

Owner's M A N U A L

THE MOST FROM
YOUR BIKE AND BODY

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THE TALENT

Dial In for More Control

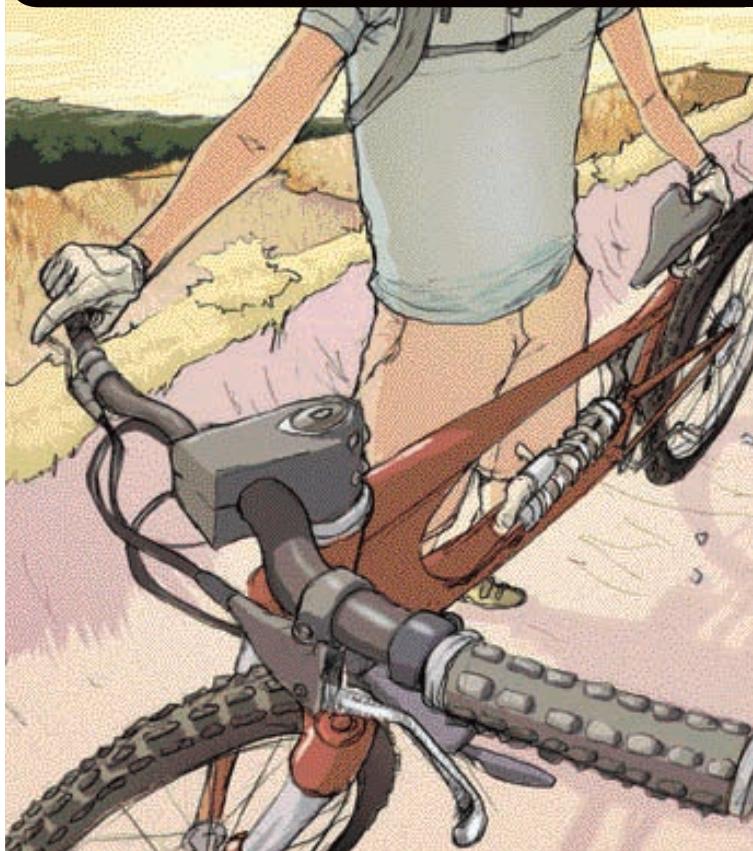
FLY WITH ONE FINGER “Two-fingered braking is bad,” says Weir, because it reduces your grip on the bar and tightens your shoulders and forearms. Make braking easier by sliding your levers in toward the stem so that your index fingers grab near the outboard hooks. Then adjust the levers closer to the bar so the brakes engage when the middle sections of your index fingers are bent at 90 degrees. “You don’t want the levers to hit the grips,” Weir explains, “but the closer you can get, the more power and control you’re going to have.”

KEEP THE NOSE DOWN If you set your saddle level with the ground and centered on the seatpost, it’s going to be nose up and way behind the bottom bracket when you’re pedaling, especially on steep climbs. Better to start with a slightly nose-down, forward-on-the-rails position, so the saddle levels out and puts you in the pedaling sweet spot when you ascend.

PREPARE TO DROP Be ready to lower the seat way down when things get technical and tricky. “If the front of your bike dives and the saddle gets in your way when you try to get your weight back, you’re going to become a human projectile,” Weir warns. Add a seatpost quick-release, or purchase a Gravity Dropper seatpost (\$250; gravitydropper.com), which uses a bar-mounted lever to instantly raise and lower the saddle.

GO BAR UP Weir angles his handlebar so it sweeps up more than back. “It may look goofy,” Weir admits, “but it works.” He explains, “If my bar was swept back, my wrists would point backward when I’m standing.” That would bring in Weir’s elbows, which would mean less control in the attack position.

