



the Juli SHOW in full effect. How LONG can she RULE? See other classic '94

mark dawson

fat tire racing

in my day

**PART I: spirit of
mountain bike
racing past
by mark chandler**

not so long ago, before the big teams and even bigger budgets and entry fees, there were the “good ol’ days” of mountain bike racing.

Now, don’t worry. I’m not going to bore you with how we waded through knee-deep snow, or welded our own frames with Bic lighters. It’ll be decades until my bouts of nostalgia reach that kind of hyperbole.

Just indulge me if you will, however, on a 900-word trip down memory singletrack and I’ll tell how it really was in the halcyon days long before the hoopla or the Hyperglide.

Races back then had more in common with a Dead show than an athletic event. In some cases, no-one was even racing: remember the year they did the RockHopper as a tour?

You didn’t need five bucks to park in the lot, just a VW van, transmogrified Cadillac, flat-bed truck or other “vehicle” of suspect dependability. No where in sight could you find cavernous box vans neatly plastered with outside sponsors’ logos.

There were a few teams back then — Fisher, Ross, Schwinn, and Specialized all had squads. But more often than not, riders who wore the team col-

ors on Sunday worked for the very same company come Monday morning.

Races had names like Giro di Briones and Tahoe Roubaix. No CorporateCashClassics like we have now. There was no TV coverage, although I do remember seeing Repack on Evening Magazine once.

Race courses weren’t the “dirt crits” of the nineties, with convenient viewing for spectators or TV crews. Crash voyeurs had to ride bikes of their own out on the course in search of “vulture corners.”

Nosiree, these were courses where, if you broke down, you had one hell of a walk getting back to civilization. There is but one word to describe those courses of yesteryear: singletrack. Yes, singletrack so plentiful you thought it would never end. If you’d have told me then it would later be a crime to ride that kind of stuff, I would have simply laughed. I cannot laugh now.

Before there was a bike called a RockHopper, there was an epic race by the same name. Imagine 400 mountain bikers starting en masse on a fire road kicking up a dust cloud straight outta Grapes of Wrath. Bandanas and paper dust masks helped, but you still picked dirt out of your eyes and nose for days to follow.

Answer me this: ever been to a race with a costume contest? Didn’t think so. It’s not every day you see a guy dressed as one of the Saturday Night Live Killer Bees astride a bright-yellow Bontrager.

Back then, “race-ready geometry” meant “La-Z-Boy.” Yup, angles in the sixties and wheelbases that gave compact cars a run for their money. Titanium? Nope. Aluminum? Rarely. Mostly steel, lots and lots of steel — and

fat tire racing timeline



Wendy Cragg

Fred Wolf racing down Repack in the early '80s. Fred was one of the original six riders in the first repack race of '76



Wendy Cragg

Charles Kelly organized the first cross-country race in '77 just weeks before Breeze delivered his first custom bike.



Wendy Cragg

Push, Push Before STI. '84.

bailing wire and duct-tape. And what about those guys on the crappy Schwinn tandem? The lovely brown one with the vise-grips seat-binder and ape-hanger handlebars...?

It wasn't uncommon to see folks racing on frames they'd built themselves. More than one old-time racer went from backyard builder to industry big-wig.

There were no such things as SPDs. Even toe clips were a rarity. Many a rider relied on Lava Domes and Bear Traps, and they probably still have the scars on their shins to prove it. Occasionally you'd spot the fish-out-of-asphalt road racer, with cleats and road quills. And then there was the guy with the knee-high, fringed, suede moccasins...

Before LX, DX, XT, XTR, and XC, there was T.A. (Traction Avante or Trouble Ahead?), Mafac, Magura, and Huret. The only indexing was in the headset bearings, and a groupo was a

bunch of people who played hacky sack together. Oh, and those superlight "quick"-releases that require some kind of tool to undo? Nothing new. We had those way back when. We just called them "bolt-on hubs."

With the exception of the venerable Snake Belly, tires didn't have cool or exotic names, or come in colors other than black.

Suspension meant bleeding out some air before downhills and not riding tensed-up. Unicrown forks were considered "hi-tech." We descended with conviction, not technology (apologies to Joe Breeze).

