heck can you get your foot into it?

That last problem is the easiest to solve: you don't, or at least not right away. Put one foot into a clip and forget about the other. Use the back of that pedal and consider yourself lucky if you make it to the top without having to bail out again (which is a lot easier to do if one foot is already free).

Getting started requires delicate bal-

ance. Lowering your saddle can help, especially when you're new to this game. Make sure you're in the lowest gear. Now check the trail. Look for a slight leveling of the slope, or a flat spot behind a rock or log, or even a shallow depression. This is where you want to place your rear tire. Make sure the front isn't behind a stone or other obstacle. If there's a rock, low embankment or anything else you can stand on, so much the better. Get on it and throw a leg over the bike. Put your foot into the toe clip and backpedal to the start of your power stroke. You need to apply a smooth, even force to get the maximum forward movement.

Now decide whether to stand or sit during the first stroke. You'll probably be able to sit only if you've lowered the saddle or are standing on something.

Sitting improves traction because your weight is over the rear wheel. But it can



Dave Meyer showing how it's done.

Hank Barlow

also cause you to immediately pop a wheelie or veer to the side. Standing lets you maintain pressure on the front wheel while simultaneously applying maximum power. But with insufficient weight on the rear wheel, there's also the likelihood of your first crank stroke causing another abrupt spin-out.

An alternative exists, and here's an example of how it works. Stand over the top tube, right foot at the start of the power stroke, left foot lightly on the ground, torso comfortably bent forward, hands squeezing the brake levers. Sit on the tip of the saddle so you are pressing back rather than down.

As you release the brakes, simultaneously rock the bike forward and push off with the left foot, putting your weight on the right pedal. Now here's the tricky part: apply power to the crank with great restraint. Don't spin the rear wheel. Use your arms to pull gently down and back; if you pull up on the bar you'll wheelie. Press back on the saddle in response to the rear wheel's needs. You've got to have a high degree of sensitivity to the tire's traction.

Focus on a spot ahead of the line you want to take. Imagine your eyes pulling you to it. If traction is good, shift slightly forward so you're crouched over the top tube and either just off or barely touching the saddle. At such a slow speed it's important to keep pressure on the front wheel so you can steer accurately. The more technical the terrain or the more constricted your path, the more important this is. Balance your pedal thrusts to minimize lateral movement of the bike.

Concentrate on smoothness.

If traction is poor, put more weight on the saddle while pulling strongly down on the handlebar. The trick is to keep pressure on the front wheel while putting as much weight as possible on the rear wheel.

A tree or bush can also help you get started. Position your bike close to it and hold on with one hand. Put both feet into the clips. If it's a bush, you won't actually be able to push off, but you can with a tree. These starts are best done when seated, so be prepared to smoothly slide forward during your first or second pedal stroke. You need to get far enough forward on the saddle to center your weight. Then you can make weight shifts with minimal movement.

Okay, you've started successfully and have made two or three pedal strokes. But now your front wheel is about to hit a slight step in the path. You don't yet have enough momentum to carry you over, so you must quickly create it.

Time the beginning of your next power stroke so it coincides with the tire meeting the obstacle. This might require a slight pause or even a quick backpedal. Now apply the power and lower your torso while simultaneously raising the front end of the bike. If you're a skier, you'll recognize the term down-unweighting, which is what this movement is. You can unweight whatever is supporting your body by either jumping up or by dropping down. Both create a fractional moment when no weight presses down. What makes this movement a chal-

lenge is the need to unweight only the front wheel and avoid popping a wheelie. You want to skim the wheel over the step while keeping the rear wheel weighted for traction.

Down-unweighting accomplishes the same thing as up-unweighting, or jumping the front wheel up. Both result in unweighting, which naturally leads to weighting. It's like landing on the floor after a jump, legs bent, muscles flexed. Think of it as the equivalent of compressing a spring. For a second, tires are compressed into maximum contact with the ground. Your muscles are tensed, lungs empty. Everything is set for an explosive upward and forward thrust. In short, you've just created the momentum necessary to get the rear wheel up and over the step.

Your torso is low, arms bent. Just before the rear tire hits the step, release your stored energy by surging forward with your body. As you cross the step, immediately pull the bike up behind you. All this must be done subtly and quickly or you'll lose traction. The moment the rear tire clears the step, put your weight back for traction and reapply power to the pedals.

If you've succeeded, you'll be totally jacked. The hill is yours. Hold your elbows in and down, balance on the saddle tip, shift weight with each pedal stroke, and you'll find yourself gaining strength. By the time you hit the summit, you'll be flying. That fragile start zone has been convincingly left behind, and now you're back in the fray. *



The second stroke is the critical one, not the first.

Hank Barlow

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A Tale of Two Cities

GARY SPRUNG

Mountain bikers are constantly encountering obstacles in their quest for single-tracks. While the 1984 banning of bikes from National Forest Wilderness Areas was the single biggest blow in terms of land area, today's land access battles center on public lands near the urban areas where most mountain bikers live. Today, trail closures seem more the norm than the exception.

One big plus for off-roading is happening in the Santa Cruz Mountains on the lower San Francisco peninsula. A model of club organization, user cooperation, and political action has managed to re-open some trails while preventing others from being closed. The Los Gatos-based organization that's responsible is called ROMP, the Responsible Organized Mountain Pedalers.

In sharp contrast to Los Gatos, a dramatic failure occurred in February, 1987, in Boulder, Colorado. All trails in the Mountain Parks system and most in the Open Space Parks system were closed to bikes. Two attempts to organize bicyclists into an effective group with some modicum of political clout failed totally. Depressingly, the closures were to an extent brought on by the bikers themselves.

In January of '82, the Boulder City Council voted 8-1 to prohibit mountain bikes on all trails and access roads in city parks, though the city manager was also authorized to reopen specific areas at his discretion. Shortly thereafter, the popularity of mountain bikes increased rapidly and, in response, a trails committee consisting of environmentalists, trail users, and city agencies decided the new sport should be accommodated. The committee then convinced the city to open 21 trails.

Park rangers recommended against the opening. They were overruled on the theory that mountain biking was just a fad and the bikes were too expensive for widespread popularity.

The theory was wrong. Mountain bikes now account for 60-70% of Boul-

der bike sales, according to Kevin Dwyer of University Bicycles. He estimated there were 9,000 mountain bikes in Boulder last March, and more than 12,000

"We couldn't keep the signs up. We couldn't even make them fast enough. They were ripped off"

der bikes by October. His medium-size shop sold some 500 mountain bikes in that seven-month period, and there are 10 other bike shops in Boulder.

When Boulder trails were legal for bikes in '84, conflicts and problems were minimal. Complaints increased in '85, and by the end of the year rangers had begun documenting complaints and reports of damage. In '86, the three-person park staff (responsible for a 7,000-acre system used at the rate of 1.5 million visitor-days per year) documented 619 "incidents" involving mountain bikes, including 102 citizen complaints, 24 cases of vandalism, 256 warnings, 24 tickets, and 14 cases of cyclists eluding rangers. Mountain bikers received 41% of all tickets written by rangers that year.

At first, rangers only posted signs on trails where bikes were allowed. Riders argued that signs should be posted where bikes were prohibited; signs with a red

slash through a cyclist were promptly erected.

"We couldn't keep the signs up," ranger Jean Scholl reports. "We couldn't even make them fast enough. They were ripped off."

Trail damage began to increase. Most of the trails are surfaced with decomposed granite, a loose and far-from-ideal material for the heavy use the trails were receiving. The trails are also heavily water-battered to minimize run-off damage, but bicyclists, objecting to bouncing over the erosion-controlling bumps, began to ride around them. In the process, they wore paths by which water was able to circumvent the small diversion dams. Trails began to gully. Scholl claims the damage was well documented with photographs, the tire tracks clearly pointing to bicycles as the cause.

By the end of '86, the situation had grown into "the hottest issue in the history of this ranger department," she says. Boulder is home to Olympic marathon champion Frank Shorter and is well known for its running clubs. The runners turned vehemently against bicyclists. Rock climbers and legions of hikers joined in. These groups exerted intense pressure on the city.

As they had done every year, rangers in early '87 recommended closing the trails to mountain bikes. This time they succeeded. On February 23, the city council voted to close the trails.

Where were the mountain bikers when this happened? John Palescandolo tried to organize a mountain biking club in the early 1980s. "We knew Boulder was already crowded, so we respected the rights of the walkers and hikers and simply rode above Boulder," he wrote in a letter to me. "Not so for others I encountered around town. They crashed through campus, crashed through private roads, scared hikers, and maintained a Boulder tradition of personal, righteous indignation for whatever

your cause is. We knew the trails would be closed soon. In fact, just as the club was growing, I called a meeting to say it was finished. We could not responsibly put a group of riders on a Boulder multi-use trail and not spoil something or someone's perception of Nature."

A more political group, the Boulder Mountain Bike Coalition, formed around '83-'84 but was short-lived; the few active members left town and the group dissolved. A second effort in '86-'87 took on the same name but was unable to counter the anti-bike momentum. The club's present incarnation has, if nothing else, contributed an entertaining name to mountain biking—CRANK, or Concerned Riders Advocating Natural Klunking. Evidently, the club is dormant. And recent reports have a new group forming to focus more on recreation than politics. To date, its visibility is low.

Ranger Scholl, a mountain bike enthusiast herself, is disappointed in the bike groups and speaks rather cynically: "They volunteered to do trail maintenance and made promises, but after 1984 we never heard from them again." When the closures loomed at the end of '86 and cyclists reorganized, "All of a sudden, they were there again, making all these promises."

Cyclist Jim Robb worked on that second organizing effort. He agrees that the groups didn't work.

"Let's face it, mountain bike riders have a free spirit," he explains. "They don't want to get involved in an organization." Nevertheless, he says that government shares the blame. "The city stuck its head in the sand. Boulder has lost its foresight in dealing with this situation."

University Cycles's Dwyer claims the city "really did not look for another option. They went for the easiest way out, total closure." He said the coalition offered several alternatives, including seasonal closures to avoid the wettest weather when trails are more easily harmed, closures of just the high-use trails that create the most conflicts, and better education and enforcement efforts. Dwyer agrees that some trails should be closed to bikes, but he's bitter about the closure of the parks' jeep roads.

Scholl maintains that her agency "really did feel that we did a good job of education for several years." Rangers posted bicycle maps and warnings at every trailhead and regularly fed information to local newspapers and radio stations. They worked with the city bicycle registration program (which has since been eliminated) and with the University of Colorado registration system. They even

posted the NORBA code of ethics. "It just did not work," she says.

The root of Boulder's mountain bike problem, in the opinion of many, is the University of Colorado's student body. In '86, 63% of all summonses issued to off-road riders went to CU students. During the summer vacation months in '87, rangers issued only a dozen warnings to bicyclists violating closures. In September, after the students returned, violations jumped by 300%. Rangers now issue \$100 tickets -- no warnings! Scholl notes that students are transient, hard to reach and educate, and have little attachment to the local land.

That the parks are located just blocks away from campus only compounds the problem. Scholl says the problem is unsolvable, that massive closure is the only

"Let's face it, mountain bike riders have a free spirit"

option. She doubts whether even a highly organized mountain bike club could positively affect the situation.

The Boulder scene isn't entirely bleak, however. Boulder County also operates a park system, and cyclists are permitted on eight of its trails. But only two traverse challenging terrain, and their combined length is just three miles. The other six trails are flat. Kathy Vaughn Grabowski, an administrator, reports few conflicts and erosion problems, citing "great cooperation with the mountain bike people."

County naturalist Jodi Grossman is working to keep these trails open through educational programs. As a mountain biker and a Boulder resident, she has already felt the loss of the Mountain Parks trails. Now the closest open trail is miles from the city. "I can't just leave my house and go for a ride," she notes. "That's really a drag."

California's ROMP supplies an uplifting contrast to Boulder. Monthly organized rides, a regular newsletter, active involvement with influential parks boards, and cooperation with a trail-building cen-

ter have made this Los Gatos club a model for how to run an effective mountain biking organization.

Not that they're winning every battle; they win some and lose some, probably more the latter than the former. But overall there is slow progress and increasing, if grudging, acceptance by equestrians, who for years have dominated mid-peninsula trail usage.

Owning a horse in urban America is almost exclusively an option for the wealthy—the same folks who have great influence over government actions. With the Silicon Valley and Stanford University nearby, the communities perched between San Francisco Bay and the Santa Cruz Mountains enjoy unusually wealthy populations. It's no accident that the trail systems have traditionally been managed for equestrians.

And equestrians fear bikes. On narrow trails twisting through heavy forests, horsemen claim they are encountering increasing numbers of rambo mountain bikers. The result is predictable: spooked horses and pressure to ban bikes.

Jim Bolin, operations supervisor for the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District, says many riders come "screaming down, really flying." Yet the only accidents he knew of were one spooked horse and a couple of bikers involved in solo crashes. Is the equestrian/biker problem real, perceptual, or totally political?

To ROMP president Jim Hunter, it's political.

"Political power is everything," he says. "Mountain bikers complain that it's not fair, that we wear helmets and gloves, that we don't cause much damage, that horses do more damage than we do. Well, I say if we had enough political power it wouldn't matter when or how we rode or even if we tore hell out of the trails. We're going to be treated like a minority until we join the political process."

ROMP has placed volunteer mountain biking advocates at every local government and parks board meeting having anything to do with trails. Its newsletter lists a Mid-Pen activist, a Santa Clara County activist, a San Mateo County activist, a Santa Cruz activist, and a State Parks activist. Committed, dedicated people also produce the newsletter, coordinate membership, arrange social events, and sponsor rides and races. ROMP is ORGANIZED.

There's one man, a lawyer, who is a ROMP member and the president of a Trails Advisory Committee. Hunter says he hasn't met the guy and wonders whether ROMP has a mole in the committee or whether the committee has a mole in ROMP. Either way, communica-

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tion is taking place and it seems to be accomplishing something. Most trails in the Mid-Peninsula District remain open. Santa Clara County, which had a law prohibiting bicycles on trails, has opened one trail and may soon open more, all because of ROMP's lobbying. Land managers I spoke with unanimously agreed that the club is honest, responsible and effective.

Carolyn Lekberg, an equestrian and past president of the Mid-Peninsula Trails Council, admitted she used to be "very narrow minded and had a hard time coming to grips with bicycles on trails." Because of ROMP, she is now neutral on the issue.

The Trails Council was originally formed by equestrians who did not like a trail closure. Today, it lobbies on be-

"We're going to be treated like a minority until we join the political process"

half of trails in general, watches master plans for parks, makes sure trail user needs are met, and works to interconnect trails. For two years, the council has grappled with the role of mountain bikes. ROMP activist Doug Thomas has been involved with the Trails Council, skillfully representing bikers' interests throughout the process.

Hunter describes Thomas as "very polished, very tactful. He really knows how to put a lot of pressure on a group.... He's a manufacturing engineer at Hewlett Packard and works with different people on a variety of projects. That's probably why he's so skillful and successful in getting opposing user groups and park officials to understand the importance of everyone sharing our trails. Everyone who has seen Doug in action at park meetings agrees that we couldn't hire anyone who could represent us any better. And he does it for nothing in his free time, which, as a proud grandfather, he doesn't have a lot of."

Another hot ROMP activist is Bern

Smith, president of The Trails Center. Smith describes it as "a group of volunteers who heeded the call to maintain and build new trails on the San Francisco Peninsula." Working with state, city, county, and open-space governments, the Trails Center has found that all the land management agencies have trail projects but no budgets. The Trails Center steps in and gets as many as 120 people—including hikers, bikers, equestrians, and environmentalists—to meet for a weekend of volunteer work. The Center also publishes a large collection of books and maps about local trails, and its newsletter has a comprehensive listing of all area trails-related events. Best of all, Smith himself is a mountain biker.

ROMP suffers one major problem. With two million people living in the area, it's inevitable that there are a few rambo riders. Thomas worried about this in the ROMP News: "It pains me to think that people are still abusing our riding trails and that in a couple of hours can reverse what has taken me over two years to accomplish."

How can ROMP reach out to these unincorporated souls?

Recreational rides, the roots of the group, may provide one answer. These rides, held on the first Sunday of each month, attract outsiders who are then influenced by ROMP members. All types of riders show up, from racers to guys in Levis who just bought a bike but haven't been cycling in years. ROMP also organizes non-competitive events, such as poker runs, and a New Year's Eve Bash, and the Mountain Bike Brawl.