THE PRO: WTB PR guy, team manager, racer and BikeSkills instructor Mark Weir’s motto: “Anything worth doing is worth overdoing.” One look at his backyard, which he’s carved into a dirt-jump track, is enough to prove his mountain biking fanaticism. Yet in his seven years as a pro racer, nothing taught Weir as much about long-travel bike setup as his quest to climb 1 million vertical feet in calendar 2005—which he completed with a month to spare—mostly on his 38-pound, 8-inch-travel Santa Cruz VP Free. “I averaged close to 5,000 feet a day,” says Weir, “and I was always adjusting my bike so it would handle better uphill.” The surprise? The uphill-boosting changes left the bike’s downhill prowess intact. To set up your long-travel rig for all-mountain maneuvers, check out Weir’s advice (and the video at MOUNTAINBIKE.com/bikeskills5).—*Brian Fiske*

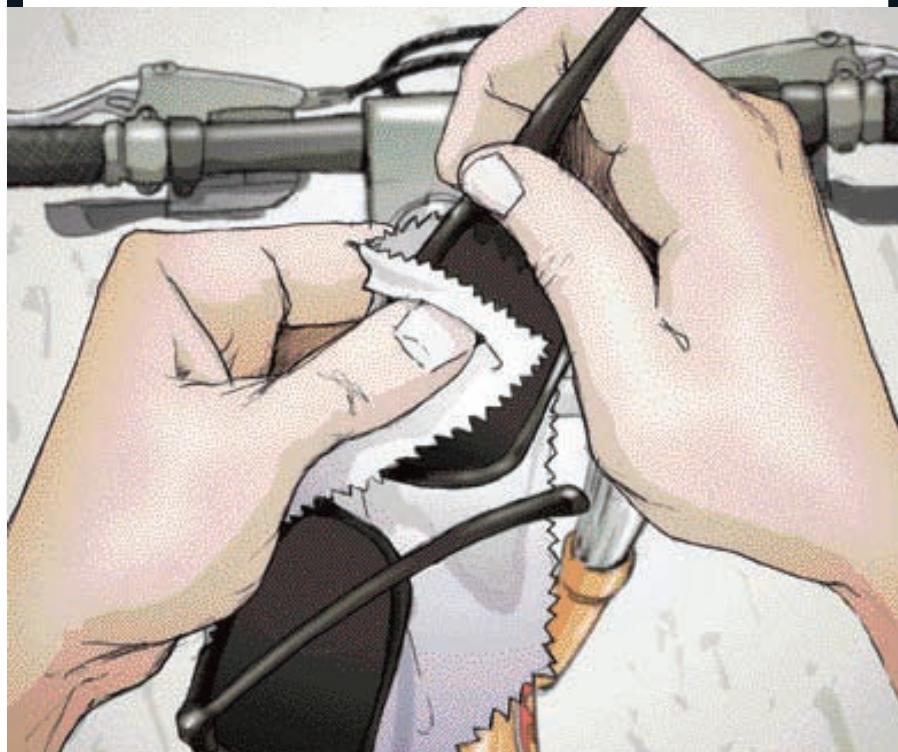


KEEP IT LOW With a 6-inch-travel fork, run the stem directly on the headset to keep your weight as low as possible, but put a couple of spacers on top of the stem to allow for some adjustment. Weir’s advice: “The lower you are, the better off you are. Otherwise, you’re just going to fall from high up.”



THE FIX

CARE FOR YOUR WEARS Cycling apparel provides protection, comfort and a place to carry tools and nutrition. With proper care, your gear can last for years. Without it, you'll be the guy with the saggy spandex and pilly jersey. Follow these tips to get the most out of your wears—and your wallet.—*Ron Koch*



1

HELMET Never leave it in a hot car—heat breaks down the foam. Take it into the shower with you and scrub it with shampoo. Or clean it with warm water, a mild soap such as dishwashing liquid, and a soft rag. Never use petroleum-based cleaners—they can attack the helmet's structure, reducing its level of protection. If the pads start to fall apart or stink, replace them.

2

CLOTHING Wash jerseys, shorts and gloves in the washing machine on gentle cycle. Never use detergents with fabric softeners or perfumes, or products with additives. They can leave surfactants on a fabric's fibers, inhibiting its technical performance. Zip zippers and secure hook-and-loop closures before washing so they don't catch on or stick to other garments. Don't put these items in the dryer—heat damages spandex and shortens your clothing's lifespan. Instead, hang them or lay them flat to air-dry.

3

SHOES Clean your shoes with dishwashing liquid, water, and a stiff nylon brush. Remove the footbed and stuff the shoe with crumpled newspaper to help keep the shoes' shape, absorb moisture, and speed drying time.

