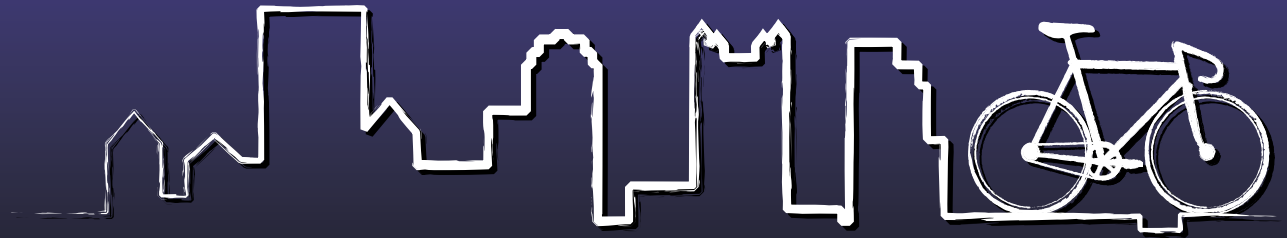


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Issue #17 • January 2010



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URBAN VELO

Issue #17 January 2010



Brad Quartuccio
Editor
brad@urbanvelo.org

Jeff Guerrero
Publisher
jeff@urbanvelo.org

On the cover: Minzi in downtown Singapore. Photo by Yasin Rahim, mr36sees.wordpress.com

Co-conspirators: Mike Wilson, Clay Enos, Nicholas D. Mack, Kevin Walsh, David Hoffman, Spencer Boomhower, Roger Lootine, Maureen Foley, Sarah Meyer, Josh Boley, Ken Kaminski and Andy Singer

Urban Velo, PO Box 9040, Pittsburgh, PA 15224

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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Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio



Inspiration comes in many forms, and I'm personally very lucky to be surrounded by incredibly smart and resourceful people that continually push our entire community of cyclists and non-cyclists alike to strive for more. In the face of adversity it can be helpful to look beyond the circumstances of my own life to the more trying struggles of others—not to bask in their misfortune but to hopefully gather strength and perspective to help conquer whatever challenge lies in front of me. This issue features one such story that I've been chasing for some time, that of Matt Gilman and his remarkable riding skills, all done without sight.

His story is especially touching to me, mainly because we are roughly the same age and have followed similar paths of *bikesbikesbikes* since childhood. I can't begin to imagine what it is like to deal with a significant disability like blindness, let alone having it strike you in your mid-twenties at the supposed peak of your physical conditioning. Coming to terms with his new reality and reclaiming his passion for cycling is an unbelievable example of what we can each be

capable of if we truly want it. I'm thrilled to present Matt's story to you, and hope each person reading along can draw from his life in some way when it seems like everything is crashing in around you.

It seems inappropriate not to mention the change to full color that this issue of Urban Velo ushers in, and the excitement that Jeff and I each have in sending this issue to print. Like our switch to a binding and color cover with Issue #8, this switch to color is just another effort of many to create a better magazine, and to keep from being stagnant or accepting the status quo. While this has been in the cards since the beginning, it's still remarkable to me that with the support of our readers, friends and family we've been able to turn two laptops and about a hundred dollars initial investment into what you see today, less than three years later. If I could thank each person who has helped us achieve this goal in this space I would, but the list is far too long. You know who you are, and rest assured so do we.



We want your words. Send your editorial contributions to brad@urbanvelo.org


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Publisher's Statement

By Jeff Guerrero



Color. Wikipedia defines it as *the visual perceptual property corresponding in humans to the categories called red, yellow, blue and others*. And there are the alternate definitions—nouns, verbs and adjectives.


The decision to print the magazine in full color was not an easy one to make, and I'm certain the initial reactions will be mixed. Some will undoubtedly miss the simple black and white format. Some will be excited to see people from around the world in full, living color. And I'm sure many people will just say, "It's about time."

We understand all of these sentiments. The decision really comes down to making a better magazine. Color allows us to be more expressive, and to better reflect the people and the world we live in. After all, people are not black and white. And the world is not black and white.

I do admit to getting a little nostalgic when I look at the first few photocopied editions of *Urban Velo*, though. I started making punk fanzines back in 1988 using the

photocopier in my high-school guidance councilor's office. After years of working as the art director for a full-color national magazine, it was refreshing to get back to my roots in 2007.

Moving forward, I think it's important to keep that spirit alive. For that, we need your help. Most of the contributors that help us bring these pages to life aren't professional photographers and freelance journalists. Typically, they're talented everyday people who love cycling and relish the opportunity to express themselves. And the professionals who do contribute enjoy the chance to apply their talents towards their passion as opposed to working on just another commercial gig.

Perhaps most importantly, we need people to continue contributing to our *I Love Riding in the City* department. These stories are the heart and soul of the magazine, and serve to inspire people around the world. If you've been waiting to send yours in, consider this a call to action. 

Urban Velo issue #17, Jan 2010. Dead tree print run: 5000 copies. Issue #16 online readership: 55,000+



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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Zachary (left) Nicholas (right) and Keith Snyder

LOCATION: Northern Manhattan, NYC

OCCUPATION: Kindergartener, kindergartener & novelist/filmmaker

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

Nicky: We were riding our bikes to P.S. 178. I live in 6F.

Zacky: In 6F! In New York! It's fun! And I like to ride bikes in the sun and the rain!

Keith: I got doored on Queens Boulevard when the boys were two (they're twins—obviously not identical), so we moved to Washington Heights/Inwood to have work, preschool, and home all accessible by the Hudson River Greenway. Now I tow the boys to kindergarten every morning in a Burley trailer, and we spend Saturdays riding around, usually with a trip to Dyckman Fields, which has a lot of flat paths along the river. There's also a nice hill for little ones to learn climbing and descending, and the place is deserted in cooler weather—which is when we like it best.

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

Nicky: I like taking pictures!

Zacky: New York! Because I like to! Because it's very pretty and I love to see the leaves shining up in the sun!

Keith: I do love riding in New York City, though sometimes that's because it lets me feel all macho about tangling with the cabbies on 2nd Ave or the psychotic livery cab drivers in the Heights. I also love having the greenway at my doorstep and 9W to Nyack or Bear Mountain is just over the bridge—and it's not too far to where the NJ Randonneurs start their brevets. NYC cycling figures prominently in my next novel.

But I also have to admit a soft spot for Montreal. I occasionally take the train up there for inexpensive writing retreats. Amtrak won't allow my road bike aboard, but they let me put my Xootr Swift (folding bike) in the luggage area. Looking down at the fog on the St. Lawrence river, riding past the Biosphere in a dedicated bike lane, spending no money to get from the Gare Centrale in Montréal to the cheap hotel in Brossard—those are nice things.

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Photo by Clay Enos

Name: Eric Matthies

Location: Temporarily in Vancouver, BC

Occupation: Producer

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

I grew up in Chicago, I live in Los Angeles and I'm working on a movie in Vancouver for four months. Riding here in Vancouver is pretty sweet, especially for a commuter. For starters, they have tons of designated bike lanes, paths and trails. Enough of 'em that when I figured out the Studio is under 6 miles away on a protected route from my corporate housing apartment, I took a tiny fraction of my rental car budget, bought a rain cape and Lake boots and started pedaling to work every day. Commuting affords me a few luxuries: it clears my head, keeps me fit, let me put that rental car budget to better use and stamps my client issued "green initiative" passport with a gold star.

Vancouver is super bike-centric. The local students even built a groovy route planner to help make things easy for locals and out of towners alike. For the most part, people follow the letter of the law here—way more so than

in LA, that's for sure. Certain designated bike lanes even have their own trigger patches embedded at intersections to help move you along.

On the weekends, there are miles of beautiful sand, gravel and dirt trails along the water and through the various woods. Sure it's winter now, making it wet and cold but that's what good gear is for. A set of fenders, a little wool, some Gore-Tex and a pinch of common sense can keep you riding regardless of conditions. I show up smiling and jazzed for work every day, and get back to my apartment with any stress from the job shaken off me each night—perfect.

Vancouver is a cool town—easy to get around, full of good people, good food and surrounded by the great outdoors. For a denizen of LA, where cycling to the jobsite is an act of aggression and survival, it's a real treat to work in a city where commuting by alternate means is not only accepted but encouraged and supported by the locals. The best thing here is the fact that you can explore a ton of "urban" cyclocross scenarios. From hardpack to singletrack, "traffic furniture" dismounts in town, fallen logs in the near woods and tons of off camber dirt, sand and grass. This place rocks. Waterfront slalom through seagull discarded mussel shells and slippery goose poop and then midway up the shore you encounter signs at stream crossings that proclaim "Don't Disturb Salmon at Work." The air is crisp, the dirt fresh, the trees and foliage are lush and green. I love riding in this city—even in winter; as my Austrian colleague notes—"There's no bad weather, just bad equipment." We're around 2/3rds through production and I've logged seven hundred miles so far. Up with city riding!



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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Martina

LOCATION: Seattle, WA

OCCUPATION: Stitcher—Swift Industries, Teacher

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

I live in Seattle. Cycling here is nothing short of dynamic: the topography and landscape are breathtaking. There's no such thing as the "wobble" of San Francisco here, only another huge hill to get over.

But you come over a hill—heart pounding—and have snow-capped mountains to either side of the city, massive waterways carved in between neighbor-

hoods and the ominous Mt. Rainier in the distance. It's stunning. Then there's the rain. You don't see all that beauty in the rain, but one can feel pretty badass riding through the torrents. There's a lot of cycling solidarity in the winter!

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

Montreal was pretty amazing. There are designated two way cycling lanes on most arterial streets through the city. And it's flat—feels like the Portland of the East. We came up to bike parking and there'd be 50 bikes locked on a corner; folks cycle to work in their suits (none of the spandex kits you see here), or in high heels with a baby on the bike. It was really fun exploring Montreal by bike.