ROMP started from group recreational rides and as a marketing tool for a local bike shop, the Velomaster. Then Hunter and others got involved and the focus shifted to land access. ROMP also dropped its shop affiliation, which according to Hunter was crucial to the group's success because the relationship tended to exclude people who supported another shop.

Says Hunter, "It's really important for any club to specify that you're not just a bunch of hardcore rambo riders, or just bicycle activists, or just trials riders, or racers, or whatever. Make everybody welcome. If something is not going on in the club and someone wants to do it, let them organize it. Don't limit it."

One of ROMP's most exciting activities is the first scientific test of mountain bikes and erosion, a joint project with Santa Clara County. According to reports, the results are likely to show what every mountain biker would expect.

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Teetering on the brink, Dave Arbogast in action, Expert Trials.

RACE WARS

CHARLES KELLY

WORLD BEATER

Overhill, Overdale, Overend Doesn't Fail

The story of the Raleigh Technium World Mountain Bike Championships (RTWMBC) is a Ned Overend (Team Schwinn) feature article, with a sidebar by Joe Sloup of the Ross Indians. In the women's competition, Klein rider Cindy Whitehead encountered much tougher opposition than she had prepared for and won only one of the three titles, the downhill. Surprising Fisher rider Sara Ballantyne captured the hillclimb and cross-country race.

The nature of the RTWMBC courses left little doubt as to the level of competition the men could expect. The four-lap cross-country event wasn't overly long (29 miles), but it started at 10,000 feet, then climbed and dropped 1,300 feet each lap on the loose, shifting surface of pumice sand. The descents had a few vicious surprises concealed under the

sand, and the ascents were steep enough to prove climbing ability.

California's Mammoth Ski Area, one of the country's largest, provided an impressive mountain for the hillclimb and downhill races. The 11,000-foot summit is 2,000 feet and four miles of bad road above the parking lot. The resort's thin air may be advantageous for descenders, but any climber who hadn't prepared extensively at altitude might as well have taken the day off. You can go so deeply into oxygen debt on this mountain that your grandchildren will be paying it back.

(Editor's note: There's another school of thought. For maximum performance at altitude by those who don't live high in the mountains, some claim it's best to arrive at the race site just one day prior to the start. This is said to produce better

performance than a week of acclimation.)

The hillclimb occasioned a visit by the governor of California, George Deukmejian. While he expounded predictably on what fine people mountain bikers are as long as they vote Republican, a squad of large guys in suits and sunglasses brought us back to reality by treating the riders with unconcealed suspicion.

As usual, Overend and John Tomac (Mongoose) were the class of the field in the hillclimb, but Ned was the *creme de la creme*. Which is how the French would say he won by a lot—more than a minute and a half in front of Tomac, who's no slouch when it comes to jamming. Schwinn's John Weissenreider, who's yet to have a major victory but who lives at a suitably high altitude, fin-

ished three minutes down to take 3rd.

National Champion Whitehead missed the start time for the Women's Hillclimb, in which Ballantyne trimmed Margaret Day by half a minute over a shorter course than the men's. Why women's courses are shorter is unknown; it's not because of their performance.

The cross-country races were held the following day. Overend and Tomac rolled away from the field, trading the lead and testing each other's determination. They even watched Rishi Grewal take a spin at the front during the first lap before he checked into the DNF column. But Tomac had made a serious rookie error; he didn't pack lunch. He bonked badly with about a lap and a half to go and slipped into slow motion. Fisher star Mike Kloser picked him off with less than a mile remaining to take 2nd place.

Joe Murray (Team Marin) was an early casualty. Operating on the theory that you either need to prepare completely for high altitude or hit it just before the start, Joe got to Mammoth late. The theory didn't work. He went into O2 debt and stopped to talk to some of the more interesting hallucinations.

The women finished the cross-country in the same order as the hillclimb: Ballantyne, Day, and Lisa Muhlisch (Specialized). Whitehead was a disappointing and disappointed 7th. She allowed that she might have underestimated the opposition in the absence of perennial rival Jacquie Phelan. From the look of this field, women's racing has developed considerable depth and experience in the last year.

Now the event you've been waiting for. Sure, "downhill" is a dirty word in some circles, but I love it when you talk dirty. Downhill has nothing going for it except speed and danger. These are fine qualities for skiing, but they seem to be negative for mountain biking no matter how much we explain that riders only practice indoors while wearing helmets, and with first-aid stations every 20 feet. Isn't that right fellas?

The only other well-known downhill race, the Repack, is no longer in service due to political considerations. (Try to explain the concept of downhill to a four-term Republican.) This makes Mammoth the *de facto* world championship since so many people decline (or lack the decline) to stage such an event. The Kamikaze course has a few long straights to test nerve and bike handling; in the thin air, terminal velocity is just under mach 2. (Question: Does gravity's weaker force at altitude counteract the lessened air resistance?) The prize goes to the guy who can leave the brake levers alone the longest and live to brag about it. At these velocities, any connection with the road

is tenuous at best. Sometimes the bike isn't even pointed in the direction of travel. This is great fun to watch from the side of the road if you don't mind a bike in your lap now and then.

Tomac's reputation is going downhill, in large part because he won the 12-mile descent at the Palm Springs Diamond Back Classic. Now the Mammoth plunge was his last chance to take home one of the coveted RTWMBC winner's jackets.

On the line he was asked, "Is the idea to ride fast enough to win and slow enough to keep your bike working?"

He replied, "No. You have to ride fast enough to win and be lucky enough that your bike makes it all the way down." That's a long speech for Tomac, and it turned out to be longer than his ride, which ended with a flat tire just out of the starting gate.

The winner was Sloup, who one week earlier on the same four-mile course had captured the Mammoth Kamikaze. In that race, Sloup beat his Ross teammate, Casey Kunselman, by only one second. This time Sloup thrashed him by three. Considering all the gonzo motorcycle talent competing in the downhill, it seems fitting that the first two places went to all-around mountain bikers. Third went to motorbiker Mike Bell from Team Oakley.

Whitehead got a world championship jacket as well as a measure of revenge in the women's downhill. Her time of 6:32 would also have won the Veteran and Sport men's classes, and it was

Andy Grayson going for broke in the Expert Trials competition.



more than 30 seconds ahead of Day, who finished 2nd in all three events. Third place went to Fisher rider Linda Perez, one second behind Day. Day wasn't sponsored before this weekend, but Raleigh signed her immediately after.

The RTWMBC also included observed trials, but it was questionable as to whether this event rated world championship status. Winner Andy Grayson (Specialized-Ibis) would probably concede that the European trials riders, who weren't in Mammoth, are far superior to the Americans. When world trials champion Ot Pi showed up at a subsequent race, the difference in European and American skills was obvious. The Spaniard could ride up stuff you couldn't climb with a hundred feet of rope and a handful of pitons. (This is called "exaggeration for effect.") *

NATIONAL CLASS

Meet Two Who Danced the Durango

The NORBA National Championships returned to Durango, Colorado, for the second consecutive year, thanks in part to the organizational ability of local promoter Ed Zink. Zink is also known for his work (along with a host of others) on the Iron Horse Bicycle Classic.

That the two pro winners both live in Durango is sure to find the nationals elsewhere this year. The home-court advantage is strongest when the court is at elevation and, for riders from the East and Midwest, racing at elevation may be a handicap that no amount of training can overcome.

The first championship event was the hillclimb, an 1,800-foot ascent in less than four miles, ending at 9,654 feet. Climbing is Ned Overend's forte, and the Schwinn rider took immediate advantage with a one-minute victory over Mongoose's John Tomac, with John Weissenreider (Schwinn) third. The women's hillclimb was close, with only 19 seconds separating the top three finishers—Sara Ballantyne, Martha Kennedy and Nancy Dolan.

The Edgemont Ranch cross-country circuit, a track created specifically for

Top: Overend celebrating victory at the Nationals, Durango, Colorado. Middle: Ross Team Rider Mike Jordan airborne at the Vulture's Roost. Bottom: Ed Zink working the single-track descent in the National's.



mountain bike racing, was modified for '87 with more climbing and a longer, very technical single-track descent. These changes made a superb course even more so. Laps were about 4 miles long and included 500 feet of elevation change. But despite the picturesque setting, most spectators concentrated their attention on a man-made obstacle. This spot has earned various nicknames on the theme of Vulture's Gulch or Buzzard's Roost. It's a high-speed double-whoop over a culvert (water flows between the humps), and it comes at the bottom of a steep descent that gives competitors plenty of speed for their lift off—if they manage to make the last turn to

the obstacle. Though the pros sail cleanly over both humps, the sport class riders combine maximum hot-dog with minimum ability, resulting in larger crowds thirsting for blood.

In the men's pro race, the familiar tandem of Overend and Tomac blazed away from the field at warp speed, dueling through the first few laps until Tomac hit the magic two-hour mark and turned into a pumpkin. Just as he'd done at Mammoth, John bonked and had to settle for 2nd. Overend finished three minutes up, while Tomac managed a four-and-a-half-minute advantage over the 3rd-place rider, Team Fisher's Mike Kloser.

Robert Winslow

The Results

Raleigh Technium World Mountain Bike Championships

Men's Hillclimb

1. Ned Overend (Schwinn) . . . 32:04
2. John Tomac (Mongoose) . . . 33:41
3. John Weissenreider (Schw.) . . . 35:03

Women's Hillclimb

1. Sara Ballantyne (Fisher) . . . 31:09
2. Margaret Day . . . 31:35
3. Lisa Muhich (Specialized) . . . 32:07

Men's Cross-Country

1. Ned Overend (Schwinn) . . . 3:02:16
2. Mike Kloser (Fisher) . . . 3:08:32
3. John Tomac (Mongoose) . . . 3:09:17

Women's Cross Country (short course)

1. Sara Ballantyne (Fisher) . . . 2:08:17
2. Margaret Day . . . 2:12:16
3. Lisa Muhich (Specialized) . . . 2:12:50

Men's Downhill

1. Joe Sloup (Ross) . . . 5:38
2. Casey Kunselman (Ross) . . . 5:41
3. Mike Bell (Oakley) . . . 5:46

Women's Downhill

1. Cindy Whitehead (Klein) . . . 6:32
2. Margaret Day . . . 7:09
3. Linda Perez (Fisher) . . . 7:10

Observed Trials

1. Andy Grayson (Spec./Ibis) . . . 16 pts
2. Mike Craig . . . 20 pts
3. Peter Delaney . . . 23 pts

Ross/Swath Stage Race

Pro Men Final GC

1. John Tomac (Mongoose) . . . 6:28:00
2. T. Rutherford (Mr. Steak/Hammer) . . . 6:36:00
3. Joe Murray (Marin) . . . 6:36:18
4. Ned Overend (Schwinn) . . . 6:39:25
5. Mike Jordan (Ross) . . . 6:44:48

Pro Women Final GC

1. Cindy Whitehead (Klein) . . . 5:31:48
2. Margaret Day (Raleigh) . . . 5:40:37
3. Jacquie Gardner . . . 6:16:00

Observed Trials

1. Ot Pi . . . 12 pts
2. Hansjorg Rey (Swatch) . . . 21 pts
3. Jim Tregonis (Cunningham) . . . 36 pts

NORBA National Championships

Men's Hillclimb

1. Ned Overend (Schwinn) . . . 31:43
2. John Tomac (Mongoose) . . . 32:53
3. John Weissenreider (Schw.) . . . 34:04

Women's Hillclimb

1. Sara Ballantyne (Fisher) . . . 42:03
2. Martha Kennedy (Niskaki) . . . 42:10
3. Nancy Dolan (Cycle Logic) . . . 42:22

Men's Cross-Country

1. Ned Overend (Schwinn) . . . 2:34:44
2. John Tomac (Mongoose) . . . 2:37:47
3. Mike Kloser (Fisher) . . . 2:41:24

Women's Cross-Country

1. Lisa Muhich (Specialized) . . . 1:35:40
2. Sara Ballantyne (Fisher) . . . 1:36:48
3. Cindy Whitehead (Klein) . . . 1:37:50

Expert Trials

1. Hansjorg Rey (Swatch/GT) . . . 8 pts
2. Jim Tregonis (Mountain Avenue/Cunningham) . . . 12 pts
3. Andy Grayson (Spec./Ibis) . . . 25 pts

Expert Men X-C

1. Jeff Murray (Fat Chance) . . . 1:40:06
2. Tom Collins (Stewart Hunt) . . . 1:42:00
3. Johnny O'Mara (Yeti/Tiger/Shimano) . . . 1:44:59

Expert Women X-C

1. Dina Disantis (Alan's Bic.) . . . 1:16:15
2. Cyndi Schwandt . . . 1:19:10
3. J. Buratovich (S. Hunt) . . . 1:21:39

Robert Winslow

Hank Rarick

RELIEF FROM THE EAST

MOUNTAIN BIKE RACING IS alive and well back east. Although the schedule of events isn't as long or arduous as in the west, the number of races and racing enthusiasts is steadily growing.

According to Brian Stickel, manager and head mechanic at the West Hill Shop in Putney, Vermont, "The mainstays of racing here are the sport and expert classes. We're seeing good turnouts in the beginner class, which is causing rapid growth in the sport class since beginners have to move up after competing in five races. There aren't too many pros yet, though it's only a matter of time before we see more hot riders coming through the ranks."

New England races tend to consist of multiple laps around a 2-to-4-mile circuit rather than a single-loop or point-to-point course. One exception is a 30-mile cross-country race sponsored by the Greasy Gonzos of White Mountain Cycles in Plymouth, New Hampshire—the original New Eng-

land mountain bike mania. Stickel reports that "most sport-class races seem to be about 12 miles long, with the pro and expert classes going roughly twice that distance."

The '87 season started in August with the Rockhopper East in Connecticut. A sizable purse drew many of the western big guns, who claimed most of the top places. "Ron Andrews is the hottest East Coast pro-am rider I know of," says Stickel. "He placed tenth in the NORBA Nationals this year. Greg Yoder of Pennsylvania is another up-and-comer, although he was kind of hot and cold this season."

The Ross Stage Race, a non-NORBA event, is the premier Eastern event. "This year was sort of a combination bike race and swim meet," says Stickel of the rain-plagued event. "I thought the course was the easiest all year—mostly gravel roads—and the prize list in the sport category was pretty sparse considering the size of the field. But the turnout was good despite all that."

By Don Cuerdon

A few organized teams exist; some even have sponsors. The Fat City Cycles, Off-Road Bicycles, Greasy Gonzos, and Putney Bicycle Club/West Hill Shop squads were in evidence all season. But most of the competitors are just individuals out getting their jollies in a strange new sport.

"About half the races are combined with observed trials events," notes Stickel. "Prize lists are usually quite minimal. That's mainly because the guys putting on events are just bike shop folks drumming up interest in the sport. There aren't any high-rollers hopping in yet."

New England mountain bike racing clearly has a bright future with so many beginners joining the ranks. "We've been pretty happy with the race days, even though our wives haven't been," says Stickel of the '87 season, which ended October 18 in Craftsbury, Vermont, with a time trial. "I hope NORBA gets their act together so the sport will have a chance to grow," concluded the governing body's Vermont representative. ★

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As evidence of the new downhill section's technical difficulty, Tomac, arguably the finest bike handler on the pro circuit, hit the deck right in front of Overend on the first lap. But because of the track's narrowness, Ned couldn't take advantage of John's slip. All he could do was wait for Tomac to remount, which occurred almost instantly. Overend's technical skills have obviously improved dramatically, since Tomac was never able to gain time on the descent. So fast was the duo's pace that by the halfway point of the first lap, they already had two minutes on the pack. Until Tomac's flame-out, this was mountain bike racing at its finest. Neither backed off the throttle.

In the women's pro cross-country, defending champ Cindy Whitehead was dethroned by Durango's Lisa Muhich, riding for Specialized. In 2nd place was Fisher discovery Sara Ballantyne of Breckenridge. Whitehead fell early in the race and spent most of the afternoon trying to catch the two very fit Coloradans. She managed to move from 7th to 3rd before finally running out of race. Certainly there was more competitiveness among the women than we've seen in awhile, fueling hope for the future.

In the observed trials, Hansjorg Rey, a European who lives in California, won the Expert class with eight points, four less than Jim Tregonis.

ROSS IN STAGES

Combination Bike Race & Swim Call

AUGUST was a tough month for John Tomac. After winning the stage race at the RTWMBC war-maps in Mammoth, he lost to Ned Overend in both the world and national championships. Chemistry seemed to be the problem; he bonked at the two-hour mark in both races and watched Overend glide away with the titles.

