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Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #14 • July 2009





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# URBAN VELO

Issue #14 July 2009

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**On the cover:** Teams from Madison and Milwaukee in the finals of the 2009 Midwest Championships, Dayton, OH. Read more about the current state of bike polo on page 66. Photo by Brad Quartuccio.

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**Co-conspirators:** Cristian Marin, Jordi Tamayo, Stephen Cummings, Kevin Dillard, David Hoffman, John Greenfield, Don Sorsa, Chris Thomas, Roger Lootine, Jimmy Flaherty and Andy Singer

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Urban Velo, PO Box 9040, Pittsburgh, PA 15224

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Urban Velo is a reflection of the cycling culture in current day cities. Our readers are encouraged to contribute their words and art.

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A black silhouette of the continent of Australia is centered on the page. The word "Velocity" is written across the middle of the map in a large, white, italicized, sans-serif font. Below the word, the slogan "the best name to ride with" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, enclosed in quotation marks.

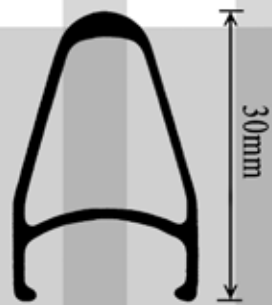
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# Three ways to roll Deep...

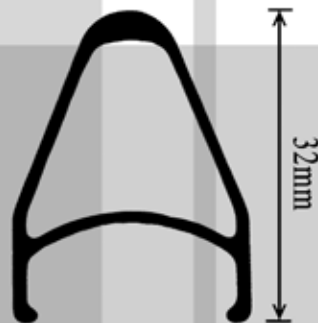


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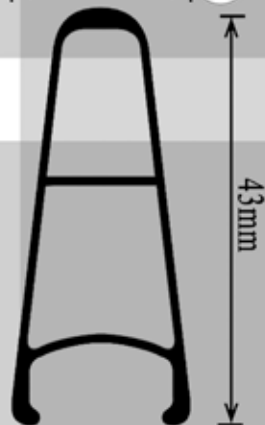


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Photo By Doug D. Of Kremin



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EXPERIMENT





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With the proliferation of bike polo leagues around the world, and the ever increasing size and frequency of polo tournaments, people have begun to question the need for standardized rules and regulations. Among the hottest topics is whether or not there should be a governing body (aka the Hardcourt Bicycle Polo Federation, dubbed the Fed).



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# Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio



**T**ravel makes it all come together. Road trips so often are the fuel for what ends up in the pages of each issue. One such journey a couple of years ago was the final determining factor that, yes, Jeff and I were going to stick our necks out and create the first issue of Urban Velo. Inspiration is so often found on the road, most recently serving it up on a Midwest swing that took me back to the place the aforementioned journey ended up; Minneapolis, via Chicago.

Meeting and riding with new-to-me people in new-to-me places is perhaps the most rewarding and eye-opening part of this whole endeavor. Sharing in the experiences of friends in far off places never tires, just

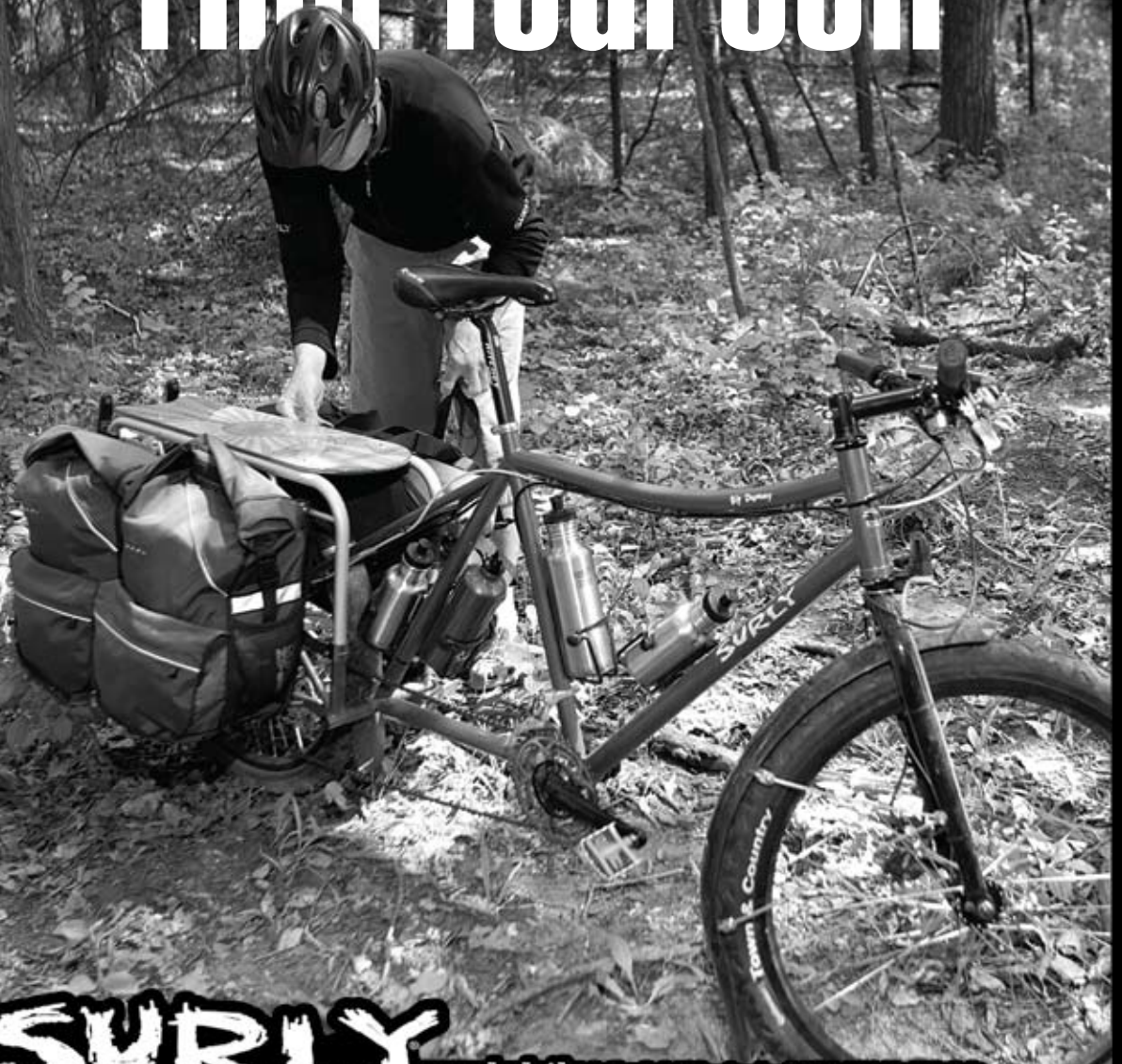
as the fun of riding itself hasn't changed much since childhood. Visits to other locales just have a tendency to bring it to the forefront as people show off their own hometown secrets and turn up the riding to another level for the out of town eyes. A perfect example comes from Mike Carney pictured above, part of the Minneapolis Tricks and Drinks crew out on a Tuesday night in early June nailing what is likely the first documented fixed gear hand rail grind. And due to good timing and good friends, I just happened to be there to witness the feat.

Keep inspiring us, and we hope to keep inspiring you.



We want your words. Send your editorial contributions to [brad@urbanvelo.org](mailto:brad@urbanvelo.org)

# Get Lost and Find Yourself

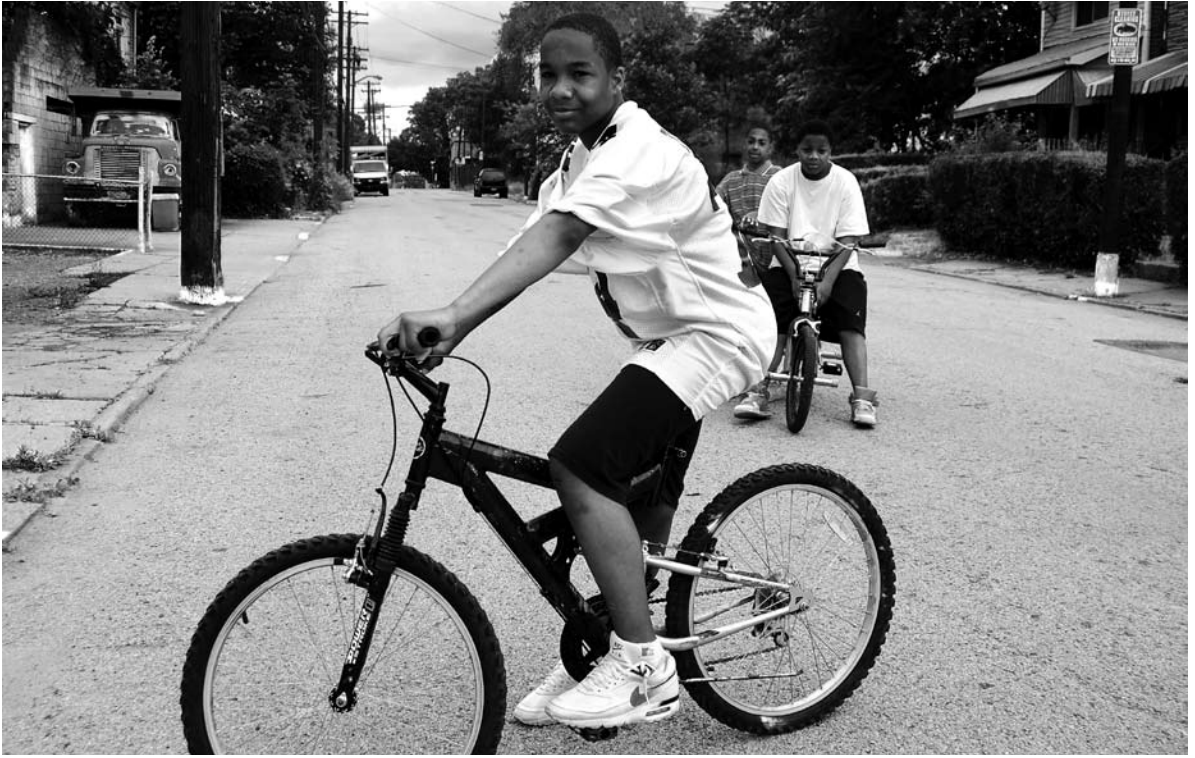


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# Publisher's Statement

By Jeff Guerrero



I'm locking my bike in front of the local home-improvement center when a stranger approaches me. Though he's just bought a sizable bucket of spackling compound, he's got a slightly disheveled look that makes me wonder if he's trying to bum money for bus fare. Instead, he wants to know about my basket bike. He hoists his bucket up to get a better idea of how much stuff the Wald 157B can hold, and asks me if I think it's strong enough. I offer him the chance to give it a try, but he's seemingly sold on the idea.