Fancy clothes and wonder-fabrics? Let's see, we had cotton T-shirts, denim and occasionally wool. Nobody — not even the women — shaved their legs. There were no such things as helmets with wizzy inflation systems. Sometimes we didn't even wear helmets. And when we did, it was a

crusty Bell Biker, a wimpy leather hairnet (can you say "spot the roadie"?), or maybe a batting helmet with "Eat S**t and Die" written on it. The real style mongers used their old skateboard or hockey helmets. Hockey-style mouthguards and leg-protectors were popular with the downhill set, too.

Entry fees were cheap. You'd get to ride a great course (well, usually), collect some schwag (a T-shirt at least, and usually a water bottle to boot) and food. Real food. Not lockjaw-inducing energy bars, but real, honest-to-God burritos, burgers and even pizza. ("Dominos? Yeah, we need 25 pizzas at the RockHopper.")

There was a little money to be won, but not much. Nobody made a living from it. Prizes were plentiful, though. I remember the time I won a cool flashlight handlebar mount for coming in last in my class (Hey, I never said I was fast).

You can't live in the past. You can, however,



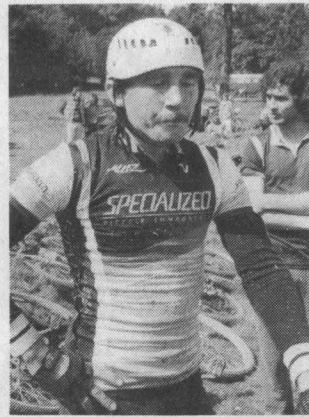
Jo Hadley

How many legends can you spot in this pic?
Shimano Off-road Grand Prix '83



Jo Hadley

Even in '83 the camera crews
camped out at the sick drop-offs



Mark Michell in the Mount
Anguish Race in March '84



Some things never change about mtb
racing. Jacquie Phelan, Mammoth '85

help inject some personality back into mountain biking. Strap a muppet to your bars (we'll miss you Bob). Cross the line without your jersey (thanks for the mammaries, Jacquie). Include interplanetary directions to your race — whatever.

It's only a job for a very select few. Dig the course and the people. Have fun with it. However it changes offroad racing will always give you memories and anecdotes to last a lifetime.

whereweat

**PART II: spirit of
mountain bike
racing present by
mike ferrentino**

the moun-
tain bike,
vehicle of
escapist dreams, beast
of burden, suffering

steed of the cycling outcast, has reached prime time. Prime Time. The bike upon which many of

us regained our childhoods, on which some of us spent our childhoods, is now a household entity.

Look! There's one hanging in Jerry Seinfeld's apartment. Brandon was cruising around his zip code on a Nishiki that was a tad too big, and was caught sleeping in a Hans Rey T-shirt (wonder what Freud might have said about THAT). MTV sports can't get enough of the damn things.

Go see 'Tread'. Try to convince yourself that it is anything but a ninety minute long Mountain Dew commercial — "Thetaste thetaste thetaste thetaste that's gonna mooooove ya!" Mountain bikes, OUR mountain bikes, have been smoothly incorporated into pop culture. Now, just like cigarettes and lite beer, they mean good health, great hair, big bright teeth and boundless opportunities for the quenching of our sexual appetites.

So where does this leave the racer? And who is the racer now?

Go figure. Along with widespread cultural acceptance (which, ironically enough, does not in any way constitute a change for the better as far as land access goes) come a few interesting twists. Big crowds, more dweebs, and an overabundance of sporty import cars with sleek black roof racks. It can be very ugly.

The average mountain bike race which might have drawn a field of 200 riders a decade ago will now feature a field limit of a thousand, staged wave after wave ready to charge off a few hundred at a time in a lemming-on-speed rush to the first singletrail bottleneck where the lucky logjammers can scream frustrated abuse at each other. The lines to the green rooms also stretch longer every year, with incontinent racers hopping about fearfully, wondering which will happen first — the explosion of their bowels or the start of their race. Still more frustration and abuse.