High-altitude races with miles of climbing are ideal for Overend. His strength is going up; on the downhills, he doesn't risk life and limb as casually as Tomac. Tomac is fast and strong and, more than any other rider on the circuit, one with his bike. He also rides slow better than the other pros, inevitably cleaning up in the observed trials stages.

On a course that favors his style, Tomac is as close to unbeatable as Joe Murray was in '84 or Overend is in the mountains. The '87 Ross/Swatch race suited

The Ross Team jamming



Tomac to a T, as in Total Triumph. He won all seven stages.

Tomac pitched his shutout against as good a field as there is, including his Mongoose teammate, Max Jones; the strong Ross team of Casey Kunselman, Mike Jordan, and Joe Sloup; Schwinn's galactic champ Overend; WTB's Paul Thomasberg and Roy Rivers; Marin's Joe Murray and Dave Turner; Fisher's Mike Kloser; Ron Andrews from Fat Chance; Terry Griebel from Cunningham; and Colorado roadie Tim Rutherford (Mr. Steak/Hammer).

Eight stages were scheduled, but a driving rain (Massachusetts was enduring its wettest September on record) forced the cancellation of one short uphill time trial, a stage that would probably have had zero effect on the final overall standings. The only rider disappointed with the cancellation was Tomac; he missed a chance to make another \$100 in prize money plus about \$1,000 in sponsor incentives.

The race's hard-luck kid was Joe Sloup. He had a flat in one stage, derailed in another, and finished the week by crashing and retiring for some embroidery on his knee.

Stages included three time trials, an observed trial, and three circuit races on courses ranging in length from three to four miles. Despite Tomac's commanding lead in the general classification (GC), the last stage turned out to be the most interesting. Tomac could have cruised through the 15 laps, but instead he had his eye on the lucrative incentive for stage wins built into his contract with Mongoose.

But victory didn't come easily. A \$500 prime on each lap was all the riders needed to keep the pace hot. Having ridden off the front in the two previous circuit races, Tomac adopted a new game plan. This time he rode a tactical race, waiting until the final lap for his winning sprint.

Sloup and Tinker Juarez sprinted for early primes then bailed out. Sloup for minor surgery, Juarez with a flat. Mike Jordan moved in and took the next six primes, stretching his lead over 10 chasers to about 40 seconds. He was helped by teammate Kunselman, who wasn't exactly chasing as much as getting in the way of those who were. It's a good thing there's no team tactics in mountain bike racing.

With a couple of laps to go, the diminishing pack swallowed Jordan. Overend, Rutherford and Tomac moved into a break, jostling for position for the final sprint. Just before the last climb, Overend dropped his chain but managed to get back with the leaders. As Tomac moved into the lead, Overend was per-

fectly positioned behind Rutherford, and it looked as if Ned would salvage a win from what had otherwise been a disappointing race. All he needed was a strong leadout by Rutherford and he could slingshot past Tomac. But to Overend's dismay, Rutherford conceded the sprint and sat up. Ned jammed anyway, but his chance of blowing by Tomac was history. Ross/Swatch ended with Tomac icing the victory and the cake; he's not old enough to ice the champagne.

The remaining GC positions were close. Jordan's two dabs in the observed trials and Kunselman's five were the difference between their 5th- and 6th-place finishes. Rutherford knocked Murray out of 2nd place with his strong final stage. Overend did well in the observed trials but fell off the pace in the last lap races, finishing 4th overall.

As usual, California and Colorado were well represented among the top finishers, again demonstrating that the talent pool is still west of the Mississippi. Ron Andrews (Fat City) was the highest placed Eastern rider in 9th overall, though Marin rider Gary Summers (8th) calls California home while living in New York most of the time.

In the women's pro event, only three riders competed. Most of the top women stayed away in protest of a prize list that

Mud-speckled Margaret Day taking a break from the action.



was much smaller than the pro men's. At the last minute it was doubled from \$300 to \$600, but the men stood to make \$2,000 for a GC win. Stage wins netted the women \$50 against \$100 for the men. The women's GC cash went three deep, 10 deep for men.

Klein rider Cindy Whitehead wore the leader's yellow jersey from day one, finishing comfortably ahead of Margaret Day (Raleigh), who had beaten Cindy at the Mammoth race two weeks earlier. Day excelled in California on the strength of superior climbing, but she couldn't match that performance in New England on the faster course.

In the pro observed trials, Spain's world champion, Ot Pi, showed us what a kid whose dad owns a trials bike company can do when properly unsupervised. Pi picked up a C-note prime offered for the first rider to clean a certain section that looked as if it had been imported from Switzerland. This rock jumble also provided local journalists with endless superlatives.

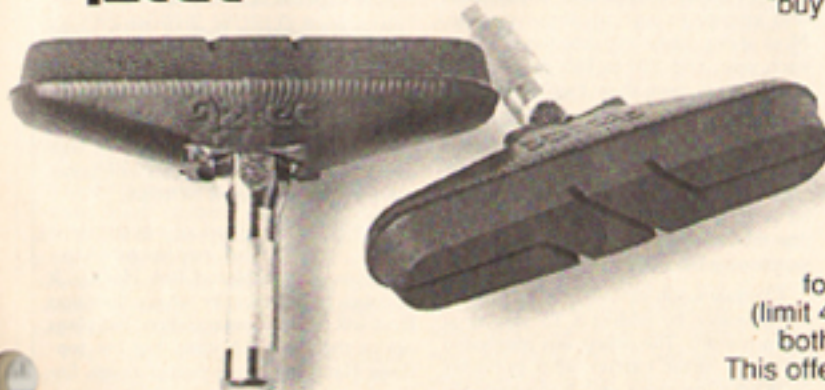
On hand as well was Hansjorg Rey ("I have Swiss passport, and I live in California"). He's the smiling face in the Swatch ad that shows him riding off a taxi. Top American was Jim Tregonis, with former national champ Kevin Norton 4th.

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GIVE THE SPORT A HOOK

Kelly on the Left,
Kirkpatrick on the Right

In 1988 the Course Gets Tougher by Charles Kelly

1987 WAS A YEAR of reduced expectations for the National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA). Just prior to 1987, the privately held organization was purchased from Glenn Odell by the American Bicycle Association (ABA), based in Chandler, Arizona. The ABA had been previously involved in BMX racing.

The sale did not sit well with some promoters of major races, especially after the new ownership made it clear that race promotion was one of its priorities. This was an area Odell had avoided. Some saw the new approach as a conflict of interest, while others viewed it as a legitimate business move. A business, after all, is supposed to make money.

A major point of contention became the National Points Series, which was based on pro races throughout the country. This series was originally proposed to replace the one-day national championship race, but it was changed in the face of pressure from those in the industry who argued the series would weight results in favor of pros with generous travel budgets.

More important, the Points Series further crowded a calendar already containing annual races that were major stops on the racing circuit. Because the pros could not afford to miss any of the points races, the six Points Series dates were automatically eliminated for any other promoter who wanted a quality field. Compared to the established stops on the circuit as it existed in '86, the '87 Points Series events were in relatively out-of-the-way locations. This worked well for NORBA since it meant no competition. Meanwhile, the established promoters of big races felt mighty squeezed.

Another issue that got plenty of ink was mandatory NORBA membership for

racers. At \$25 per license, this represented a major expense for riders who only wanted to compete in their local race. Mandatory licenses certainly aren't unprecedented, however. Other sports have had them for years, including the U.S. Cycling Federation, the governing body of amateur road racing. Nevertheless, a cry was raised, and NORBA responded with a \$10 license good for one month.

Forgoing a NORBA sanction became an option for promoters of the Iditarbike 200-mile race in Alaska, the Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival in Wisconsin, and the Ross/Swatch Stage Race in Massachusetts. The lack of a sanction had no effect on the races' popularity. In fact, Chequamegon hosted 650 racers, one of the largest fields in mountain bike history.

Chequamegon's Gary Crandall states, "I have no quarrel with NORBA, and some years our event has been sanctioned by them. But the mandatory membership issue presented major problems for us since 99 percent of our riders are not NORBA members and we would have to spend considerable unpaid time and energy to sign up these people. Most of our riders only race this one race each year, and \$30 to \$45 [license plus entry fee] is more than they would pay. Interestingly, even some of our riders who are NORBA members told us not to get the sanction."

In fact, Crandall says a questionnaire he sent to Chequamegon's racers found that the mood is overwhelmingly against sanctioning the race.

Chequamegon provided its own liability insurance by adding a \$3 surcharge to each entry. The policy was purchased from the same carrier who provides NORBA's insurance and was essentially identical.

Iditarbike was not NORBA sanctioned,

partly because NORBA itself wanted nothing to do with such a potentially hazardous event. The Mountain Bikers of Alaska, who put on the race, are far removed from the political scene that surrounds mountain biking in the lower 48, and so they pay little attention to the sanctioning process. They just have rides and put on races and figure the rest of us may catch up with them someday.

The Ross/Swatch Stage Race was the East's biggest and wealthiest '87 event. It attracted the cream of the professionals, but it wasn't sanctioned because of major conflicts between race organizer John Kirkpatrick and NORBA. Kirkpatrick was a member of NORBA's Competition Committee, a group that under Odell helped chart the course of off-road racing. After the ABA entered the picture, friction developed and Kirkpatrick quit. Charges, countercharges, and threats of legal action have continued to this day.

In contrast to these major races, most of the events in California and, to a lesser degree, in Colorado were sanctioned. These areas have so many races that a dedicated mountain biker can justify the expense of a license.

A major weapon that NORBA might choose to start wielding against independent promoters is its agreement with the USCF. The road racing body could get sticky about permitting road racers to take part in unsanctioned mountain bike events, and the only off-road sanctioner the USCF recognizes is NORBA.

NORBA's new head of operations is Chris Ross, who replaced Alan Vaughan, who replaced Bob Hadley. It remains to be seen in which direction Ross will take the organization, but plans are in the works. Noting that the top-three National Points Series riders finished in the same order as in the single-

continued on page 70

In 1987 Racing Earned a C-Minus by John Kirkpatrick

1987 was a dismal year in professional mountain bike racing. Too many C-minus events. Too few purses for the pros. Lack-luster media coverage by the cycling press. Almost no new blood in the pro mens field and erratic and minimal participation by pro women. The only saving graces were some great battles fought by the pro men, a number of speed and course records, a couple of new women—occasionally, and some big fields in the Midwest. This mine of uneventfulness is very suspect in the face of solid consumer interest in fat tire bicycles, head-over-heels one-up-manship on the part of manufacturers to produce a better mountain bicycle, and strong outside-the-industry interest in fat tire racing.

So what's wrong? Let me put it this way. Six or seven times a year, I travel to watch the professional teams compete. More often than not, I am confronted by low class, pea-brain, underfinanced, basically boring events. With little purse, no pageantry, less organization, no media, no crowd, just me and a handful of regulars and the 50 BEST MOUNTAIN BIKE RACERS IN THE WORLD lined up in the middle of nowhere disappearing into the woods for two hours. In most cases, I realize we just spent more money getting the team there than the race organization spent on the race.

So why would anyone in their right mind arrange airline tickets, rental cars, hotels, food, clothes, bikes, entry fees, and stacks of spare parts for the sole purpose of standing in the middle of nowhere staring at the trees waiting for the winner to return. The answer is that no one in their right mind would.

The problem with 1987 mountain bike racing was THE BORING FACTOR. We Americans have a highly refined sense of THE EVENT due to T.V., the likes of Disneyland, and dozens of

other institutions which surround our lives with passion and gusto. One badly produced mountain bike race is enough BITTER for any reasonable man. "Where's the beef?" is the current state of affairs in professional mountain bike racing. There were many exciting things to do in 1987, but (with these exceptions) watching a mountain bike race was not one of them.

Don't get me wrong. I think the potential for excitement is very healthy, but in practice the pro circuit is sick. Nevertheless I have not "lost the faith". I still believe mountain bike racing has a spectator and media fascination. But those who promote must rise to the occasion with pageantry oriented events, good purses, good publicity, in beautiful locations. The world will not rise around us and present a golden crowd on a silver course with television cameras. We must earn those crowds and cameras with courses, promotion, and pageantry. But earn it we have not. At least not in '87.

So what's ahead? Where do we go from here? Can '88 find us turning over a new leaf, giving the folks something worth going to see? Or have we made too many unrecoverable mistakes, driven off too many potential patrons, burned one too many bridges? I'm not sure and I'm certainly no soothsayer so I'll leave the odds to the boys in Vegas. But I will suggest some directions and make some predictions of my own for '88.

Eighty-eight should give birth to some directional changes. A Riders Union should and probably will form to take up the slack left by a rapidly disintegrating NORBA. NORBA has all but disappeared as an active functionary in the inner workings of fat tire racing. The rules will carry on and perhaps another governing body will get off the ground but NORBA in my opinion, will be history as a mover, doer, and shaker in '88 racing.

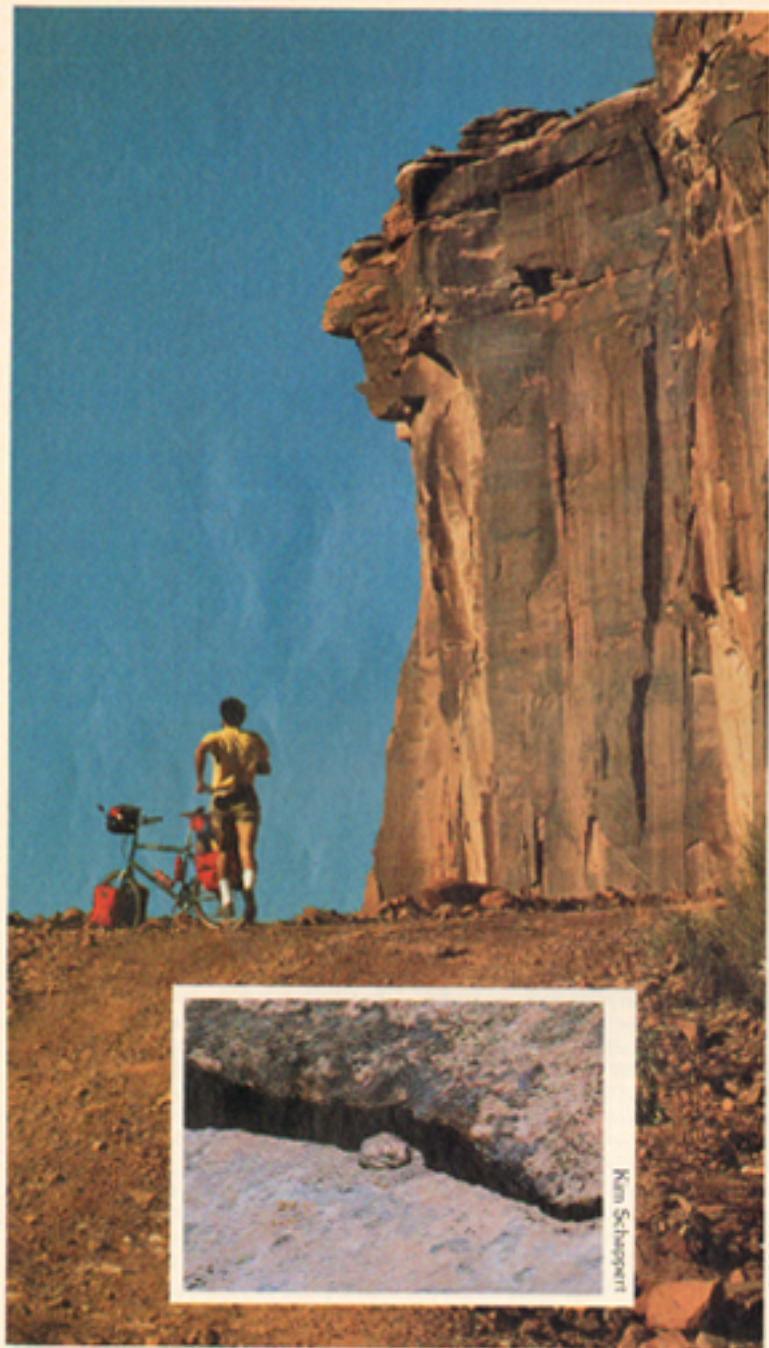
The professional racers, short of a governing organization, need a structure: an accurate and complete calendar, a professional purse, solid individual race organizations, course standards, advance public relations, and guaranteed media before they and their sponsors will commit talent, money, and the ever-so-important psychology-of-competition to a race. Very expensively showing up in the middle of nowhere for nothing will have to stop.