But then he starts to complain about how much bikes cost. He tells me he doesn't want to spend \$40 on a basket for a \$50 bike. I scratch my head and wonder where he's seen \$50 bikes for sale.

Still, I suggest that he go to Kraynick's Bike Shop and look in the back where the used stuff lives. His eyes light up a bit at the notion of bargain bike parts. He thanks me in a gruff, but notably sincere manner and walks away.

I begin to reflect on the interaction while I'm in the store.

Why is the average American so reluctant to spend money on a bicycle? I can't count how many of my friends and coworkers have asked me for bike buying advice, only to balk at the notion of spending \$500 on a decent entry-level bicycle.

What's more, I can't believe how many people don't already have a bicycle at their disposal, especially the kids I teach. When I was their age and wanted to go somewhere I just hopped on my bike. I didn't need bus fare. With the economy taking a downturn, a lot of my students are afraid their parents can't afford to buy them a summer bus pass, and only now are they considering bicycles as a source of transportation...

A half hour later I'm riding home, my basket bouncing ever so slightly under the weight of a 40-pound bag of potting soil. The sun is shining, the birds are chirping and I've got the song Low Rider playing in my head. From half a block away I see the guy from the home-improvement center, he's anxiously pacing at the bus stop. He sees me, reads the expression on my face, and shouts out loud, "That's it! I've gotta get a bike!"



Urban Velo issue #14, July 2009. Dead tree print run: 5000 copies. Issue #13 online readership: 45,000+



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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Rudolph Nadler

**LOCATION:** Tucson, AZ

**OCCUPATION:** Massage Therapist

## Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

You'd never know that you could get blue lipped in the middle of the summer in the desert until you face a monsoon that's got bits of hail and high winds while wearing just a light jersey and shorts. Brrr. And then there's the construction on the bike routes and pathways of Tucson, and crazy drivers that shout from their cars as they pass, and the 115 degree heat. And then there's the great dumpster at Beyond Bread where you can find bread for the week, the trail that is part of my commute where there's a friendly hello from the tarantula that lives by the trail, all

the shiny spider eyes reflected in the glow of my headlamp, and the coyote racing across town. If it weren't for my commute, life would be just lacking.

## What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

Paris, I love Paris in the springtime, I love Paris in the summer. Narrow streets, huge driving circles, cafés and—mmm—breathe in the atmosphere.

## Why do you love riding in the city?

Who in their right mind would want to drive? Being stuck in traffic, getting tense. On a bike I know none of the cars can see me, so being invisible I can observe and listen to the world around me. Fly on the wall. But get in a car and the tide changes. It's mano et mano, car vs car.



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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Amanda

**LOCATION:** Adelaide Australia

**OCCUPATION:** Analyst

## **Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

I live in the big “town” of Adelaide Australia, population 1.1 million. Adelaide is a city of surprising contrasts. We celebrate health, fitness and lycra with the Tour Down Under in January, and then all things unhealthy and bogan in April with car racing. Adelaide is a relatively cycling-friendly place. There is a linear path, which runs from the base of the hills in the east to a popular stretch of coast in the west. There are cycle paths through the north and south of the inner city, and “bike-direct” paths, which allow cross traversal further afield.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

There is nothing better than the buzz that I get from getting to work each day on a bike. It makes me feel alive and ready for anything. I love looking out the window from my desk at my bike and counting down the hours until I get to saddle up and take off again. I love racing the train each

day as I pass over the railway tracks three times on my 20km trip. I love passing a line up of cars and going straight through the lights at peak hour. I love catching up with friends for a fast ride along a road I have never been on before and stopping for coffee before I head home. I love going for a ride through the forest with the family. I love tan lines. What's not to love about bikes and bike riding?

## **Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...**

Australia has a growing cycling culture and more and more workplaces encourage riding to work. By pure numbers of growth in recreational cyclist numbers, and the people with membership in cycling and triathlon clubs throughout the country, more and more politicians are getting on-board with the benefits to themselves, and the community, of promoting cycling.

I live in a country where bike sales outnumber car sales. How cool is that?





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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Timmi Von Gersfeld  
**LOCATION:** Montreal, QC, Canada  
**OCCUPATION:** Bicycle Homebuilder

## Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Montreal has come a long way towards recognizing the sharing of the roads with cyclists... Although this is still in its infancy and can only recently be felt, it has gained momentum and is accelerating fast. Two decades ago, it wasn't uncommon for me to be cut off or run off the road by impatient drivers eager to shave off a second from their

time to arrive at the next red light. Today, we have many bike paths in the city, which makes it safer to ride alongside the cars (except at intersections where drivers are still getting used to looking out for cyclists appearing from their side as they wish to turn), and the city has ambitious plans to radically increase the bike path network to cover most of the city. Finally we are starting to be recognized, but there is still much education to be done not only with drivers in general, but even with the police that also happen to be drivers with an anti-cyclist point of view. Still, despite the difficulties, I feel free riding in the city. Free from traffic jams. Free from looking for parking spots. Free and happy to show off my vintage Vicini racing bike, now converted to a singlespeed, restored and repainted.

## What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

I used to like to ride alongside the roadways leading up north into the mountains for training back in the days I was racing. I can't say I really had a favorite city to ride in—I preferred to ride in the countryside where drivers didn't have "city stress." Today, I'm finding that Montreal, with all the efforts it is making to integrate and facilitate cycling into the urban landscape, to resolve an impending transit problem and to integrate health-conscious citizens is becoming a nicer place to cycle. Already, those who own a car seem to be "out," while anything on wheels without a motor is "in."

## Why do you love riding in the city?

As I mentioned, it's the freedom from all the stress and hassles that you face when you have a car. The expenses, gas, insurance, worries, traffic, parking. It's a liberating feeling to know that you'll get somewhere just as fast as those sitting in their cars. And it's just so much more convenient—park it anywhere, just outside where you want to shop, instead of worrying about parking logistics. The bike paths that motorists now HAVE to deal with... All of those little things combined just make it so great!

## Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city... Poetry anyone?

There is a growing sense of community. I've met a few new people through my Facebook group, Vélo Montreal Cycling. I've discovered bike polo, which I love, and I'm starting to feel a sense of community wherever I go and cross paths with other cyclists.

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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Alexis Dold

**LOCATION:** Gainesville, FL

**OCCUPATION:** Frame Builder

## **Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

I live on the North East side of the city. It's the older side of town that wasn't polluted by cul-de-sacs and gated neighborhoods during the middle part of the last century. Speed limits are low and being at the opposite end of the city from most student housing the traffic is fairly light and seems more experienced and amicable than most other places I've ridden.

## **What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

All the places I've ridden have their perks. Germany, with its paved trail system and beer at McDonalds. San Francisco is amazing—I lived there for two years dodging doors, hopping rails and drowning in sushi and the best Mexican I've ever had. Riding up streets so steep that a couple actually clapped for me when I crested one of the big ones near Coit Tower. Not to mention the accessibility of world class riding just over the Golden Gate Bridge.

There's something about the northeast that elicits a kid-like kind of excitement in me that no other place can. The hospitality, brutality, and camaraderie that is a consequence of that environment is poetic. In my opinion, NYC is the epicenter of everything that makes riding a bike for me so badass. Where else do you have to work so hard not to be killed?

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

It's kind of like staying with a bitter lover. Sometimes she embraces you, sometimes she hurts you for no other reason than because she can. She makes you respect her and then drives you to drink. She's exciting and easy to leave, for a week or so. She has what you need and you've got history, but she always seems to cost you money. She teaches you and inspires you. She makes you smile and curse the world. She affects you. She lets you know you're alive.

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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Csaba Eisenbacher

**LOCATION:** Budapest, Hungary

**OCCUPATION:** Sales Consultant

## **Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

I live outside of the capital Budapest and have to work in the city so I ride every day to Budapest and back. It's not easy to ride without dedicated bike routes but I own a fast bike and have learned to be immune to traffic. It's definitely much faster to ride a bike than travel by bus or car.

## **What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

It was Darmstadt in Germany because they have separated some of the normal road for bikers and the whole driving culture is very patient and intelligent.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

Oh yes! It is the fastest way to move and makes me really happy and fit.

## **Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...**

It's the feeling of pure freedom—you can move forward everywhere where at least a bit of asphalt exists. Cars, trucks, traffic lights, signs... You can ignore everything and just move forward. Perhaps flying would be better but on the ground there is no other solution in the city for me.



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# I Love Riding in the City

**NAME:** Christian Munoz  
**LOCATION:** Chicago, IL  
**OCCUPATION:** Web Slinger

## Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

We have all kinds of great bike trails near the city, and over 40 miles of trails on the lakefront. Cycling in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs is great. One big benefit to Chicago cycling is that our mayor is an avid cyclist! Just last year the city began closing some major roads on Sundays to be used for cycling only, very similar to what is done each Sunday in Bogotá, Colombia!

## What's your favorite city to ride in, and why?

A few years ago I rode in Rochester, MN and I loved the hills and they are very bike friendly there as well!

## Why do you love riding in the city?

My favorite is riding along the lakefront and even though it can get busy at times I do not mind as I can just shift into a low gear and work on spinning.



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**Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

**What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

**Why do you love riding in the city?**

**Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city. Poetry anyone?**

Email your responses to [jeff@urbanvelo.org](mailto:jeff@urbanvelo.org)

# I Love Riding in the City

**NAME:** Alessandro Bocchi

**LOCATION:** Padua, Italy

**OCCUPATION:** Computer Specialist

## **Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

I live in Padua, near Venice in Italy. Riding in the city center is nice and fun, but we have to pay attention to the bicycle. You have to never leave your bicycle unlocked or you will never find it. It will change owners...