4

EYEWEAR Carry a microfiber cloth in your hydration pack to clean your lenses midride (shown above). Never use your jersey. Gently rinse off mud with water before wiping glasses. If you don't, you may scratch the lenses.

5

PACK Remove the reservoir, wash the pack on gentle cycle and hang it to dry. Clean the reservoir with a system such as CamelBak's Cleaning Kit (\$20; camelbak.com).



SNACK-DOWN

HOOAH BAR VS. RAW INDULGENCE RAW REVOLUTION

Just when you thought the energy-bar market was saturated, here come two offerings from opposite ends of the spectrum.

Billed as "the energy bar created by the U.S. military," the Hooah (\$1.99; hooahbar.com) promises rocket-fuel levels of performance for demanding soldiers (and, presumably, mountain bikers). Raw Indulgence, meanwhile, suggests that by noshing its Raw Revolution bar (\$1.99; rawindulgence.com), we can bring ourselves "closer to healing ourselves and the global ecology."

So which holds the edge? "Everything in here is a food you've probably eaten," says Debora Robinett, a registered dietician and former roadie, reading the list of seven ingredients (20 fewer than the Hooah) that are in the Raw Revolution. "You get dates, which are full of vitamins and minerals, and amaranth, which has a lot of fiber," she says. "I like to see real foods in an energy bar because your muscles need all those micronutrients, not just sugar and protein." Robinett points out that while the total fat content of the Raw Revolution is higher than that of the Hooah (15 vs. 9 grams), it has good-quality, poly- and monounsaturated fats that are essential to proper organ and muscle function. "Yes, it's quite a bit of fat, but good fats are an anti-inflammatory and actually increase endurance."

Robinett isn't as complimentary toward the Hooah bar. With 40 grams of carbohydrate (compared with 29 in the Raw Revolution), comprised largely of highly processed corn syrup, the Hooah might give you a quick boost, but over the long haul it's bound to let you down. "You might as well eat a Snickers bar," says Robinett. "It's pretty much the same thing, for less money, and it'll probably taste better." And the Hooah's partially hydrogenated fats are a red flag, for their contribution to heart disease.

In short, says Robinett, the Raw Revolution is a better choice for cyclists—and our men and women in uniform.—*Ben Hewitt*



FASTER FOOD

GREEN TEA

Maybe you're one of those enlightened folk who actually likes the taste of tea better than coffee. Or maybe that hole in your stomach lining is acting up again. Or perhaps you already know what we're about to tell you: Green tea has been linked to reduced rates of cancer and heart disease, weight loss and increased endurance. Not convinced? Read on.

"We all know that caffeine is beneficial to endurance athletes, and recent studies have shown that coffee has tons of antioxidants," says Bonnie Minsky, certified nutrition specialist and spokesperson for the American College of Nutrition. "But green tea has both of those things, and more."

Minsky points to a Japanese study in which mice were fed green tea for 10 weeks. Their endurance went up a shocking 24 percent. Why? "Well, we don't really know," says Minsky, adding that she's hesitant to promise similar

results in humans. "It could be that green tea stimulates the muscles to use fatty acids. And if you're burning fatty acids, you're sparing carbs." End result: Greater endurance and, potentially, the loss of a few of those pounds you picked up over winter.

And green tea has topical medicinal benefits: Apply a wet tea bag to a wound, and watch the healing take place before your eyes. Another bonus: Unlike coffee, green tea can actually help your body resist the dangerous effects of UV light. In other words, drink at least two cups of green tea every day, and you likely won't get so damned sunburned.