Why do you love riding in the city?

It screws my head on tight. On days when I've been working and focused all day, it's the perfect remedy to take to the streets and weave through the neighborhoods and parks here. There are so many different neighborhoods and routes around the city that it's pretty unpredictable where you'll end up riding around. I also really love all of the cycling communities represented here and feel like they intersect pretty well. People dedicated to cycling tend to be really obsessed. If you like longer rides you can get out of the city in any direction and cycle through farm land, on the islands, or circumnavigate the lakes. It's easy to forget about the city when I'm cycling.

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

I guess it's the simplicity that has me hooked.

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NAME: Devan Mickell Council

LOCATION: Las Vegas, NV and Nashville, TN

OCCUPATION: Student of Philosophy

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

I'm from Las Vegas, but I go to school in Nashville and do most of my riding here. Nashville is an amazing city to ride in. It isn't too big, but the bike scene is growing incredibly fast. We have a very close-knit cycling and fixed gear community (especially thanks to Halcyon Bike Shop and Skumlife).



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

Riding in huge groups through downtown Las Vegas and riding the hills on the west side ride is always awesome, but I have to say, there is nothing like riding in Nashville with some of the most amazing and fun people you'll ever meet. There is always something going on, and there are sure to be friends riding around town at any time of day. It is a very ride-able city; there isn't anywhere I can't get to on a bike, and for the most part it's a pretty bike friendly area. Not to mention, it is incredibly hilly; you can't beat climbing and bombing down hills. Though my favorite part about riding in Nashville is that I can ride from a very urban setting to scenic greenways where I can submerge myself in nature. It's seriously gorgeous out here.

Why do you love riding in the city?

How can you not love it? Everyday on my commute to and from class I feel sorry for the people sitting in traffic in their cars as I pass between all of them. I absolutely love that I can get anywhere in town faster on my bike, without wasting money on gas or harming the environment, than I could in a car.



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NAME: Max Norton

LOCATION: Tampa, FL

OCCUPATION: Musician

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

I live in downtown Tampa on the Hillsborough River. I've lived here most of my life. There is one bike lane in downtown that everyone uses, so that's how I meet most people on the road. Downtown Tampa is built much like New Orleans, because many Italians moved to Tampa from New Orleans in the early 1920's. There's a lot of mafia history here, it's neat.

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

Austin, Texas! Art, music, bikes galore, Tex-Mex, good people, and more music!

Why do you love riding in the city?

When I travel to cities while touring, I bring my bike and wander up and down the streets. I get a much better perspective of a foreign place when I'm on my bike. It just feels right and natural. Cities create some of the best stories to bring back home.



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

Why do you love riding in the city?

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NAME: Alex Mountford
LOCATION: Fremont, CA
OCCUPATION: Student

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

I currently live in Fremont, CA, a suburban city across the bay from San Francisco. Riding in my town is very average, things are spread out so if you go somewhere it takes 10 to 20 minutes to get there and the roads are kind of chunky. The two most interesting things about cycling here is going into back alleys and parking lots behind stores and shopping centers and seeing what you can find (like random little grocery stores and whole mazes of deserted stores for your exploring pleasure), and racing cars.

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

I love riding in San Francisco. I take my unicycle there every once in a while and it is a nice mix between peaceful and chaotic. When going around China Town and the Market District you have to dodge pedestrians and cars while looking in storefronts and watching seagulls steal french fries from men in suits. And then you get to the more residential area where the crowds are less hectic and it is a more leisurely ride, smelling restaurants and catching bits of conversation as you go by.

Why do you love riding in the city?

Riding in the city for me is my great escape from suburban madness. People in cars, in cubicles, and in front of the TV 24/7 is just something I can't deal with. So when I get on my unicycle or fixie I'm free of all of these things. And the experiences that you get once you are out and about are smelling freshly cooked food from every restaurant, seeing people and hearing voices not broadcast through a plastic box, and seeing the buildings tower above you as you ride around at their feet is like riding through the land of giants.

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

For everyone who reads this magazine who cycles in the city on a unicycle, kudos.

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NAME: Geraldo Siqueira
LOCATION: Curitiba, Brazil
OCCUPATION: Plastic Artist

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

I live in Curitiba, capital of Parana State, Brazil. To ride a bike here is quite good, I feel connected with the city, despite some problems. For instance there are too many cars in the streets and some routes are still without cycle lanes, but it's still a great city to cycle.

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

Besides Curitiba, I also like to ride in Rio de Janeiro. It's great cycling while watching the city; it's beautiful and chaotic at the same time, but still interesting. Most cycle lanes are near the beach, it's definitely a "Marvelous City" to ride a bicycle.

Why do you love riding in the city?

Curitiba has many parks and green areas around the city and downtown is quite green and clean too. Despite being a modern city it still keeps an ancient feeling and this is what I think gives its charm. I like to look at the architecture, the great places that tell us about the city history.

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

When I was a child, I used to ride my bike a lot. Last year, precisely in October, I decided to buy a new bike to use as my way of transportation. I fell in love with cycling again and started to rediscover the city with new eyes—the architecture, the tourist spots, the people...

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NAME: Mark Evans

LOCATION: Shanghai, China

OCCUPATION: Digital Media Director for an environmental non-profit

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

Shanghai might be the most dangerous city for bikes and pedestrians—drivers (especially cab drivers) exercise willful ignorance of other vehicles on the road in an effort to force other vehicles to react to where they are going. Most of the time, they don't see you. Also, traffic laws don't really exist, which means you can do whatever you want, but so can anyone else.

Beyond that, this city is nearly perfectly flat, fucking polluted and crowded as hell.

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

I miss Portland, OR—real hills, good beer, drivers who are scared to get within 6 ft of you (most of the time) and great bike culture.

Why do you love riding in the city?

In the modern world it's totally possible to live a completely safe existence. City riding adds thrills, danger, problem solving, social interactions, and adrenaline into my day. Better than coffee and goes well with beer.



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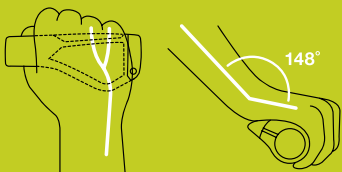
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NAME: Dragos

LOCATION: Timisoara, Romania

OCCUPATION: Architect

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

Timisoara—somewhere in the “Far East” of Europe. It’s the place were my tribe is starting a new revolution... A green one this time.

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

Budapest. As with any other European capital it’s a busy one, 24-7. You can die for a parking space! There are a lot of historic quarters that need to be seen and a lot friendly people to meet.

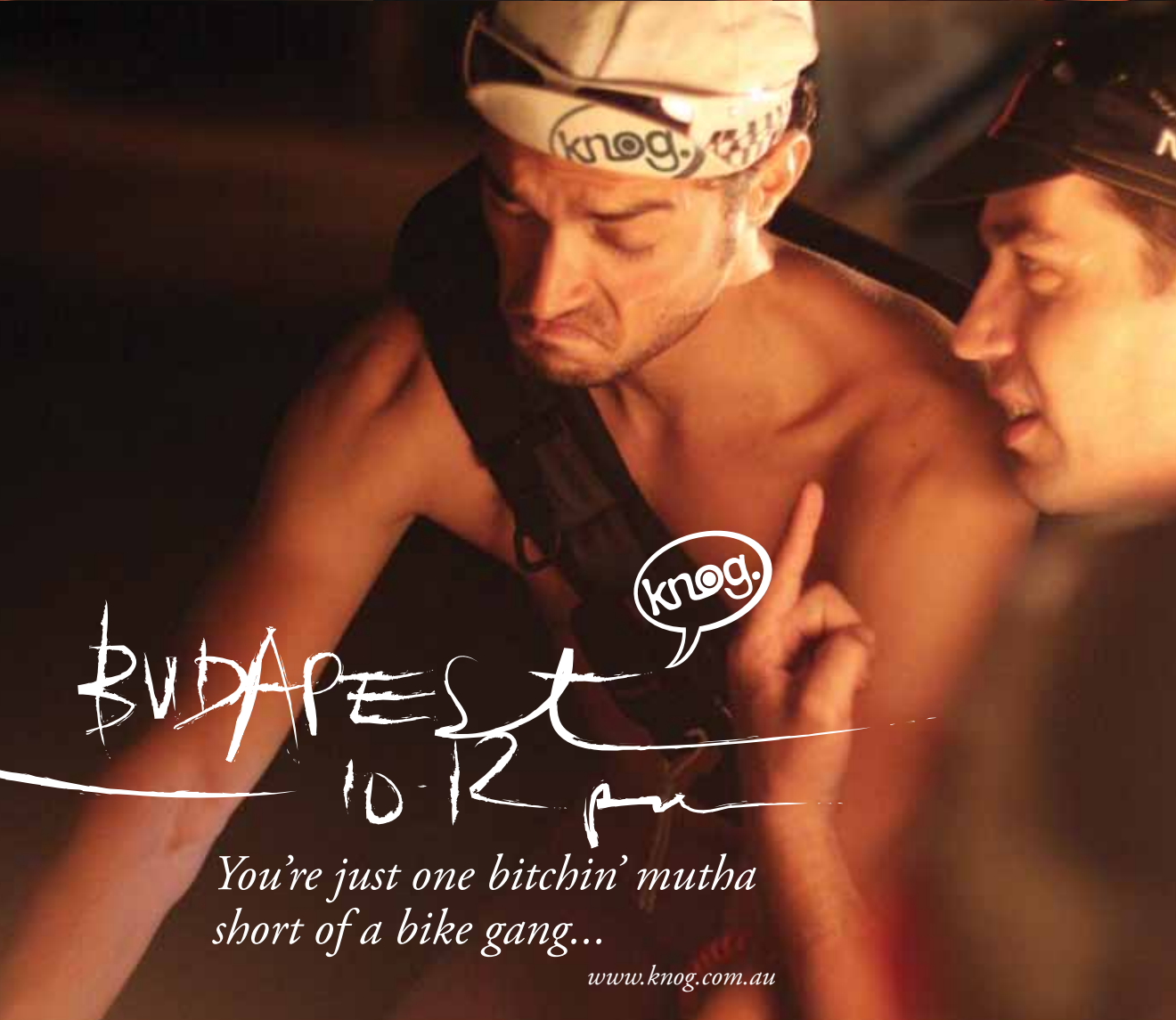
Why do you love riding in the city?