## **What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

I like to ride in new cities all the time. We go by car and then we dismount the bicycles and we will start to ride in the new city. Looking for hidden places just a bit outside of the path of all the other tourists.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

Because you will remember much more about a place if you visit it by bicycle. You can smell the air and hear the voices and the noises around. It's much more in contact with the other people.

## **Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...**

Just ride and enjoy...



**NAME:** Jose Troncoso

**LOCATION:** Mexico City, Mexico

**OCCUPATION:** TV Editor

## **Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

I live in Tlalpan in Mexico City, and I ride everyday to everywhere I have to go. I like it because my relationship with the city has changed for the better. I know my times for commuting no matter the traffic or anything else.

## **What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

Mexico City is my favorite city to ride in because it is where I ride all the time. It is a very nice city with a lot of trees, excellent weather, not many hills, and in some areas like downtown it is the only way to move about.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

Because I feel free and I feel better with myself, the environment and my health. I meet a lot of nice people and save lots of money and time, and I feel safer and closer to the people in the city.

## **Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...**

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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Tricia

**LOCATION:** Pittsburgh, PA

**OCCUPATION:** Web/Graphic Designer

## **Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?**

I live at the top of a hill in Garfield and commute to work in the South Side every day. It's a fun downhill in the morning and I have a bit of a climb at the end of the day. I don't mind, the varying topography (and weather) is what keeps biking in Pittsburgh interesting. I really love biking across bridges and seeing the skyline, or casually sight-seeing through the neighborhoods via bicycle.

## **What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

Well, so far Pittsburgh is the only city I have tried out.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

It's faster than the bus, and since I can't stand running or going to a gym—it's great to be able to get some exercise while actually getting somewhere. I also like the feeling of being exposed to the elements whether it's the sun on my face or (more likely) the rain, wind or snow. I may not always like it at the time and sometimes I punk out, but I get a sense of satisfaction knowing that yes I'm that crazy person on a bike in the middle of a rainstorm.

## **Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...**

Road rage is not limited to those with four-wheels... I know this because I have a "lead-foot" and a tendency towards impatience while biking. I think everyone (no matter the number of wheels) can stand to slow down in a mental sense. Impatience means I am looking out for myself rather than others.

I really enjoy seeing the different kinds of bicyclists. You've got your punk bikers who built their own fixie out of parts they pulled from a dumpster. On the other end you've got the gear head, fitness mongers who blaze past you on their streamlined steeds. Then you have your recreational cyclists with the upright cruisers, casually pedaling down the riverfront trails. And you have people all along the spectrum who commute to work. I think I'd like to think I'm mix of everything, a Heinz 57 cyclist if you will. At any rate, we all have one thing in common: we all ride bikes that run on human power!

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*Regal*



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**san marco**

SELLE FATTE A MANO DAL 1935



# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Jordi "Santa" Tamayo  
**LOCATION:** Barcelona, Spain  
**OCCUPATION:** Industrial Designer

## Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

Vivo en el barrio más céntrico de Barcelona, el Rawal, conocido por ser un barrio muy antiguo que actualmente

se conoce por ser zona de bares, estudios y salas de arte. La comunidad Pakistani también a hecho de él su casa. Me encanta. Esta cerca del mar y por la mañanas puedes escuchar las gaviotas i las bocinas de los barcos como si estuvieras en un pueblo costero. También es perfecto porque todo lo que me gusta se encuentra cerca, cines, bares, museos, calles para montar tranquilo en bici, etc. Me encanta esta ciudad porque creo que esta pensada para disfrutarla en bicicleta. Es una gran ciudad con un formato de pequeña ciudad.

*I live in el Rawal, in the heart of downtown Barcelona, known for being a very old neighborhood. It is currently known for being an area of bars, education and art galleries. It has also become the home of the Pakistani community. I love it. It's near the ocean and in the mornings you can hear the seagulls and the sirens from the ships as if you lived in a port town. This neighborhood is also more perfect because everything I like is close: movie theaters, bars, museums, quiet streets to ride your bike in, etc. I love this city because I think it's made to be enjoyed on a bike. It is a great city with a small town format.*

## What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

Creo que Barcelona porque es especial en muchas cosas. Clima, orografía, gastronomía. Si tuviera que escojer otra ciudad que conozco, tal vez Londres por ser tan plana y por ser "el foco" del Fixie en Europa. Paris también podría estar bien si no fuera por su "adoquinado" de las calles, ejejej. Pienso que cualquier ciudad que tuviera mar. Para mi es importante acabar en él de vez en cuando.

*I think Barcelona because it is special in many ways. The weather, the mountains, the local food. If I had to choose another city that I know, maybe it would be London because it's so flat and for being the fixie centre in Europe. Paris might also be alright if it weren't for its cobblestone roads. Any city with oceans nearby. It's really important to me to end up in the ocean every now and again.*

## Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...

Me gusta la libertad que te proporciona. Te permite ver tu alrededor en un punto medio a ir andando o en coche. Es un medio muy rápido para circular por ella y no tienes problemas de aparcamiento. Os parece poco?

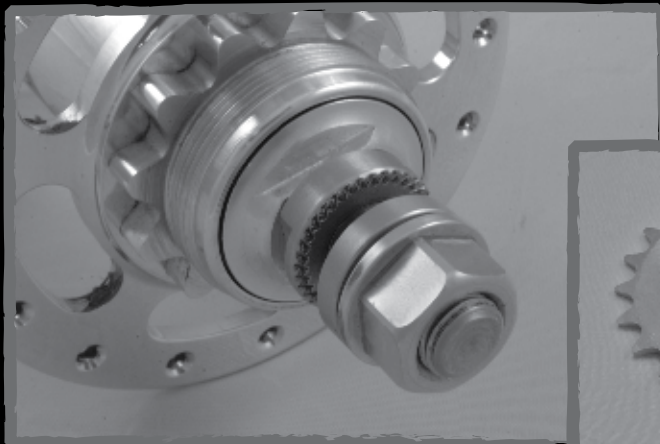
*I like the freedom that bike riding provides. It allows you to look at your surroundings from a middle ground, instead of walking or using a car. It's a fast medium to move about your city and you don't have problems parking. Isn't that enough?*



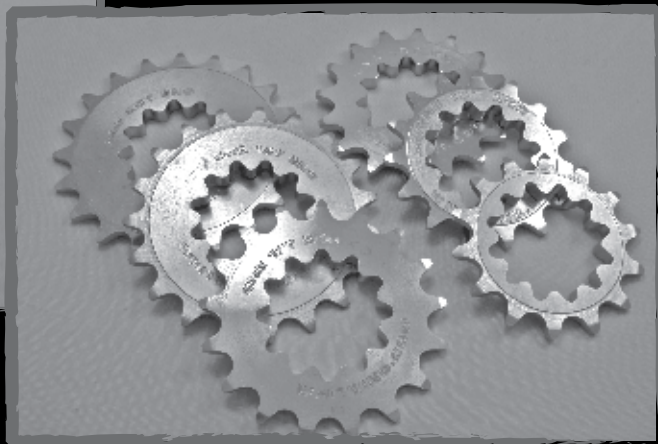
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# I Love Riding in the City



**NAME:** Cristian “Spaceboy” Marín  
**LOCATION:** Barcelona, Spain  
**OCCUPATION:** Industrial Designer

## Where do you live and what’s it like riding in your city?

Vivo en un pueblo costero muy cerca de Barcelona llamado el Masnou, pero toda mi vida social y laboral la realizo en Barcelona.

Quizás lo mejor de vivir en Barcelona sea el ritmo de vida y el ambiente que se vive en una de las capitales más importante del mediterráneo. En Barcelona hay solo 60 días que hay lluvia y 300 días con sol, si a eso le sumas, el buer royo de la gente y la cantidad de turistas guapas... Es un delirio.

En cuanto a la comunidad fixed en Barcelona actualmente somos unos 200 bikers, pero el número se ha duplicado en el último año y la cifra va en aumento.

Lo mejor son los partidos de Polo, las Alleycats, los Midnight Keirin que cada fin de semana ruedan en la noche barlonesa.

*I live in a coastal town near Barcelona called el Masnou, but my social life and my work I do in Barcelona. Perhaps the best part of living in Barcelona is the pace of life and atmosphere in one of the most important capitals of the Mediterranean. In Barcelona there are 300 days of sunshine and only 60 of rain, if you add to that the good feeling of the people and the huge number of beautiful tourists... A delirium. As a fixed gear community we are currently up to about 200 bikers in Barcelona, but the number has doubled in the last year*

*and the figure is rising. The best things are the polo games, the alleycats and the Keirin Midnight ride every weekend night in Barcelona.*

## What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

Todas las ciudades, como las mujeres, tienen algo especial del que enamorarse, Barcelona, Madrid, París, Londres (me encantaría visitar EUA y Japón). Pero lo que más aprecio de una ciudad, a parte del carácter de la gente y de si es más o menos bonita, es la calidad del aire, la temperatura y el sol, los latinos necesitamos el sol como los lagartos!

*All cities, like women, have something special to love, Barcelona, Madrid, Paris, London (I'd love to visit the USA and Japan). But what I appreciate most of a city, besides the nature of people and its beauty is the air quality, temperature and sunshine. Latinos need the sun like lizards!*

## Why do you love riding in the city?

Me encanta ir por mi ciudad en Bici, básicamente porque Barcelona es una gran capital en muchos aspectos, pero es una ciudad contenida, enmarcada entre dos ríos, el mar y la montaña, por lo que no puede crecer y eso la mantiene pequeña, no tiene rascacielos y las calles son anchas y con buena visibilidad. Además con 100.000 ciclistas diariamente en las calles nunca te aburres, siempre hay carreras por las calles. Aunque lo mejor es la comunidad Fixed que se está formando alrededor de enciclika.com que cada día nos da satisfacciones, llena de gente estu-penda.

*I love going on my bike in town, primarily because Barcelona is a big capital in many ways, but the city is contained. Framed between two rivers, the sea and the mountains, it cannot grow and that keeps it small—it has no skyscrapers and the streets are wide with good visibility. Besides, with 100,000 daily riders on the streets you never get bored, there's always racing through the streets. Although the best part is the fixed gear community that is forming around enciclika.com, that every day gives us pleasure, full of wonderful people.*

## Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...