Because green tea doesn't contain as much caffeine as coffee (about 15mg per cup; coffee has 5 to 10 times as much), Minsky recommends tossing back a shot of espresso for your performance-enhancing caffeine hit and drinking two to four cups of lukewarm or cool green tea over the course of a long ride. And if drinking this herbal juice isn't your cup of tea, try green-tea extract, which is available in capsules at your local purveyor of supplements.—*B.H.*



PARTS: LOWER BACK

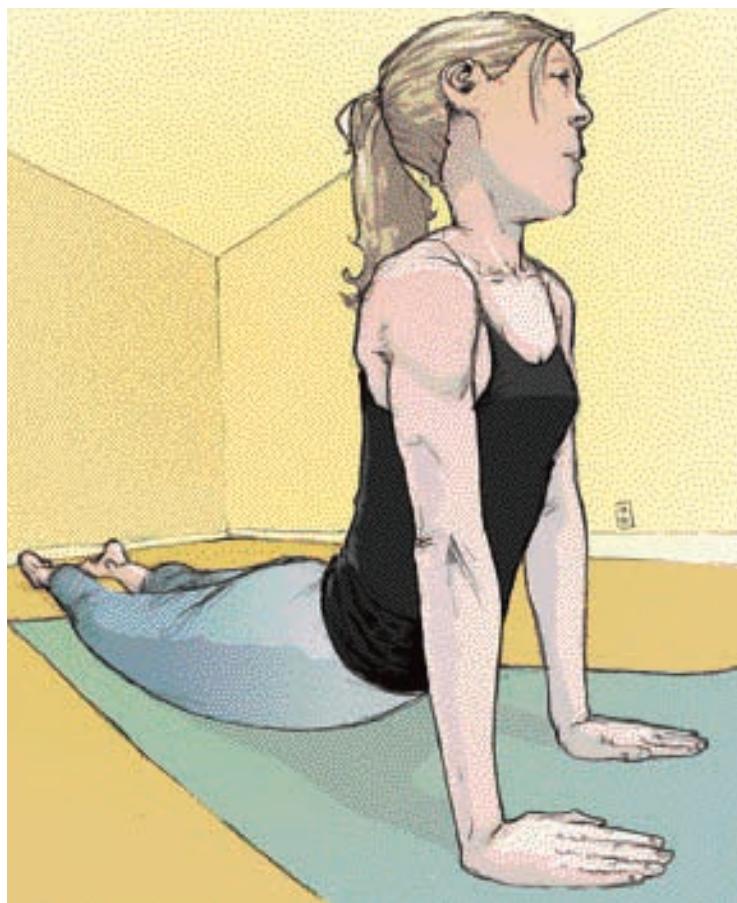
KEEP YOUR LUMBAR LIMBER

Think of your lower back as your body's bottom bracket: You don't realize how much your performance depends on it until it's out of whack. And then it's hard to focus on anything else. Though there are myriad potential causes of lower-back pain, according to Wendell Liemohn, Ph.D., professor emeritus of exercise science at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, for mountain bikers, the problem is likely related to three things: the bent-over position on the bike, which straightens the lumbar curve and puts stress on ligaments and spinal discs; the added weight and pressure of a loaded hydration pack; and a general lack of core muscle strength.

With that in mind, there are some on-bike changes that can reduce your risk of back pain—including sitting up now and then during long rides to reintroduce the natural curve to your lower back, and carrying as little weight as possible in your pack. Beyond that, Liemohn recommends the following two exercises, both to prevent and to treat mild lower-back pain. Use them to keep back pain at bay—and keep yourself riding strong. (Note: If your pain is so severe that your posture is contorted or you're uncomfortable walking, self-treatment isn't a good idea. Go see your doctor.)

THE MACKENZIE STRETCH (Know yoga? If so, this is identical to the Cobra pose.) Lie facedown, with your hands, palms down, under your shoulders. Then push up, extending your arms until they're almost straight as you raise your head and chest off the floor (shown, right). Keep your pelvis in contact with the floor so you hyperextend your back. Hold for five seconds, and slowly lower back to the starting position. That's one repetition. "When I feel like I have a few symptoms, I'll get prone and do three sets of 10 of these," Liemohn says. "And then I'll feel more comfortable."

THE SIDE LIFT Lie on your right side, with your right arm bent under you so that your right elbow is under your shoulder and your right forearm extends for support. Put your right foot behind your left to provide a stable base. Then, push



up so that your body forms a straight line from your head to your feet. ("The whole body is the hypotenuse of a triangle," Liemohn explains, "and the right arm is the short side.") Hold for 60 seconds, then return to the starting position. Repeat two more times, then switch sides.—*B.F.*