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Fat Tire Flyer

THE ORIGINAL MOUNTAIN BIKE MAGAZINE

MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

RACING. SO WHAT?

Among the hundreds of thousands of people who own mountain bikes, only a small percentage race them. As the racing scene now stands, there may be a couple of thousand riders who have taken part in a race. This begs the question, how important is racing to the average rider?

The answer is that it is more important than most riders realize, for several reasons. Races have always been a meeting of the most innovative riders and builders, because such events provide the most severe tests of performance available. As an example, we would like to point to one of the earliest organized mountain bike events, the now-defunct Repack Downhill. Although fewer than two hundred riders have raced at Repack, the list of competitors reads like a "Who's Who" of mountain bikes. Course record holder is Gary Fisher; third best time belongs to Joe Breeze. Tom Ritchey raced there on an old Schwinn in 1976, before he ever built a custom off-roader. In fact, the first custom mountain bike frame we know about was built specifically for the race promoter, who now edits a mountain bike publication, by Craig Mitchell in 1976. One year later Joe Breeze raced his first frame there.

Although the racing has changed considerably since those days, competitive events still bring out the best, the worst, and the wierdest of innovations, and at the same time provide a gathering of the idea makers. Gary Fisher points to his race team as the cutting edge of his research and development effort.

The results of racing trickle down to the average rider in the form of improved components, lighter and stronger frames, and a host of accessories and add-ons that make life on a mountain bike a little easier.

But perhaps the most important aspect of mountain bike racing is that the events are the best parties a biker could ever want. Where else can you hear six hours of conversation on only one subject, our favorite: mountain bikes?

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Charles Kelly



Carleen Sweeney

PROMOTION OR DEMOTION?

by

Don Mertle

The contest of speed can be defined as an effort on the part of the participant to register the shortest possible elapsed time over a specific distance. This is a form of competition in which results can be clearly defined, measured, compared, and documented. But once the number of contestants grows beyond the number of fingers on one hand, the complications of the legal and financial concerns apparently overwhelm many off-road race promoters, leading to neglect of the basic needs of the contestants.

The re-emergence of the unpublicized "non-race" and the persistent interest in non-sanctioned events are symptoms of the dissatisfaction with mountain bike racing at the participant level. Those who never get closer to a race than the pages of a mainstream cycling magazine have little clue to the changing nature of the sport and the participants at every level.

A "pro" rider is a misnomer in practical terms. There is not enough prize money and sponsor support to completely employ any of the well-known pro riders. Most work in bike shops or work at unrelated jobs between travelling to races. The real reason these people race is because they enjoy it.

While the non-expert participants usually comprise the bulk of the entries, most of the attention is showered on the high-visibility sponsored teams, and this includes tabulation of the results. Since it doesn't take as much attention to detail to decide who won as it does to decide who took 239th, the needs of the media can be met easily by a skeleton crew, even if the needs of the average rider cannot.

The reporting of riders' performances is frequently ignored or in obvious error except for the first handful of pro or expert riders. As categories overlap and boredom sets in with the volunteer officials, and groups finish rather than individuals, whatever inadequacies exist in a system become apparent and discrepancies start to slip in.

The majority of the paying players in the game, i.e. the

amateurs, have certain expectations about their collective contract with the promoter. Most would be satisfied to receive in return for their entry fees a printed set of complete results rather than a water bottle with the sponsor's logo. Still, the NORBA sanction means little as a guarantee in terms of consistent credibility and availability of results. (In defense of NORBA, Glenn Odell has established a policy of printing complete results of sanctioned races in the NORBA newsletter, and the sanction rules include a provision that the promoter must provide NORBA with complete results.)

Race after race we hear stories about the rider who passed and beat a prize winner and was completely lost from the results. Of course, most people aren't fast enough to get burned out of a prize, but the chances of getting any kind of tabulated results are far from certain. Sometimes the time is shouted or scrawled out at the moment of the rider's final exhaustion, sometimes it is unannounced until weeks or months later. A stamp, label and photocopy are the only things needed for a mailing that should be a sanction requirement. The absence of same-day results is inexcusable.

After several years of existence, sanctioning has brought media recognition and insurance, but never credibility in race results. Personal experience with each promoter is the only reliable way for an individual rider to have realistic expectations.

One disrupting force on the competition scene as far as the ordinary rider is concerned is the presence of Public Relations aimed at the mainstream media, such as colorful tapes and banners imprinted with sponsors' logos which appear at the finish to line the last hundred meters and lead the rider to the cameras. The time and effort spent decorating finish lines would be better spent marking the far reaches of race courses where poor course markings have on many occasions cost riders well-earned victories.

In a recent race a turnoff that riders could approach at 40-plus mph was marked with a sign the size of a bumper sticker, fifty feet uphill from the turn. The leading rider missed the turn, which had no marshal, and continued to descend another 1000 vertical feet before realizing his error. He dropped from first to twentieth, and few of his fellow riders would argue that he had been cheated, no matter how much those who don't have to ride may split hairs about the fairness of the situation.



Mark Farris



Insurance has become a bigger and more influential part of the sanctioning work load. This kind of financial concern increases the influence of the ever-larger commercial concerns involved in the real professional aspect of mountain bike racing: exploiting the image (which we are doing also).

Non-cycle commerce begins with the local cookie bakery getting exposure by giving away some goodies. National consumer product companies have more to extract from their association with a scenic and energetic outdoor activity and its appealing image. They sell their association with our fun as something connected with their products. Presenting the visuals results in an effect that has commercial use in advertising. Our image becomes their image. The rub comes when *they* start deciding where *they* want to take that image and how *they* want to change it. It is commendable that major sponsorship has shown an interest in the minor participant as well as the pro. We have only begun to feel the effects of the bike manufacturers' participation on events, and the other major sponsors are too recent to have much impact—yet.

Some promoters have good reputations, and others fall flat consistently in obvious areas. Every racer who has made the rounds of the circuit has horror stories of inadequate course markings and ridiculous results to cherish along with memories of contests and comraderie and unique rides.

Hardly anyone seems immune to promotional problems, with only a few exceptions. Examples include an embarrassing silence in the vicinity of the NORBA championship finish line last year, as the sun sank in the west while riders waited to see whether they had won anything. In addition, when most of the best racers in the country arrived in Crested Butte last year they should have been presented with five or six challenging races in the unmatched racing terrain. Instead the tepid racing schedule staggered under a weight of local politics. Volunteers from the ranks of the vacationers had to be recruited to run the events, and results from one race were changed three times in two days (daze?).

The efforts of Glenn and Chris Odell are not lost in the void. They have worked with the bike industry to keep the sport alive in spite of an unfavorable insurance situation and the small amount of bargaining leverage NORBA

enjoys compared to the USCF. They also scramble to act as a responsible voice and as a forum, while overseeing an increasingly ambitious event schedule. It is not realistic for us to expect perfection on every count without more participation from the constituents.