Because sometimes you can go faster than a Ferrari (when it’s stuck in traffic). Or just because it’s fun and refreshing. You get free sun, free gas and occasionally a free shower.

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R I D I N G blind

By Brad Quartuccio

Observed bicycle trials is hard enough already—a constant balancing act, fluidly moving a bicycle up and over seemingly unrideable forms and obstacles with a certain riding technique unlike other disciplines. Rear wheel balancing, hopping sideways up handlebar height ledges, the majority of people place trials one step away from circus act in both the style of riding, and the inability to see themselves ever attempting it. Relatively few try their hand at it, and even fewer succeed. Matt Gilman does it blind.

**I am PROOF that
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possible.**



It wasn't always this way, nor was it supposed to be. Throughout the nineties Matt rode everywhere, and every-day: the typical bike kid, growing up on two wheels and working his way into a shop job that allowed for a steady stream of bike parts and riding inspiration. Through a cheap trade-in Matt found himself the owner of a trials bike in 2001, working his way up to a be a solid street rider and Sport-level competitor placing middle of the pack at the well-attended '04 Motorama competition. It was just about a month later that Matt went to the doctor thinking he needed glasses only to find out that at the age of 24 his vision was in serious jeopardy, a result of complications from diabetes which he was diagnosed with as a child.

"My vision loss is due to mismanagement of my diabetes. When I was a teenager, as with all teenagers, I thought that nothing could happen to me. I just wasn't watching my blood glucose as well as I should have been. I also wasn't seeing the doctor as often as I should. I would eat many things that I definitely shouldn't have been eating. It was a mix of things but [it is] all due to me not taking care of my diabetes as well as I should have been."

Some twenty surgeries later and Matt is completely blind in his left eye, able to make out differences between light and dark and see the horizon with his right. The transition was tough, with periods of clear sight between surgeries before the vision after each eventually regressed further with scar tissue and further complications. He held out on using a white cane or learning Braille for some time, partially out of hope that his vision loss was a passing stage, and partly out of stubbornness. As with anyone going through such a significant life change, it all took some getting used to. After a two-year period completely off of his bike, in 2006 Matt decided to give it another



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try, walking his bike out to the sidewalk, ready to bounce around a bit and see if he could recapture the lost love of cycling.

“I went out there and quickly realized I couldn’t even trackstand. At that point I knew what I would have to do. I would have to relearn how to ride my bike all over again, starting from the most basic move.”

From practicing trackstands in the living room to trying some basic moves outside, the physical movements came back with a completely different method. Balance is different without sight, learning how to manipulate the bike in space without a visual reference is an ongoing challenge. Slowly, as Matt’s skills and confidence came back so did pedal kicking, first off a curb and then pushing higher. With the ability to see only incredibly contrasty things, Matt is truly riding in the dark by feel, instinct and memory. Concrete and rocks generally all look the same without distinct edges to base any movements on. Walking out a section and measuring it with both his hands and bike helps, as does a trusted spotter giving cues when needed, but much of the riding is done on faith. “Wing it, hope it lands.”

As one can imagine, Matt always rides with at least one other person around. Not being able to see has its hazards when on two wheels, and having someone there to mention that pole or low hanging branch is invaluable. Matt reports one of his biggest problems on the bike is staying straight, he needs a relatively wide berth free from posts and the like as he tends to drift to one side or the other as he goes. Rocks and ledges also at times need a spotter to help with orientation—“a little bit right, your tire is just touching the edge”—as does competition. Since losing his

sight, Matt has entered a competition or two, both as a personal challenge and to stay connected to the small trials riding community. Short urban sections can be more or less memorized, but the multiple obstacles and relatively long length of competition trials sections require a spotter to help him navigate.

“I’m here to ride a bike, not just hang out.”

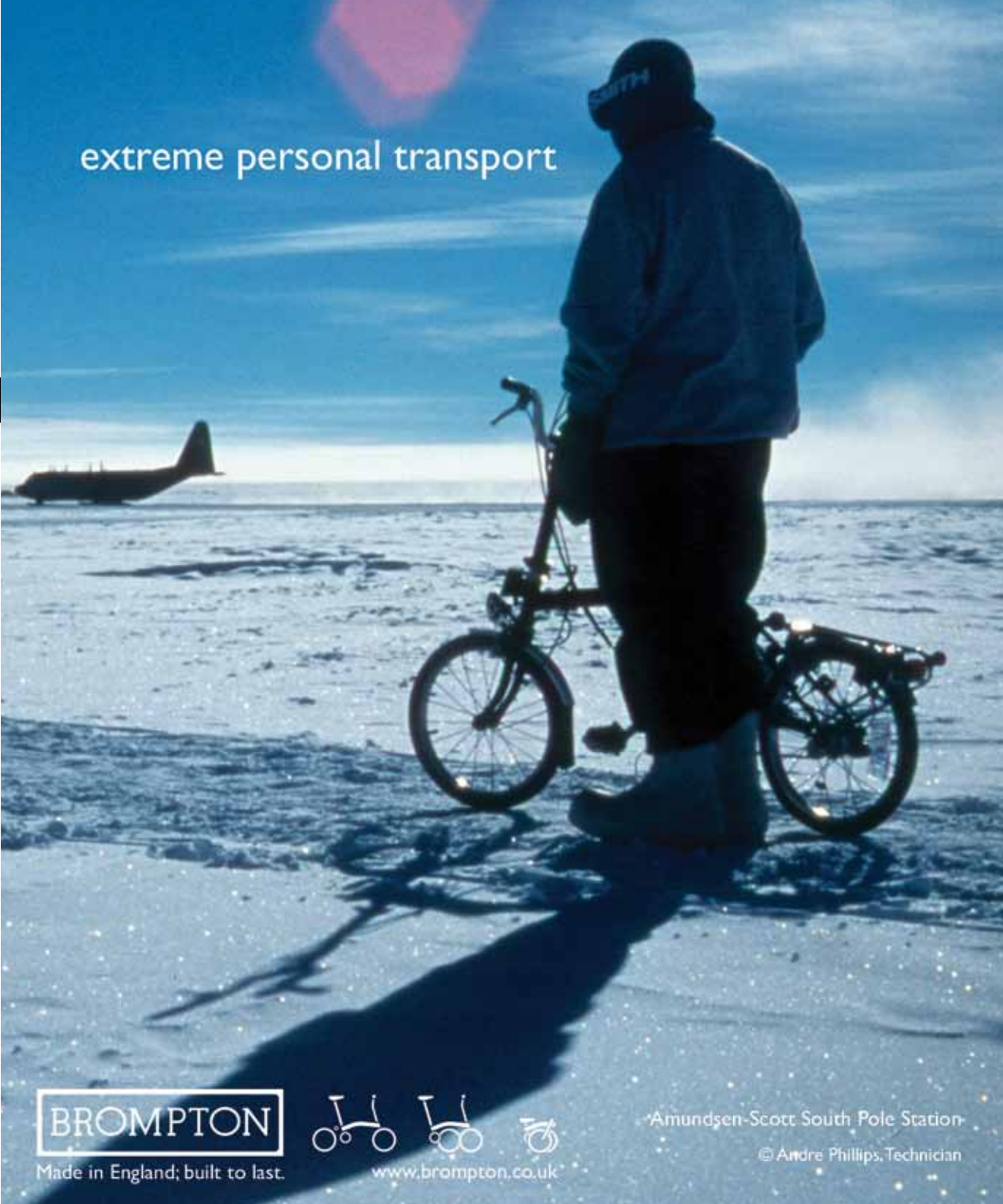
These days Matt is employed as a mechanic back at the same shop he was working back when he lost his sight. Starting with bike unpacking and building, he’s now back to wrenching on just about everything that doesn’t require a direct measurement of length or torque, and at work to solve that last hiccup through calipers and wrenches with audible alerts. There is the potential that with medical advances and future surgeries Matt’s vision could improve, but until that day comes it is the reality of being blind and finding solutions to the problems that arise.

Since first gaining a bit of notoriety for his riding and the story of how he got there, Matt has taken to a mission of spreading a can-do message for anyone struggling with disease or disability. Through public riding demos and his website he hopes to spread awareness of not only diabetes care in particular, but that no matter the disability hurdles can be overcome and people can once again pursue their passions.

“With a disability things that seem impossible are not so, you just have to look at it in a different light. You need to figure out a new way to go about it. You may need more assistance to get going, and you might be terrified to push forward with certain things but I am proof that the impossible is possible. I mean look, I am blind and I am jumping off of things on my rear wheel...”