And the whole pre-race/post-race, strut



Are these guys touring or racing. Tennies sans toe clips. Rockhopper circa '85



Mark Miller

Pre lycra, helmets optional— Eye of the tiger mandatory, Rockhopper '85



Patricia Greschner

Cindy putting the hurt on the men. Cindy Whitehead circa '87



Barbara Hanscome

Trialsin—Same as it ever was. Norba finals '90

around posing thing has just gone totally out of control. Folks with mighty spendy full suspension polished sci-fi rigs can be seen flexing along in muy suave new skinsuits, sporting a horribly visible underwear crease BENEATH the lycra, a shiny new helmet perched backward on their heads. White collar types, amped beyond reasonable limits for their first race ever, scream incoherently at significant others:

“CLEAR OAKLEYS! I said get me my clear Oakleys! I need my clear Oakleys! How can I race without my clear Oakleys? Oh GOD this is all wrong why can't anyone just do what I tell them. . .”

Safe to say, the scene is changing. The cut off jeans, the ratty T-shirt, the Bell biker helmet and gardening gloves, the post race keg, the hill-climb, the long single loop races and the camping adventure that simultaneously surrounded and was engulfed by the race. These things are all gone, gone as sure as friction shifting, free

beer and broad collar polyester shirts.

In their stead we find box vans, million dollar budget teams, celebrity mechanics and body armor. T.V. found mountain bikes, or vice versa, and now every rookie knows how the really fast folks are supposed to look. And, of course, to look fast is to be fast.

But, in spite of the overwhelming media pressure to read, view and emulate the latest in wallet sapping trends, the individuals are still out there. The sport is growing in a huge way, yet there is still room for those who dance to their own funky beat. There are no outcasts here yet. Sleek and lean roadie, meet dungaree clad, bearded hillbilly and knee sock wearing, heavily tattooed, cigarette smoking on the start line bike messenger. Shake hands and race.

Growth has brought legitimacy, in both the good and bad sense of the word. Mountain bike racers are no longer thought of as some tar lunged

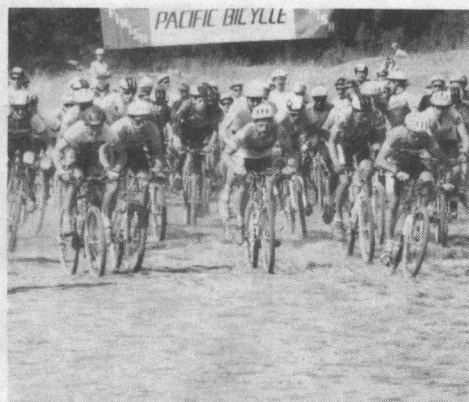
poor cousins to real athletes. Top pros make money now; maybe not so much of the stuff as the often pot bellied and hairy palmed billionaire heroes of certain ball and stick disciplines, but enough to buy nice houses in Colorado and keep themselves in Powerbar heaven unto perpetuity.

And along with that money comes the responsibility of living like a professional athlete. The pro today trains all the time, tuning the body with monk like devotion. The pro today has a contract to race mountain bikes, a rigorous diet, a beeping fax, a phone that never shuts up, recurring nightmares about arthroscopic surgery and a deadline in Atlanta two years from now that is traumatizing enough to convulsively ulcerate the toughest intestine.

This explosion of marketing and technology and popularity has also given rise to athletes who smash our preconceived notions about limitations. Juli Furtado. Is there no end to what she



Charles Kelly



Mike Rosanney



Kim Grob



Mike Giacu

How many of today's superstars haven't ridden for Yeti? Juli's formative years '90 Worlds

"Mass-Hysteria" start. '91 pre human cattle days

Sara asking "who is that lining up? Is she fast or what?" Mammoth '92

Who says we aren't rock stars? Herbold, Lajtas, TX '92

can do? Stronger and faster than a good chunk of pro men, she is living defiance of "the weaker sex." This is her time. In many ways, she epitomizes the now of mountain bike racing. Missy Giove, Kim Sonier. They go down hills a whole lot faster than you, mister.

There is nothing more beautiful than watching some hairy goon who thinks he is macho gravity incarnate realize that not only did he just get beaten down the Kamikaze by a woman, he got smoked!! And then he finds out that the woman who just mangled his ego free slid without her bike across the finish line. . .

And it probably goes without saying that this very same goon thought 'Tread' was just about the best damn movie ever, and what the hell is wrong with Mountain Dew anyway?