NORBA's Competition Committee is mostly composed of major sponsors who meet whenever there is a bike show. This removes them from the input of the everyday participant who helped create NORBA but who can't attend those meetings and doesn't protest in writing. The changes brought by the committee so far have not been drastic. Insurance problems and national class prestige for the media have taken priority over credible results for participants.

Constructive comment and input, including membership and contribution, is your part to play if you want to see a happy world of access and activities for your fat tired pleasures. Even the inept promoter creates memorable moments of pedaling, so we try to think positively about the riding. Those interested in the organizational situation should be responding with help for NORBA, but few participants are actually members. The rest of the many who have enjoyed racing are freeloaders.

Existing standards of marking and scoring should be evaluated and enforced, and some guarantee of results available to the participants should be provided, perhaps a bond for refund of entry. The certification of officiating is a possibility, although this solution invokes visions of a bureaucracy akin to that of the USCF.

Timing and recording of results should be universal, with running tabulation. Using a computer is no panacea; a sound plan and a stopwatch may be easier for the promoter to cope with, and what good is that fast, fancy printout if it is wrong? How about the successful promoters sharing some of their secrets with us?

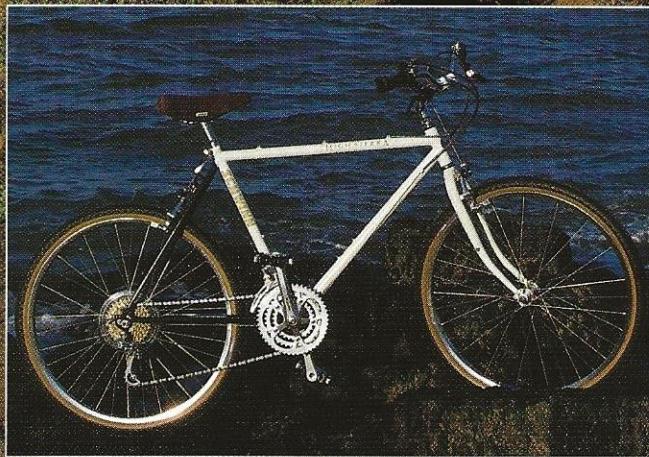
Big money, banners with logos, loudspeakers, and committee politics have become part of the mountain bike competition scene. They have made our carefree underground fun into an accepted, legitimate activity. Most people prefer organized and sanctioned mountain bike racing to an outlaw sport, but traditionalists in some areas are already rejecting the hassles and holding low key "Tribal Councils".

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MAMMOTH

by
Seekay

Claiming nearly 700 participants, the Mammoth Cycling Classic was the biggest event of the year in California. Promoted with a maximum of razzle-dazzle, including fifteen-foot inflated beer cans cleverly situated so as to get into nearly every action photo, the event came off smoothly, although a few glitches were noted.

The format was a stage race for all categories, including an observed trial, a cross-country race, and a downhill time trial on one of the hairiest courses around. The downhill race, four miles and 2000 vertical feet, features a gondola ride to the top of the mountain, a luxury that is one of the main drawing cards for those who came just to go for the gonzo.

Day one started with the observed trials on a course that must be one of the best so far set up. Observed Trials coordinator Tom Hillard had the use of a heavy-duty loader and a crane to arrange logs and rocks on the rolling lawns in front of the Mammoth Lodge, and he came up with some interesting obstacles. The toughest was a gondola car with a log ramp up and a three-foot drop (sideways) to get off for a landing on a log, reserved for experts only.

Because the race was a stage race, observed trial performance had to be converted to elapsed time for the scoring. Riders were penalized thirty seconds on their overall time for each dab, a

relatively large penalty and the cause of some grumbling among those who consider stamina a mountain biker's greatest asset. All but trials experts wanted a dab to be worth five to ten seconds; in fact, the Schwinn team was absent because their policy is to avoid situations that might be hard on their top rider, Ned Overend, who is not yet a great trials rider. For stage race purposes the downhill times were multiplied by four, so one minute difference on the descent counted for four minutes in General Classification.

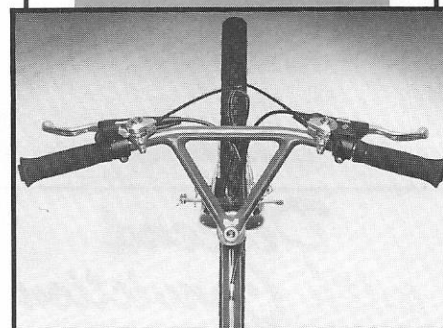
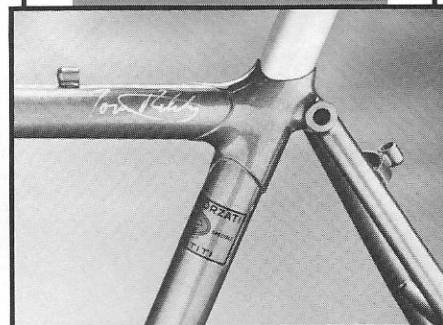
The road stage was 44 miles for experts and 22 for sport on a network of sandy roads near the resort. Here the first glitch showed up. The course was indifferently marked and marshalled and had so many junctions that several riders got lost. One of those was the pre-race favorite to take the women's prize, Cindy Whitehead, who lost her lead when she went nearly half a mile in the wrong direction, then turned around and nearly chased down national champ Jacquie Phelan, finishing only a minute and a half back. Phelan, who thought she was in second place, was surprised to find herself a winner at the line, and graciously allowed that the win was a fluke.

George Theobald won the men's pro cross-country event, taking a measure of revenge on his former sponsor, Fisher MountainBikes, who had fired him only a week before. Theobald's bike featured in place of the manufacturer's decal a sign reading "4 Hire \$." It shouldn't take too long, George.

Continued on page 11



*The Evolution
Continues...*



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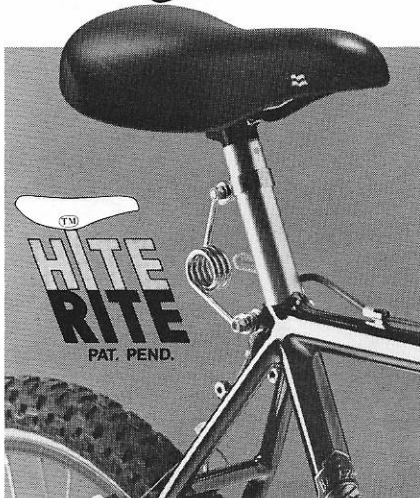
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Continued from page 9

Downhill racing is the orphan child of off-road. One of the earliest forms of off-road, it strikes terror into the hearts of Republicans everywhere. No one wants to touch it for reasons of image, insurance, or fear of the sight of blood. In truth, it's safer than bullfighting or pro football, so what the hey? The only people who really like this dreadful stuff are the hundreds who turn out to participate whenever anyone gets the moxie to put on one of these contests.

Speaking of which. Mammoth is the ideal situation, a gondola ride to the top, even for practice. A pure downhill course, it drops 2000 feet in a little under four miles, steep enough for any possibilities to be explored. The winner was going to be a guy who could leave the brakes off the longest on the steep straights, and still arrive at the bottom on a working vehicle.