I suspect, if a Professional Riders Union is formed, many historical races will be designated as events and not professional races. This is good because it clarifies reality. A new wave of PROFESSIONAL RACES will naturally cause the down-grading of those events which offer little more than the claim to being one of the original races. Just trying to put on a good race is not good enough any more, as '87 demonstrated so clearly. Professional races need planning, money, crowds, media, organization, public relations, and pageantry to succeed. I suspect '88 might see the professional racers offering a position paper detailing exactly what "a professional race must have" in order to attract the factory teams.

The emergence of several new factory teams is a particularly bright spot on the '88 horizon. Look for Specialized, Raleigh, and Diamond Back to field squads. I suspect we will see a long awaited increase in professional women's racing, in terms of numbers, as most factory teams move to pick up at least one female professional.

The National Championships will probably move from high altitude to sea level and the event will probably include a downhill segment in addition to the traditional circuit race and uphill climb. Trials are clearly growing. Europeans will venture across the water in greater numbers in search of gold in what they have

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Look at these two photos - the shot of me running for my bike and the close-up of the Canyon tree frog. With a surprisingly small amount of equipment you can capture such diverse subjects - and everything in between. But you can't do it with a basic point-and-shoot Instamatic 110-type camera. It's possible to take the more standard scenic and general close-up shots with such a rig. By avoiding camera shake and using proper film you can produce images of excellent quality.

Ken Schappert

Hard Knocks Photography

How to Keep The Sport in Focus

by Dennis Coello

AN EXCITING DEVELOPMENT for mountain bikers is the waterproof 35mm camera. Some models have optional lenses for closer and more distant shooting. Considering the variety of terrain and weather we off-landers are willing to pedal into, these remarkable cameras seem designed for us. One of their main advantages over 110 cameras is 35mm film. It's considerably larger than 110, so making quality enlargements is much easier. Though these new marvels are still limited compared to standard single-lens-reflex (SLR) cameras, they might be exactly what you need if you can live within their boundaries. They're small, relatively light, and undamaged by water from any source.

The next level is the 35mm SLR camera with interchangeable lenses. With one of these, you can photograph everything from a self-portrait to that toad. Most come equipped with a 50mm lens, which gives you a view through the viewfinder that's about the same as what you see with the naked eye. With any lens, the viewfinder shows you exactly what the lens sees and, thus, what will be on the film. With the Instamatic-type 110s and the shoot-and-point 35mm's, you're looking through a window above the lens, not through it, and must frame your shot with "guide lines."

The standard 50mm lens has a fixed focal length. An attractive alternative is a zoom lens, which has a variable focal length. An example is the 35-210mm lens I use. It gives me the ability to shoot

wide angles at 35mm and pull in distant objects with 210mm, plus use any focal length between. Another popular choice is a 70-210mm zoom complemented with a "fixed" 28mm wide-angle lens. For bike touring where weight and bulk must be minimized, a single lens such as the 35-210mm is preferable (and it saves lens-changing time). Also avoided is the chance of dust or moisture getting into the camera during lens changes.

There's a trade-off, though. A zoom has a lot of glass between the subject and the film, thus reducing the amount of light reaching it. The less light there is, the slower the film "burns" (Film is a light-sensitive composite of chemicals on which an image burns for as long as the shutter is open.) Decreasing the shutter speed (increasing the length of time the film is exposed to light) is an obvious solution, but the longer the shutter is open, the greater the risk of blurring the image.

A general guideline for hand-held photography is to set the shutter speed equal to the focal lens length. For example, if you're zooming in on a distant subject with the 210mm, set the shutter speed no slower than 1/250th of a second. For a standard 50mm lens, hand-held photography slower than 1/60th isn't recommended.

Shooting in low light with a slow shutter speed is possible by placing the camera on a steady surface. For example, I've used my wallet to support the lens while resting the body on a brick wall, a pannier, rocks - anything that's handy. Full-size, portable tripods can be used, though admittedly this is extreme if you aren't shooting professionally. Tripods also are excellent for taking self-portrait "action" shots. Another option is a small plastic tripod that stands about four inches high and has a Velcro strap so it can be attached to a tree limb.

If you want extreme magnification, consider carrying a quality 2X multiplier. Attach it to your zoom lens and jump from 210 to 420mm. The trade-off, of course, is even less light reaching the film and a minimum shutter speed of 1/500th.

Still another attractive option is a macro lens. Many zooms have a "macro ring." Macro, means making a small subject look larger. In macro photography, "life-size," "1X," and "1:1" all mean the same thing: the subject will be seen on film the same as it is in life. Half as big would be 1/2X or 1:2. Macros enable extreme close-ups of flowers and other small subjects. Along the same lines is yet another option for close-up photography, special filters. They're usually sold in sets of three.

Macro-photography can be addictive. You'll quickly realize you've been riding over whole worlds of fascinating crea-



Dennis Coello

My personal camera kit:

- 35mm camera body
- 35-210mm zoom
- 90mm macro
- 2X multiplier
- 50mm (occasionally)
- polarizing filter (to accentuate clouds)
- tripod
- film
- camera bag
- 25-foot air release
- backup camera battery
- lens cleaning solution
- lens paper
- blowbrush (for cleaning lens and camera)

tures you never knew existed. Photography, like mountain bikes, can introduce us to much more of the world.

The tricky part of combining 35mm SLR photography with mountain biking is carrying the gear. Fortunately, a number of manufacturers have anticipated our needs. Flip through the ads of any photography magazine ("Outdoor Photography" is best for this) and you'll see many options. In fact, there are far too many to go into now. I use a heavily padded cordura camera bag with a handle on top, which in an instant unzips to become a waistpack with camera and lens compartments. I carry the camera body with the lens affixed, and store other camera gear in the pouches.

When touring on a road bike, I prefer having my camera readily available in a handlebar bag (several brands offer padded "camera inserts") or resting inside a large camera bag attached to a high-rider front rack. (I had a cobbler sew straps

and Fastex buckles to the camera bag so I could secure it to the rack.) Unpleasant and costly experience has taught me that lenses cannot handle the knocking about that front-rack placement on a mountain bike allows. A handlebar-bag disrupts my steering on single-tracks, so it's equally unsatisfactory. The best off-road placement is inside a pannier with the camera generously padded in its own bag. For photographing fellow riders, keep it handy in a fanny pack. Some riders use chest harnesses to hold the camera tight against their body, but the weight can be bothersome and the camera may become sweaty.

Most camera bags, like panniers, are not waterproof. I use pannier covers for rain protection. I find them superior to my old stand-by, large "freezer-strength" ziplock bags.

Contrary to what you may think, self-portrait action shots are easy to execute. All you need is a full-height tripod (or tall rock) and any 35mm camera with a 10-second shutter timer. As I obviously have, you'll probably take some shots of your back until you get the hang of it. If money is no object, you can buy an infra-red or other space-age shutter release that allows you to shoot the picture while riding. I usually do fine with an inexpensive, lightweight rubber air-release bulb and 25 feet of tiny rubber hose. With this I can get much farther from the camera before tripping the timer. I then toss the bulb out of the picture and hop aboard the bike for the picture.

Smaller aperture (f-stop) settings give greater depth of field, meaning more of the world is in focus. Use small apertures for action self-portraits (most 35mm "automatic" cameras have a manual override to allow this) to avoid pedaling out of focus range.

For these action shots, I use a full-length tripod with flip-lock legs. It's surprisingly light. A cordura bag protects it from the weather, and I carry it like a sleeping bag across the rack. In good weather I keep it handy for instant access. You may not understand why any biker would want to bother with a tripod - until you've given one a try. It's very helpful when the light is low.

No technique will help if your film isn't up to par. The intense heat that can occur inside panniers may ruin color film. While black-and-white handles heat well, few bikers use it, everyone wants color. Kodachrome is basically a black-and-white film until processing, when coloration "couplers" are introduced. If you want to shoot slides in hot weather, you would do well to use Kodachrome in place of Ektachrome. Besides, magazines generally prefer Kodachrome, and who's to say you won't snap a cover shot your next time out? ★

Baja

By Kim Schappert

One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three, one thousand four.... I counted the seconds, waiting for the thunder. Another bolt shattered the sky behind us. Thunder collided over our heads, the air vibrating and rippling with energy. Water poured out of the sky, pelting the parched soil, running over the land and pooling in depressions. The moat we'd dug around our North Face tent overflowed, the water inching too close to our gear for comfort. The ground felt like a giant waterbed, but nothing leaked through.

We were huddled in a hot, steamy cocoon of nylon in the middle of a storm, the whirling edge of an oncoming hurricane. Outside, in the lightning's bluish light, the wind whipped tents and tarps. People were rushing about trying to secure their gear. Black, angry clouds boiled overhead, where for the past five days a hard, yellow sun hanging in a pale sky had blistered us without mercy. Arroyos that had been bone dry were now raging with water. This was rapidly turning into a magnificent finish to our short—too short—cycling tour of southern Baja.

Ineke and I had planned the trip a month earlier over midnight beers during her 40th birthday party. Winter was approaching, and a quick interlude of heat before the snows fell had struck us as an excellent idea. The possibility of being washed away by rain never entered our thinking.

Heat we got; for five days our brains were boiled on a hot, dry road traversing the searing desert. All that saved us was a sea breeze, views of the ocean, and a constant supply of tepid water. A waterfall of sweat ran down my face; drinking more than a gallon of water a day was barely enough. We knew Baja would be hot—that's why we wanted to go there—but obviously our definition of hot wasn't

Baja in September!

Fall is the tail end of Baja's off-season. Temperatures are extreme, the weather unsettled, and businesses closed and waiting for the winter's onslaught of surfers, sailboarders, vacationers, and honeymooners. In another month, things would change dramatically. Southern Baja has become a winter vacationer's mecca and every year sees more and more gringos making the long trek south from the border. Campgrounds, hotels, resorts, and restaurants are bursting with "snowbirds" escaping winter and heartily enjoying Baja's balmy climate and its justifiably famous surfing, windsurfing, fishing, and scuba diving.

Not in the fall, though. Baja was deserted. The lack of operating tourist facilities was no problem since we'd planned on camping anyway. We wanted to get away, to hang out on great curving beaches of white sand and clear water. We weren't disappointed. The achingly beautiful beaches were all but empty of people, and there was ample time for conversation with the few people who did happen along, for invitations to fishermen's homes for a fresh seafood dinner, even for lunch with a construction crew in a town we'd been told we could buy supplies in.

That information proved to be incorrect; the town had neither food nor water. The only supplies available were the construction crew's. The tortillas and cheese they generously sold us kept us going for another day and a half. Our arrival had been cause for break from work. They thought two women riding through on bicycles was novel; we thought a town without food and water was novel. We were lucky they were there; without them, we would have been in trouble with little food and not nearly enough water.

We'd arrived in Baja with only a sketchy plan of action. Finding specific information about mountain biking in Baja is virtually impossible. Not that it was all that important. Where we went didn't really matter; we just wanted to go, to explore this wild and remote extension of Mexico, to ride our bikes and camp along the ocean.

We'd arrived on Mexicana Airlines, our bikes in the luggage bay. We headed north from town along the coast road. The washboard began almost immediately, the road so rough that we averaged only five miles an hour. The sea of ridges extended from road edge to road edge with no respite. Beyond the road was the desert, heat waves shimmering over its gravelly, rock-littered surface. Thoughts of escaping by veering onto the desert were instantly quashed by visions of tires shredding on the ubiquitous cactus. Because of our unexpectedly slow pace, we had to pedal through the midday's 102-degree heat to make any kind of mileage.

Baja is raw desert with existence a clean and simple affair—survival. Our first two days were spent just figuring out how to cope with the heat. Life was reduced to water, or the need for water. An incredible amount of our time seemed to be spent making sure we had enough. Vultures perched on saguaros maintained a vigil over us. One day when I was feeling particularly whipped, they seemed to be watching more intently than usual. I wondered if they knew something I didn't.

Our first day, before we'd fully grasped the conditions facing us, we met a group of surfers waiting for waves along an enormous bay. They were amazed to see two women cycling in Baja. Before we left, they insisted on our taking a half gallon of water, a package

of cookies, and a bag of raisins despite our vigorous protestations that we were fine and didn't need them.

The extra water and food saved us the next day when it took far longer than expected to reach our destination. The heat and washboard guaranteed that our original mileage goals were unrealistically grandiose. But as long as we could keep supplied with water and food, we were in no hurry to get anywhere. Instead of putting in long hours on the bikes, afternoons found us turning off the main road onto any side track that looked like it would deposit us on a beach. They never failed us, though we wondered at times.

The beaches were incredible, the kind you see pictured in travel brochures: white sand, blue sky, and crystalline water. All were empty of people. One didn't even have footprints along the two miles of shore we explored. In a setting like this, our dinner of canned tuna fish and molky tortillas was a feast. Another day, we arrived at a remote resort perched on a cliff overlooking a sparkling bay. The thought of a shower and cold beers was too much and we signed in. A group of scuba-diving dentists were in residence, and that night's dinner, served on a spacious veranda, was fish and lobster they'd caught that afternoon. It was incredible, almost a dream; the resort is definitely one of those places to return to.

But that was true of all of Baja. The trip was worth all the sweat and the constant hammering of endless washboard. The beaches and bays were unbelievable, and those were only the ones we saw. For every one visited, there are dozens more that rarely, if ever, feel a human tread. Even the storm was grand, a wild reminder of the tenuousness of man's passage. ★

Bay at Los Frailes, just one more incredible beach along the coast.



First morning on the beach; local fishermen heading out in the background.



Patching the water bottle with a little help from our friends.



Deserted beach, bathtub-temperature water, and new-found friend.





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CHOICE PASSAGES



COSTA RICA

Not Just Another Revolution

by Ann Poe

"THERE ARE NO ROADS FROM HERE TO JICARRAL." The voice belonged to a huge man dwarfing the bar stool on which he perched, his hands wrapped securely around a half-empty vodka bottle. Uncertain of his sobriety, I shuffled through my panniers and pulled out our well-worn map. The usual tourist handout, it was like using an interstate highway map to locate trails in a national park.

"Look, here it is, Jicarral," I said. "There's a line from here to there. That's a road." I feigned confidence, weighing the map's past performance against the half-empty vodka bottle.

Downing another swig, the man replied, "Not built yet. Comprende?"

My husband, Mike, and I had already ridden our mountain bikes over two-hundred miles of cattle trails, beaches, and gravel roads in the last two weeks. One hundred and fifty more miles of roads described as "you can't get through" was just the kind of adventure we came for. We'd been soaking up the sun along Costa Rica's Pacific coast and were in no hurry to return to northern Idaho's December weather. Our panniers were stuffed with the essentials for independent travel: tent, sleeping bags, stove, tools, Spanish language book, and lots of film.

End of the road, bike hiking to the Pacific Ocean, Costa Rica. Inset: The other story: rain forest destruction.

Old wave ATB.



The Nuts and Bolts Of Traveling to And In Costa Rica

Preparation: Learn some Spanish. English is spoken only in the capital. Read about the country. It's as varied as the whole U.S.

"The South American Handbook," edited John Brooks, has a section on Costa Rica. It's a budget-minded guide book with out-of-the-way places. "Backpacking in Mexico and Central America," Hillary Bradt describes great trails perfect for off road biking.

Maps: Get them in the U.S. before you go, but don't expect much. Write 6 weeks ahead to: Costa Rican Tourist Board, 200 SE First St., Room 400, Miami, FL 33131. Roads are never what they are shown to be. Asking locals doesn't do much good; they want to help but have never been there. Look at it as an adventure into the unknown.

Getting there: Excellent fares from Miami, New Orleans, Washington, DC, New York, and Los Angeles are available. Bikes travel as oversized luggage, one piece per person, no charge. Call ahead to the airline to make sure it has boxes. Remove the pedals and turn the handlebar. For the return flight, you'll have to make your own box, though they will put the bike on without one (rough on the bike).

Customs: No big deal. They didn't even stamp on our passports that we had bikes (requiring us to take them out), so selling them is a possibility. A passport, tourist card (good for 30 days from Costa Rican consulate), and a return ticket are required.

Bikes: Costa Rica has many excellent

prepped roads, but if you want to cycle in the country, most of the roads are steep and winding and gravelled. Mountain bikes are recommended.

Spare Parts: Tools in Costa Rica are either very shoddy or very expensive. Take your own. With good quality bikes, not many spare parts will be needed. Tire tubes and chain lubricant are essential. Our tires lasted 3,000 miles, though we each carried a spare. We also took spare spokes, cables, bearings and chains, but we had no mechanical problems. Bike shops do not carry parts that fit mountain bikes.