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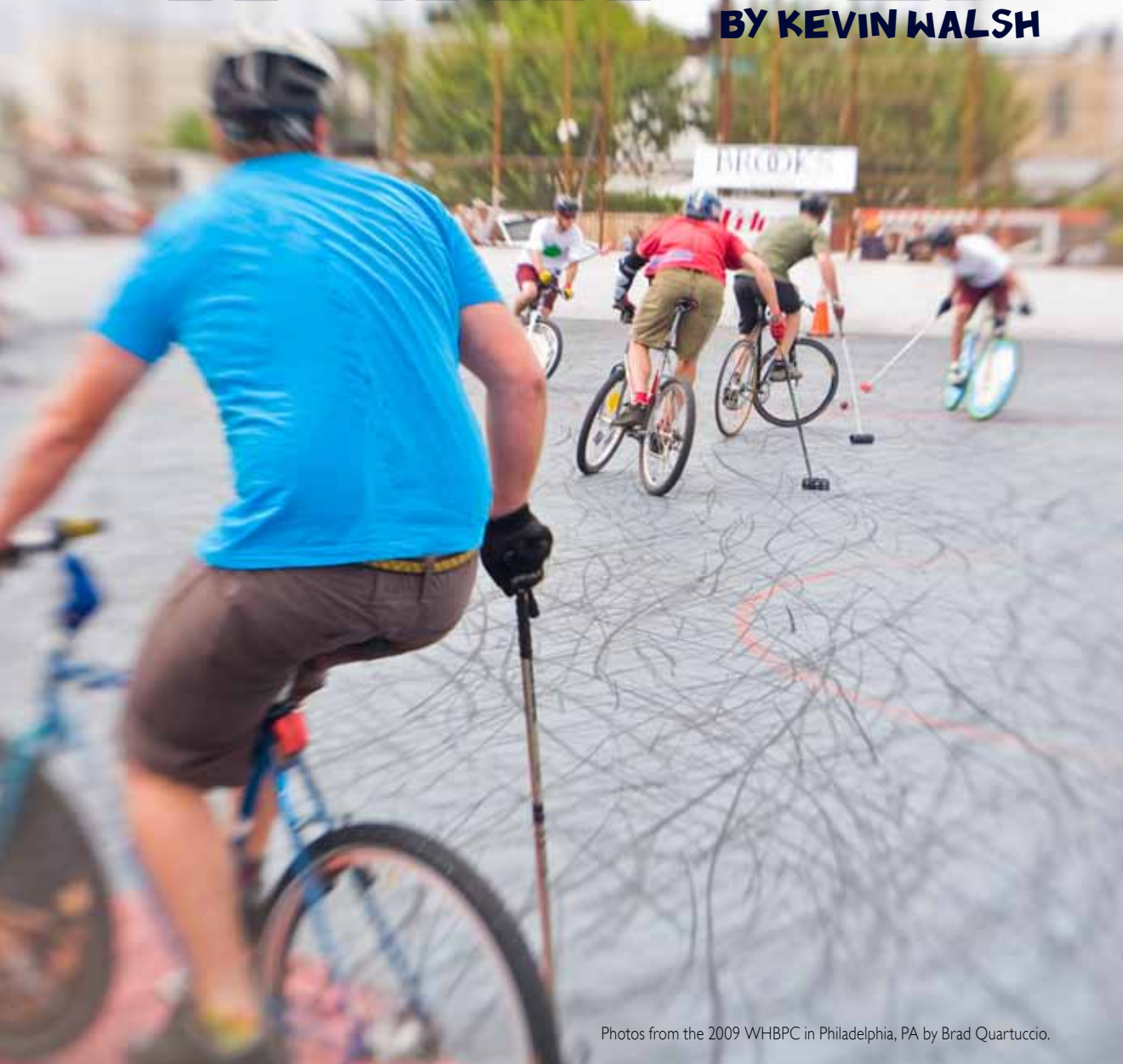
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HARDCOURT BIKE POLO GETS ORGANIZED

BY KEVIN WALSH



Photos from the 2009 WHBPC in Philadelphia, PA by Brad Quartuccio.

If you've ever witnessed a mallet toss on a Sunday afternoon at a crowded bike polo court, then you've pretty much seen the full extent of formality in the organization of the sport. And a lot of people like it that way, because for most of us players, pickup is what defines our sport; afternoons outside with friends, cans of beer or a bottle of what-have-you, and the sound of trash-talking punctuated every so often by the sound of mallets being thrown in to randomly determine which players get in on the next game.

For a growing number of players, polo is also being defined by the trips we take across borders, or even across the ocean, to play at tournaments. In 2009 there were ninety tournaments posted on the League of Bike Polo website (www.leagueofbikepolo.com), compared to only about 20 in 2008, and probably less than half that in 2007.

And it seems that the more people travel, the more people wish things were better organized. For example, there are some minor regional differences in rules—which kind of ball to use, when you can attack after scoring a goal. But more importantly, players are beginning to expect some basic tournament standards: the quality and quantity of courts, well-designed tournament brackets, reliable officiating, and basic logistics like housing, beer and toilets.

Tournament organizers, meanwhile, are faced with increasing competition for dates to host their tournaments (there were an average of three inter-city tournaments each weekend in North America in summer 2009), as well as competition for players and event sponsors. So far there has been no system to establish the location, timing, or quality of flagship events like the North American Hardcourt Bike Polo Championships (NAHBPC) and the World Hardcourt Bike Polo Championships (WHBPC)—it's been a mix of organizers' self-declaration and some mysteriously functional internet-forum-based consensus. Also, some of the most committed sponsors are being approached by dozens of tournament organizers for prizes or financial backing.

In an effort to better coordinate all of these efforts an interim body of 25 polo players representing cities across Canada and the US formed together in October 2009. For the moment, their "organizing body" has neither a real name, nor a bank account, nor a tax status. And for its first year, it has a fairly modest, North American-specific agenda:

1) Choose the location for the North American Bike Polo Championships 2010 (This has been accomplished; Madison WI and Boston MA presented two excellent bids, Madison won. See www.leagueofbikepolo.com/bids.)





2) Develop a collective approach to sponsors for tournament organizers, and explore the idea of supporting an established circuit of major North American tournaments.


3) Establish a viable decision-making structure, consisting of a system of elected club/city and regional representation.

4) Launch a public-facing website (its current home is a sub-forum on www.leagueofbikepolo.com).

5) Rules. It's unclear whether there will be a "rule-book" per se, but it's reasonable to expect that the organizing body will have a hand in determining what rules are in place at the 2010 NAHBPC in Madison.

6) Establish a bid process for determining NAHBPC 2011, and work with polo communities in Europe, South America, Oceania and Asia to establish a bid process for determining the WHBPC 2011. Ideally, by the time NABHPC and WHBPC roll around in summer 2010, we should already know who is hosting the 2011 tournaments. By the end of 2010, we will hopefully know about 2012 too.

Bike polo is one of only a handful of sports to have developed on a global scale during the age of the internet. Its growth has been horizontal and organic, and for good reason people have been skeptical of various aspects of formalization, standardization, or top-down structures. But its rapid growth has given rise to the need for something to hold it together and ensure that its growing pains aren't much more painful than the road rash worn by most of its players.

With any luck, 2010 will see the formalizing of this body, it may even gain an official name and legal status. Until then, the stakes are being kept low, and our decentralized/DIY/local polo pickup scenes remain sovereign. 

About the Author

Currently based in Toronto, Kevin is the polo geek behind www.leagueofbikepolo.com, and an interim rep for the "Northside" region.



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PULLING OUT THE STOPS

How a nearly 30-year-old Idaho law that permits bicyclists to sometimes roll through stop signs is gaining interest across the country.

By David Hoffman



A still from Spencer Boomhower's Idaho Stop Law animation. www.vimeo.com/user1572838

In 1982 the Idaho legislature passed a law that allows bicyclists to in some cases treat stop signs as though they were yield signs. Under this law, permitting that there were no vehicles at the intersection, cyclists would perform a rolling stop. In addition, bicyclists are permitted to treat a red light at an intersection with no other traffic as a stop sign—first coming to a complete stop and then proceeding forward. Now known as the “Idaho Stop Law” or the “Stop as Yield” to many people, both legislators and advocates alike are beginning to explore the possibility of passing a similar law in their state. Unsurprisingly, this law generates considerable controversy—even among some bicycle advocates.

The tension between motorists and bicyclists is grow-

ing as more and more bicyclists are taking to the streets. Efficient bicycling relies on the momentum generated by the bicyclist to keep moving forward, and as anyone who has ridden a bike knows, stopping breaks momentum and forces the rider to work harder to regain the lost movement. This simple law of physics encourages most bicyclists to perform “rolling stops” at most stop signs—scanning left and right to make sure that there is no competing traffic, and then proceeding forward without letting the bike come to a complete stop. This behavior, or worse—blowing through a stop sign without even slowing—is observed by motorists, and there are few things that make motorists angrier when they share the road with bicyclists. Tensions rise.

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The Idaho Stop Law

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

Idaho Statutes Title 49 (Vehicle Code), Chapter 7, Section 720 states:

49-720. STOPPING—TURN AND STOP SIGNALS. (1) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a stop sign shall slow down and, if required for safety, stop before entering the intersection. After slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping, the person shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection or approaching on another highway so closely as to constitute an immediate hazard during the time the person is moving across or within the intersection or junction of highways, except that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a turn or proceed through the intersection without stopping.

(2) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a steady red traffic control light shall stop before entering the intersection and shall yield to all other traffic. Once the person has yielded, he may proceed through the steady red light with caution. Provided however, that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a right-hand turn. A left-hand turn onto a one-way highway may be made on a red light after stopping and yielding to other traffic.

(3) A person riding a bicycle shall comply with the provisions of section 49-643, Idaho Code.

(4) A signal of intention to turn right or left shall be given during not less than the last one hundred (100) feet traveled by the bicycle before turning, provided that a signal by hand and arm need not be given if the hand is needed in the control or operation of the bicycle.

Most cyclists who hear about the Idaho Stop Law embrace the idea without hesitation. The reason is simple: While a great number of bicyclists do roll through stop signs, it removes the stigma attached with this behavior.