Day two started with an early practice run on the downhill course, and then contestants lined up for the start at 1:00. For more than four hours riders were sent off, initially at thirty second intervals. The interval was reduced to twenty seconds as the day progressed, which made for plenty of exciting passing moves. In the pro category a converted motorcycle racer, Mike Bell, blazed to a victory in 7:09 on the 3.7 mile (5.9 km) course, thirteen seconds faster than his nearest rival. As usual, flat tires were a big factor in the results, and defending champ Jammin' Jimmy Deaton lost pressure and his chances at the same time. Joe Sloup, coming off two big downhill wins at the Ultimate Kamikaze and in Whistler, B.C., managed a third place in spite of the fact that he destroyed his rear derailleur with

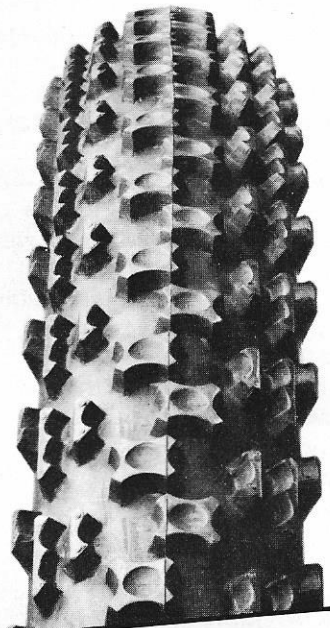
a mile to go and had to finish the course as a glider pilot. George Theobald, in a good position overall because of his decisive road win, saw his chances go down the deflated tubes when he flatted, a potentially five hundred dollar flat. George was seen offering the offending formerly sponsored tires in the parking lot, cheap.

No times were given at the finish line because the computations were complex, and riders assembled in the bar at the lodge where they anxiously awaited results. Stalling for time, the promoters encouraged the unruly mob to drink more beer and continue partying, a redundant request if there ever was one. The howling in the bar got so intense that an impromptu howling contest was staged, with no clear winners.

Finally results were announced, and hitch number two surfaced. Because of the complexity of the calculations there were a few mistakes made, and when Jacquie Phelan was relegated to fourth place overall, a murmuring mumble arose from the crowd. Carmen Carrouche was awarded the money and the medal for third, then had them taken away when Jacquie was moved up to second. First woman was Cindy Whitehead, who picked up the overall win with no stage wins, finishing second in three events, although a case could be made that she should have won the cross-country.

Mike Jordan picked up the overall men's pro award and a sizeable chunk of cash as the Ross team continued to dominate California results with winners in both men's and women's pro classes. Jordan's victory silenced critics of the scoring, since his overall ability is unquestioned after his win at the Sierra 7500 50-mile race two weeks previously.

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RACE SCORING

by SeeKay

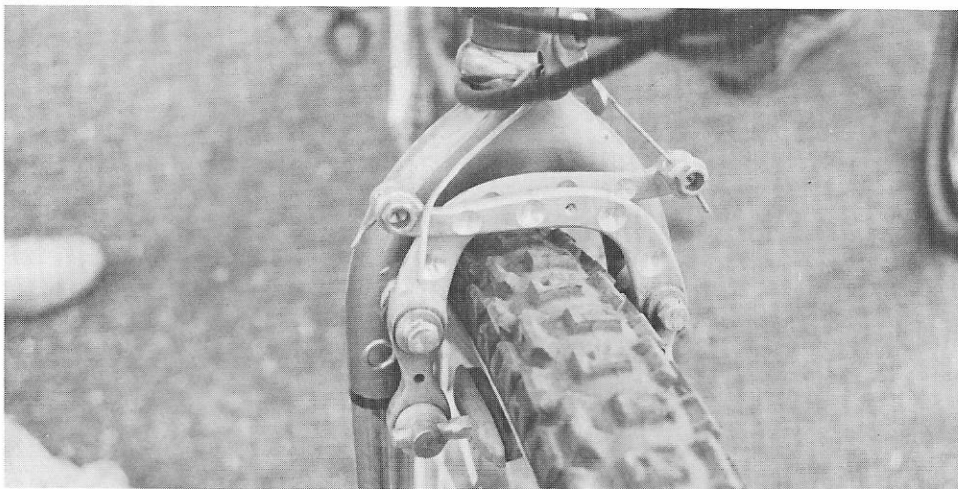
Discussions are now under way concerning changing the format of the NORBA national championships from a single event to a stage race. By the time this hits print the issue will be decided, but as these words are being typed the issue is still up in the air. Indications are that the stage format will be accepted, which leads directly into another subject, that of scoring such events.

All stage events are not alike, but in general each consists of a series of tests of the rider's ability. In some off-road stage races an observed trials is included, and the question arises as to how to include the results of a non-timed stage with the rider's overall time.

In the recent Mammoth Kamikaze stage race riders were penalized thirty seconds on General Classification (G.C.) for each point picked up in the trials. This rather heavy penalty was not that popular with the riders, of whom most were average but not expert trials riders. In the long run this penalty didn't change who won, but it moved some good trials riders well up in the standings.

In the 1986 New England Fat Tire Stage Race there will be bonuses available for trials winners, but the losers will not be penalized. This is how it works: each rider may make two passes of the course, although if he is willing to accept maximum points, he (or she) will not be required to ride each trap. Lowest score on each pass will be awarded a thirty second time bonus, i.e. that amount is subtracted from G.C. Lowest total score for both passes will also be awarded a sixty second bonus; thus, if a rider wins all the trials, he or she will be awarded a total of two minutes in bonuses. Smaller time bonuses are awarded for lower placings. Note that the trials section is not mandatory, and by accepting maximum points the rider does not have to attempt it. Skipping the trials only costs the rider a chance for the time bonus, but does not carry a time penalty.

In order to complicate the picture even more, we would like to suggest yet another format for including trials results in G.C. In our scenario, the pro and expert stage riders would ride the novice trials course with a relatively small time penalty, say five seconds per dab. However, they would be permitted the option of attempting the expert obstacle at each trap, with a bonus of ten seconds for cleaning it and five seconds for one dab. Penalties for two, three or five points would be five seconds per point, the same as on the novice obstacle. The time penal-



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ty would be no worse than on the novice obstacle, although chances of picking up points are increased by the difficulty of the obstacle; still, expert trials riders could gain ground in their best event.

Glenn Odell of NORBA has stated that he doesn't like the idea of pure downhill events because he doesn't like to showcase the gonzo possibilities of mountain bikes. News media pick up on downhill races because they're fast and look dangerous, but environmentalist critics of mountain bikes sieze on reports of this type of activity as evidence of the irresponsibility of mountain bikers in general. Whatever the political ramifications of downhill racing, anyone who puts on a downhill race has no trouble rounding up a sizeable field to take part in it. The current NORBA position is that downhill events will only be permitted when they are run in conjunction with less radical competition, such as trials and cross-country. (How about a stage race consisting of a tiddly-wink contest and a downhill race?)