Locks: We had no problems in Costa Rica, but theft was very much alive in the other Central and South American countries we cycled. For peace of mind, take U-locks.

Films: Take all you need and have it processed back home.

Camping: Mostly unorganized. A few popular beaches have sites. We camped in soccer fields, on private driveways, and on grazing lands. Ask the owner's permission. Most are very kind. Take all necessary equipment: tent, mattress, sleeping bag, stove (multi-fuel).

Lodging: ranges from \$5 to \$25 per night. Many small towns have no lodging facilities and distances between them can be long.

Water: Take an effective water purifier. Your only source of water in the country may be drawn directly from streams where pigs wallow.

Politics: Costa Ricans are proud of their democracy. We felt safe and were welcomed with sincerity.

"GRACIAS, SENOR" we said, then turned our bikes for the unknown. We hadn't ridden but a few miles when the road did in fact disappear... into the Pacific Ocean. Our route was across the Rio Blanco, 150 feet wide and 4 feet deep. We had to cross immediately, before the rapidly rising tide cut us off. Mike swam the river in several places hoping to find a shallow spot. The best he could find was chest deep. We stripped our gear off the bikes, floated them overhead, and waded in. Between the strong current flowing out and the strong tide coming in, I could barely hold the bike aloft. Mike had to grab my rear wheel to keep it from going under. By the time we got the last of the gear across, the water was up to our necks! Before us was an endless panorama



Shucking corn the old way. Judging by the size of their pile they were glad for our help.

of untouched beach, pounding surf, and stranded rock outcroppings punctuated with gnarly trees. We mounted our bikes and cut tracks across the desolate expanse until making camp in the midst of a lonely stretch of beach. In the morning, we noticed strange imprints leading from the sea to our fire pit. A giant sea turtle had laid her eggs during the night in the warmth of the dying coals.

For the next nine days, we cycled over deserted beaches and twisting cart paths. What showed as gravel roads on the tourist map meant a bulldozer had passed that way once for perhaps one might go by at an undefined future

date). The engineer was obviously a geometry wizard; he knew the shortest distance between two points was a straight line. Translated into cycling language, this meant straight up.

We'd charge the hills at full speed until our legs couldn't keep the pedals spinning anymore or we'd pop an unintentional wheelie when the angle got too steep. Then we'd fall over, exhausted. The river rocks used for surfacing produced the same effect as walking on marbles. After pushing up one steep hill, we walked down the other side to keep the rear wheel from trying to pass the front. Curves were especially challenging as we invariably slid from the outside to the inside. Just when we figured it couldn't get much tougher than this, the gravel road dumped us unceremoniously onto a cattle trail that defied the passage of 4-wheel-drives. It took both of us to push one loaded bike up the steep, slippery rocks.

Beyond that, the dirt road had been soaked with rain, run over by a thousand cattle, then baked dry by the sun. First we tried riding fast with the hope that we'd skim across the top, but my front wheel hit so hard I flew over the handlebar. Then we tried keeping our feet on the ground for balance. We switched to pedaling slowly after Mike's toe got stuck in a hoofprint and he nearly dislocated his hip. Nor was there any escape from the torture; we were fenced in by a 6-foot-high barbed wire fence. I pressed on in deep concentration, trying not to bite my tongue when I crashed into the practically petrified footprints.

"How ya doin'?" Mike asked.

"Couldn't be better," I lied. The trail seemed endless. Near exhaustion, we finally broke free onto a real gravel road, and civilization... a large swimming hole bursting with children. Hot and dirty, we used our Frisbee as an entry permit.

The bikes instantly attracted attention. Word spread and soon the nearby villagers gathered to stare. Curious children hurled questions like fastballs. "How much do they cost? Can I ride one? What is that?" pointing to the pump, or brake, or gears until we'd looked up the Spanish word for every part on the bike.

Setting up camp generated another flurry of pointing and chattering as each new item appeared from the panniers. The children assisted with putting up the tent and blowing up the mattresses. Lighting the stove drove them into silent raptures. Their attention was so intense that I'm sure they were able to count the silver fillings as I spooned the noodles into my mouth. We crawled into the tent to go to sleep. I peered out the netting

Downtown Jicaral, stare on the left, Jicaral Cafe on the right.



at pairs of eyes staring in and I wondered what audience I'd have when it came time to relieve myself. We arose at 5:30 the next morning and our watchers were already assembled.

By 8 o'clock, it was already hot as the sun bore down on the rough, unsheltered road. Large ranches with herds of white oxen lined both sides. Caballeros rode check on fences while field hands swung at the hay with their machetes, leaving neat rows behind for the gatherers. Ox-drawn carts ferried children home from the fields as the hour for fiesta approached.

The heat intensified. Beads of sweat mixed with the dust on our tanned bodies as we pedaled vigorously along. Preoccupied with our efforts and the heat, we nearly collided with a family of pigs rooting in the road. Skidding to a stop, we looked up and saw Jicaral.

The village looked like an old Hollywood set for South Pacific. Palm trees shaded the only two wooden structures, which faced each other across the sandy street. Three pigs wallowing in a mud hole served as the welcoming committee, while tethered horses rested on three legs, their heads hanging low in the shade of their haunches. We propped our bikes against the palm trees.

A cowboy, machete hanging from his hip, arms loaded with newspaper-wrapped bundles of goods, struggled out the door of the building, in front of which the horses were tied. We sauntered in. The room was stuffed with merchandise. Field hands leaning on a counter were directing a little girl, who climbed up and down the shelves like a monkey as she retrieved canned tuna, baskets of rolls, toilet paper, and tobacco. A woman ran busily up and down the aisles, gathering axes and knives while a young boy added prices on a scrap of paper. We positioned our elbows on the counter and started pointing.

Stocked with canned meats, a bag of

rice, fresh oranges, bananas, and grapefruits, we stumbled back out into the heat, stuffed the food into our packs, then shuffled through the dust to the pink building across the way, the Jicaral cafe. The proprietors were out back, shucking corn. The eldest son was directing his brothers in the use of a rusty old John Deere hand-cranked machine that stripped the corn from the cob. Mike wanted to help. The boy operator puffed out his chest with pride. It was a good thing the machine was simple to operate because the Spanish directives were not. Half an hour later, Mike had a foot-high pile of corn at his feet. The father removed the chaff by tossing the corn into the wind, while the mother ground it in her pestle.

A long, low rumbling interrupted the grinding.

"What was that?" Mike wondered as he looked up from his work.

"I've got to eat," I confessed, trying to quiet my stomach with a piece of stale roll.

A cool breeze blew through the cafe's open walls, providing a refreshing place for lunch. The seniors brought us heaping plates of rice, beans, bananas, meat in a sauce, cabbage salad, and a batch of fresh tortillas made from newly ground corn. Chickens pecked at our feet and flies circled our heads. Swallowing the last mouthful with dispatch, I noticed a tall, handsome rancher watching us. He approached our bikes. His wondering eyes reminded me of the children at the swimming hole.

"Allow me to introduce myself," he said. "Alejandro Rodriguez. I live in the prettiest place in the world. I welcome you to visit my ranch."

We accepted. Indeed, it was beautiful. White stucco with a red tile roof, the house perched on a ridge overlooking the Pacific. Alejandro introduced us to his wife Rostia, rode his bike around the yard, and in-

continued on p. 71



Stewart Aitchison

CHOICE PASSAGES



Stewart Aitchison



Stewart Aitchison

Left: strange and wonderful Ocotillo tree, Cabeza Prieta
Middle: Ah-ah kava flow, Pinacate N.P. Right: unusual fan
shaped Saguaro cactus tip, Cabeza Prieta.

By Stewart Aitchison

ARIZONA

For the Desert and Lava Fiends

WE HEADED SOUTH to the desert and an escape from a winter stubbornly refusing to release its grip on northern Arizona. Bikes were strapped on the car as we turned our backs on Flagstaff and its snow and cold and dropped down out of the heights, passing through the Phoenix sprawl and south towards the Mexican border.

Our first stop was the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Arizona, home to desert bighorn sheep and the endangered Sonoran pronghorn. It's also one of Arizona's least known and least visited areas, though this hasn't always been the case. During the mid-nineteenth century gold rush, a

torrent of prospectors passed through on their way to the gold fields. Many never made it; over four hundred died—most from dehydration—along the El Camino del Diablo (Devil's Highway). Ironically, during the preceding two centuries of Spanish rule, only a handful of people died along the same route.

Before the Spaniards' arrival, small groups of San Papago Indians eked out an existence in this inhospitable land by hunting desert bighorn and gathering cactus fruit, mesquite beans, and a bizarre mushroom-like plant known as sand food. The padres, and later the prospectors heading to California, passed through as quickly as possible, leaving the Indians, the desert, and the wildlife little affected.

Then copper was discovered in 1916. The huge copper mines in nearby Ajo

and the consequent resident population resulted in dramatically increased hunting of the desert bighorn and pronghorn to the point that their existence was threatened. Conservationists, including the Boy Scouts of America, crusaded for the protection of these rapidly vanishing desert species, and in 1939, 860,000 acres of Sonoran desert were designated as the Cabeza Prieta Game Range. That designation was changed to Game Refuge in 1975. Under the area's protective umbrella are a variety of desert creatures and plants, including the white-winged dove, desert tortoise, kit fox, harris hawk, golden eagle, the poisonous Mexican jumping bean, the rare Kearney sunflower, and the peculiar elephant tree.

The Refuge has periodically been recommended for National Park status but evidently its remoteness and the public's

lack of knowledge about this unique area has prevented a ground swell of enthusiasm for Park designation. Probably not helping is the fact this vast and rugged region lies within a U.S. Air Force air-to-air gunnery range.

Why we drove so far to such a desolate corner of the country just to find ourselves in the middle of a bombing range where, if we weren't shot, we'd probably die from thirst or be bitten by a Gila monster is not an unreasonable question. Our answer: Because the Sonora desert is incredibly beautiful. Precautionary rules for the Refuge are simple: carry plenty of water in your vehicle and on your bike, plan your trip for anytime from fall through spring, and count yourself lucky if you should chance to see the rare venomous creature. And what about those bombs bursting in air? Public

access is prohibited when the Air Force is practicing. Permission to enter has to be obtained from the Refuge manager in Ajo or Yuma.

Be prepared for soft sand and dirt; low gears are recommended. Pedaling from the east entrance through the Pinacate Lava Flows spilling over the Mexican border is easy enough, but just west of the flow we encountered deep, unrelenting sand. Since a late-winter storm was also approaching, we elected to retreat to our camp while we still could, instead of pressing on deeper into the Refuge and taking a chance on getting caught out too far.

That storm was unbelievable. Cabeza Prieta is one of the driest parts in the entire Southwest, but here it was beginning to rain. We packed up to look for drier desert, vowing to return and continue

CHOICE PASSAGES

PERMITS & ACCESS

CABEZA PRIETA

Permits - Refuge Manager, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1611 N. 2nd Ave., Ajo, AZ 85321. They'll send you a Refuge permit application as well as a military 'hold harmless' agreement.

Access - The main entrance is via the Darby Well Road (also called Bates Well) 2 miles south of Ajo on state highway 85. It's generally passable for any high-clearance vehicle. Once within the Refuge, four-wheel drive may be required, but then again, you have your bike. There are no gas stations and no sources of drinking water once you leave the pavement at Ajo.

ORGAN PIPE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Permits - No permits are required for day use, but an overnight camping permit is required in the backcountry. Contact the Park Superintendent, Rt. 1, Box 100, Ajo, AZ 85321; or call (602) 387-6849.

Access - The Monument is located about 120 miles west of Tucson and can be reached by taking State Route 86 to Why (yes, this really is the name) and then south on State Route 85. The Visitor Center is 22 miles south of Why.

PINACATE VOLCANIC FIELD NATIONAL PARK

Permits - None required. Information and a map can be obtained from the rangers at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. You may also try going to the Pinacate Park Headquarters in Soyotla at 16 de Septiembre, 11, just west of the Botica San Luis.

Books to read or take along are: 'Campfires on Desert and Lava' by William T. Hornaday, a classic work about early exploration of this area recently reprinted in paperback; 'Gathering the Desert' by Gary Nabhan, eloquent essays about the remarkable plants of the Sonoran Desert; 'A Naturalist's Guide to the Deserts of the Southwest' by Peggy Larson, a good introduction to surviving the creatures, plants, and extremes of the desert.

our bike exploration of the Refuge at another date.

Immediately east of Cabeza Prieta is Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. We retraced our route on the Bates Well Road to Ajo to refuel our cooler before heading southeast in.

Organ Pipe has a variety of backcountry roads worthy of a mountain biking venture. You have to share the roads with vehicles, but since everyone is there for the scenery, they generally drive slow. The Ajo Mountain Drive is a one-way, 21-mile, round-trip gravel road passing through magnificent stands of the Monument's namesake while circumnavigating rugged mountains. It's an easy afternoon ride with the first half mostly up and the second half an exhilarating downhill. For an all-day excursion, take the 53-mile Puerto Blanco Drive. The road skirts the Puerto Blanco Mountains past

old mines before arriving at Quitobaguito, one of the Monument's few permanent springs.

The best ride of all is an overnight excursion on the 75-mile loop beginning at the Visitor Center. Take the paved road north about 15 miles to a jeep road heading west. This road follows the Monument's northern boundary to Bates Well, where it connects with Cabeza Prieta's east entrance road. Some 6 miles beyond Bates Well, a jeep road (marked with a sign) heads south to Quitobaguito Springs and the Puerto Blanco Drive. Camping in the backcountry is allowed but only with a free permit obtained at the Visitor Center.

We arrived at Organ Pipe with no firm route plans, but a cool breeze and overcast sky told us too clearly that winter was still on our heels. In desperation (we'd bailed out of Flagstaff specifically to

get away from storms, not to go cycling in one), we crossed the Mexican border at Lukeville at the southern edge of the Monument and headed south towards Mexico's Pinacate Volcanic Field National Park, an area we'd never visited.

We drove to Soyotla, then turned west on Mexican Route 2 paralleling the border. At kilometer post 51, we turned south onto an unmarked and wide black cinder road. The road ran 4 miles straight to a volcanic enter mine. A few hundred feet before entering the mine area, we spotted a dirt track taking off to the right through the creosote bushes. We stopped and looked at one another then back at the track. We took it and, after another mile of driving, we camped.

There weren't any signs, visitor centers, or park rangers. This was wild country requiring plenty of food, water, a good sense of direction, and a solid dose of desert savvy. It's also no place to be in the summer...your tires would melt and your brain would fry. Cacti were everywhere, especially the fuzzy-looking chollas, sometimes called jumping cactus. The chollas bristle with fine needles and break off into segments when unexpected flesh casually brushes against a plant...a very effective way to distribute itself, though painful for the host.

The morning found us pedaling down the road, where we soon ran into a dramatic, jet-black lava flow. The ragged, tumbled blocks of lava looked as fresh as yesterday, though a few thousand years have passed since the volcanoes were active. The road skirted various volcanoes and forked several times. Using a photocopy map bought at Organ Pipe, we managed to find Cerro Elegante, a huge crater some 800 feet deep and almost a mile in diameter. These craters or maars, the result of violent explosions, are the most dramatic features of the Pinacate region and well worth visiting.

The sun stayed out all day and so did we, exploring side roads, lava flows, and craters. We decided maybe spring really was going to arrive. The 5-gallon jug of water we'd left in the sun was just the right temperature for washing off the trail dust when we finally pulled back into camp that afternoon, graphic evidence of the day's heat, which is what had brought us down out of Flagstaff's heights in the first place. We'd ended up driving more and riding less than we'd planned, but the weekend didn't turn into the bust threatened by the rain at Cabeza Prieta.

Clean, slightly sunburned, and enjoyably tired, we returned the bikes to the roof rack and drove back to Soyotla for a well-deserved meal of refried and Mexican beer before the long jaunt home. ★

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Of course, Panasonic's reputation for quality is inherited by each of the 7 Mountain Citi models.

If you want to bring out the beast in your biking (even in the asphalt jungle), make tracks to your nearest Panasonic dealer. And capture one yourself.