Whatever, let him straighten his Troy Lee helmet, suck hard on his Camelbak, pin me in the halogen glare of his Nightsun, and launch

his creaking aluminum fully suspended mono-coque machine straight at me. No doubt the last thing I'll notice before he T-bones me will be the grim Visible Panty Line violation beneath his 'Hammer' bodywear. No doubt at all.

the future

**PART III:
no access?
no time?
no problem!
by jacquie
phelan &
charles kelly**

Introducing "The Virtual Race," produced by Ben Dare & Dawn Thatt, a pair of Silicon Valley computer geniuses whose big miles are logged on the information superhighway. "Because we never got up from the computer these last few years, we decided to build a program to simulate the great

rides and races we used to do," says Dare, a forty year old software programmer who developed the VR with his girlfriend, Thatt.

"We hope this opens the door to future info-technology products providing the ultimate answer to the trail access issue, while simultaneously solving the nagging problems of safety, liability, comfort, and convenience," Thatt remarks, adding, "Not to mention boredom stemming from riding the same old loop — the only legal one in our area — a million times."

According to the accompanying diskette, "virtual" riders can say goodbye to biting bugs, ozone-hole sunburn, shattered bones, the "bonk", broken bicycles, getting lost, bruised egos and scar tissue on your knees. Now you can enjoy off-road training and racing at its gnarliest without leaving your home! Your computer terminal will be your new wilderness, as you open up new simulated riding possibilities.



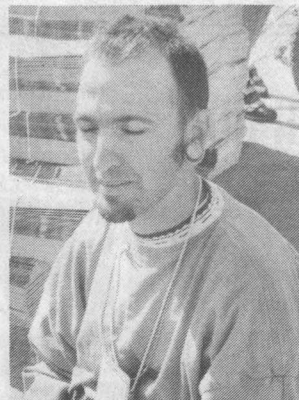
Mike Glau

Still think women are the weaker sex? Susana Castro@ Tyler '92



Mark Dawson

The over 50 crowd ripping it up. Mammoth Kamikazie '93



Mark Dawson

You're only as hip as your latest piercing.- Zappie, Mammoth '93



Mark Dawson

Mountain biking will never die. Mammoth '93

The conscientious rider who doesn't want to break any rules will stay well within the law when they plug in this game, a mere \$39.99 — about half what you would pay for a citation! Racing from the safety of their own padded swivel chairs, players simply select the name of the competitor they'd most like to race against (choose from the likes of Missy Giove, Dave Wiens, Juli Furtado, and other greats) — or custom design the opponent to match your own personal racing enemy in your particular category! Then type in the name of the race course: 100 miles of Iditabike? 2 miles of the world championship course at Bromont? You name it! Think of the entry fees you'll save!

Every curve is faithfully reproduced in computer-enhanced fractal imagery, and every rough spot on the trail color coded by integrating speed and ability level. A special "weather conditions" function allows you to determine

the hardships you'll face, and a one-to-ten traction parameter dictates the "stick-tion" quotient. Enter your personal parameters of riding experience (measured in number of months), clarity of vision (eyechart included), reflexes (measured number of doobies smoked that morning) and sheer nerve (determined by the number of years you've sandbagged in the beginner class). A special Excuse Tailoring Feature™ allows you to type in reasons you didn't win from a menu that includes:

**HUNG OVER
NEW BIKE**

(hasn't been shaken down before race day)

OLD BIKE

(the new bike isn't ready yet)

INADEQUATE

(a) nutrition (b) training (c)time, etc

HELMET WRONG COLOR

"THE SUN WAS IN MY EYES"

You can even bail out with a special "Whining Key" that enables you to quit at any point in the race and not have to ride home!

Never again will you sport vet men discover you don't have "enough for a category." Women can breathe easier knowing that they will get a good workout: these virtual races needn't be shortened to expedite the "main event." You are your own event promoter! All complaints about your virtual race come right back to you, and you can modify the event by pressing the "return" key, which gives you your (virtually real) money back! When does that happen in reality?!

Given the worldwide trend in restricting mountain bike access to public lands, we estimate that by 1998, ALL mountain bike racing will be done by computer. Be the first one on your block to ride worry-free, and as they say at Lemans, "BikeNerds, boot your operating systems!" 