That said, let's explore how downhill races have been scored in two recent stage events, the Whistler Fat Tire Festival in British Columbia and the Mammoth Kamikaze. In Whistler the downhill results were just added as straight time to the rider's total. In effect this negated the importance of the downhill skill, because the good climbers made up far more time on the climbs than the good downhillers could recover, and none of the good downhill riders showed up in the overall results. Since uphill times are four to five times as long as the downhill times, they should be weighted accordingly, and that is how the scoring worked at Mammoth. At the Kamikaze the downhill time was multiplied by four to increase the importance of any gaps in riders' times. This seems to be just about the right factor as far as we are concerned.

Series Points

Although we are leary of "national series" competitions because travel budgets can play a bigger part in the scoring than skill, we approve of local series races because they provide incentive for riders to turn out at several events. In Arizona the Arizona Bicycle Sports Association runs a year-long mountain bike points series with a scoring system that seems eminently fair. In the pro-expert group the winner is awarded 100 points plus two points for each rider in the field, second place 90 points plus two for each rider, and so on down to tenth place. Each rider placing below that gets two points for each rider in the field. The bigger the field, the more points there are available.

In the ABSA Sport category the winner gets 50 points, second is worth 45 and so on, plus one point for each rider in the field. These points carry the same weight in the series as the pro points, but it is obvious that no one racing Sport will accumulate enough points to beat a good expert rider for a series title.

Speaking of points, the Punk Bike Enduro stage race features an interesting scoring method. The Enduro, which is underground, secret, invitational and held in an undisclosed location, is conducted as a series of short point-to-point mass start races over a variety of different types of terrain. Each rider is awarded points based on his or her placing on each stage and the winner is determined by total points rather than elapsed time. Since the stages are all less than two miles in length, each one is conducted as a shoulder-to-shoulder sprint, and bike damage plays as important a part as fitness. By scoring points rather than time the organizers have fewer complications and can deliver both running and final results with a minimum of calculation and errors.

RACING 1986

by SeeKay

The 1986 NORBA racing season got off to the slowest start of any year since NORBA appeared, thanks to insurance problems that almost cancelled the entire season. This year's insurance crisis bears out our worst fears, and if the trend continues, no one will be permitted to do anything remotely resembling fun anywhere ever.

But while NORBA staggered, others picked up the slack. In the Los Angeles area promoter Byron Friday staged a series of spring races, first without insurance by obtaining waivers from all riders, then by getting an independent insurance package through a BMX sanctioning body. Because of this, the Southern California riders had a big jump on many of their competitors when the NORBA season finally got under way.

At the same time in Arizona, the Arizona Bicycle Sports Association (ABSA) managed to get their racing season started in spite of cancelling a couple of races due to the NORBA insurance situation. By hooking up with a charity, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and by donating all proceeds to that organization, the ABSA was able to use the Association's insurance policy. And by "going independent" of the NORBA policy, the ABSA has established its own de facto league in Arizona. Although the ABSA is still a member of NORBA and supports the association in matters of policy, Arizona racers are no longer dependant on it for insurance.

Currently the insurance problem is under control, at least for this year, on the strength of a little arm-twisting and gentle extortion from NORBA that wrung most of the necessary staggering premium from those whose publicity would suffer the most in the absence of racing, the Major Manufacturers, as well as some of the lieutenant manufacturers.

Next Subject Please

Having dispensed with insurance, let's look at the next most journalistically beaten-to-death aspect of off-road racing, the musical question. "Will Anyone Ever Beat Jacquie and Joe?" (Doo-dah, doo-dah).

Both the repeating national champs have had to live with the "unbeatable" label, but of the two, **Jacquie Phelan** is closer to that category simply because **Joe Murray** has had to face more and hungrier competition in the men's ranks. Joe's longest victory streak of ten straight was set in 1984, and it might be a while before we see another one like that. Although he is

still a winner, **Roy Rivers**, **Ned Overend** and **Max Jones** all pushed him hard in 1985, each taking at least one win away from Joe. Both Jones and Overend were prevented from challenging for the national title by mechanical problems early in the championship race, which turned into a duel between Murray and Rivers that Murray eventually won.

Overend threw down the gauntlet in the early part of the 1986 season. Unbeatable in his home town of Durango, Colorado, Ned won the "King of the Mountains" trophy in the Iron Horse Classic by such a margin that they're still waiting for second place. Kidding aside, he made it look pretty easy, to the delight of his sponsor, Schwinn, also the principal sponsor of the race. The suspicion lurks that Schwinn chose carefully when deciding what race to put their money into. Ned also picked up the top pro money for the Whistler, B.C. stage races on the basis of his climbing ability in a race where climbing was most of the race.

Since this year's national championships have been scheduled for Durango, Ned Overend must be considered the favorite. Among the changes in the works for the nationals is a modification of the format from one race to several in order to more completely test the riders, and to downplay the element of luck that can be a factor in a single event.

One of Murray's most serious challengers was until recently on the same Fisher team as Joe; **George Theobald** is

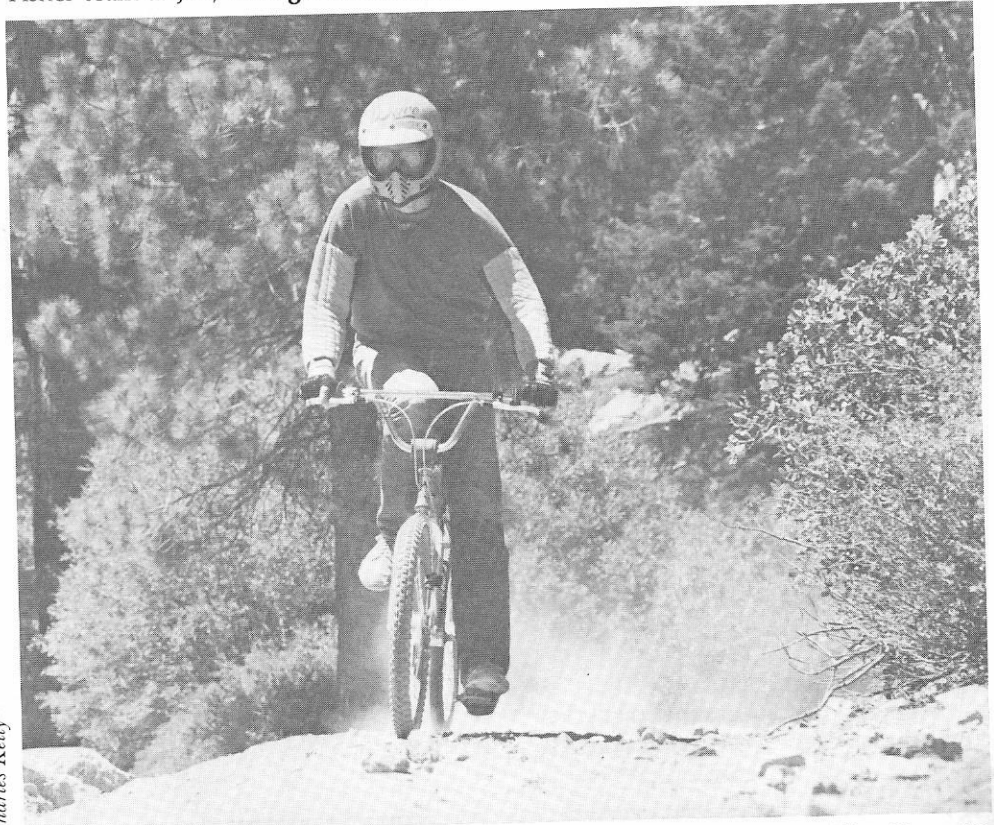
a ski-racer turned cyclist from Chico, California and riding now for Marin Bicycles. This year George won the Rockhopper South, as well as the cross-country stage of the Mammoth stage race.