No importa quién seas, ni qué tipo de bicicleta montes, lo único importante es sentirse libre y a gusto con uno mismo, un poeta decía: “Buscad la belleza pues es la única excusa válida en este asqueroso mundo.”

*No matter who you are, and what kind of bike you ride, the only important thing is to feel free and at ease with oneself. A poet said, “Seek the beauty because it is the only valid excuse in this nasty world.”*



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# Barcelona Tiene Poder

By Cristian Marin

Photos by Jordi Tamayo

*As the great Catalan gypsy said in his Rumba...*

*She has power*

*She has power*

*Barcelona is powerful*

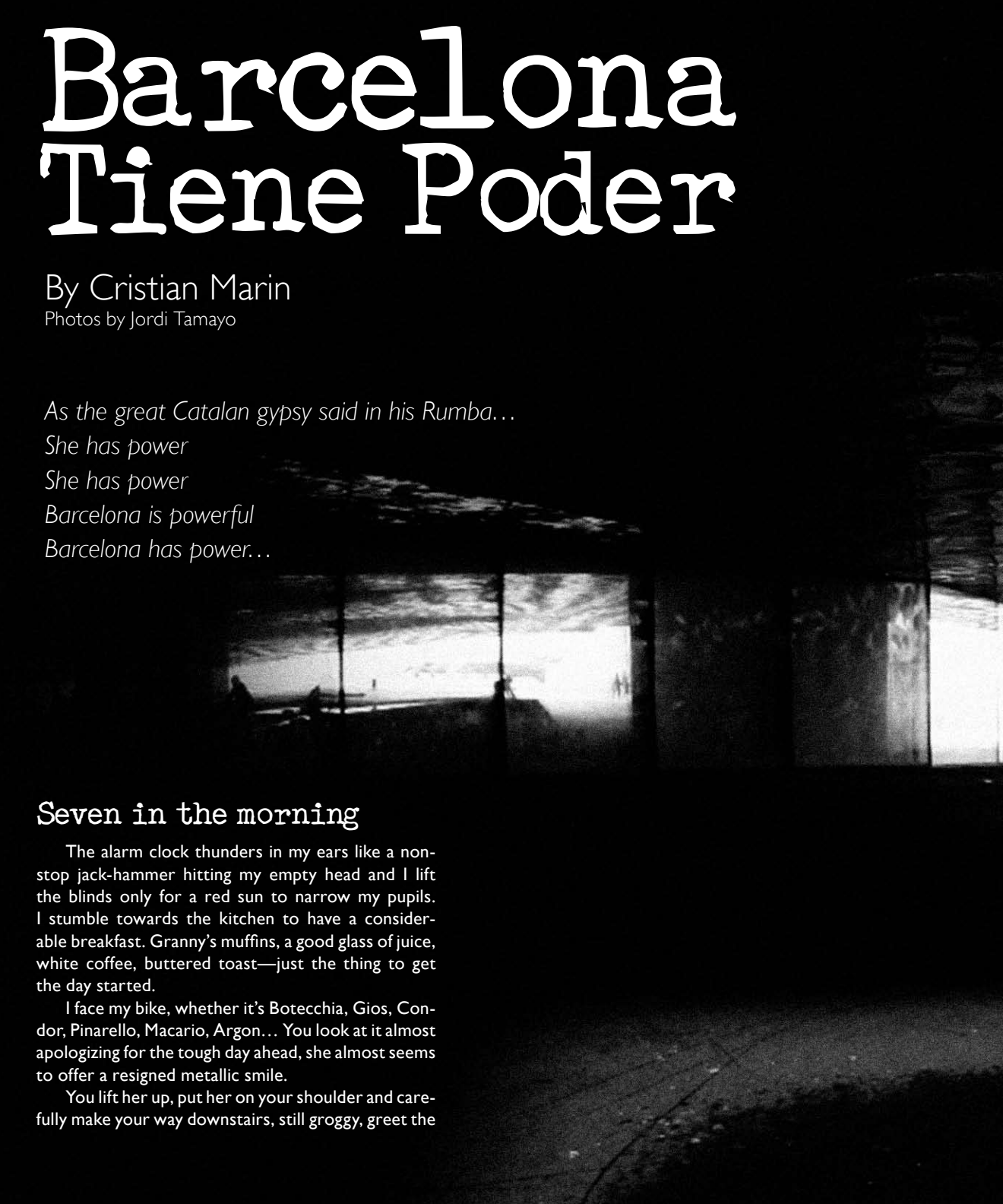
*Barcelona has power...*

## Seven in the morning

The alarm clock thunders in my ears like a non-stop jack-hammer hitting my empty head and I lift the blinds only for a red sun to narrow my pupils. I stumble towards the kitchen to have a considerable breakfast. Granny's muffins, a good glass of juice, white coffee, buttered toast—just the thing to get the day started.

I face my bike, whether it's Botecchia, Gios, Condor, Pinarello, Macario, Argon... You look at it almost apologizing for the tough day ahead, she almost seems to offer a resigned metallic smile.

You lift her up, put her on your shoulder and carefully make your way downstairs, still groggy, greet the







Brylcreemed doorman in his ironed overalls who's seen better days, and gently place the tires on the warm tarmac. You get on and put a foot in the pedal.

It seems a new day has begun in Barcelona.

Enciclika sprang forth a year ago from the combined passions of bicycles and creative expression. Tired of breaking bones and wrecking joints with downhill and BMX we started at the same time to explore "calmer" ways to ride—fixed-gear bikes. After a trip to Tokyo in 2007, my friend Jordi came back to Barcelona convinced this was the perfect city for these kinds of bikes. The San Francisco of Europe? What happened then was only a question of time.

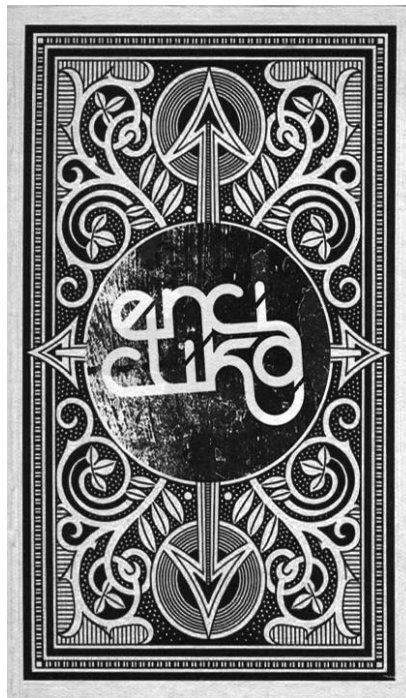
## What is Enciclika?

Enciclika is a means to promote the "fixie" culture, in general directed at the Barcelona community but expanding to the whole Spanish-speaking world. The idea from the beginning was to create a type of media using free technology available on the internet, paying special attention to form and design.

For years Barcelona has had a small community of riders, but through the Enciclika project of the number of


participants in events such as meetings and get-togethers throughout the city has grown spectacularly. The rest is thanks to the wonderful cycling community in Barcelona, who have set up their own fixed-gear club; FIXA CLUB is

a non-profit organization that hopes to bring together the fixed community in Barcelona as well as the rest of Spain.



## The Secret Of Barcelona

What does Barcelona have that makes it so well loved all over the world? What's it have for cycling? The Mediterranean in its finest expression, all with a pleasant climate. Another point is relief. A city "protected" by mountains. The city is interesting, mountainous behind, with a relatively flat central part as we move towards the sea. Yes the sea! Finishing the day with the chance to see the sun again as it sets, sitting on the sand drinking a cocktail in the middle of Spring is priceless... I invite you to join the never ending party, the sun tanning the visitor's skin, wide streets, night races, all

this and much more, let us know, get in touch and we'll be your guide. 

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# CRIT RACING

By Stephen Cummings

Photography by Kevin Dillard - [www.demoncats.com](http://www.demoncats.com)

There is a legend in cycling circles about the 1980 Coors Classic stage race, which the movie *American Flyers* is based on. The story goes like this; a team from Colombia showed up and dominated the road race, putting several minutes into the top American. The Americans were demoralized, and teamed up against the Colombians in the criterium. The lead American needed to lap the leader twice in order to make up the time he had lost to win the race overall. The Colombians were inexperienced at criteriums, to say the least. The Americans were superb.

“Jock” Boyer lapped the lead Colombian two times, and was crowned the first Coors Classic champion.

A criterium (crit for short) is a form of bike racing consisting of a sub one-mile paved course that is closed to traffic. The race has multiple laps, multiple corners and high speeds. Crits are the most common form of bike racing in America, so common because of the ease with which they are put on. All a promoter needs is four city blocks or even a big parking lot with cones. A road race requires closed roads, lead cars, follow cars, course inspection etc., all of which are a logistical nightmare. Also, unlike a road race where spectators may only see the cyclists once, crits offer one of the most spectator friendly forms of bicycle racing. Seeing the speed and colors of bicycle racers against the backdrop of a city or town square is a very exciting thing for cyclists and non-cyclists alike. There are a few criteriums that are known as being a bike race within a street festival or party such as the Twilight Criterium in Athens GA, infamous for the thousands of spectators that stand four-deep to cheer on the racers under the glow of city streetlights.

Criteriums are like early Black Flag: short, fast and aggressive. At the same time, there is an amazing amount of precision that goes into every second of it—an average crit has each racer going through hundreds of corners. Hundreds of racers going through hundreds of turns can lead to a lot of trouble when a minor incident happens. Something such as a racer rubbing the wheel in front of him, or two racers leaning into each other in a corner can cause half of the field to go down.



This takes us back to 1980, where the Colombians who were inexperienced crit riders were facing a stacked field of America's best. They were fed to the lions. Since then, crits have become more popular outside of the United States, however Americans still seem to thrive at them.

Today, there is no shortage of criteriums available to anybody interested in racing. Most cities usually have a "training crit" on weeknights and "serious" crits on the weekend. A lot of weekend criteriums shut down a few blocks of a city or town and last several hours, allowing different categories of racers to compete. With different categories available, a novice bike racer will not be racing the best racers there. Different categories usually separate men from women, and experienced racers from novices. A well-attended event will have age group races as well, allowing older racers and juniors to compete against people of similar ages.