MC
Mountain Citi



Panasonic

Goods

FRED ZAHRADNIK

Performance Off-Road Shoe:

The new Performance "Mountain Bike" shoes look good. The lugs are shallow enough for easy entry into toe clips, they grip the pedal well, yet they allow you to yank out when you're in trouble in the middle of a boulder field. Off-the-bike traction is good, though a 3/4-length steel shank that provides stiffness for pedaling makes the sole slightly stiff for extended hiking. Heel slippage is minimized by a solid heel counter. The padded and gusseted tongue is comfortable while the uppers are made of a

breathable mesh and full-grain leather, including bumpers to protect the toe and toe strap area. We haven't used these shoes long enough for a final opinion, but they appear



study enough to withstand the abuses they'll be subjected to. A feature unique to the Mountain Bike shoes is a wedge of shock-absorbing, rubbery material built into the forefoot area of the insole. We haven't formed an opinion on the advantage it may have. We're certain, though, of the benefits of these shoes coming in narrow, medium, and wide widths—almost unheard of in off-road shoes. They weigh 28 ounces per pair and sell for \$29.95 plus shipping from Performance, Box 241, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

Dirt-Tough Rim Strip:

Specialized's "Mountain-Strip" rim strip is a serious improvement over other rim strips. So what? you say. What's wrong with good old electrical tape? It's cheap, easily wrapped, and it's not all that important in the first place. Out of sight, out of mind. Except that the time you suddenly rediscover your rim strip is invariably out on the trail after you've suffered yet another flat. You find that your old strip is dry, cracked, and the spoke

ends are beginning to wear through. You're miles from home, and suddenly a rim strip is very important.

Specialized's new, high-tech model lets you safely take rim strips for granted again. It's made of a tough, stretchy poly-

mer that doesn't crack, dry out, split, or melt; at least it hasn't so far on any of our test wheels. Nor have we had any spoke or pinch cuts, even with low tire pressures. The material can also withstand temperature extremes without becoming brittle, and no glue is needed for installation since it snaps smartly onto the rim. Weight is only 20 grams. For the nearest shop that sells the Mountain-Strip, write: Specialized, 15130 Concord Circle, Morgan Hill, CA 95037.



3T for Off-Road:

3T, the Italian company that's forged a reputation for quality road handlebars and stems, has seen the dirt. Its new mountain bike bar is made of heat-treated 6082 aluminum and features the same extra-strong center construction as the road bars. The one-piece design has no collar to creak or induce stress cracks. The bars are adequately stiff without be-



ing too rigid, an important consideration during long, rough passages. The off-road stem is forged from 6082 T6 aluminum and available in 110mm, 120mm and 130mm extensions. It costs about \$40, \$25 for the bars. Both are available with a black-anodized or silver finish. For more information see your dealer, or write: Bicycle Parts Pacific, Box 640, San Jose, CA 92071.



MONGOOSE SYCAMORE™

The 1988 Mongoose line includes two exciting new models, the Sycamore and the Switchback. Like the rest of the Mongoose line, these models have been engineered and equipped with the help of John Tomac and Max

Jones to provide you with the best possible performance and value. ■ The Sycamore comes equipped with the new granite grey Shimano Exsage Mountain component group with Soft Touch brake levers and rugged Araya alloy rims. ■ The value priced Switchback features positive shifting Shimano SIS Indexing gear systems, quick stopping alloy cantilever brakes and a responsive, yet comfortable frame geometry. ■ Pick up a 1988 Mongoose Catalog and see all the new Mongoose bicycles including the incredibly fast John Tomac Signature model, the performance ATB and the popular Alta and Hill Topper at your local Mongoose dealer.



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SLICK SPRING LOOKS

A Fine Line for '88

LIZ FRITZ



1



2

Photographed in Moab, Utah by John Laptad.



3

THREADS

Photo 1

Left
Axi Sport-America, Inc. - Long sleeve jersey with padded shoulders (\$42) worn with cycling short with polypropylene liner (\$36.95).

Middle
Helly-Hansen - Life polypropylene jersey (\$49.95) and knicker (\$39.95).

Right
Scott Tinley Performancewear - Mountain bike jersey with polypropylene padded shoulders and elbows (\$32); mountain bike knicker with polypropylene side-leg padding (\$36).

Photo 2

Helly-Hansen - see credit above

Photo 3

The North Face - Tight ropes tight with 4-way stretch Cordura paneling (\$70) worn with Sierra Design's quick-dry anorak (\$45).



1



2



3



4

Nylon/Lycra shorts of Cool-Max or polypropylene are still the No. 1 choice of many riders.

Shorts are featuring padded panels built into the hips and thighs.

Below-the-knee knickers and tights of heavyweight nylon/Lycra or with panels of abrasion-resistant Cordura or Kevlar give an extra margin of protection.

Baggie-styled shorts for maximum freedom of movement are still riding favorites, with the up-graded version offering a hidden cycling short liner built into the baggie.

Photo 1

Patagonia - The "electric" lightweight reversible windbreaker (\$69) worn over Alita asymmetrical-neck tank top (\$28) and Super short with Cool-Max/Lycra inner short (\$50).

Photo 2

Right: Patagonia - Comfy synchilla sweater (\$100) worn over Serac cut-out ladies jersey (\$45) and riding tights (\$35).

Left: Hind - Pro Stretch jersey of Pro Core mini mesh (\$39) and heavyweight high-visibility cycling knicker (\$44).

Photo 3

Specialized - Team Stumpjumper jersey worn with Trek Be Bop Bike short with anatomical stretch inner short (\$36).

Photo 4

Hind - Supplex Women's Explorer short with polypropylene brief (\$37) and soft, lightweight Sport Systems top (\$27).



1

Choose from the latest in fabric technology: moisture transporting fabrics such as Field-sensor, Cool-Max, Pro Core and polypropylene are available in any shape and size.

On cooler and windy rides, comfy fleece and wind-proof nylons offer high-tech protection. *



2



3



4



5

THREADS

Photo 1

J.T. Actif - Wool polyester long sleeve jersey (\$54.95) worn with Hind men's Explorer short (\$37.90).

Photo 2

Surbuster - Heavyweight nylon/Lycra road tights (\$44) and training jacket (\$58).

Photo 3

Front: Le Coq Sportif - Cycling short (\$42) and heavyweight cotton jersey (\$57).

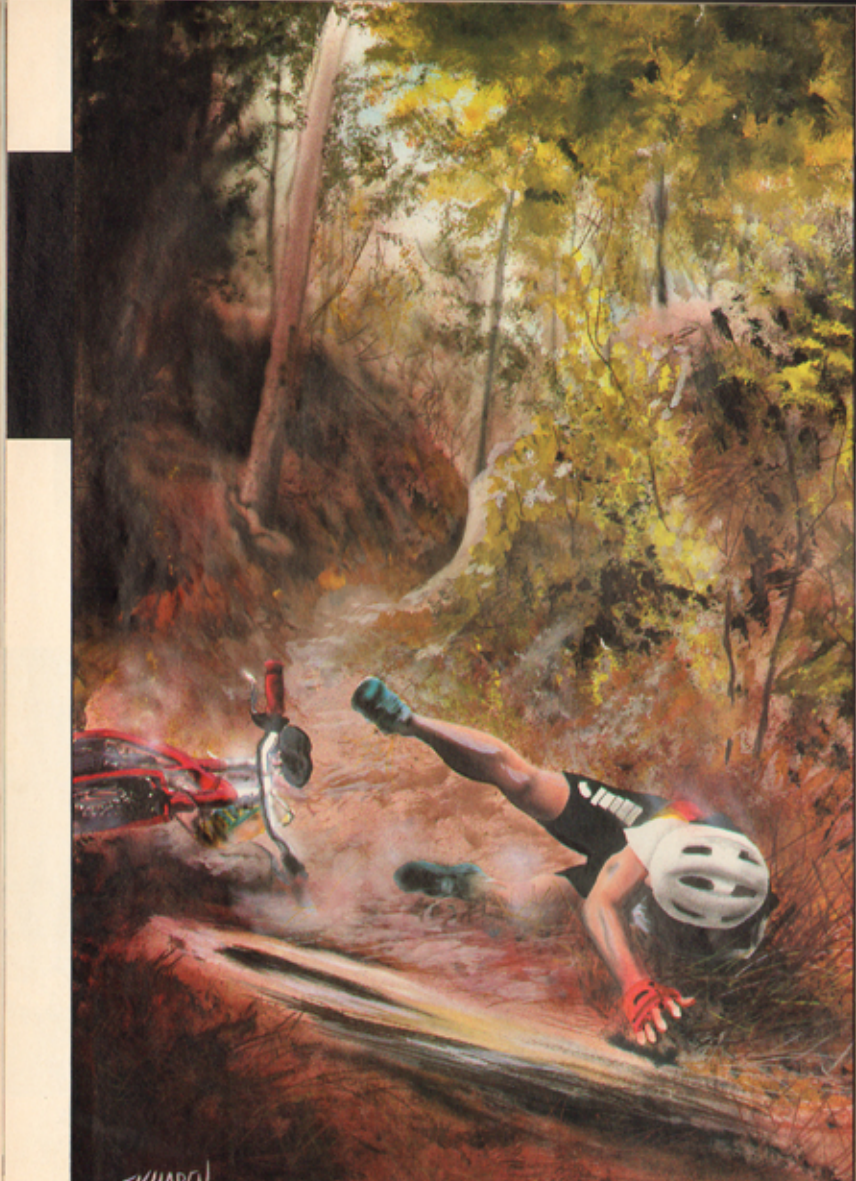
Rear: Sense - Hot Flash III Synabie fleece pullover (\$65) and Cruiser short with liner (\$35).

Photo 4

Skimmer Wear of Park City - Nylon/Lycra crop top (\$20) and riding tights (\$29).

Photo 5

Nike - Wind- and water-repellent nylon rtpstop Stand jacket (\$36) and Supplex City short with polypropylene liner (\$35).



CRASHING RIGHT

It Doesn't Happen to the Other Guy

by DORI KLAAREN

IT WAS LIKE ALWAYS. Like a movie. The scenery was gorgeous, we were riding glibly into the sunset, and everyone was going to live happily ever after.

Of course, "just in case" we were wearing helmets. But it really didn't matter because "it" always happens to that other person.

Then, suddenly, reality hit. My tires spun on the wet leaves, slipped across some slick mud, and smashed into a tree root.

I found myself airborne and crash-bound.

We were deep in the woods, five miles from the most remote civilization. While taking on the terrain, the only sounds had been of nature, our bodies' endeavors, and the reassuring jingle of the tool kits.

As I landed in a twisted pretzel of body and cycle, I heard the electric crackle in my ears of a dead faint. I shook myself alert.

I had seen long-time mountain-biking friends proudly show off deep right-call sprocket cuts—the teeth of the beast they had conquered. Most cyclists I know have a gladiator approach: let those scratches clot. Band-aids are for wimps with boo-boos. Anyone but a wimp could endure a scrape or scratch.

But this was more. This was downright pain.

I stayed collapsed where I had fallen, two comrades coming quickly to my side. For them, the accident had happened to "the other guy," but they were with me all the way. It had happened to all of us.

"Are you alright? Are you alright?" My husband and our friend's anxious queries were also formulated to see if I was in real trouble or just whimpering out.

It was trouble. Real throbbing trouble.

The only thing more real than pain, and even more trouble, is blood. Not a scratch-covered purple bruise, I'm talking REAL blood here—on the order of a Monty Python sketch. My head was okay, but when I moved my clothing aside, deep red, American blood gushed so steadily we wondered if it could be stopped. As I sat clinging to a sapling, it was imperative that I remain level-headed.

In the case of any such open wound, stopping the bleeding is the main priority. We placed a square piece of sterile gauze on top of a folded sock and applied hard, even pressure to my wound. It's scarier now to think back about it, but if not for that extra pair of clean, thick, absorbent socks, I very may well have bled myself into oblivion out there where the deer and the antelope play.

LUCKILY WE WERE ABLE TO check the bleeding, clean the area, dress it adequately, bind it securely, and tow me and my (unscathed) bike back to our car. We even had a frozen water bottle in the ice chest to take down the swelling during the drive home. (I've since wondered about an unsuspecting Ranger or hiker who may have stumbled onto the accident scene and began looking for body parts.)

The irony of this story is that I outfitted my husband with his first-aid kit more than a year ago when he'd returned from backwoods biking all

scratched up, eyes sparkling while telling about his tree-dodging adventures. I figured he could use one. And he did. Only the first time he used this kit was on me during this fateful ride.

We were glad to have every item in there.

Regular commercial first-aid kits contain a variety of gauze and small band-aids, but I realized after my accident that mountain bikers need more than that.

A couple of versatile items, a bandana for example, coupled with some sterile bandages and common sense can at least get you out of danger in most situations. And it can fit neatly into a waterproof zip-lock baggie. The total cost for this unofficial Boy Scout package is around \$20, not including the cost of a small pocket knife. It could be less, depending on how much you have on hand already.

Don't let your first-post-crash thought be remorse over not having brought along a first-aid kit. Twenty bucks isn't a lot to pay before that weekend of blind enthusiasm. Nothing can put a damper on a ride like an accident. It's possible to crash and almost ruin oneself in this sport, as I found out. If not for the responsible riders I was with (BOTH had a first-aid kit), I never would have made it out.

THE CURIOUS MAY WANT TO know exactly where my injury was. Let's just say that every cycling friend who heard details of my accident made it a point to put a BMX bar pad on the handlebar.

And I'd be the last one to call any of them a wimp for doing so. ★

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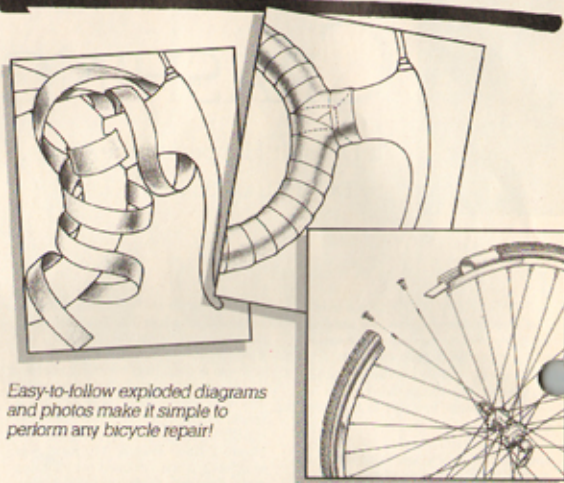
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North-of-the-border mountain bike, by Brodie.

It's A Brodie

By Stewart Brenton

CANADIAN MOUNTAIN biking has received a jolt of excitement from Paul Brodie, an inventive framebuilder working in Vancouver, BC, and Brent Martin, a hard-charging racer.

Brodie has been acquiring a reputation for building hot bikes with unorthodox designs. In a world dominated by horizontal top tubes, the dramatic slope of a Brodie frame defies convention.

He explains: "With a slightly longer head tube and the seat tube extension, the top tube and down tube are more parallel, giving the frame a bit of suspension when the tubes flex. However, the torsional stiffness [head tube and seat tube alignment] is retained."

The design did not occur overnight. Before he had even heard of mountain bikes, Brodie had spent several years fooling around with motorcycles, machining his own parts for his Vincent Black Shadow. Then the first Stumpjumper came north, and his curiosity was aroused. When he saw a bright red Ritchey Team Comp with matching bullmoose bars, his desire to build mountain bikes was confirmed.

The result was a two-year stint setting up and manufacturing frames for Rocky Mountain Bicycle company in Vancouver, BC. It was there he had his brainstorm and began developing a sloping top tube in the spring of '85. This led to prototype - the Rocky Mountain Team Thunderbolt.

Brodie is now on his own, a meticulous craftsman striving to make the fast-

est, most innovative mountain bike on the market. Brodie Bikes is a small shop producing high-quality frames from Tange tubing, each bike weighing slightly more than 26 pounds. There are three models: the ClimbMax, with a 69-degree head angle; the Romax, with a 70.5-degree head angle; and the Simian Warrior, a trials model with a 73-degree head angle.

Brodie's relationship with Brent Martin came out of Brent's desire for a Canadian racing bike. He'd heard Brodie's bikes were user friendly with a speed and smoothness that was attracting more and more attention. He went to Paul with the intention of purchasing a bike he could win on and ended up being given an experimental model with a 71-degree head angle. The bike more than met his expectations, but not before some reservations.

"The bike climbs great, and I really get off on it," Martin says, "but sometimes I found the handling too quick."

Formerly a rugby player, Martin has the potential to become a major figure in West Coast racing. A thoughtful, disciplined athlete, he trains year-round in Whistler, BC, his hometown and Canada's mecca for skiers and mountain bikers.