John Loomis was formerly a member of Fisher's strong team, but he is now wearing Ross colors and in the early season he has made a good showing. Last year Loomis blew past a surprised Ned Overend to win a close decision at the Colorado state off-road championship. Other Ross riders are now looking so good that the team must be considered the strongest in the country; **Joe Sloup** is challenging unattached **Jim Deaton** as the most consistent downhiller around, winning the Silver Canyon Kamikaze and the Whistler, B.C. downhill, and placing well in stage events. Ross Indian **Mike Jordan** won the ultratough Sierra 7500 as well as the overall stage race win at the Mammoth Classic.

But speaking of downhill, a former motorcycle racer, **Mike Bell**, (Team Oakley) rewrote the law of gravity at the Mammoth Kamikaze, a 2000-vertical-foot/four-mile descent, with a time 13 seconds faster than the next guy's. This race may bad for our image but it does wonders for the adrenalin.

Look for **Casey Kunselman** of Wilderness Trail Bikes/Trek/True Temper as another strong rider, recently returned from the world's cyclo-cross championships. The WTB/TT team is one of the

Continued on page 14



Charles Kelly

lesser known pro teams, but the riders don't act like it. In addition to Kunselman, **Roy Rivers** and **Joey Peterson** have become fixtures in the top ten. Rivers has picked up a couple of big wins, including the most dramatic sprint of 1985 when he nipped Murray at the line after fifty miles, and a win this year at the Flume Race in Lake Tahoe.

Midwest champ **Mark Frise** managed a win in 1985 on a rolling Chequamegon course over Murray, whose strength is on long climbs, but he was unable to make a similar showing when he took on the western mountains. This year Frise, who has owned the midwest, dropped to third behind **David Olejniczek** and **Eddie Hale** at the Dirtstomper, so these two must be considered among the best in the midwest.

The Ritchey U.S.A. "team" is composed of whoever is wearing the jersey that day, and is anchored by "Mad" **Max Jones**, the hard luck kid, and Crested Butte's own **Steve Cook**. Holding an eight minute lead in the Revenge of the Siskyou, Max broke his derailleur and conceded the win to Tracy Smith, and as mentioned, a broken chain took him out of contention for the national title last year. Max won the 1986 Tahoe Roubaix on a tough circuit against quality opposition. Cook has done well in Colorado's 1986 season, winning at Brian's Folly, Cripple Creek and Mosquito Pass.

Crested Butte expatriate **Tracy Smith** moved to Marin County, "stopped partying," joined the Cunningham team, and now he's deadly, picking up third at the Sierra 7500 as well as the win at Revenge of the Siskyou.

Out of nowhere comes **John Tomac**, a former BMX rider from Southern California who rips, shreds, and tears the theory that BMXers are just sprinters. Riding a showroom stock bike considerably heavier than the custom units under his competition, he has held his own over the toughest of courses, including a fifth place in the Sierra 7500 fifty-miler.

Paul Thomasberg should get the award for being the fastest guy who built his own bike. Out of Davis, California, Paul consistently finishes in the top five in Northern California races, one of the tougher local circuits.

Jacque Phelan, A.K.A. Alice B. Navratilova, rides for Cunningham cycles, no surprise since she lives next door to the



Don Mertle

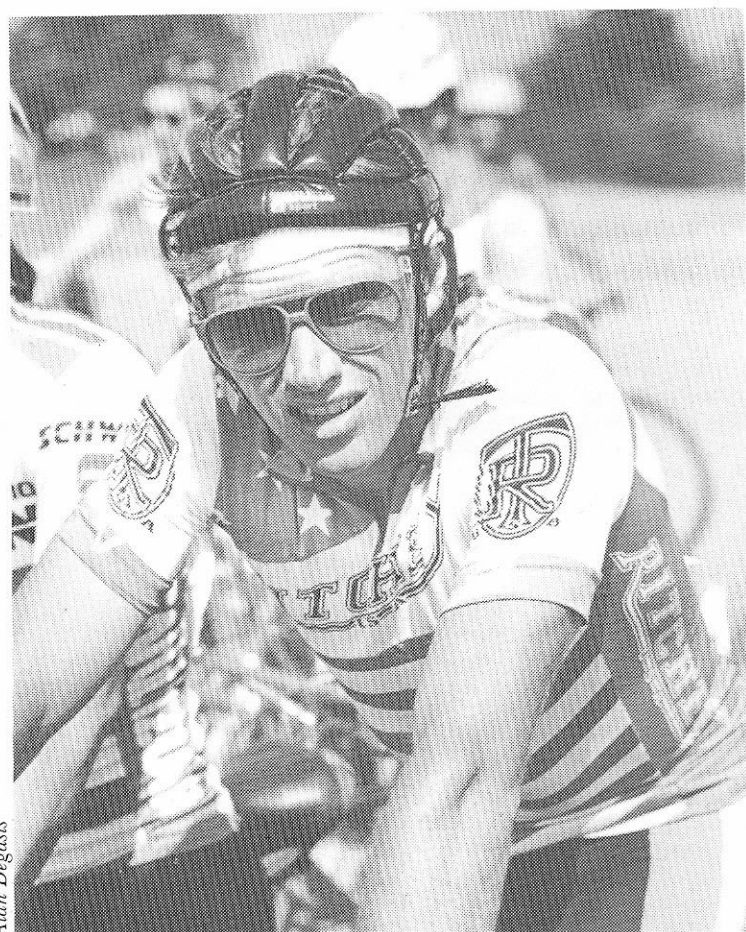
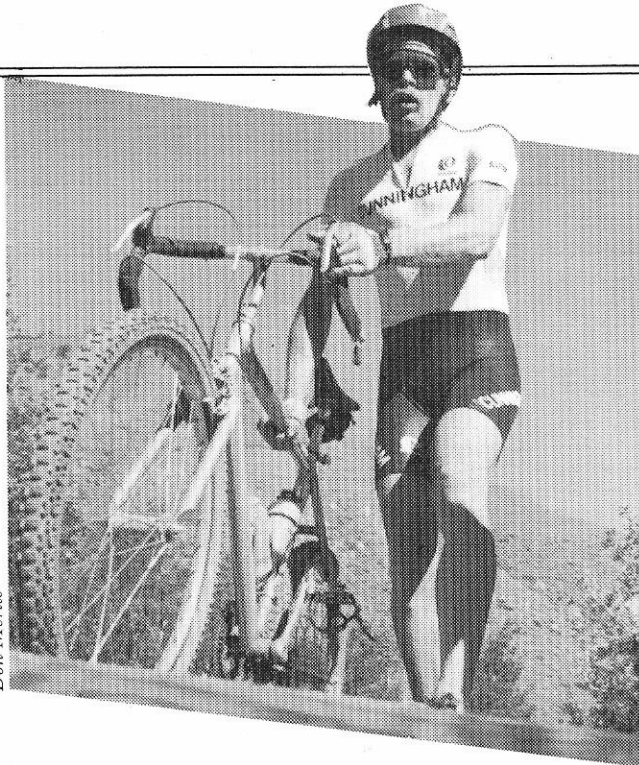
Cindy Whitehead writes her own legend as she chases Jacquie Phelan after losing her saddle in the Sierra 7500 (above). After the race she savors the moment of victory (below).