The Debate

Supporters of the Idaho Stop Law note that laws are enacted to meet a need; in the case of stop signs and stop lights, the regulation of traffic through intersections. Additionally, laws can and do change over the years. Prohibition (the banning of the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol) became the law in the United States in 1919 by way of the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. It was repealed 14 years later by the passing of the Twenty-first Amendment. Prohibition didn't mean that people stopped drinking; it only meant that it became an illegal activity to do so. The ban on drinking helped to grow the reach and influence of organized crime, and it became apparent that simply legislating a ban on drinking would not stop the activity.

Consider the fact that stop signs first appeared in the United States in 1915, more than 20 years after the introduction of the automobile. Were they introduced because horses had suddenly become faster or bicycles too numerous? (The bike boom of the 1890's had many more bikes on the road than in 1915). No. The reason for the introduction of the stop sign was that automobiles with limited visibility, greater speed, and greater mass had become a hazard to other roadway users at uncontrolled intersections. In fact, the core issue with the Idaho Stop Law is that it essentially modifies a traffic code that has been designed to regulate and control motor vehicles.

Opponents of the Idaho Stop Law fall in to two main camps. The first is comprised largely of motorists that are already frustrated with bicyclist behavior on the road (but seem to conveniently overlook the fact that automobiles routinely drive faster than the posted speed limit, fail to give the right of way, or come to a complete stop at stop signs). These people feel as though a modification to the current stop sign law will further embolden bicyclists to flaunt traffic laws by blowing through stop signs and "hiding behind" the new law. In fact, the law is quite explicit



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25%
mission

The reason for the introduction of the stop sign was that automobiles with limited visibility, greater speed, and greater mass had become a hazard to other roadway users at uncontrolled intersections. In fact, the core issue with the Idaho Stop Law is that it essentially modifies a traffic code that has been designed to regulate and control motor vehicles.

about when a cyclist may treat a stop sign as a yield (see sidebar). Bicyclists would not be able to blow through red lights, either. At stoplight-controlled intersections a bicyclist would have to come to a stop before proceeding through a red light, and only then if no other traffic had the right of way.

The second group of opponents is made up of vehicular cyclists (see John Forrester's book, *Effective Cycling*, currently in the 6th Edition) who believe that any situation in which a bicycle has special privileges will alienate motor vehicle drivers and runs counter to the goal of bicyclists having an equal share of the road. In many cases, Vehicular Cyclists work directly with state Departments of Transportation and/or legislators to prevent laws that would give bicyclists special rights. It is important to note here that "vehicular cycling" on the road is a highly effective and widely recognized method of bicycling. The League of American Bicyclists (www.bikeleague.org) bases its League Certified Instructor (LCI) courses on John Forrester's work, and a modified version of his work has been adopted in Canada by CAN-BIKE (www.canbike.net).

Why Stop As Yield Is So Attractive And Some Considerations

Most cyclists who hear about the Idaho Stop Law embrace the idea without hesitation. The reason is simple: While a great number of bicyclists do roll through stop signs, it removes the stigma attached with this behavior. The Idaho Stop Law helps to preserve cyclist momentum through an intersection, an area that is traditionally high in conflicts, thus providing more maneuvering capability. It does not prevent bicyclists from coming to a full stop, or behaving as a vehicular cyclist.

Opponents and skeptics to the Idaho Stop Law point out that Idaho isn't known for crowded and dense metropolitan areas. Boise isn't New York City, let alone the rest of the state. However, statistics from Idaho show that there has been no increase in crashes related to this law. Even Idaho has metropolitan areas; the statistics would seem to suggest that at the very worst, the stop as yield option would work well in the majority of low traffic secondary routes that most bicyclists favor.

Efforts Outside Of Idaho

It is possible that the path to adoption of the Idaho Stop Law outside of Idaho will be through a limited test area where it can be proven that the Idaho Stop is a safe and efficient change to the motor vehicle code. This could be achieved through a legislated pilot program in several areas similar to the green bike boxes in Portland, OR or shared use lane markings (sharrows) that saw extensive testing in San Francisco before being widely adopted.

The idea of enacting the Idaho Stop in other states is gaining steam. In an effort that began in 2006, great progress was made towards passing legislation in Oregon earlier this year. The effort ultimately did not carry, and there is speculation that advocates may try again for a 2011 legislative session.

In 2008 members of the Bicycle Advisory Committee for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (serving the nine County region around the San Francisco Bay Area) considered recommending the Idaho Stop legislation. This proposal would eventually have made its way to state level legislation. State-level advocates have also considered the idea.

In 2008 Minnesota introduced Idaho Stop legislation, and then again this year. Arizona and Montana also introduced Idaho Stop legislation this year. None of these efforts has yet to pass, but that doesn't mean that advocates and legislators aren't working on it. Surely in addition to these states, others are considering the legislation. The issue will continue to surface in the form of legislation and debate for years to come. Stay tuned; yield could be the new stop.



QUICK LINKS

An excellent animation of how the Idaho Stop Law works, produced by Spencer Boomhower: www.vimeo.com/user1572838

Frequently Asked Questions on BikePortland.org: www.bikeportland.org/2009/01/14/idaho-stop-law-faq

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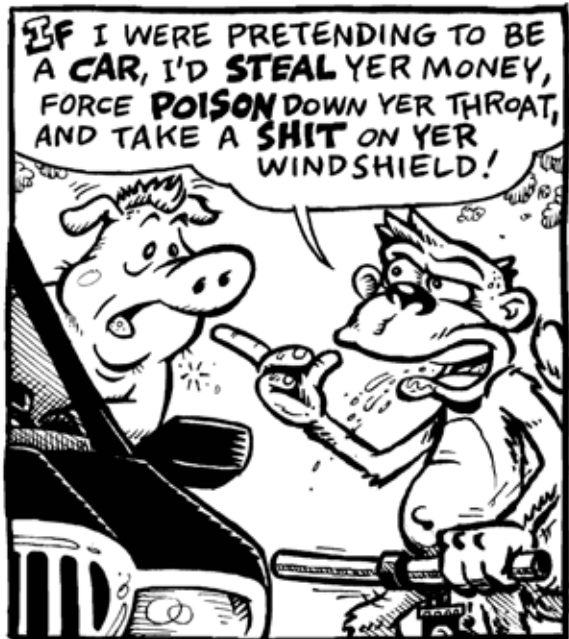
Minzi trackstanding at Vivo City.



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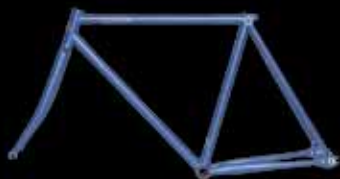


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An excerpt from the memoir

SMIDGE AND SPACE GO WEST

By Maureen Foley

Brakes that fail. Identical twins are human clones. Forks, knots, balloons, openings, treetops. The word depth reflected in a pool upside down. Aging. Diagnosing a broken rib. Selecting a list of people for valentines. How our brains make no noise when they're running. A man with cancer all over has a hard time dying. Identifying the beginning at the end. A flat tire on a bicycle, late for work. These are all unfamiliar things. As a bike courier, the two most unsettling things are a broken bike and no messenger bag. For both, I came to rely on Holland Zo and his Velo City bike shop.

Holland Zo. Old school San Francisco bike mechanic, voice deepened from smoke, crafty bright blue eyes, and wiry. A crusty old timer from the lost days of San Francisco and the man behind the Velo City bike shop. Usually wearing loose wool bike leggings, a t-shirt, and a sporty wool cycling cap, the little brim and primary colors reminiscent of a jockey. But Van, a younger mechanic who played good cop and actually remembered my name, made up for Holland's cantankerous vibe.

After falling out with Malcolm and his free repairs and services at the Bike Shack, Velo City became my bike shop of choice, chosen from dozens in the area. Catering to messengers, Zo gave the professionals priority on repairs and kept his prices the lowest in town. And the catch? Holland Zo is cranky, bordering on downright mean. I watched him scare away yuppies and other innocents in half a breath.

Like most bike shops, Velo City kept a small inventory of dilapidated bikes locked to racks on the pavement in front of the store. But there was an unspoken rule about these bikes. They weren't really for sale.

In theory, a person could buy them. But I never saw one actually leave the store with a new owner and they didn't have prices on them, and they looked like scrap heap finds, metal lacquer now faded and pin stripes dull. Eventually, I saw them as permanent exhibits in Holland's vintage

bicycle museum. If a genuine gearhead expressed interest in them, Holland would ramble on about their provenance, where they were hand made, why they held vast personal meaning, how they were significant examples of a particular type of bike or rare specimens crafted by long-gone bicycle artisans. The bike museum acted as barometer of cool and a booby trap for monied idiots who lacked true bicycle aesthetic. It was as if Holland despised anyone who just wanted to own a cool-looking bike, without having any investment in two-wheeled culture.

I remember once this thirty-something man, all brown hair perfectly askew and delicately oiled skin, stumbled into Holland's clutches. I watched him on the sidewalk, from inside the store's plate glass windows, while I waited on a repair. Carrying the ubiquitous white, paper coffee cup in one hand, he stared at the old bikes, leaned sadly in the racks. At one point, he squatted down to look closely at the chain ring on one red bike. To the undiscerning eye, they looked like perfect San Francisco junkers, bikes that could be ridden to bars late at night. And if they were stolen or rained on? Who cares. By the time the man walked inside the store, he'd been browsing outside for five minutes.

As soon as he heard the sound of the man's fine, brown loafers slap the floor, Holland smelled blood.

"Hello," Holland yelled, not moving out from the repair area in the back of the store.

"Hi," the man said, "I was interested in that bike out there."

"Which one?" said Holland, barking.

"The red one," said the man, gesturing with his latte.

"It's not for sale," Holland said, turning away from the man.