The equipment needed to race is that which is usual for a normal road ride. A road bike in sound mechanical order with high pressure, narrow tires (25mm at the widest) is the main requirement. No "aero bars" or "tri bars" are allowed in any sort of mass start events. A bicycle can

be ruled as "unsafe" and a racer barred from racing by the officials for various reasons, such as a chain skipping due to miss-shifting, or rims that are severely out of true. This does not mean that a new racer needs to buy a new fancy ProTour issued bicycle. A cyclocross bike or touring bike stripped of accessories and with narrow tires is fine for an entry-level racer.

Most bike races are sanctioned through a governing body, several of which exist in America. The sanctioning bodies provide insurance, rankings, champions, licenses and other logistics. These are things that make the race legitimate, but also cost a bit of money. A new racer should be prepared to invest some money for the experience, and a bit of time training (riding) to be competitive. For those lucky enough to have a "training crit" series in their city, they should consider watching a few races before jumping into one. Either way, a new racer should consider doing some criterium specific drills in order to be ready to race. There are essential skills a rider must have in order to successfully complete a crit. As racing becomes regular, these skills get internalized and become automatic.



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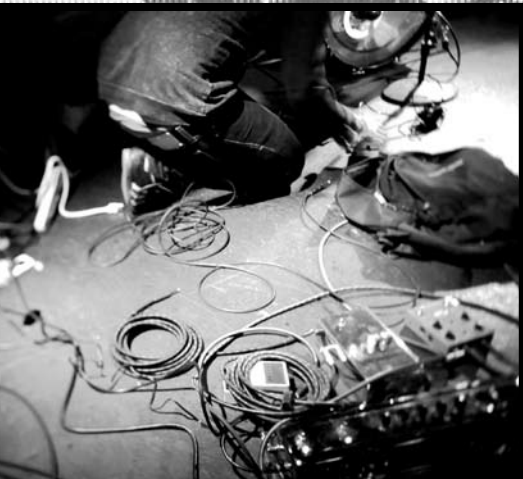
# Skills

**Pack Riding:** A new racer should be comfortable riding in a pack in close proximity to other racers. The best way to train for this is by doing group rides and learning to ride elbow to elbow with your peers. Even experienced mountain bike racers can be spooked by how tightly experienced road racers ride. Group rides provide the population needed to ride in a pack, experience drafting, and learn how to predict moves of others around. Most populated areas have plenty of group rides ranging in length and speed.

**Cornering:** Cornering is a skill that is needed to be a successful crit racer. Taking a corner at high speed without slowing down is a lot harder than it might seem. When speeds get high in a criterium, the racers are usually going single file or two abreast through the turns. These racers are usually starting the turn on the outside, nearly hitting the apex of the corner, then again moving to the outside of the next straight away. By doing this, they are turning a 90 degree corner into nearly a straight line, allowing them to hold a lot of their speed. They do not hit their brakes, except in the case of an emergency. Watching experienced racers take corners while they race, or following them while they warm up on the course, is a great way to learn. There are a number of things that an experienced cyclist will do intuitively while cornering that are essential to being successful. Some experienced racers can pedal through corners, but while learning, a novice should coast with the outside foot down (eg. left turn, right foot down). This foot acts as a pivot point and should hold most of the racer's weight. A racer should always look forward, where she wants to go, and also watch the few racers in front of her to see if they are slowing down or accelerating out of the turn. Cornering can easily be practiced in an empty parking lot, marked with chalk or cones denoting the inside and outside curbs. It should be noted that while warming up at 15 mph a racer may be able to pedal through a turn, but as the speed picks up the racer will lean more, and pedaling while leaning could cause a pedal to strike against the ground.

**Acceleration:** Being able to accelerate can be the difference between winning and losing a crit, or finishing and not finishing. Racers usually “jump” out of every corner during a criterium, causing hundreds of accelerations each race, and most races are finished with a sprint for the win. Sprinting is just as it sounds, being able to go from a high speed, to an even higher speed. The sprint at the end of the race is the hardest, maximum effort a racer can do, and can usually only be replicated a few times per race. The smaller accelerations can be caused by the need to close gaps to the riders in front, who may have had a cleaner line through the turn, or may have accelerated, or “attacked” out of the turn. These small jumps can be replicated on any ride simply by jumping for 15 or so seconds per minute, over and over. This could even be done in conjunction with cornering drills in an empty parking lot. Invite a few friends and you have... A training crit!





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## Conventions

The rules of a crit are the similar to most bike races, and the first person over the line wins. However, there are a few things that make it a bit different.

**All racers finish on the same lap.** This means that if you get lapped, you finish with those who lapped you. If a three-person group gets away and laps you, you are then sprinting for fourth place while they are going for first through third.

**Free Lap Rule.** A free lap is given to a racer who suffers from a “recognized mishap.” This generally means that if you flat or crash, you can check in with the officials and jump back into the race. Different governing bodies have different rules, but you generally can’t do it the last few laps of a race. It is up to the racers to know at what point they can no longer take a free lap. Checking in with officials is a must.

**Lap cards.** Races will have lap cards at the start/finish line. They will count down as you cross the line each time. The bell is rung with one lap to go. This is the finishing lap for all racers.

**Premes.** A preme is a mid race contest. The officials will ring the bell and announce what the racers are contesting. Sometimes it is announced on the start line. The items can be trivial, big money or products. There are some races famous for giving away thousands of dollars over the course of the race, before the finish.

## Basics

There are a few fundamentals of criterium racing that should be adhered to at all times for your safety and the safety of those around you.

**Warm up.** Criteriums notoriously start fast. Sometimes a beginner event will start with a neutral lap or two. Either way, the opening and closing laps are the fastest. A good warm up is the key to being able to start fast. Ideally, if the race is local, riding to the race is a great warm up. Adding in a few jumps to spike your heart rate a few times will get your legs ready for the race.

**Know the course.** The course is CLOSED during the races. This means that you cannot warm up on the course while other fields are racing. However, promoters usually allow 10–15 minutes between races. This is

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a great time to jump on the course and get to know it. Note the corners and how to properly take them, any potholes or imperfections that could cause a puncture or crash. If warming up on a trainer or rollers, try to visualize the course and how you are going to take the corners.

**Be predictable.** You should be riding in a predictable manner at all times. At no point during the race should you move side to side abruptly. Quick movements like this may cause others to overreact. You could be one of the best bike handlers in the world, but the guy next to you might not be. The rule is that you own the space in front of your front wheel. The space next to you is owned by the person whose front wheel is behind it. If you need to move over, or get out, wait for a time that it is safe to do so. Don't wait until the whole field has passed you to move over, but don't move around as if the whole road is yours.

**Brakes are for emergencies.** If there is a pile up in front of you, yes you are going to need to grab "a fist-full of brakes." Other times, racers should be able to judge what is going to happen by being aware of their surroundings. After a few times into a turn, mark where you stop

pedaling so you can save energy by coasting into it rather than sprinting in, jamming your brakes, then sprinting out. As you are coming, watch the people in front of you. If they are slowing out of the turn, be prepared to not jump out of the turn. Again, this will save you the energy you were going to spend accelerating into the back of a slowing field.

**Letting gaps open is a no-no.** When races get fast, they get very strung out. If you are at the back, you might not see it, but people are probably attacking at the front. If you are at the breaking point and feel that you **MUST** quit (don't quit), make sure the person behind you knows your intentions. You can flick your elbow and quickly move over, or before pulling out wave the person behind you on. Do not just sit up and force the person behind you to sprint around. This is rude and can be the difference between the people behind you finishing and not finishing.

**Don't "chop" corners.** "Chopping a corner" is what some people do in order to make a quick gain in position. If you are in the pack, about to make a right turn, you will notice that the right side of the road is empty and you may feel that you could easily pass a dozen people and slip into the corner. What you may not realize is that you are going to have to accelerate rapidly to get there, then hit your brakes to make the turn, and then accelerate rapidly to get out of the turn. Chances are, the person you were next to is going to coast through the turn and end up right next to you or right behind you, while you wasted a ton of energy sprinting into and out of the turn. Chances are also that you only have the fitness to do that a few times during the race.

This article hopefully covers the fundamentals needed to start participating in criteriums, which for many serve as the first jump from passionate commuter to competitive rider. Like other things, practice is key. People often go from getting lapped multiple times their first race to finishing in the top 10 within a few months. There is nothing to be embarrassed about or ashamed of in getting dropped from your first crit. No matter how fast you are there is always going to be somebody faster. The goal should not be to win, although winning is nice, but rather to gain experience and progress as far as you can as a racer. You have to start somewhere, sometime, and there is nowhere better than here and now. Good luck, be safe.



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# SAFE ROUTES REVOLUTION

BY DAVID HOFFMAN



Looking around her home office you would never know that she has been one of the key bicycle and pedestrian advocates in the United States over the past ten years. A couple of awards and proclamations sit on her bookshelves; a photograph or two of her with some key political figures, some throw pillows sitting in corners of an otherwise spartan room, and an iPod with speakers. Deb's simple furnishings offer little distraction for her in the course of her daily work.

For starters, Deb manages to squeeze three jobs into the course of a day. She works as the Advocacy Director for the Marin County Bicycle Coalition ([www.marinbike.org](http://www.marinbike.org)), sits on or advises the Board of Directors for both the Bay Area Bicycle Coalition ([www.bayareabikes.org](http://www.bayareabikes.org)) and the California Bicycle Coalition ([www.calbike.org](http://www.calbike.org)) and, most importantly, runs the Safe Routes to School National Partnership ([www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org)). Safe Routes to School is a national program in all 50 states that encourages youth to walk or bike to school. Safe Routes to School also works with local communities to create and improve bicycle and pedestrian routes to school. The education and infrastructure efforts combine to create a powerful tool for helping to promote healthy lifestyles, reduce congestion around schools, and change the way that we think

**D**eb Hubsmith is not your typical bicycle advocate. In fact, there is very little about Deb that is typical. For this interview, I go to Deb's home in Fairfax, California—a sleepy little town in Marin County that is the gateway between bucolic, rural West Marin, and the more heavily populated suburban communities that are just off of the other end of the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco where the locals have been known to sport bumper stickers on their cars printed with the slogan, “Fairfax: Mayberry on Acid” against a tie-died background.