Charles Kelly

Tracy Smith is one of this year's new faces in the winner's circle.

Don Merile



Alan Degasis

Max Jones is a rock-climber, cross-country ski racer, and now a mountain bike ace.

factory. She has rarely been challenged for the last three years, except on a few occasions when she missed the trail or had mechanical problems. Normally she puts the hammer down early and hard, and never sees any of the other women until the race is over. Jacquie is as well known for her colorful style as she is for her cycling.

The most impressive woman to emerge recently as a threat to win the national title is Ross Indian **Cindy Whitehead**, who has been slowly working her way through the ranks from raw beginner at mountain biking two years ago to the next heiress-apparent. Now she's right outside the door and ready to kick it open. The first indication of Cindy's strength came at the early season races in Los Angeles; in one of these Cindy started with the women, two minutes behind the men, and beat all but seven of the men on a course that featured seven miles of climbing.

At Whiskeytown this year Cindy did the unthinkable; she beat a healthy Jacquie Phelan by four minutes over a 35-mile course rated as one of the tougher ones on the circuit. The next week an aroused Jacquie reversed the standings with a win at the Rockhopper—by a mere ten seconds over Cindy, who had fallen back early due to a mechanical problem. Chasing all the way, Cindy had gained twenty seconds in the last mile.

Cindy entered her name at the top of the first page in the book of mountain bike legends (yet to be written) with her performance at the Sierra 7500. One mile into the 50 miler the clamp on her seat-post broke and her saddle fell off. In spite of this handicap she chased down (or up) Jacquie Phelan and won the event, which is certainly the toughest race of the season.

Cindy also took the overall title at the Mammoth Classic, in spite of getting off the track during the cross-country event and losing many minutes and a probable stage win. At the end of that race she asked rhetorically, "When am I just going to ride a race without any problems?"

The next most active woman on the circuit is Schwinn rider **Mary Lee Atkins** of Durango, Colorado. In the absence of Whitehead and Phelan she dominated the women's off-road field at the Iron Horse Classic, but her trip west immediately afterward must have been disappointing as the two Far Westers came on strong, relegating her to third in the next two races she entered.

NORBA At Crossroads

For the second time since it was established in 1983, the National Off-Road Bicycle Association has changed hands.

Effective on August 4, Glenn Odell transferred his interest in NORBA to Clayton John, president of Bicycle Merchandise Exchange, Inc., which is also staffed by the same principals as the American Bicycle Association, a BMX sanctioning organization. Bob Hadley has been hired, with a title yet to be determined (probably president) as a principal executive. Odell will remain in a role of executive director, where he will be involved with the recreational and land-access issues. Odell expects his involvement in these important areas to be increased, since he will no longer be responsible for processing memberships and producing the NORBA News.

Although Glenn Odell was deliberately vague about the reasons for the transfer, he stated that, "If anyone wants to criticize the decision, I'd like for them to walk a mile in my shoes." Our position is that Odell has done a thankless and difficult job that no one else wanted to do when he accepted it, and that his influence will long be felt in the off-road sport.

On another front, Odell says that he has recently been notified that he was nominated and elected (in absentia) to the Board of Directors of the National Trails Council, a lobbying body. "Now I'll be able to get my licks in for fat-tire fanatics under two letterheads," he says.

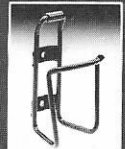
For more information on the latest NORBA status, contact the ABA at 602-961-1903.

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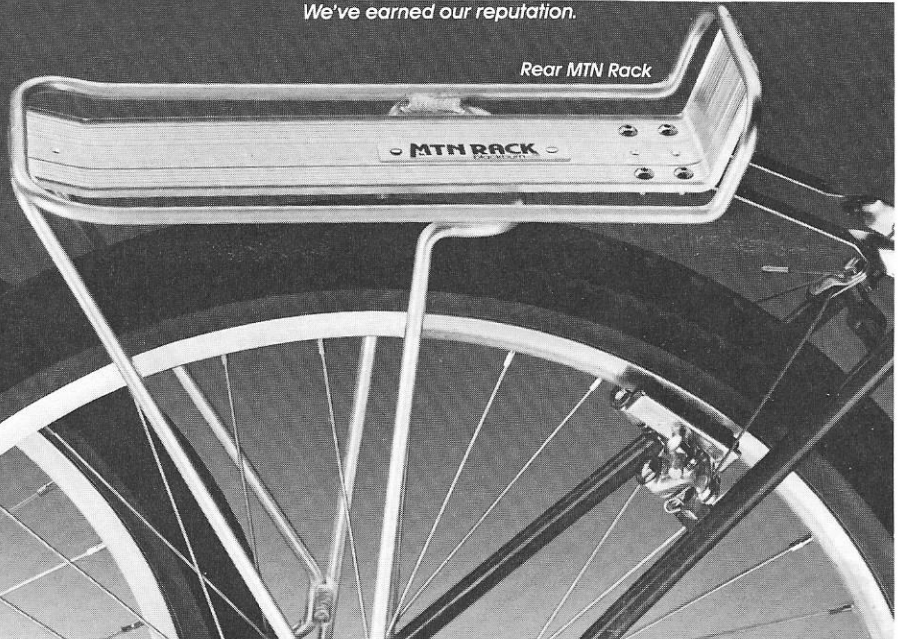
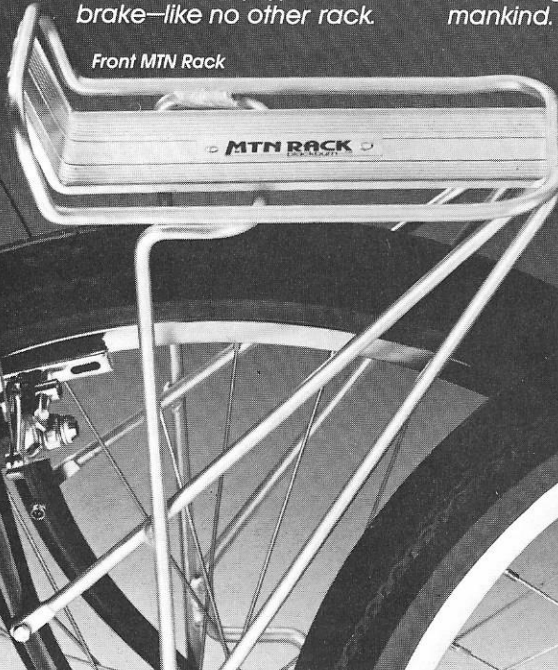
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ALASKA UPDATE

In our March/April issue we carried a reprinted article from Alaska Magazine concerning a bicycle journey taken by Max Hirshberg down the frozen Yukon River from Dawson City to Nome in the year 1900. We stated that as far as we knew, his was the only trip of its kind.