The man wandered toward Holland, still intent purchasing a bargain cruiser.

"Oh. Well, what about the brown one?"

"Nope."

"Are any of them for sale?" he asked.

"No. Not for you."

Stunned, the man stormed out the door. After a few months and hours spent at the store, I could predict these little tempests. They always involved middle-aged men with an air of privilege. It was as if Holland was taking out all his gentrification angst on these men for all the new big box stores, the recent incursion of money, the commodification of the city that he'd love even at its dirty, gritty worst. Instead of the usual model of embracing any and all customers, Holland seemed set on testing his customers for their true nature and weeding out the dross. As a result, his clients were a strange breed of low-end messen-



ger types, passionate about cycling and willing to endure his moods to visit his bicycle wisdom nirvana. He wanted the lifers. He was a pusher servicing addicts; he didn't need the quick and easy weekend sale.

If a messenger bothered to spend ten minutes listening to him patiently, after explaining what delivery company they ride for, they'd learn a short history of San Francisco's bicycling past. He held specific, quirky opinions on everything cycling related, from how to change a flat to what type of wool underwear is best to beat the cold during a rainy ride.

Zo's son, Eric, was another local myth whose stories Malcolm passed on to me. According to Malcolm, he was a legendary stoner who designed and produced the courier bags of choice for local messengers. But finding the bags was half the battle. I only knew of two places that actually stocked the indestructible nylon and waterproof vinyl bags, equipped with quick-fasten shoulder strap and reflective strip. The way the most messengers acquired a new bag, however, was by being at the Zeitzgeist or another messenger bar on a night when he happened to be cruising through.

One time, Eric Zo stopped by at the Shack and somehow Malcolm got a bag off him for free, a trade or maybe

he was initially just supposed to borrow the bag. From the outside, the bag looked the same as any other Zo Bag, the standard one color nylon, and corresponding colored strap, and bright vinyl inside. But instead of the usual strip of black Velcro to hold the bag's flap down, inside there were five velcro strips that were each a different color: red, blue, yellow, turquoise and green.

"Dude, I don't have a Zo Bag. I have Zo's Bag," Malcolm joked in fake stoner California-ese.

There are two media references people always use when I mention I was an SF messenger. First they ask if I've seen the movie *Quicksilver*, a Hollywood flick based on messenger life. Then they ask me about Puck, the messenger punk who angered everyone on one of the early *Real World* MTV reality series. The Zo's appear in both, referentially. Watching *The Real World* reunion after I'd begun messengering, I carefully scanned Puck's messenger bag as he walked on the set to a shower of boos and hisses. Sure enough, he wore a Zo bag. Malcolm said he knew Puck, said he was a nice guy in person but a real ass in a crowd. According to another former messenger, Holland Zo is who the crusty mechanic in *Quicksilver* is based on, but I've never seen the movie to confirm that rumor.

Another time, Holland Zo was finishing fixing my bike

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Regal



Rolls

san marco

SELLE FATTE A MANO DAL 1935



at the end of a weekend. I think I had to go back to work the next day. In any case, I'd been into the shop often enough that he finally recognized me, and we started talking. I mentioned my love for covering my bike with stickers, and his moth-like eyebrows twitched up, opening his bulgy eyeballs even fuller.

"Oh, come back here," he said.

He pulled down some secret shoe box filled with stickers sent by all the bike gear manufacturers. He handed me several then stopped on the last one. Like a gnome, his hands holding the oracle, he held up a white rectangular sticker printed with the words Grip Shift, a brand of gear shifters that work by rotating them on your handlebars.

"Just cut this here and here," he said, pointing to the block of letters, "And then can you see what it says?"

Then he paused before he handed the sticker to me with a crooked smile.

"rip Shit."

At Velo City, they kept track of all my expenditures, presumably so I could print out the record and deduct it on my income taxes. Of course, when it came time for income taxes, the kind lady at 1-800-IRSLOVESU said that bicycle repairs did not fall under any deductible sub-category. Still, I have the invoice record from Velo City, and it reads as an eerie shadow to my messenger days, with dates and times of repairs duly noted.

Brake pads, bolts, reflector clamps, installation, grips, a new saddle, a bell, the list reads like a bike messenger wish list. In total, I spent \$524.24 at Velo City. Five-two-four, two-four. Wonder what the numerologists have to say about that one.

But by far the most common repair as a bike messenger was the flat tire. Karmic, my flats came in fits and starts. I learned very quickly always to carry tire irons, a spare tube, and a pump while I worked. Tubes were faster

and easier than patch kits, mostly because I could never locate the puncture in order to patch it. But hardcore messengers could identify, according to local myth, the hole in the bike tube by rubbing spit onto it and then fixing it with a patch. I just used tubes, six bucks each, usually purchased from whatever bike shop was closest to my last puncture wound.

Glass on the streets everywhere, especially in dot-com world, South of Market, where construction was constant. The flat usually a slow realization, gets to the point where going over a stick you can feel every groove, so I'd pull over onto the sidewalk, turn the bike over onto its back, unscrew the tire clamps, undo the quick release and

depending on whether it was front or back, finagle the tire out of the forks. Had the repair down to minutes, but I'd still inevitably nearly flatten the tire in my attempt to fill it up. One unfortunate day, got two flats in one afternoon. Felt like a real messenger, sweating on the sidewalk while leather uppers flip-flopped past me. Felt like a messenger in the truest sense, asking for no one's help. Just me, concrete, and my bike.

For flats, I was on my own. But for everything else, I needed help. Like when on the second week on the job I was climbing a hill when suddenly I heard a crack, my tires jammed and I rolled a few feet backwards downhill. Tipped the bike and sort of hopped off, thankful that the wheels froze uphill not downhill, where I would have flown to my death.

Imagining that possibility, I examined my back tire. The nifty yellow reflector attached to the spokes of my back tire somehow wobbled loose, caught, bent my wheel, and tweaked my rear derailleur beyond repair. Luckily, I'm near Malcolm's Bike Shack, so I walked my bike over for a new derailleur (\$31.50), borrowed a loaner bike for the rest of the day, and lost an hour of messenger time.

Another time, my front wheel got stolen. Not going



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anywhere without both wheels. I locked my bike to a parking meter in front of the Planned Parenthood in San Francisco. In to get more birth control pills or maybe for that failed HIV blood test attempt, left, through all the bullet-proof rooms, down the elevator, walked to my bike. Am I just imagining it or was my wheel really gone? Poof. Gone without a trace. Instantly, I imagine the faceless hood unscrewing my quick release in seconds and dashing down Van Ness with the aluminum-rimmed wheel.

I walked for 45 minutes from downtown to the Upper Haight, pushing my bike by holding the handlebars and tipping it up on its one back wheel. I retrieved a new wheel from Velo City (my second new wheel in a month, the first one to replace the wheel bent in the reflector incident earlier the same month). \$49.95 later, I left with a theft prevention tip from Ken, the kind mechanic.

He said, "Buy two metal hosing clamps from the hardware store on Haight Street. Then, clamp down the quick release knobs, messenger style, and keep a small screw driver in your bag."

I followed his instructions. After that, it took a little longer to take off my wheels, but they were still easily removed. Never lost one since.

But wheels do get stolen in San Francisco. I'd heard of that. Chains, however, are another story. By all accounts, chains are supposed to last a very long time. According to the records at Velo City, in the first year that I messengered, I had a chain installed on January 16, February 20 and then again on April 11, and a fourth one later that spring, in early June (but not at Velo City). As a messenger during San Francisco's rainy season, I wore through those metal links quickly, efficiently and effectively.

The last chain, the June catastrophe, I actually broke while I rode up a hill after I'd finished messengering. By then I was an edit assistant at Wired. Annoyed with people and feeling claustrophobic from my desk job, I decided to bike over the Golden Gate Bridge to stay the weekend at the hostel in the Marin Headlands. I missed riding desperately; I needed a break from the urban landscape.

Last minute, my housemate Josh decided to join me. A bike enthusiast as well, Josh chose me as a housemate (no small task in San Francisco at that time, due to the housing shortage) based partially on my job as a bike courier. He thought it was cool that I rode the city.

Riding that day, we made it all the way over the bridge, and were heading into Marin when my chain snapped, and again I rolled backwards downhill.

"Shit."

"What happened?"

"My chain broke."

Silent pause.

"What if I tow you with my bungee cord?"

"That won't work. Shit."

"Let's try it."

And we did. I walked my bike up the hill, Josh corded me onto his mountain bike's rack, and he towed me over the few flat or slightly uphill stretches. Luckily, the road then leads downhill all the way into Sausalito, and I coasted in to the nearest bike shop for the replacement. That chain lasted over a year.

Motion of mounting an old bike. Smell of your own sun-warmed skin. Feel of 72 degrees. Mother's hands. Sound of wind through trees. Phone ringing unanswered. A lover's back. Traffic. A sibling's sneeze. Footsteps. Childhood home. Pad Thai. Smell of avocado leaves. Sound a bike pump makes inflating a tire. These are familiar, soothing things.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Maureen Foley is a writer and artist who worked as a San Francisco bike messenger in 2000. Her writing has appeared in Wired, Santa Barbara Magazine, the New York Times and elsewhere. She also authored a chart on bicycle maintenance through the Barnes and Noble imprint Quamut. "Unfamiliar Things" is an excerpt from Smidge and Space Go West, her memoir about couriering and bicycling from Colorado to California. She currently lives in Baton Rouge, LA with her husband and teaches English at Louisiana State University. For more information, visit www.maureenfoley.com.

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TWO BIKES *and a* FUNERAL

By Sarah Meyer

On September 27th, after months of training and preparation, my cycling partner and I left for our first ever bike trip. We'd given ourselves 6 days to accomplish the 650-kilometer trek from Montreal to New York City. The following is a selection of stories from the road, as well as lessons learned.