"I ski continuously in the winter," he says. "In the summer, I run and swim in the mornings, work during the day building log cabins, then ride after work."

He hangs out with the Deep Cove Boys, arguably the finest group of mountain bikers in Canada. They live above

North Vancouver, up Indian Arm at the base of Seymour Mountain, in a world of up and down where flat is boring. Rugged individualists, they ski and cycle with the seasons, creating a crazy Canuck camaraderie in the process. Also called the Brown Fish Jumpers and the Poo Hoppers, the Deep Cove Boys have nicknames like Lumpy, Brake, and Numb-nuts. They're a clannish bunch known to occasionally do strange things in the wee hours, such as riding nude through the streets of North Vancouver.

HANGING AROUND THIS group, it was inevitable that peer pressure would coerce Brent into entering local mountain bike races. He did well enough and showed distinct promise but it wasn't until his natural abilities meshed with his new Brodie that he began standing out from the pack. He hasn't looked back since, consistently placing at the top. That includes winning the '86 Canadian Nationals.

Canadian mountain bikers may be small in number but what they lack in quantity, they more than make up for in drive. They're obsessed with pushing back the limits of riding in the dirt and are constantly exploring deeper into British Columbia's vast and challenging topography. And with people like Paul Brodie and Brent Martin leading the way, B.C. is rapidly turning into an off-roader's playground with unlimited opportunities. ★

TEST



BICYCLING Senior Editor, John Kukoda, jamming the Grove Innovations over Colorado's (in)famous Trail 409.

GROVE INNOVATIONS

by John Kukoda

The diamond frame wouldn't have survived largely unchanged for more than a century if it didn't offer a reasonable compromise of light weight, stiffness, and comfort.

Nevertheless, a bicycle needn't have the familiar diamond profile to work well. Grove Innovations's unique mountain bike proves this. In place of a top tube and down tube, designer and builder William Grove of Lemont, Pennsylvania, has substituted a single, 2-inch-

diameter "spline" tube of 0.035-inch-thick chrome-moly between the head tube and the oversized, 1 1/2-inch-diameter seat tube. The intent, Grove explains, is to provide more vertical compliance, or "jounce," than is offered by a diamond frame, while adding lateral and torsional rigidity for a rock-solid bottom bracket. One result is more efficient use of the rider's upper body strength when pulling on the one-piece chrome-moly bars and ovalized stem.

None of our test riders noticed any substantial increase in comfort due to Grove's design, but we all agreed the bike was admirably rigid when jamming out of the saddle and plenty stiff for precise, confident control on demanding single-track descents. The sloping tube also provides generous crotch clearance, although this is somewhat diminished when a water bottle cage is mounted. This clearance, combined with a 12-inch-high bottom bracket and tight, 41.5-inch wheelbase, makes the design useful in some trials situations. Several riders remarked on how easily the Grove could be hopped over obstacles.

Because of the low straddle height, Grove offers the frame in only two sizes, 17 1/4- and 19 1/2-inch, measured to the top of the seat tube.

On climbs, the Grove's 17 1/4-inch chainstays and 71-degree seat angle put the rider's weight squarely over the rear wheel for superior traction when seated. The flip side is that getting out of the saddle for a climb is akin to hauling your tired bones out of an overstuffed chair—it's an effort.

More important, the shallow seat angle makes it difficult to keep weight on the front end for control when climbing. Riding the bike on a steeply ascending single-track requires concentration and effort. Fortunately, even when crouching far forward to weight the front wheel, the tight rear end supplies adequate traction. But a more upright seat tube and proportionately longer spline tube could make this otherwise sweet-handling bike even better. (Grove says he's considering switching to a 72-degree seat tube, and custom frames are available in any geometry.)

As is, our 19 1/2-inch test bike had a generous 22 3/4-inch top tube equivalent dimension. Sliding the seat forward to, in effect, steepen the seat angle reduces this distance about 1 1/2 inch. Long-legged, short-torsoed riders (which describes many women) might achieve good fit by sliding the seat forward, but doing so made our testers feel cramped, even though it improved front-wheel control. Lengthening the stem isn't a solu-

tion, since a very long stem would act like a tiller when combined with the Grove's 70-degree head angle. It would exaggerate steering input and make precise control difficult.

These minor gripes about the bike's frame dimensions have nothing to do with the unique spline tube design. We did bemoan the lack of a top tube when forced to carry the bike several hundred yards up a steep, unrideable trail. The most comfortable method was to shoulder the bike like a marine humping an M-60 machine gun, with the water bottle as padding between spine and spine.

Though only about 20 spline-tube frames have been built, Grove is no newcomer to the bike industry. He designed and produced a line of superlight titanium/magnesium alloy components, including a 52-gram headset, in the early '80s. Grove also created the original bear trap pedal, a design he sold to Hush.

Grove performs all framebuilding tasks himself, TIG-welding each frame. (The rear dropouts are fillet-brazed.) Tubing for the frame and uncrown fork is mostly True Temper chrome-moly. Our bike's spline tube was straight gauge, but Grove says he hopes to obtain a butted spline member for future production.

The frame features internal cable routing, with the rear brake and both derailleur cables disappearing into the head tube and emerging at the appropriate places. Unfortunately, the routes aren't lined, which creates the possibility of internal corrosion from water infiltration. Without tubes to guide the cables, setup is also "a bit of a pain," Grove admits.

The conglomeration of cables sticking out of the head tube prohibits use of center-activated brakes. Grove modified a SunTour roller-cam by replacing the rollers with machined aluminum fittings that convert it into a super-sidepull. The modified brake, which retained the original SunTour pads, felt powerful and precise.

The rear U-brake, a silver Shimano Deore on our test bike, is mounted under the "lateral" stays, which parallel the line of the spline tube. The brake's transverse cable straddles the seat tube. The rear derailleur cable stays hidden until it emerges from the lateral tube at the rear dropout.

Priced at \$1,495, our test bike came equipped with an eclectic mix of mostly Japanese components: the brakes just

TEST

mentioned: Deore XT 48/38/28T crank, pedals, 13-28T cassette hubs, shifters, and a reverse-action SunTour XC front derailleur with a special clamp to fit the oversized seat tube. The seatpost was a Strong; the seat, an Avocat Touring II with raised, padded bumps.

To survive the altitude and terrain of Crested Butte, this flatland bike tester replaced the 28-tooth cog with a 34, saving my legs and lungs at the expense of indexed shifting precision.

Grove Innovations, Box 524 Lemont, PA 16851 *



NISHIKI'S PINNACLE

by Gregg Morin

Okay, I give—will the real Pinnacle please stand up?

Remember "To Tell the Truth"? The bike industry could've done well on that show. We know of three Pinnacles so far: the CyclePro Pinnacle tire, the Klein Pinnacle, and now the Nishiki Pinnacle. Given the images conjured up by the word, its popularity is so natural I'm surprised the tobacco industry hasn't laid claim to it.

Pinnacle is Nishiki's top-of-the-line mountain bike. Specs are suitably impressive, with a TIG-welded frame made from Tange MTB tubing and a mostly Deore XT gruppo. The major exception was the Browning transmission. This was our first test bike with a Browning, and it didn't take long before everyone was clamoring to try it.

It works incredibly well. Chainring shifts can be made whenever you want, and I mean this literally. It doesn't matter how hard you're pounding the cranks, or whether you're going uphill or down,

slow or fast. Every shift is made with no delay and no grinding of the chain. Amazingly, the shifting mechanism is electric and triggered by pushing a button—the top one for an upshift, bottom for a downshift. A quarter of the hinged chainring then moves over, taking the chain with it. Thus, the chain is in continuous contact with the chainrings, even engaged with both at one point during any shift. This is why there's never any slipping or grinding. Hit the button and the shift is made. Couldn't be easier.

There are drawbacks, however. First, nothing smaller than a 26-tooth inner chainring is available. Evidently, a 24-tooth ring is too small for the required mechanics. Nor can you switch chainrings to meet varied needs. And because it's electrical, you might want to always carry spare batteries. The system is sealed against the elements, but there's still the possibility of something going wrong with the electronics. Also, every Browning-equipped bike we've seen has had the battery pack mounted on the

TEST

downtube, eliminating the lower of the two water bottle cages, an important consideration for backcountry riders. But the Browning is also such a joy to use that there's no question about wanting one. It really is that good.

CyclePro Pinnacle tires are standard equipment, naturally. West Coast Cycles distributes CyclePro tires and Nishiki bikes. The tires work well, though because they're narrower than their 1.9-inch rating the ride tends to be bouncy. The Pinnacle is also equipped with a Turbo Bio saddle mounted on a Strong post. What a pleasure to find a quality saddle on a production bike. Rounding out the componentry are a "bulge" handlebar and Salsa-copy stem with the same cracked-paint look as the frame. Ours had a subdued green tint and looked great.

Geometry is relatively current: 71-degree head angle, 2 inches of rake, 73-degree seat, 17.375-inch chainstays, 43.125-inch wheelbase. These numbers result in a conservatively modern design producing a solid, jack-of-all-trades bike.

The Pinnacle does everything well but nothing exceptionally well. Climbing was good until things got radical, then maintaining traction while off the saddle was all but impossible. The chainstays are slightly too long for maximum climbing.

The front wheel tended to overreact to steering on steep climbs, apparently from two causes: the two inches of rake combined with the 71-degree head angle and the lengthy chainstays. Keeping enough weight on the front end was difficult without slipping forward on the saddle, which would cause loss of traction. Holding a line on a steep, technical passage wasn't easy. Switching to fatter tires with more aggressive knobs helped. They also improved rear-wheel traction so more weight could be shifted forward, helping the front end settle down and go where we pointed it. We still couldn't clean certain hills, but we did ride farther up. Not helping matters was a fork that flexed too much. There just wasn't the precision we expected from a frame with this design.

The biggest obstacle to climbing was

the bike's gearing. Low was 26x28, which isn't low enough for steep, sustained hills. Since the chainring can't be smaller, a 30-tooth freewheel cog would have been welcome (a 32 even more welcome).

The Pinnacle was a sweetheart in all other conditions—smooth, quick, and fast on downhills and single-tracks. Rider weight was well-distributed by the top tube length and the Salsa-style stem. Unfortunately, our test bike's stem separated after only four hours of normal riding. Luckily, the failure was noticed on a small uphill instead of during a technical descent.

In summary, the Nishiki Pinnacle is a fine all-around bike that provides top-of-the-line components and a good riding position. With its textured paint and Browning transmission, it's a looker. As equipped, it retails for about \$1,000, but the price is \$300 lower without the optional electric gear changer. And with a better fork, a Koski for example, and fatter, more aggressive tires, the Pinnacle would really start living up to its name.

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SHOP

Treads for the Wary

GREGG MORIN

Before you buy a new set of off-road tires, you should ask yourself several questions: In which part of the country will you be riding? What soil and trail conditions will be prevalent? How much do you weigh? How much do you want to spend?

The ubiquitous center-ridge/combo tires that come stock on most mountain bikes are fine for pavement and some dirt roads, but they're completely inappropriate for serious off-roading. A set of fat knobbies will make an incredible difference to your bike's traction, handling, and comfort.

Tires are like bikes in that evaluating them is mostly subjective. A tire that works great for a rider on one type of terrain may perform poorly for someone in different conditions, or even for someone who has a different riding style.

The following tires are among the most widely available. Because of variations in manufacturing and distributing, all prices, weights, and widths are approximate.

TUBES

Unless you live in cactus country or where there are "goat heads," normal butyl tubes should work fine. They cost \$3.50 and weigh 180-200 grams. Ultralight tubes weigh 20-30 grams less. Thorn-resistant tubes are thicker on the outside circumference, weigh 300-400 grams, and cost \$5.80. "Mr. Tuffy," thick plastic strips that go between the tire and tube for bulletproof protection, weigh 260 grams in the 2.125 size and cost \$10 a pair. CyclePro's new PolyTex polyurethane tubes are claimed to be three times more puncture resistant than normal tubes, yet they weigh less (160 grams, 2.125 size). They cost \$19.95 each and require a special patch kit.

PUMPS

Mt. Zefal is the most popular mountain bike pump. It's faster in diameter than the regular Zefal in order to inflate fat tires faster. It's also shorter to fit behind the seat tube, but it can be rendered useless by dents from flying rocks. Available in black, blue, white and orange. Zefal HP and Zefal HPX: The HPX is the original die-hard pump. The HPX

has a special spring loaded handle that locks the pump in place on the frame. Both can quickly be converted for use with Schrader or presta valves.

The best way to carry a pump is behind the seat tube, out of the way. Or better yet, opt for a Wilderness Trail Bikes seatpost pump that fits into the seat tube of most bikes. It's a Zefal Sol-bloc pump with a modified wooden handle.

QUICKFIL

Used by more and more riders and especially racers, these are small CO2 cartridges that instantly inflate a tire through a valve stem adapter. Be careful, though, because haste can cause you to overlook glass or thorns in the tire, or the bead may not be seated. The Quickfil only works once, then it's gone. With a pump, you can always do it over again.

FLOOR PUMPS

The most popular is Silca, made in Italy of Columbus tubing. This pump has an accurate gauge and requires presta valves. Price is \$35-40. Inexpensive model.

WHAT DO PEOPLE REALLY RIDE?

We talked with several pro racers, novice riders, and everyone between to find out what tires they use.

Ned Overend - Durango, Colorado. National and world professional champion. Specialized Ground Control "S", front and rear.

Kay Peterson - Crested Butte, Colorado. Mtn. Bike enthusiast, non-racer. Specialized Ground Control, front and rear.

Mike Kloser - Vail, Colorado. Pro racer (fisher). Winner of the '87 Colorado Off-Road Points Series. Fisher Fat Trax, front and rear.

Lisa Muhich - Durango, Colorado. Pro racer (Specialized). National champion. Specialized Ground Control "S", front and rear.

Phil Wehmeyer - Boulder, Colorado. Bike mechanic/sales, non-racer. Specialized Ground Control, front; Tioga Farmer John, rear (chevron open).

Fred Matheny - Montrose, Colorado.

els such as the Zefal "Rush" convert from Schrader to presta quickly, but the plastic pump body and plunger may not last as long. Price is \$10-12.

TIRE LEVERS

The nylon composite levers from Specialized and Kool-Stop are rounded and relatively soft, making them less likely than metal models to pinch the tube or damage the rim. They cost about \$1 each.

TIRE TIPS

Altering air pressure will make a big difference in how a tire handles. High pressure (60 psi or more) provides less rolling resistance and helps prevent snakebite flats—pinching of the tube resulting in two holes next to each other—but causes a stiff, harsh, bouncy ride.

Lower air pressure produces a softer, less-bouncy ride and better traction on loose terrain, but it increases the chance of a snakebite. Some riders run more air pressure in the rear because that's where more weight is. Experiment to find what's best for you.

Teacher, cycling writer, vet racer. Specialized Ground Control, front and rear.

Wade Wilderman - Winter Park, Colorado. Pro racer (Diamond Back). Specialized Ground Control, front; Marin Rockstar "K" rear.

Shari Stolla - Gunnison, Colorado. Mountain bike enthusiast, non-racer. Cycle Pro Pinnacle, front and rear.

John Tomac - Chatsworth, California. Pro racer (Mongoose). Winner of the 1987 Swatch/Ross Stage Race. Tioga Farmer John, front (chevron closed); Tioga Farmer John, rear (chevron open).

Bill Groll - Moab, Utah. Owner of Rim Cycles, non-racer. Specialized Ground Control, front and rear.

Carol Bauer - Crested Butte, Colorado. Mountain bike enthusiast, non-racer. Specialized Ground Control, front and rear.

Patrick Cookson - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bike mechanic/sales, non-racer. Specialized Ground Control, front and rear.

If you have a flat from something other than a puncture or pinched tube, check the inside of the tire casing with your hand for smaller culprits, such as cactus needles and broken off goat heads. Check the spokes to see if they're protruding. Make sure the rim strip is in place. Inspect the rim walls for small things that can leave sharp edges.

Keep an eye on the sidewall as well as the tread. Brake pads that are adjusted too high can slice the sidewall, especially if you run low air pressure. Lightweight tires tend to puncture and slice much easier. Beware of sharp rocks and stumps.

If you flat in the backcountry but have forgotten or lost your tire levers, use a quick-release handle from your hub or seat post to unhook the bead.

In addition to a spare tube, always carry a patch kit in case you get more than one flat (it happens). Wrap the tube in an old sock if you carry it with your tools in a pouch. Otherwise, you may find a flat spare when you try to use it.