Research never sleeps here at FTF HQ however, and we contacted the Yukon Archives in Whitehorse to ask them what they knew about this trip. To our utter and complete surprise, we received in return a very detailed account of such a trip, in the same year and month, but apparently taken by another rider, a man named Edward R. Jesson. The account was not firsthand, but was compiled by Ruth Reat and Margaret Walters from Jesson's diaries, and published in the July 1956 issue of Pacific Northwest Quarterly.

Needless to say, we are mystified as to whether there were actually two such journeys or whether one is a fabrication. Both accounts have the

ring of truth to them, including details of the sort that seem unlikely to have been made up, and aside from the fact that both accounts are of similar trips, there are no common features. If in fact two such journeys were undertaken in the same year, it seems that the two principals would have been aware of each other, but neither mentions the other. Hirshberg wrote his account in the late fifties and it appears to have lost some accuracy in the interval. Certainly Jesson's story as told by Reat and Walters, which at about 6000 words runs considerably longer than Hirshberg's, is crowded with the kind of living detail that lends authenticity. Hirshberg's appears to have its detail dimmed by the passage of more than five decades, and he casually dismisses hundreds of miles of travel in a few sentences.

We are continuing to probe this mystery of the two Yukon riders. We would like to hear from anyone who has access to archives and news accounts from Nome or Dawson City around March of 1900.

Ecology Concerns

After perusing several geological tomes, we have come to a startling conclusion. In many parts of the world, and even within the boundaries of our own country, mountains are wearing out! In some locations the mountains are so worn out that there aren't any at all! The forces of erosion are in a constant battle with the forces that raise mountains, and in many cases erosion is winning.

Many things contribute to erosion, including human beings. However, humans cannot take credit for flattening all the mountains, because uncounted mountain ranges have been worn flat by the forces of nature long before anyone showed up to help. Still, the presence of hikers, horses and even (sob) mountain bikers contributes to the process of erosion, as each of us carries or pushes minute fragments of any mountain downhill every time we go up on it. Other human recreational activities contribute even more to erosion, including motorcycling, "four wheeling," or bulldozer racing.

This information might not bother freeway planners, but it should be of major concern to all mountain bikers. By now you should be pounding the table and demanding to know what can be done about this tragic situation. We thought about starting a charity, called "Save the Mountains," where we would let people adopt their own mountains and send rocks to the top each year at Christmas. This proved unfeasible because we couldn't figure a way to make millions off it in management expenses.

Here is our suggestion: every time you ride uphill, remember to stuff a few rocks in your pockets and unload them when you have reached your highest point. Tourists with panniers can take even more rocks. Even sand or ordinary dirt will do, but always take a piece of Mother Earth up to replace what you bring down. And every time you sit around and enjoy the view, make sure that the view will be there for future generations by idly tossing a few pebbles uphill.



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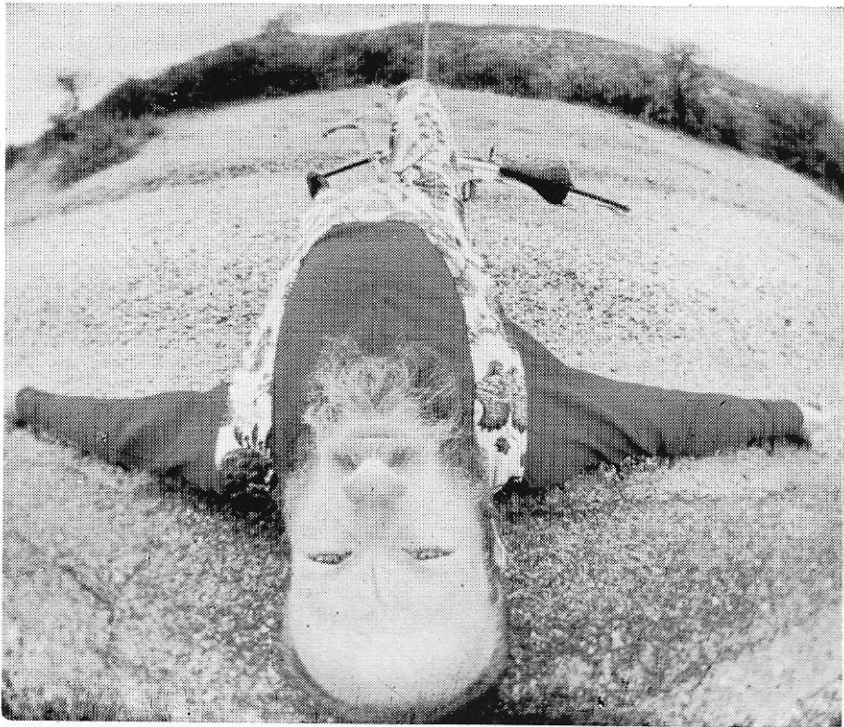
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From "Rodeo" by Jane Martin ©1981 by Alexander Speer, As Trustee.

FISHER TEAM BREAKS UP

One of the biggest stories of the 1986 season is the dismantling of what had been the strongest team in off-road racing, the Fisher MountainBike squad led by two-time national champion **Joe Murray**. With the firing of **George Theobald** and **Jim Deaton** in July, the "team" was down to one member, an obviously unhappy Joe Murray.

Fisher cites the expense of maintaining a team in competition as the chief reason for the dismantling, especially in the face of the financial ability of such large companies as Schwinn and Ross to hire the best riders and escalate the median salary. The future of the Fisher factory team will be with younger riders who live in the immediate area, and who presumably will not run up a lot of travel expenses. Fisher says, "I don't like the idea of just hiring a lot of ringers from all

over the country to represent me. I like the idea of a team that hangs around and rides together, as well as training together. One of the reasons for me to have a team in the first place is for research and development, and if it's a bunch of guys who live and work in the area, we can try out a lot of different things and see how well they work. And there are plenty of young riders around here who would love the chance to be on my team."