1. Never underestimate the power of a poncho.

The day we scheduled our trip to begin it rained all day. In fact, the weather was to remain rainy, windy and overcast for the majority of our trip; a factor we had not even considered. Of course we anticipated warm and agreeable fall weather and cloudless skies, none of which would ever come. We were only to enjoy a few brief moments of a beautiful harvest sunset over barren farm fields in Southern Quebec at the end of our first day. Those short moments were almost enough to make up for an awful first day, but then I looked down at my jeans, socks, and shoes that had been soaked through and gritted my teeth. Thank God we'd bought ridiculous rubber ducky ponchos and covered the equipment in orange garbage bags. We'd belted the ponchos to keep from inflating like Macy's Day Balloons; although they hadn't kept us as dry as I'd hoped at least we were partially sheltered. Not having the time to wait out the rain we were obligated to start the trip off on an uphill battle against the elements and the clock; Mother Nature held the upper hand from the get-go.

2. It will be harder than you thought, you will be amazed.

When we told our friends about the trip, their first reaction was some permutation of, "Wow that is crazy!" or, "Are you serious?" I'd look at the floor with a sheepish smile and draw shapes with my shoe. "Well, yeah, we are actually." No one could believe what a far out idea it was. Initially I had been a little skeptical myself when Rodolfo mentioned wanting to plan a bike trip to New York City. After thinking it over I realized the potential for a great adventure, an opportunity to challenge our passion for cycling. Our very good friend Mark, an avid biker, traveler, and founder of a fantastic website StayNomad.com which we used to help plan our trip, was incredibly encouraging and a great source of help and inspiration. Mark helped ground us and keep us on track with what was realistic for a first time bike trip.

What was most surprising was how quickly I would tire, how much slower I found myself biking. We had certain mileage goals for each day planned out in order to be sure we stayed on course and made it to the city on time. We soon realized that our estimates of how far we could bike each day had been overzealous. Even on a full nights sleep of almost 9 hours or more the wind, rain and hills took a toll on us that we had not figured into the calculation of our daily goals. On the Vermont-New York border we pulled over to a rest stop after a particularly hilly ride hoping to hitchhike part of the way through New York, a

feat that seemed impossible given how much equipment we had with us. As fate would have it, luck was on our side and we found a ride from a jubilant construction worker with a large pickup truck with enough room to fit our bikes, trailer, and bags and to take us all the way to Albany. We were hosted by two wonderfully hospitable couch surfers for the evening; making it an early night so that we could get up and get on the road at the dawn's first light.

3. Be prepared to let go.

I love my bike. Well, loved. It was a funky old bike from someone's basement that I bought at a co-op when I first moved to Montreal. I was particularly fond of the bike because it was pink, and affectionately named her Rosie. However, being an old bike there were many mechanical issues that were difficult to overcome. Rodolfo did an amazing job upgrading Rosie for the trip with new rims, tires, seat, bike rack and a thorough tune-up. Nevertheless certain problems persisted no matter how carefully she was looked after, such as a chain that would fall off, gears that wouldn't shift properly or even at all, and a derailleur that had a habit of coming unhinged.

The night after our spirits were lifted by good luck, good company, and a good night's sleep in Albany we got off to an early start and enthusiastically got on our bikes ready, excited to ride! Minutes into our journey Rosie's derailleur went catawampus and bent sideways as I attempted to shift gears, getting caught in the spokes

and folding in half. We pulled off to inspect the bike and it quickly became obvious that we needed a new derailleur and could go no further until it was fixed which meant losing time and pouring more money into an already capricious bike. Unsure of what to do next we called our couch surfer friends and asked for a ride to the nearest Greyhound bus stop.

4. Know your limits (re: It will be harder than you imagined).

Rodolfo and I agreed it was best to cut our losses and take the bus the rest of the way to New York City. The weather had begun to turn (rain, again!) and Rosie had finally bit the dust. We began to disassemble the bikes to fit them into the boxes necessary for bus travel. True to her nature Rosie was less than agreeable; the pedals were practically welded to the bike after all the rust that resulted from a harsh Montreal winter. Rodolfo tried to remove the pedals to no avail, breaking the wrench in the process. "I think we have to leave Rosie," he sighed. I nodded silently in agreement.

The act of throwing one's bike into a dumpster on a bike trip is a cruel and absurd finish to what was supposed to be an exhilarating adventure. I carried Rosie to her final resting place as a line of cab drivers looked on, some in shock and some in empathy, as I lifted her frame which had been stripped of all useful parts and laid her carefully into the cold bin as Rodolfo looked on in silence, photographing the moment.

5. If at first you don't succeed...

Although our trip was riddled with mishaps and unfortunate events it was still an incredible and unique experience. We met many amazing people along the way who were willing to go out of their way to help us—how refreshing it is to meet kind people, kind strangers. We also saw unparalleled beauty in the great state of Vermont! The scenery was stunning and so refreshing to our tired eyes. We realized the foolishness of our initial goals but learned how to better plan for the next trip. The trip was without a doubt one of the most exhausting things I've ever done, but I was left with an amazing sense of accomplishment at what we had achieved. Despite not being able to reach our initial goal of biking the entire way we still had an amazing ride trying to achieve it. Leaving Rosie behind was a cathartic experience but I like to think that someone rescued her the way we had been rescued, and that she's somewhere pedaling the streets of Albany now, a revision of what had been expected, but an adventure nonetheless.



BICYCLE TOURING RESOURCES

Adventure Cycling • www.adventurecycling.org

A North American non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage travel by bicycle.

Warm Showers • www.warmshowers.org

A hospitality network for touring cyclists.

Sheldon Brown • www.sheldonbrown.com/touring

Not surprisingly, Sheldon's website features a page on touring with lots of online resources.

Bicycle Touring 101 • www.bicycletouring101.com

An online resource for cycle tourists.

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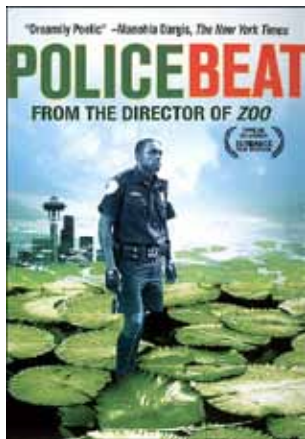


forged by hand, driven by passion

Bikes on Film

By Ken Kaminski

Police Beat




As the opening credits roll on *Police Beat*, a 2005 film by writer/director Robinson Devor, multiple exposures of a table graph of abbreviations slide around in every direction. This table is printed on a wall above a bank of computers at the Seattle Police Department where Z, a Senegalese immigrant and

bicycle cop, writes his reports, and the abbreviations represent categories that Z must assign to his reports. Although the table looms large physically over the room, over Z, and over the atmosphere of the film, he finds it impossible to fit the calls to which he responds—usually grisly, rarely sensical, and all based on real-life Seattle police reports—into the police departments categorical order, nor can he seem to fit the events of his own personal life into any order that makes sense.

There's a lot of the kind of humor typical of fish-out-of-water scenarios, but unlike commercial fish-out-of-water movies, the hero's innocence and fresh perspective don't result in his triumph in the face of an unfamiliar situation, but in his failure at his job, and everywhere Z goes, he is abused and belittled, even in the face of his authority as a police officer. Against his frustrated efforts to get promoted to a patrol car, the bicycle turns into a symbol of this humiliation. While not exactly a celebration of urban bicycle riding, the feeling is at least authentic. I hope that, if nowhere else, I can admit in these pages that riding a bicycle on the streets of an American city is often unpleasant, and urban riders are belittled in the images of an autocentric culture. This is reflected, perhaps, in the self-righteous diatribe of a cyclist Z cites for riding recklessly in the park, the only other perspective on city riding available in this movie,

and it's extremely brief. It pains me, however, to acknowledge how accurate it is, so I assume Devor is at least familiar with the culture.

This movie is dark and subtle with small moments of whimsy. If you're not in the mood for something slow and quiet, you'll be bored easily. If you've got the patience to pay attention to it, you might be rewarded with some food for thought and maybe with some minor depression, despite Z's ultimate hope, which he clings to for no other reason than his own painstakingly established character. 

Bikes on Film Archive



The Bicycle Thief
Bicycle Film Festival 2007
Ski Boys
Bicycle Film Festival 2008
Pee Wee's Big Adventure
2 Seconds
B.I.K.E.
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Splined Bottom Brackets

By Brad Quartuccio



ISIS

For decades the square taper bottom bracket axle was the defacto standard with nearly every high quality bicycle up through the late 1990's having the same basic crank arm interface. These days the market supports a number of splined bottom bracket designs, none of which are compatible with one another. At the high end of the market, external bearing designs with oversized spindles fused to one crank arm or the other have all but taken over, again with incompatibilities across brands. How did we get here, and now what?

The 90's saw an explosion of changes in the cycling world, a perfect storm of manufacturing technology and riding styles each pushing the limits of design. From the mountain bike side, square taper axles were proving to be undersized for the increasingly aggressive riding that some were pushing, with racers on both road and dirt desiring an overall stiffer and stronger system. It's easy to point the finger at Shimano for the explosion of bottom bracket "standards" that have appeared since, all beginning with their introduction of the Octalink V1 spline back in 1997. While not truly the first splined system, it was the first commercially successful version with eight splines and a larger and stiffer axle as compared to square taper designs, yet still fitting within the same roughly 35mm diameter bottom bracket shell, the lower most portion of the frame that houses the bearing assembly. Within a few years of its introduction, a similar Octalink V2 was introduced with the same pattern, but deeper splines. The Octalink design is protected by a number of patents, and

while Shimano has allowed some crank manufacturers to license the interface, aftermarket bottom bracket makers were shut out.