Check your patch kit at least once a month to make sure the glue hasn't dried up. This sometimes happens even in unopened tubes.

Cut old 27-inch road tires (sew-up work best) into 2- to 3-inch-long strips for use as "boots." They'll enable you to keep riding despite a large gash in your tire. Put the boot behind the hole to keep the tube in. Cut old 1.75-inch tubes into 2-inch strips to make pump head covers, which keep the dirt out and provide better frame fit. ■

T I R E S

Brand	Model	Width	Weight	Psi	Price
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Specialized: Specialized tires use an exclusive "Durano" rubber compound claimed to provide 25% more wear than other rubbers. Sidewalls have a UV coating for protection from the sun. All Specialized off-road tires have 66 threads per inch (tpi) in the sidewall and "working edges"—taller outer knobs for traction through turns.

Crossroads II	1.95	21 oz.	35-80	\$18.20
	1.5	19 oz.	same	same

The Crossroads II road/off-road tire has a center ridge between aggressive "working edges" on the sides. It's fast on pavement with 80 pounds per square inch (psi) of pressure. Yet for a dual-purpose tire it climbs and corners in the dirt surprisingly well when the pressure is reduced to 35 or 40 psi. Tends to dig with mud because of the small spaces between the inner tread blocks. Available in 1.5-inch width, and for 24" wheels. The 1.5s work well on pavement but are too narrow for serious off-roading.

Hard Pack	2.2	23.5 oz.	30-80	\$18.20
	1.5	18.5 oz.	same	same

Hard Pack is a fat but light off-road tire, providing a generous air volume for a soft, smooth ride. Provides excellent traction in sand and on rocky terrain. Shields mud well due to wide knob spacing. Beveled, sharp knob edges provide good climbing traction and side edging, but they round off relatively quickly. Also available in a 1.5-inch width, which works well in mud because of the increased frame clearance.

Ground Control	1.95	29 oz.	35-80	\$18.20
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Ground Control is possibly the most widely used tire (and some say it's the best all-around performer). It's rated especially good for cornering, thanks to large side knobs. Also has excellent traction for climbing. Only weakness is design tendency to dig with mud. Weighs a little more but lasts a long time and performs well in any terrain. Available in 24" size.

Ground Control "S"	1.95	25 oz.	35-80	\$26.28
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Ground Control "S" has the same basic design as Ground Control but with a Kevlar bead and smaller knobs. Thus, it weighs less. Larger gaps between knobs shed mud quicker and improve uphill traction, but also leave tire open to punctures and slices. Seems to cut easily and wear relatively rapidly. Commonly used on trail wheels only because of cornering ability.

Ritchey: Ritchey introduced the 1.9-inch width in 1985 and continues to produce some of the finest high-performance tires.

Quad	1.9	25.5 oz.	45-80	\$18.20
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The Quad was the original 1.9 tire with a raised center "grip strip" for smooth, quiet performance on pavement. Newest model has larger, sharper side knobs for more cornering traction. Climbing traction is fast. Clearer well because of its narrow size.

Force Racing ("K")	1.5	19 oz.	45-80	\$30
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Force Racing and Force Racing "K": Light and supple due to 127 tpi and narrow width. They corner exceptionally well because sharp side tread blocks can flex and dig in. Relatively small air volumes for 1.9 tires. The "K" (Kevlar bead) is the lightest tire of this size.

Force Duo ("K")	2.0	20 oz.	45-80	\$30
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Force Duo and Force Duo "K": Rear tires can wear out three times quicker than fronts because they bear more weight. With the Duo and Duo "Kevlar," you can "mix and match" tires accordingly. Tread pattern is the same as the Force Racing but with more rubber for longer wear. Also ideal for heavy riders.

Main: Tires. Designed by two-time NORBA champion Joe Murray. Main tires feature high performance for an economical price.

Pro Combo	1.5	21 oz.	25 or 35-60	\$13
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Pro Combo is a combination on/off-road tire with a center ridge and paddle-type side knobs for excellent traction. One of the best combo tires for mud. By far the least expensive.

Rockstar	2.0	29 oz.	35-45	\$14.15
Rockstar K	same	26 oz.	same	\$18

Rockstar and Rockstar "K" use narrow but long traction knobs generously spaced down the center line for exceptional climbing traction and mud shedding. The paddle-type side knobs get good bite but tend to wear out quickly. Center knobs also wear quickly. Another tire that feels supple. The "K" model has a lightweight, foldable Kevlar bead.

Fisher: Tires. Gary Fisher, one of mountain biking's pioneers, designed one of the latest high-performance tires ever seen.

Fat Trax	2.02	26.5 oz.	30-45	\$28.20
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Fisher Fat Trax 262 features progressively taller and longer outer knobs for cornering traction. Tends to wash out quicker in turns than the Ground Control or Force Racing. Large air volume gives smooth ride on rough terrain. Excellent choice for sand and soft ground. Creams well thanks to the large spaces between knobs and the small rills around the tread, under the knobs.

Farmer John	1.95	25 oz.	35-65	\$18.20
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Farmer John is a new tire with excellent climbing traction provided by chevron knobs (similar to a tractor tread). With the chevron open, the tire really digs in. Smooth on downhills, but lacks side tread for cornering. We've heard more than an ordinary number of reports about side-wall failure.

Pinnacle	1.9	25.5 oz.	45-80	\$16.18
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The Pinnacle's square center blocks and square profile provide good performance on pavement and hard dirt, while the scalloped side knobs assure adequate cornering traction on dirt. Small for a 1.9-inch tire, making it a good choice for bikes with minimal frame clearance.

Race X-1	2.125	28.5 oz.	45-80	\$14.16
	2.0	23.5 oz.	same	\$10.12

The X-1 is an old favorite. The most popular model before the tire boom, for good reason. It's an inexpensive, box-type knobby with good climbing traction and mud clearing properties. The new X-1 Pro has a more aggressive side knob but still doesn't corner as well as the premium priced treads.

Trek: Tires. Trek recently introduced two new off-road tires with a raised-ridge center and off-road side knobs. No performance information is yet available.

SPECIALTY TIRES

Amoco Silca	1.9	21 oz.	up to 80	\$18.20
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These mudless tires became famous on the Slickrock Trail and other lunar-like rides around Moab, Utah. When used at low pressure (30-35 psi) they work like rock-climbing shoes, sneering to put as much rubber as possible on the rock. Pumped hard, they're excellent on pavement.

IRC Blasted	2.125	32 oz.		\$20.24
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A studied snow/ice tire.

Specialized Fat Fly	1.25	16 oz.	up to 100	\$18.20
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PASSAGES

HANK BARLOW

Passages is a new department. It's about new rides and riding areas, and about the people who found them. It's also a department that's dependent upon MBM readers. We encourage you to send us information each time you explore new routes worthy of being shared with fellow mountain bikers. In this way we'll all have access to great rides throughout the country.

To participate in Passages, start by telling us how to reach your ride's starting point. Explain how you discovered the ride and give us pertinent information about it: length (miles and time), difficulty, restrictions, water sources, map sources, spectacular scenery, points of historic interest, etc. If possible, please include a sketch showing the ride's proximity to roads, towns and other landmarks. When we publish your ride we'll credit you for it.

We also need your help in another, related project. We're looking for the 25 best trails in the world. We've got a list of our own, but our information base is too small. Tell us about your favorite trail and why you think it's one of the 25 best. Our criteria for trail selection includes length, scenery, challenge, percent of single-track, access, flow, continuity, and the escape factor. Consider these plus your own, and send your nomination to Mountain Bike, Box 989, Crested Butte, CO 81224.

To prime you for Passages, we'll start with several discoveries that occurred in Colorado and Utah last summer.

COLORADO

Crested Butte mountain bikers had another hot summer of trail finding. Steve Cook, owner of Paradise Bikes and Skis, linked up some old logging roads with game trails to make a superb trail up to Green Lake. The sustained ascent is moderately difficult, non-technical for the most part, and rideable except for one short section through a bog.

The return to town is via the existing Green Lake trail, a smooth, tight, and exciting single-track descent through the woods. Roundtrip riding time is about two hours.

A favorite ride of Durango mountain bikers is from the Purgatory ski area to Telluride via Hermosa Creek, Barlow Creek, and Lizard Head Pass. This route used to have a high percentage of paved miles, but no longer. Ineke Boyce made the first known bike passage of an old single-track that runs from Barlow Pass almost to Lizard Head Pass. Her route turns off the main route onto an improved jeep road about halfway between a log mining shack and the pass itself. The road skirts a drainage, then drops down the creek valley until ending at the creek. A hundred feet before the end is a boggy meadow. On its far side is a wonderful single-track.

Motorcyclists had been on this route before Ineke's passage, but not many. The trail is more than 90% rideable and consists of smooth, fast sections and slow, technical sections through dark pine forests. The final stretch follows a long-abandoned railroad track contouring around the mountainside. It finally intersects the paved highway a mile before the crest of Lizard Head Pass.

What may well be Colorado's finest single-track was ridden by a group of five riders in August. The Bear Creek trail from Ouray to Lake City had been considered undrivable, but it turned out to be quality riding much of the way. About 90% of the first 4.5 miles was cleaned by one of the group, while the slowest rider cleaned almost 70%. This section was roughly 1/3 very technical, 1/3 moderately technical, and 1/3 cruising. The next 2.5 miles to the 13,000-foot pass were about 65% rideable, most problems being the result of the altitude rather than technical difficulty. Then came 4.5 miles of middle-chaining cruising well above timberline on a superb single-track. The ride's final section was a long, fast jeep road descent to a graded road leading into Lake City. Total riding time was about eight hours, including six on single-tracks, one on jeep roads, and an hour of goofing around.

UTAH

The stops were blown out in Moab this year with the establishment of two par-

ticularly notable rides: Poison Spider Mesa and Porcupine Rim. Todd Wagner was the author of each.

Poison Spider consists of a long, steady climb up a jeep road, through sand traps and over acres of slickrock, finally emerging onto an abrupt escarpment 1,000 feet above Moab and the Colorado River. From there, an unbelievably spectacular single-track descends to the river. The so-called trail is nothing but a cow track following a steep erosion slope sandwiched between sandstone cliffs. The descent is very difficult and sustained, but it's more than 95% rideable by exceptionally skilled bikers. Extreme care is necessary, however. At certain places a fall to the left would be fatal. Nevertheless, Poison Spider is already a classic, one of those have-to-be-ridden trails. Riding time is about four hours at a fast pace.

Porcupine Rim is a combination of graded dirt road, deteriorating jeep road, and primitive single-track. The first passage included an overnight bivvy after Todd was unable to find the faint cow trail. This track is the only way off the high mesa and not easily recognized.

Like Poison Spider, Porcupine is more than 95% rideable by skilled bikers, though the final hundred feet requires portage down a low cliff to the highway. The trail clings to an eroded slope squeezed between towering sandstone cliffs. Surprisingly, it is rather smooth and has only occasional technical obstacles. It can be ridden on the middle chaining for most of its distance.

Immediately before the single-track itself is a screamer of a downhill with unexpected ledges that suddenly pop up, just to keep everyone honest. The subsequent climb is entirely rideable, never exceptionally steep but with some nice technically demanding sections to clean. Upon reaching the rim you'll have a superb view down Castle Valley, out to Arches National Park, and into the Manti LaSal Mountains. The roundtrip riding time for Porcupine is about 4.5 hours at a fast pace. Don't miss it. *

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SPEED IS NOT AN ACCIDENT of birth. It is the result of distinct, conscious efforts and a positive, can-do attitude. One of the most effective techniques for attaining peak performance is visualization—the mental picturing of yourself achieving a goal. If you see yourself racing up that gnarly hill with perfect rhythm and form, you'll fly to the summit before you know it. But if you abandon hope even before you attack the slope, you'll never clean it. In each case, your physical condition is a constant; the mind is the only variable. Control it and you control the body.

But visualization alone won't cut it. Understanding rhythm and form is a prerequisite; how you apply forces to the bike is key. Pedaling should be fluid—no hitches—with pressure applied to the pedals in a circular motion with both feet. Ideally, the lines of force are always perpendicular to the crankarms, not an easy task even for the world's best bicycle racers. Many claim that the application of power through 360 degrees of pedal movement is impossible, and recent studies of road racers support this contention. Nevertheless, while most professional riders evidently use the upstroke to rest and only pull up during sprints and steep climbs, their objective remains a smooth, efficient pedaling action.

Stay relaxed and loose. Keep in mind a picture of your feet spinning in circles, regardless of whether you apply power only during the downstroke or throughout the circle. The objective is a constant, steady powering of the bike, not bucking micro-bursts of explosive energy.

Your attitude towards the job at hand is crucial. Peak performance demands total focus. Bitching and moaning during a race is de facto evidence of a severe lack of focus.

Attitude is also what enables riders to dig deep into mental and physical reserves, to surpass previous best performances. It may be a cliché, but the best racers actually do plunge themselves into mental and physical pain in pursuit of their goals. The difference between who wins a sprint often depends upon which rider is willing to dig deeper into his or her ability to suffer. This is directly tied to attitude.

But while thinking positively and visu-

alizing winning performances is necessary, if the body isn't prepared to deliver the goods, you'll still find yourself off the back. You've got to be properly conditioned for the job, and achieving this conditioning may be the hardest part of racing. Muscles must be stretched and lactic acid released and correct alignment of joints maintained.

Warming up is too easily overlooked. The ego gets in the way, driving us hard up a hill before we're ready. Going too hard too soon can be damaging, even to the extent that a month of riding can be lost because of an injury caused by uncontrolled enthusiasm. Riding easily for 20 or 30 minutes at half-throttle is strongly advised. This allows the blood to reach the small capillaries and connective tissues and deep into the muscles. Stretch without pulling hard or bouncing before and after a ride. Don't force. Breathe deeply and exhale slowly while gently stretching out the tightness. Be patient and don't overdo it.

During your conditioning regimen, increase your mileage by no more than 10% a week. Take a day off now and then. Alternate hard days with easy days. Intervals of all-out speed bursts followed by easy spinning until your heart rate has recovered improves stamina. Keep track of your recovery time. Most important, make your training feel good and enjoy it.

On race days, be on your bike at least 30 minutes before the start, having eaten lightly one or two hours previously. Do your carb loading the night before, but don't sleep on a full stomach. A walk after dinner can help you relax and release pre-race jitters. Make sure you are well hydrated, especially when racing at altitude. This helps thin the blood for improved oxygen uptake. During the race, stay just short of oxygen debt. Drink as often as possible, and frequently eat small amounts of food during any race that lasts more than two hours. A commercial electrolyte replacement drink is probably a good idea. Familiarize yourself with the course so you'll know the best places to down your food and liquids. Have fun and don't ride over your head. Winning isn't everything. Just finishing a race feeling tired yet strong is reward enough.

What about the bike? Admittedly, your bike's condition is less important than your own, but an ill-adjusted bike can slow you significantly and irritate you into concentration lapses and a possible crash. Besides, ensuring your bike's optimal performance is vastly easier than ensuring your own.

By the time you race on it, you should have enough miles on your bike to be completely familiar with it. Riding it should be second nature. Make sure all moving parts are well lubricated. Tune your bike before race day, then take it for a spin to check all adjustments. Your brakes should be positive and predictable, wheels centered and reasonably true. Brake levers and shifters should fall comfortably to hand. Check the headset adjustment. Double check everything. Thoroughly clean and visually inspect the bike before the race and between races. Change tire pressures to suit race day conditions. Carry a pump, patch kit, tire tools, and spare tube. A chain breaker and an assortment of wrenches can come in handy, too. They add weight but can save you from pushing your bike for miles.

If you crash, wait a second to inspect the bike and yourself. Take a few deep breaths and a drink. Resume by riding slowly until you feel comfortable again, especially on technically demanding terrain. When you feel right, you'll naturally increase speed. Keep your eyes riveted on the line you want to take, not where you don't want to go. Keep your body loose but your grip firm. Let the bike move beneath you. Use body English. Then try a little French. Enjoy the ride because you're probably not out there for the money.

And now the course itself. Hopefully, the promoter rides mountain bikes and has selected appropriate terrain. It should be challenging. Single-tracks and narrow fireroads are best. If it is a criterium-type course (multiple laps) the timekeeper needs to be alert, watching for lapped riders. Try to count your own laps, or have a friend keep track. Generally, point to point races are more enjoyable for the riders. In these events spectators can ride the course to a premium vantage point. That's where you'll find me, enjoying the racing as much as those who are competing. ★

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