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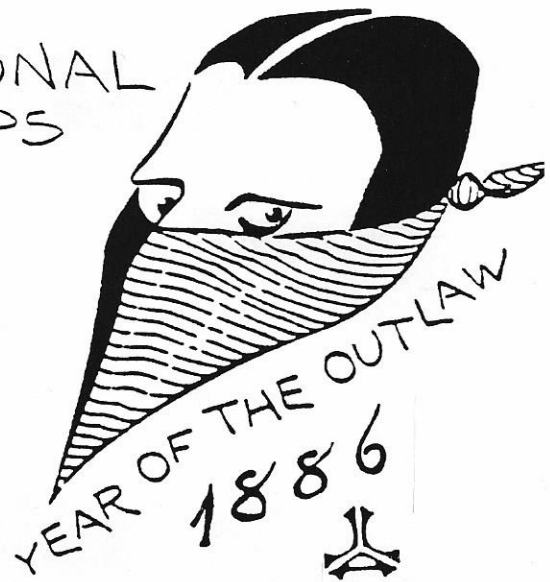
PRESENTS

OUTLAW NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The National Off-Road Bicycle Association is a privately held operation, and riders are free to believe or disbelieve in NORBA as representative of the best racers in the country. The Hidden Valley Cattle Rustlers' Association staged the Outlaw Nationals at an undisclosed location in Ventura County, California on the day before the NORBA Nationals, sanctioned by whoever believes in the results, and insured by the Providence outfit. That's Providence as in the Big Referee Upstairs, not Providence as in Rhode Island.

The Outlaw course was described as "Old dirt roads, some abandoned. Some sand, rocks, ruts. Lots of loose dirt. Some road surface overgrown. Some very old pavement. Four gates to hop. Generally rough riding (fat tires recommended). All picturesque and scenic."

Participation was through response to an announcement published in the Topanga Rider's Bulletin, which in some respects makes it just as restricted as the NORBA nats, but no protests were filed because there isn't a mechanism for such frivolous behavior at the Outlaw Nationals. If you don't agree with the results, join NORBA, take up jogging, or go home.



Results, Outlaw Nationals

Men: Matt Cotter
Women: Sally Bull
Veteran: Victor Vincente of America

According to Deaton and Theobald, they were not informed as to their status until it had already changed, when they prepared to go to the Fat Tire Festival in Whistler, British Columbia. At the last moment they were told they weren't going, and that apparently was that. The next weekend they showed up at a race with plain jerseys and the decals on their bikes either scraped off or covered up.

The postscript to all this is that Murray is quitting his association with Fisher, and

along with George Theobald will form a two-man team representing Buckley Associates. This is the company that brings us the Jungle Pad carrying strap; their current plans include importing a line of inexpensive "people's bikes" that will sell in the \$200 price range. Joe and George will presumably ride something a little fancier.

Postscript #1

Having written the foregoing, we just received a press release from the Fisher

Factory announcing the inception of a "grass-roots" racing program. According to the announcement, they are looking for "willing local riders." If you think you are willing, local, and can ride grass routes, send resume to:

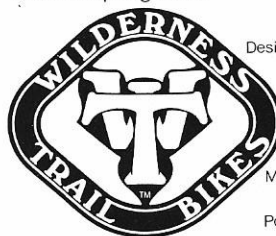
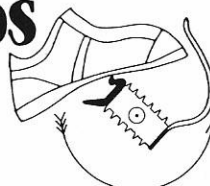
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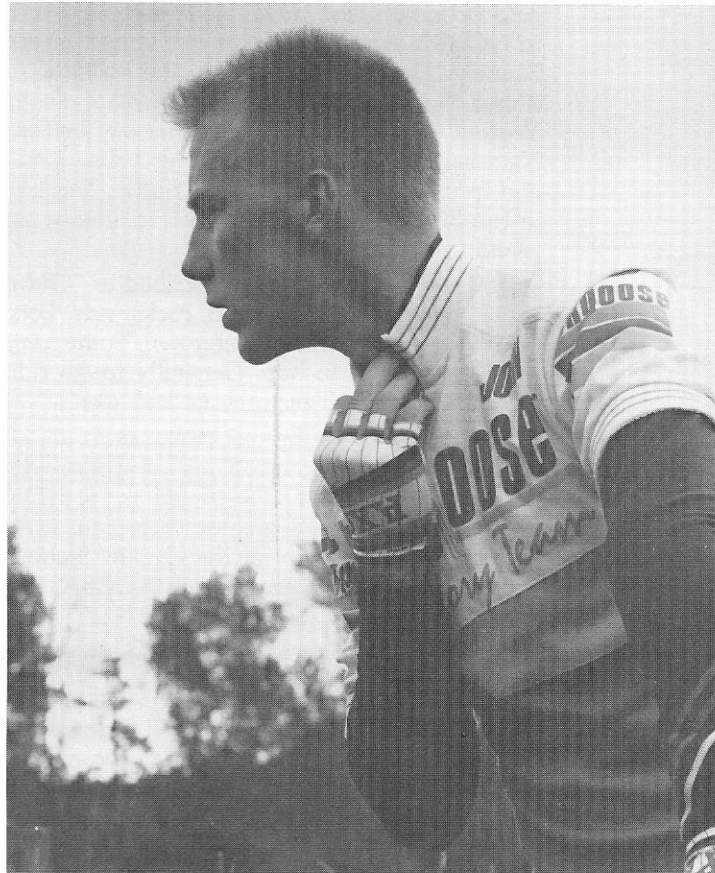
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SHOWDOWN IN



Charles Kelly

Ned Overend



Don Mentle

John Tomac

NORBA National Championships

All the talk of making the NORBA National Championships a stage race had evaporated by the time a site for the event had been picked. It was to be a one-day, one race affair on September 28, held on the same course used for the Iron Horse Bicycle Classic mountain bike race in Durango, Colorado. The course had been lengthened slightly from the layout used at the spring Iron Horse event in order to provide a little more climbing and single-track descent.

In the women's event Jacquie Phelan was defending her third national championship, but this was to be her most severe test yet. Cindy Whitehead wanted that red, white and blue jersey, and she had focussed her entire season on obtaining it. In spite of her deter-

mination, Cindy had been through problems that could easily have affected her concentration. Only two weeks previously she had left the Ross team, and had won the New England Stage Race wearing a Klein jersey to go with her Klein bike (which had sported Ross decals all year). Now she had signed on with Schwinn, and her bike had its third set of decals of the season.

The local crowd favored Durango rider Mary Lee Atkins, but this was a sentimental choice, and most experienced race-watchers expected a duel between Phelan and Whitehead. They were not disappointed.

Phelan started hard, trying to blast her competition right out of their toeclips, but Whitehead and Atkins

hung on, Cindy trailing by fifteen seconds and Mary Lee another twenty back. Phelan was unable to put Whitehead away, and the effort cost her all her reserves. Cindy failed to close the gap until the mid-point of the race, then she reeled Jacquie in on the descent where Whitehead is known to be among the most skilled.

Whitehead passed Phelan just before the start of the last lap, and the crowd went crazy as the two flashed through the staging area while Atkins began to fade badly. Suddenly, the women's racing scene was no longer the "Jacquie and Everyone Else Show."

But Jacquie wasn't through yet. Cindy's strongest move failed to finish her, and now Jacquie found herself in a new situation, hanging on desperate-