In response to Shimano's proprietary Octalink system, Chris King, Truvativ (pre SRAM ownership) and Race Face joined together and created a competing 10-splined interface that resided in the public domain for any manufacturer to use without fees. The International Splined Interface Standard (ISIS) quickly gained wide acceptance, and a bad reputation for a short bearing life span. Since the larger axle and bearings were still completely contained within the same bottom bracket shell as before, the bearings themselves were made smaller in diameter with a subsequent increase in wear. Perhaps because of this design shortcoming, Chris King never introduced an ISIS bottom bracket and riders everywhere wished for longer lasting bearings. The Octalink design was susceptible to similar bearing wear problems albeit less pronounced, with the bearing lifespan issues arguably leading to the introduction of external bottom bracket designs. Truvativ has since created the low-end Power Spline design as a lower cost alternative which is in essence a square taper spindle with 12-splines instead of the usual 2° taper. Campagnolo wisely skipped this phase, sticking with square taper until making the jump to an external bearing cup.

While bearing wear issues contributed to the development of external bearing systems, the desire for even stiffer bottom bracket and crank arm combinations was also a



Shimano Octalink

factor. As both road and mountain bikes were pushed further both in use and in the design studio, it was clear that a larger bottom spindle was necessary to increase stiffness and that without a sea-change in the size of bottom bracket shells across all frame manufacturers at roughly the same time that the bearings themselves would be forced outside the confines of the frame. Most of the major players have since introduced external bottom bracket systems where the drive side crank arm is permanently attached to an oversized bottom bracket axle which then fits into the non-drive arm. Shimano Hollowtech II, FSA MegaExo and RaceFace X-type systems are cross-compatible, meaning bearings from one manufacturer can be used with the cranks of another, while the Truvativ GXP and Howitzer systems stand alone. The Campagnolo Ultra-Torque design is similar, but has each crank arm permanently fused to one half of the bottom bracket axle which then joins in the middle with a Hirth joint. These external systems each have their quirks of setup, with compatibility issues best addressed by the manufacturer's fine print.



As this bottom bracket style has matured frame manufacturers have begun to incorporate larger bottom bracket shells into the design, allowing the bearings to go back inside the frame due to a now larger diameter shell. Some frame makers have created their own "standard" for this larger shell, others have adopted a newly coined BB30 public domain standard that also addresses concerns about the added width between the pedals and excess weight of external systems. Of course, the BB30 standard comes with its own cranks and bearings that press directly into the frame. As of now, this design is fairly limited to the extremely high end of bicycles currently on the market and is likely a long way from your commuter, if it ever gets there.

In the evolution of splined bottom brackets there were a few stumps on the evolutionary tree, not that they



didn't make their mark in some way. The Bullseye, Magic Motorcycle (eventually purchased by Cannondale) and Sweet Wings mountain cranks of the early 1990's were well ahead of their time with oversized splined spindles and bearings at least partially housed outside of the shell, but never sold enough to push the designs of the more mainstream makers. Largely skipped for the purposes of this article, BMX cranks have been splined for some time yet for one reason or another have had relatively little influence on the development of road and mountain systems.

While square taper is likely to remain serviceable for some time, the future of given splined systems is up in the air. The confusion between bottom bracket designs is not likely to go away any time soon, as there are now countless bikes out there with each competing design and demand for ongoing replacement parts for each. As these designs trickle down market and into the used sector I'd expect even further confusion, and unfortunately obsolescence as replacement parts for each are eventually taken out of production and even newer designs inevitably come to be.





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Winter Cycling Basics

By Jeff Guerrero



For many people, the cold temperatures and slippery conditions make winter cycling a daunting proposition. For other people, it's an exciting opportunity to test their mettle. And yet some people simply have no choice but to do it. The following tips are primarily aimed at beginners, but may be of use to more seasoned cyclists.

Dress in layers, and bring extras. Dressing in layers serves two purposes—multiple thin layers of clothing generally trap more heat than one thick layer. And multiple layers allow you to remove layers to avoid overheating (profuse sweating in the winter can actually make you colder). Of course you can't add a layer unless you've brought an extra one, so make a habit of packing extra clothes in case the temperature drops during your ride.

Slow down and lay off the brakes. As always, momentum is your friend, but hard braking in winter weather can lead to unexpected and uncontrollable skids. Even if the road doesn't seem to be snow covered, there are still hazards like black ice. Be conscious of this and avoid going so fast that you'll need to slam on the brakes.

Give cars more respect than usual. You probably realize that a two-ton vehicle could cause you significant bodily harm, and most likely you've adopted a practice of avoiding such confrontations. It's important to keep in mind that it takes automobiles even longer to stop in the snow and ice. So give them extra space and watch your rear end at stoplights.

Light up the night. Winter not only brings cold weather and precipitation, it gets dark sooner. Needless to say, you'll want to make sure you have basic bike lighting with you, and it's not a bad idea to have a backup light and/or batteries. Keep in mind, it's not just darkness that you've got to contend with, but snowy conditions could make you almost invisible to motorists unless you're well lit.

Spend some time in the shop. If you've got basic bike maintenance tools at home, it really pays to spend some time working on your bike over the winter. At least lube the chain every week. If you're a more advanced home mechanic, you can prolong the life of your bike by disassembling and re-greasing things like your hubs and the bottom bracket. If neither of these apply to you, then take your bike to a friend or a local bike shop. Even if you spend a few bucks more than you anticipated, you'll wind up saving money in the long run because you'll avoid more costly repairs.

Enjoy the ride. I've said it before and I'll say it again—keeping a positive attitude is among the most important things you can do to survive in the winter. If you're thinking negative thoughts and stressing out, your body will soon feel the effects. So do whatever it takes to stay positive during the winter—sing, meditate, play mental games and/or reward yourself for riding.



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The Internals of Internal Gears

By Brad Quartuccio

Internally geared hubs are popular amongst city cyclists for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that they are pretty well maintenance free. Things can and do go wrong with internally geared hubs, but the majority of people aren't going to want to open them up and find a fix, the guts can be dauntingly complex. The pictured Shimano Nexus three-speed hub and coaster brake is fairly simple as far as these hubs go, yet as one can see there is a lot going on to fit both a shifting and braking system inside the hub body. A series of planetary gears translate the rotation of the cog to the rotation of the hub body and

wheel, making the hub spin faster or slower than the cog depending on gear choice, with a freewheel mechanism for coasting and a braking system for stopping. Remarkably reliable for as many parts are jammed inside, from a performance standpoint the main drawback to an internal hub is the added efficiency losses inherent in their design. That, and of course the fact that if anything does go wrong you're likely out of luck until you can make it to your local shop with a mechanic well versed in hub rebuilds and the small touches separating one model from another. You won't be fixing one of these by the side of the road. 





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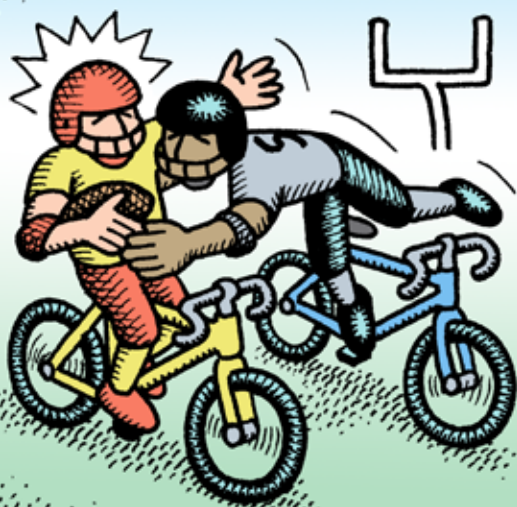
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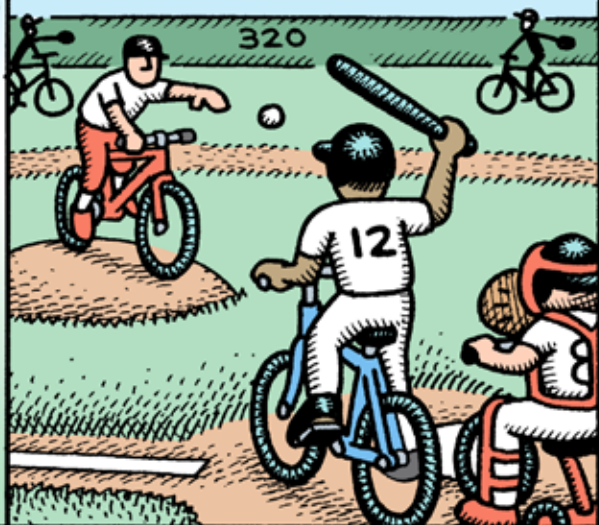
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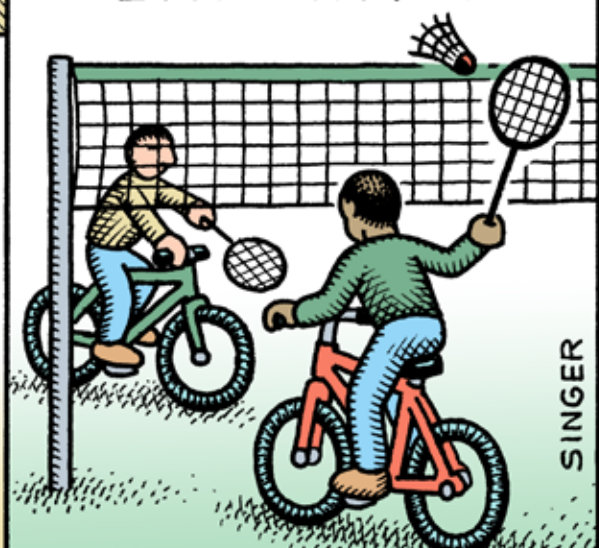
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