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**The Safe Routes National Partnership—[www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org)—For lobbying, policy change and grassroots movements**

**National Center for Safe Routes to School—[www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org)—National information clearing house, data gathering and technical support**

about designing our communities.

“I started off as a civil engineering major in college. When we began to design highways I quickly realized that wasn’t the direction that I wanted to go in. So I switched majors to Environmental Science and Resource Management. I moved to the Bay Area in 1992 because it had a great history of environmental activism and creating worldwide change.

“Early on, it became evident to me that transportation was one of the biggest contributors to the degradation of the environment. And I instinctively knew that if we were going to turn things around that we had to look to including the next generation of youth and empowering them to improve their communities.

“In 1998 I was working on a transportation sales tax in Marin County—which ultimately failed... But I worked together with Wendi Kallins (now also with Safe Routes to School), and I designed a program where I rode a solar powered electric bicycle with a trailer hauling 80 pounds of educational materials around to more than 25 schools in Marin County. I talked with school children about the impacts of transportation on the environment, public health and communities, and got their ideas on how to improve safety and convenience of bicycling and walking. The Marin County Bicycle Coalition was formed in the same year, and I became the founding Executive Director. One of my main missions was to bring Safe Routes to School and empowering youth into our campaigns and programs.

“In 1999, Patrick Seidler (President of Transportation Alternatives for Marin, a sister bicycle and advocacy organization in Marin County) brought me over to the Netherlands and England on a ‘Seeing is Believing’ tour so that I could research interna-

tional best practices for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and what was eventually to become Safe Routes to School. At the same time, Wendi Kallins was doing international research on Safe Routes to School in Canada and Australia.

“At the end of 1999 when Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN) was looking for ideas to improve bicycling in America, Patrick Seidler and I put together a white paper for Safe Routes to School, and what would eventually become the Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program (see *Urban Velo #7* for more information). In March of 2000, Oberstar said that he liked both ideas, but wanted to work on Safe Routes to School first by implementing two pilot programs. He was taken with statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and prevention that showed how childhood obesity had tripled in thirty years, and there had been a corresponding drop in children walking and biking to schools. In his words, he launched the Safe Routes to School program to, ‘change the habits of an entire generation.’

“We were lucky enough to have the MCBC designated to run one of the pilot programs. Our initial funding was \$50,000 from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) and another \$50,000 in matching funds from Marin Community Foundation, the California Department of Public Health, and the Marin Independent Journal. Initially, we implemented the program in just nine schools in the 2000-01 school year. During the first two years of the program, walking and biking to school increased from 21 percent to 38 percent. Because this was a national pilot program, Congressman Oberstar now had the statistics to demand the need for a robust national program in all 50 states in the upcoming



 German Innovation

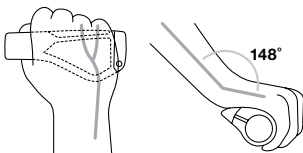
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*I instinctively knew that if we were going to turn things around that we had to look to including the next generation of youth and empowering them to improve their communities.*

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SAFETEA-LU transportation bill. A national campaign including America Bikes ([www.americabikes.org](http://www.americabikes.org)) and countless cities, states, and organizations around the country rallied Congress to include this program in the transportation bill.”

We take a short break, and I ask Deb to talk about the present and future plans for Safe Routes to School. She gets even more excited now, talking about the current work that is being done at the national level to truly institutionalize Safe Routes to School for years into the future.

“On May 21st we just got a bipartisan Senate bill introduced that would increase the current level of national funding of \$600M over five years to \$600M a year—or a five fold increase in funding, and it would expand the program to high schools! Currently the national program is for kindergarten through eighth grade. What’s happened in the last 10 years is that this idea has blossomed into a popular and effective program that’s now being implemented in more than 5000 schools and all 50 states. There are success stories in virtually every Congressional District. Throughout the country parents are working together with school districts and cities to analyze routes, and make improvements like bike lanes and pathways, and to work together with law enforcement to slow cars down, and to create promotional and educational opportunities to draw more people in to bicycling and walking. The media is covering this throughout the country—we collect the newspaper stories and the projects

that are being funded in Congressional Districts, and then our Deputy Director in Washington D.C., Margo Pedroso, meets with member offices to show how the program is directly benefitting the health, traffic, safety, and livability of their constituent’s neighborhoods.”

We talk a bit about the legacy that Safe Routes is already beginning to create, and how it plays into the larger efforts of bicycle and pedestrian efforts across the United States...

“Safe Routes to School is a bridge for showing how transportation affects public health, the environment, and the livability of our communities. While many Congressional Members have difficulty wanting to improve facilities just for bicyclists, when it’s put in the context of making the streets safe for our children who are bicycling, it converts people to thinking that if we can make our streets safe for children, we can make our streets safe for everyone. Safe Routes to School is a very important political strategy for gaining more support for bicycle facilities, policies, and programs. I am particularly enthused, because I’ve always stayed involved at the local level, as I feel that the techniques used at the local level can inform how you work at the national level. Many of the kids that I taught in school in 1998 were children of my friends, so I’ve been able to learn about the choices that they’ve made later in life. Ten years later, these kids are now in their early twenties; many of them have chosen not to buy cars, and use bikes and buses as their primary mode

of transportation. Their lifestyles reflect attention to their ecological footprint, and recognition that each person can make an important difference. As we continue with this program, we’re empowering children all throughout the United States to create the type of community that will be able to respond to pressing concerns like climate change, obesity, and traffic congestion, while building facilities that revitalize downtown communities and bring new life to areas that previously may just have been overrun with cars.

“What’s different now from ten years ago is that the bike folks are now joined together with pedestrian advocates, parents, schools, health agencies, cities and environmentalists—and this united voice has been amplified. Combined with the fact that children who have gone through the program are getting older, and are getting politically active themselves, and with the new social networking tools, I believe that we’re truly experiencing a Safe Routes to School revolution.

“I just got a call from someone in Paris—he runs a program called ‘World Streets,’ and wants stories from Safe Routes to School for his newsletter which goes out to 40 countries. There is tremendous excitement in the world arena, as there is actually dedicated funding for Safe Routes to School here in the United States.”

Where did it all begin for Deb?

“I lived about two miles from school. Mostly, I took the bus, but starting in middle school I began riding my bike in good weather and when I had after school activities. I would sometimes walk home from school or to my friends’ houses. All summer long, I rode my bike everywhere. My bike was my ticket to freedom.”





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# WINDY CITY WOOL



## Chicago's Tweed Ride is a Bloody Good Show

By John Greenfield

Photography by Don Sorsa

Kentucky Derby Day in Chicago, and a pair of southern belles in floppy derby hats are staggering tipsily on high heels from the Metra commuter rail station at Ashland and Cortland. Just west, forty bicyclists, nattily attired in vintage woolen formal wear and mounted on English steeds, combine alternative transportation, fashion and alcohol in a far more dignified manner.

It's Winston's Tweed Ride, a tour of former speakeasies that celebrates booze, bicycles and Brits, hosted by the group British Bicycles of Chicago. The jaunt was inspired by January's Tweed Run in London, where dozens of fixed-gear and single-speed enthusiasts donned dashing duds for a leisurely pedal from Saville Row, famous for its traditional "bespoke" custom clothing.



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"This is a civilized ride hearkening back to the wonderful times of 1930s bike touring," says Chicago organizer Garth Katner, splendidly dressed in britches, sports jacket, bowtie and fedora. The leather handlebar bag of his fat-tired Robin Hood three-speed is adorned with antique pins from UK cycling clubs. "We're wearing natural fibers—no Lycra louts."

Actually, tour guide Lee Diamond wears a t-shirt and tights. "I went to nine different thrift stores and couldn't find any tweed," he apologizes. "That's OK—I didn't even dress up for my wedding." The 10-mile ride departs at 1pm from Jake's Pub in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, visiting scores of classic pubs like Glascott's, Halligan's, Emmitt's and Lottie's, and gangster history sites like the spot where the St. Valentine's Day Massacre took place in 1929.

The lads and misses pedal at a stately speed, ringing bells and giving the "Queen's wave" to diners at Wicker Park sidewalk cafes on this perfect spring afternoon. Since the crowd only stops to drink at a few of the taverns on-route, it's a surprisingly sober affair. "The ride's been slow and genial, with lots camaraderie and dry English humor," says Suzanne Nathan, in woolen skirt and scarf. "Like when the light turns green people shout, 'Carry on, carry on.'"

Pausing across from the Gold Star bar on Division St., Diamond announces that the strip used to be a rowdy nightlife district known as Polish Broadway. "This pub has a particularly seedy reputation because above it was a hotel of ill repute," he says. "It's also supposed to be

haunted." Outside the nearby Inner Town Pub, a Ukrainian Village dive, Katner complains, "This bar told us not to show up because we'd ruin the atmosphere." The genteel throng boos loudly.

The outing concludes at the Hideout, a honkytonk in an industrial zone, where the group hoists pints on the patio as the sun sets and the Sears and Hancock towers illuminate. Unable to choose between all the charming ladies in their long coats, flapper caps and aviator goggles, Katner hands out "Most Snappy Lass" prizes to all of them. "Most Dapper Chap" goes to Mexico native Hector Soriano, impeccably attired in flat cap, necktie, knickerbockers, and golf shoes. He raises the trophy cup in a shout-out to "all my tweeded Mexican friends."

The handful of actual British subjects present is amused by the display of Yankee Anglophilia. "I'm pretty flattered," says Yusuf Bangora, from Northampton, England, who rode a Raleigh Superb. "It's nice that Americans are interested in the culture of my country, even if it is styles from before I was born."

60s-ish Welshman Alan Lloyd is less polite. He's vividly dressed in an emerald jacket and britches with red-and-green argyle socks, riding a lemon yellow Raleigh borrowed from his son who owns Blue City Cycles on the South Side. "I'm enjoying that I can one-up them because I'm actually British," he says. "To paraphrase Eddie Izzard, 'You Americans say "herb" and we say "herb," 'cause the word has a fucking "h" in it.'"





