

## SELF-TAUGHT ENGINEERS

Once upon a time, as all stories should begin, while working as a retail salesperson, I was asked “what’s the difference between a graduate engineer & a self-taught engineer?” What? I said: & the answer was: “Both engineers are likely to arrive at the same solutions to a problem but the self taught engineer is more likely to go off on side paths on his way to the solution” The customer’s answer was like a lesson in teaching. We do not have to re-invent the wheel for every activity. The loss of the Egyptian Library at Alexandria is one of the great human losses to civilization. Where might civilization be without the “Dark Ages”?

Many athletes are “self-taught engineers”. They miss the apprenticeship learning ritual of participating a functioning club or team, read little or the wrong things & make little use of successful mentors & coaches. Various governing bodies categorize bicycle racers all over the world, both by age & ability. In the U.S., a numerical point system is used going from 5 to 1. The old published standard has a great deal of meaning. In this system 5’s & 4’s are “beginners & local racers”, 3’s are state & regional racers, 2’s are regional & national racers, & 1’s are national & international racers. Many coaches consider the time to develop a competent Category 2 to be about 3 years. The difference between a calculated approach & “just doing it” is about 18 months. Even the “gifted athlete” has to learn & grow in the job.

## THE BENNIES

All training makes use of the “Overload Principle” Group training provides more than just long grinder rides on Saturdays. Team training can provide the information on how to hide from the wind, eat & drink on the bike, provide intervals for speed, endurance, & climbing. The team also satisfies a most important part of the training experience. The mind and emotions need constant feeding & management to provide the poise and self directed skills to be an effective competitor.

## READ THE BOOK

If you are a triathlete then a book from one of the worlds best time trialers is not to be missed. Tops on your immediate list should be Lance Armstrong: It’s Not About the Bike, at your nearest bookstore. The book is about emotions, friendships, bonding, loyalty, the bike, & personal growth. In a way it is also a training manual for setting goals & achieving them. By example, there is lots of training information most of which deals with others. You can benefit from one of the key persons in Lance Armstrong’s triumphant return to cycling and his victories by logging on to <http://www.ridefast.com>. This is the site of Chris Carmichael’s Carmichael Training System. The site is rich in information about training sessions & what training events are targeted to what improvements.

## CURIOSITY

Now it is time to fire up your Explorerscape one again and find out about clubs & organizations. Tops on your short list should be <http://www.usacycling.org>. USA Cycling is the corporate name for the United States Cycling Federation. The organization is the National Governing Body for bicycle racing in the U.S.A. As such, they receive funds from the USOC & follow their charter rules. The website subjects include Olympics, Coaching, Collegiate, Juniors, Officials & the TV Schedule. In addition there is a Coaches Database, & a Club Database for all of the U.S. This is a good place to start shopping for a bicycle-racing club to join. You can find out a bit about the structure of bicycle racing & what is likely to be active & who to contact in your area.

The linker's paradise for the Northwest appears to be <http://www.bikeride.com>. This is a very rich site with links to lots & lots of cycling sources, including <http://www.usatriathlon.org>. There are books, training downloads, coaches, clubs, race schedules & many links to various organizations. The Washington State Bicycle Association has put their information into the Bikeride.com website & there is plenty of information to follow up with a telephone call.

Some regions or States have their own organizations, which may or may not belong to the USCF. In Oregon, that organization is the Oregon Bicycle Race Association, which has their own website at <http://www.obra.org>. The site has race schedules for Road, Off-road, Track, Criterium, Cyclocross, & Time Trials. The schedule is up to date & kept complete. The site also includes some interesting links, results, coaches, & clubs. For Oregonians & those nearby this can keep you up to date on bike racing?

There is also a Southern Oregon Cycling Association with a website at <http://id.mind.net/~gumby>. There are lots of links to various subjects of interest in cycling & the site has a fun attitude. Gumby is OK too!

Montana, Idaho & Utah also have their own sites at <http://www.montana.org> & <http://ut-id-cycling.com>.

#### LANTERN ROUGE

This is the "get" portion of this short piece. It is time for those still in the peloton to get going. Get going & expand your horizons by reading, and tackling a new project such as learning more about cycling by joining a race club & finding what its all about. If your ferocity went away during the season then read Lance's book & recharge your emotional battery.

As always, questions will be answered-

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