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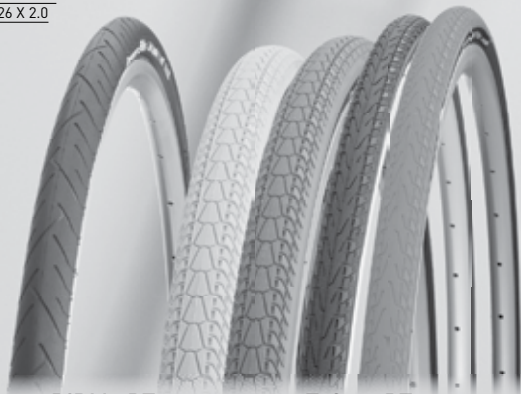


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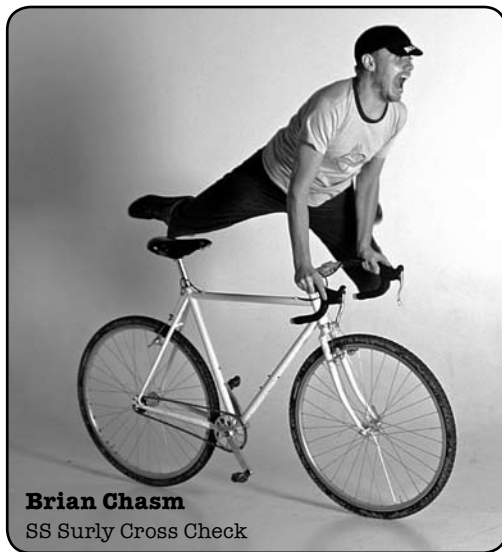
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**Paul Villasi**  
Kona Paddywagon



**Phillip "66" Audsley**  
Bareknuke track bike



**Katie "Dubbs" Watts**

Fuji converted single speed "Gabrielle"



**About the photographer, Chris "ChrisGo" Thomas**

Chris was born and raised in Kansas City, MO. He received his MFA from the University of Kentucky in 2000. He began teaching photography in Lexington, KY and helped found the Lexington Independent Photography Group. He is currently an adjunct photography instructor at Rockhurst University, where he's the faculty sponsor of the university's art club. He also works as a freelance photographer/photojournalist, and as a fine art photographer, showing work whenever possible.

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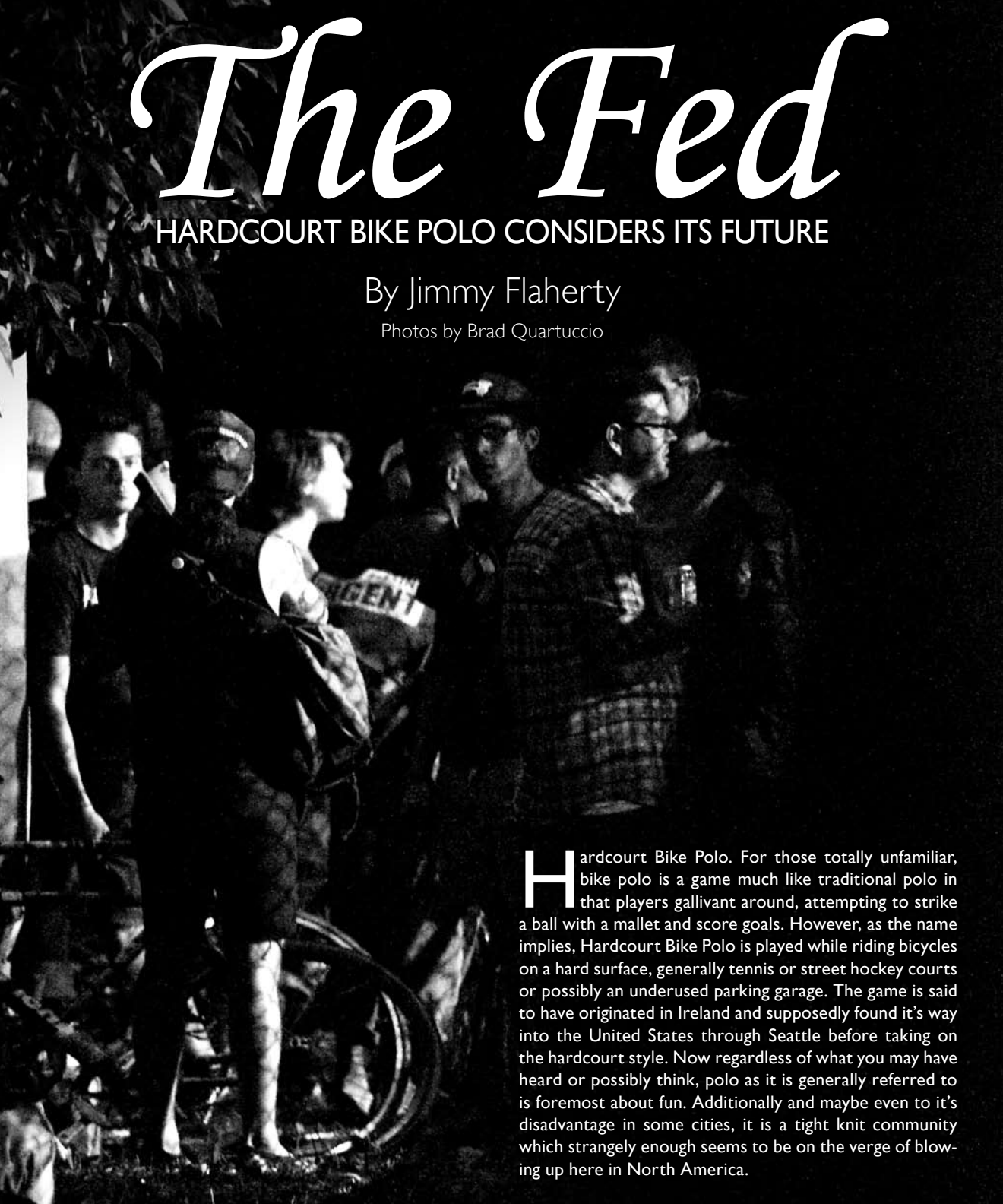
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# The Fed

HARDCOURT BIKE POLO CONSIDERS ITS FUTURE

By Jimmy Flaherty

Photos by Brad Quartuccio



**H**ardcourt Bike Polo. For those totally unfamiliar, bike polo is a game much like traditional polo in that players gallivant around, attempting to strike a ball with a mallet and score goals. However, as the name implies, Hardcourt Bike Polo is played while riding bicycles on a hard surface, generally tennis or street hockey courts or possibly an underused parking garage. The game is said to have originated in Ireland and supposedly found its way into the United States through Seattle before taking on the hardcourt style. Now regardless of what you may have heard or possibly think, polo as it is generally referred to is foremost about fun. Additionally and maybe even to its disadvantage in some cities, it is a tight knit community which strangely enough seems to be on the verge of blowing up here in North America.





My feeling is that it is a little too soon to consider any sort of “federation” for hardcourt bike polo. I think there would need to be a standard set of rules first, and that alone is going to be a challenging task. I think we are close on this one, although regional differences vary quite a bit (contact, balljointing, etc). Regarding the “need” for a federation of some kind—I don’t know. I guess, for me, I would want to know precisely how “legitimizing” bike polo would benefit the game or our scene here.

—Sean Carter, Calgary AB

In discussing the current state of polo with various players from cities both in North America and abroad it became very apparent how wide spread the game actually is and it only looks to be gaining momentum. For example, Mike Kangelos of London UK says they have regular games 6 nights a week and even had the inaugural season of The London Hardcourt Polo League (LHPL) take place from October '08 to March '09 with 12 teams competing. For the '09-'10 season they're expecting 12-16 teams. At the same time here in North America, Seattle generally has four games per week as well as having their own leagues starting up. New York City has a four-day schedule, plus a designated court, The Pit. Even Lexington, KY has a polo specific court funded by the city and games twice a week. It would seem you can find a game in just about any city you go.

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One of the reasons I love the sport is the true organic nature of it. People in different cities use what they have as far as a polo court and other equipment. I think that the differences between the game in different cities adds unique characteristics to each tournament. Certain elements will be adopted by most cities such as the like contact rule, but others will not. I think that it is fine to set up rules for your own city or your own tournament, but over legislation of the sport will kill the game. Once the rules of the sport can no longer fit on a bar napkin, the game will cease to fun.

*—Brian Griggs, Cleveland OH*



Regardless of how bad the turnout may be for your Sunday pickup games, search a few message boards and you're likely to easily come across an upcoming polo tournament or two or even a city within a couple hours ready and willing for additional players. In just a few years polo tournaments have grown from a couple per year to over 60 as of late. And with a few rims and accessories now available, we're beginning to see polo specific equipment being brought to market. Add to all that, brands such as PBR have also begun to see the benefits of jumping on the proverbial bike polo bandwagon. Is it only a matter of time before we see a mass produced mallet attempting to alleviate the lack of ski poles or any other decent shaft material in so many southern states?

As is human nature, when people gather in activity regulation and standardization are never far behind. On the heels of the announcement of the 2009 Hardcourt Bicycle Polo World Championships came rumors of the Hardcourt Bicycle Polo Federation (the Fed) starting up. For some, this seems exactly what polo needs while others don't want anything to do with it all. The majority of players I've talked with don't have an overwhelming opinion on it one way or the other. As Brian Turner from Lexington noted, "On a strictly personal level, I don't think it will impact the sport for me because I will always be the type of player who prefers simply playing pickup games with my friends and occasionally a neighboring city's team." This thought has been pretty constant in many of the players interviewed.



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Cycling is autonomy, which is fantastic, but organizing cyclists is like herding cats, so instituting a bike polo federation is going to be an uphill battle. I'm for a federation if it does not become some roller derby behemoth where it becomes equal parts merchandising, fashion, rule making and sport. Unlike roller derby, polo has not come to the point where you need to be "registered" to have play approved and matches sanctioned, which I'm oh-so thankful for. On the other hand, I can see where democratic representation for each club would be of benefit, but honestly the fear of what it might turn into outweighs this. I won't stop playing either way, but I'll have less gray hairs if there's no federation.

*—Drew Deubner, Columbia MO*



I think you could relate it to the fact that while FIFA governs all that is soccer, there are still kids playing their own games in the streets and fields all over the world.

While the Fed looks to provide some much needed standardization to regional and national tournaments it really doesn't seem like there will be much involvement on a local level. The Fed is getting mixed reviews. Seems that those who oppose it do so seriously and most of those who support it only do so from a tournament standpoint. St. Louis' Lucky noted, "I support the Fed's goals as I understand them. Organize what of polo that would benefit from organization in a representative way. Leave the rest alone."



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Anything that brings more competition. I like knowing what the rules or limits are and then pushing right up to those. The last thing I would want though is bike polo with a whistle. The sport draws a certain brand of cyclist who respects the 'basketball foul' as an inherent part of the game and play always continues. I say push for the organization of a potential National Bike Polo League (NBPL) but keep it the under-above-ground game we all love.

—Charlie Pucket, Cleveland OH

As with any seemingly underground scene, there are participants that like things just the way they are. However, polo as a game belongs to everyone and regardless of where the game goes and what organizations take hold there will always be the local pick up game. Polo has a lot of DIY ethics involved and for a governing body to sprout up seems to rub a few people the wrong way. As well, with so many of those same go it your own personalities playing all over the globe there are more people just interested in getting in on the next pick up game. Like Doug D of New York says, "this is sort of a lawless game, a lot like the real polo from centuries ago."

Polo is growing, that's easily seen. Where it is going or how it will get there is anyone's guess. One of my favorite takes on future possibilities was by Seattle's Matt Messenger, "I have big dreams about it. I would like to see it trickle down into all age groups. Maybe get as big as little league baseball. Bike polo offers a lot of skills to learn. Balance, speed, control, team-work, finesse and hand/eye coordination. How to build a bike and recycle materials used as equipment. It's a very green sport in fact. I would like to see families to travel by bike to their kid's bike polo game night. Family polo night!" Indeed. This is an aspect I can really appreciate in having kids myself. Having a 9-year-old who loves to play bike polo is something very eye opening as to where this sport could go.



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# What's in There?

By Brad Quartuccio



## *How a conventional freewheel mechanism works.*

**T**he click of a coasting bike is unmistakable, the simple freewheel mechanism that makes it all work common to a number of mechanical applications but particularly in transport. The design used on the majority of bicycles is a simple ratchet system that allows the bike wheel to keep moving forward when the pedals are kept stationary. This is a technological development first commercialized by Ernst Sachs in 1898 that forever changed the bicycle and brought about countless thrills from coasting downhill at tear inducing speeds.

Freewheel or cassette, single- or multi-speed, the mechanism is roughly the same with a number of spring-loaded pawls engaging with an outer ring gear in only one direction, allowing the axle and hub body to rotate freely forward within the rear cog while coasting. Press down on the pedals and the pawls firmly engage in the ring gear, allowing the drivetrain to power the wheel forward. The click during coasting is the pawl slipping past each tooth in the ring gear—thousands of clicks per mile, millions over the life of your bicycle. While there are a number of other clutch and ratchet systems available in boutique and/or obscure hubs, this style of ratchet is common to the majority of mechanisms in service.



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The number and orientation of pawls and ratchet teeth vary between brands and design, dictated by a balance of price, reliability and engagement. While there are multiple pawls in every freehub, at any one moment only one or two are typically engaged with a tooth. For the sake of trivia, no matter the number of pawls engaged, at a given instant in the wheel's rotation all of the driving force is placed on one pawl.

Pawls are positioned to minimize the lag time before the driving gear engages with the hub body. The delay when you press down on the pedals and when the hub engages is inherent in the ratchet design as the pawls and teeth slip into place. The amount of free rotation before engagement can be as much as 20° for inexpensive mechanisms to the single digits or near-instant for some boutique clutch mechanisms. Most hubs these days allow about 12° of rotation prior to engagement, a reasonable design compromise

Remarkably reliable, freewheel mechanisms rarely need service. Most common is a sticky pawl that makes

the engagement slip, caused by contamination, thick grease or extremely cold weather. In fact, overzealous service and greasing is behind many sticky freewheels. Extreme cold can make oil turn to sludge and gum up a freewheel the same as grease can, not allowing the pawl to return freely. One method to remedy a contaminated singlespeed freewheel that isn't engaging properly is to give it an overnight solvent bath followed by a thorough oiling. Freewheels in general are a place for light oil, not grease.

Physical failure of the pawls, springs or ring gear is possible due to wear over time, especially in high torque situations like repeated mashing in low gears. Servicing individual pawls on all but boutique freewheels is more trouble than it's worth, full replacement is usually the best bet if solvents and oil don't solve the problem.

Besides a relatively few number of riders eschewing coasting, freewheel mechanisms are as ubiquitous and reliable on bikes as wheels themselves. Coasting is fun, and this simple ratchet system makes it all possible. 

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# Looking Where You've Been

By Brad Quartuccio



**P**ractice looking back over your left shoulder as you ride. This will prove an invaluable skill in many riding situations, not the least of which is to check on passing traffic. The goal is the ability to look back without veering from your lane.

Not only does this let you know what's coming up from behind, it also lends an air of confidence to your riding in the eyes of drivers. By holding your line and demonstrating that you are aware of your surroundings you'll find that at least some drivers will treat you with more respect. And conversely, you'll have a better idea of which ones are going to pass too close.

An old school trick on how to learn to look over your shoulder without weaving is to practice in a big parking lot or empty road. As you turn to look behind, extend your arm straight-out behind you and look down it as you pedal. This gives you a visual reference point for your mind to keep you riding straight ahead without steering into the traffic lane. As you gain confidence you'll find that you can keep both hands on the bars as you check on where you've been. 





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# Stem Clamp Penny Trick

By Brad Quartuccio



Single bolt stem clamps common with older quill-type systems can make bar swaps challenging, and not just because you have to unwrap or remove the controls of half the bar to make the change. Beyond that, the clamp itself can be very hard to actually impossible for a curve in a given drop or riser handlebar to fit through. Sometimes a little bit of room can be a lot of help for a tricky bend or just to avoid scratching the finish of a classy bar.

By fully removing the clamp bolt, turning it around and tightening it against a penny you can open up the clamp a hair to allow a stubborn bar to fit through. Obviously you don't want to open it more than a full turn or so, and this should not be used to truly force a bar to fit, only to gently nudge it along.



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Photo by Brad Quartuccio



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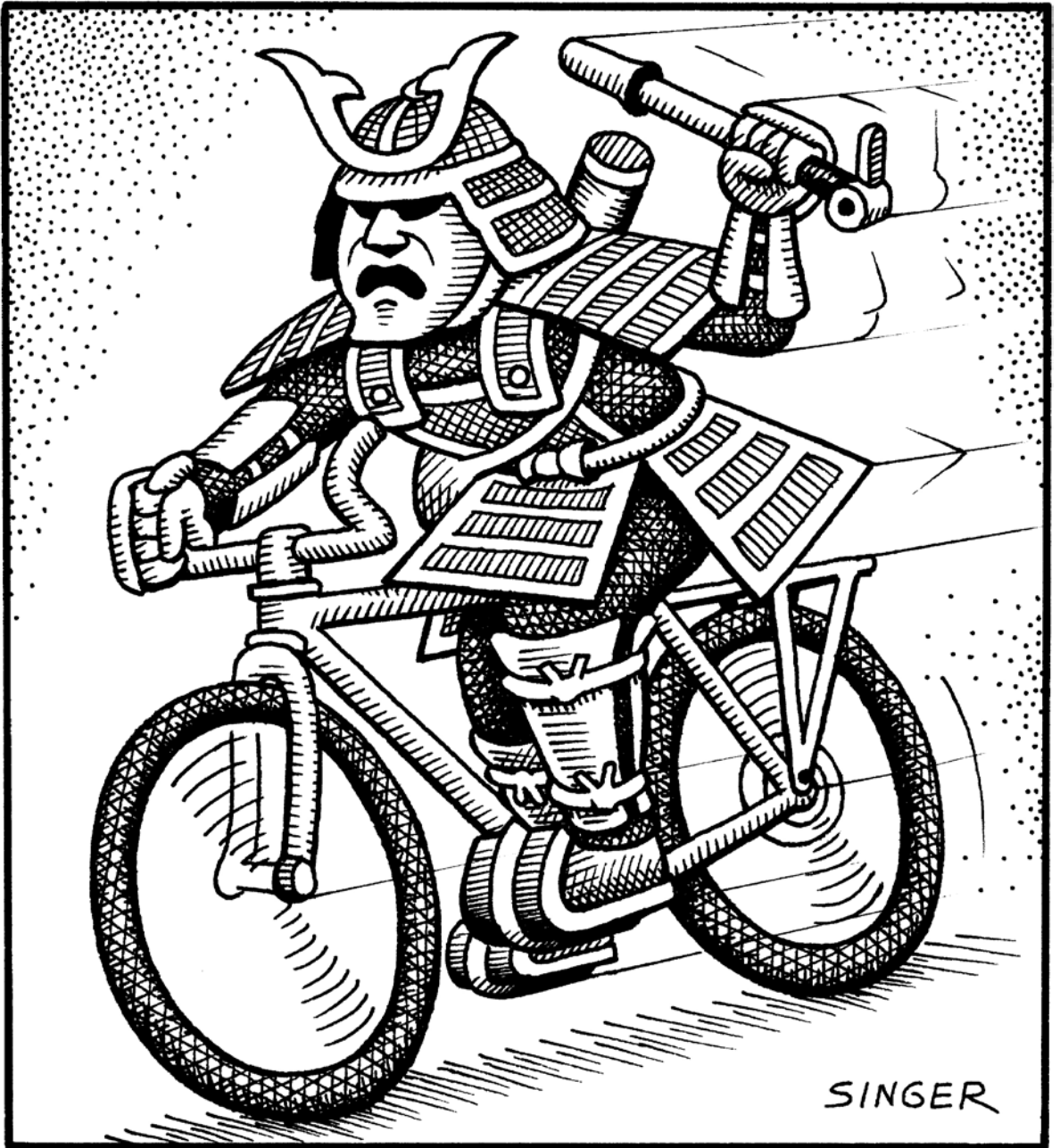
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