

25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

# MOUNTAIN BIKE ACTION

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MOUNTAIN BIKE ACTION

JULY 2011

**25** BIKES THAT STARTED THE REVOLUTION: A GUIDE TO THE FUTURE

**25** PEOPLE WHO SHAPED MOUNTAIN BIKE HISTORY

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# THE **25** MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN MOUNTAIN BIKING

*The architects of our sport*

## LANCE ARMSTRONG

When the seven-time Tour de France champion came out of retirement to race the Leadville 100, he introduced more people to our sport than any competitor before him. When he came back the next year (after finishing second to Dave Wiens) and won the event, a movie made about the event and his exploits made our sport more visible than any time in its history. He may not be remembered as a mountain bike racer, but he used his celebrity clout to show non-riders what they were missing.



Photo by Rob O'Dea

## DOUG BRADBURY



Doug was a wizard of aluminum mountain bike frame construction, but it was when he turned his attention to suspension that he made an indelible mark on mountain biking. The first efforts to come out of his Manitou Springs, Colorado, workshop were strong, light forks with undamped elastomers. When John Tomac (you'll notice how often our 25 people intermingle) began to win on Doug's Manitou forks, RockShox had a worthy competitor. Doug went on to sell Manitou (to Eddie Cole, another guy on our list), but not before he assured us that we would all be riding on better suspension.

John Tomac and Doug Bradbury (right).



## JOE BREEZE



No one person invented the mountain bike, but a strong argument can be made that Joe was the first to manufacture them. When the supply of the Schwinn frames preferred by riders in the hills above Marin, California, began to run low, Joe decided to make them from scratch. The Breezer was born (1977), and the cat was out of the bag. Mountain biking had officially begun. Joe also created one of the best-selling accessories in mountain bike history, the Hite-Rite seatpost—an on-the-fly, height-adjustment spring for your seatpost (1985).



## BILL COCKCROFT

Bill was the heart and soul of the mountain bike races held at the Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort. The Kamikaze Downhill, a scary-fast, tuck-and-stay-off-the-brakes test of skill and nerves, drew riders from as far away as Japan for a shot at clocking over 50 miles per hour on a mountain bike. Bill helped create the first World Championships under the NORBA name in '87, '88 and '89.



## EDDIE COLE

This is a man with the Midas touch. He made the designs and inventions of Doug Bradbury available to people other than John Tomac by founding Answer Products. He's a master of business, a developer of startup companies and a manufacturing genius. He founded (and later sold) Answer Products, Manitou and SixSixOne, a clothing company that broke from roadie traditions and made affordable protective equipment for mountain bikers.



## GARY FISHER

The man needs no introduction, and there is no way to sum up a legend in a few short sentences. Gary got in on the ground floor of mountain biking and has consistently spotted and championed trends—be it 29-inch wheels for mountain bikes, the High School Racing League or Trips For Kids. He has a God-given talent for picking winners, and the guy still rides more miles than possibly anyone else on our list (other than Mike Sinyard).

**BOB FOX**



It is a good chance that your fork or shock is named after this guy. Bob Fox was a professional poker player before he started Fox Racing Shox, a bigger gamble than any game he had ever entered. Bob's designs, attention to detail and made-in-California quality produced suspension components that forced all other suspension companies to up their game. Even if you don't ride on Fox suspension, your suspension is better because of this guy.

**MATT FRITZINGER**



It was Matt who accidentally started the National Interscholastic Cycling Association. He tried to get students to join in on road rides at his Northern Californian high school, but found that they were way more interested in mountain biking. Matt started with rides, then held some races, and his idea is now spreading like wildfire. Matt's idea is now getting kids involved in a sport that had been graying for the last 10 years.

Matt Fritzinger, second from left.

**BOB GIRVIN**



Bob's Flexstem may not have been true suspension, but it got everyone thinking about it. His 1990 Offroad RF-1 dual-suspension bike used elastomer suspension and was the first dual-suspension production mountain bike. The brand changed into Proflex in 1994, and the fact that you still spot these bikes on the trail today is a testimony to their quality and design. Bob's designs made dual suspension a viable alternative for mountain bikers.

**TINKER JUAREZ**



One of our sport's greatest racing personalities, Tinker is more than a fast set of legs and giant pair of lungs. He is proof of the positive effect that mountain biking can have on anyone who has to overcome staggering odds. Tinker used racing as his means of escape from gang-ridden streets and a life of few opportunities. On his "Hall of Fame" induction description it says, "Tinker is nearing the twilight of his racing career." That, friends, was written in 2001. Tinker is still going strong today at the tender age of 50.

**ROLAND HINZ**



Twenty-five years later, you might assume *Mountain Bike Action* was a sure thing when launched by Roland Hinz. In reality, he was advised against it because the sport was at best regional ("There are no mountains in Iowa.") and would never grow larger than a small group of fanatics. He went ahead anyway. The Chief, as we refer to our boss, introduced no-holds-barred bike and product tests and shootouts. He championed suspension while the designers of the day were saying, "Suspension for a mountain bike is a stupid idea." While other magazines have come and gone, Mr. Hinz's *MBA* has remained true to his initial vision of tests that riders can trust and content that appeals to the entire family.



**MARILYN PRICE**

Talk about a person who isn't comfortable in the limelight; Marilyn deserves more attention, and when she gets it, she always credits others for the acclaim. Marilyn founded Trips For Kids, a non-profit organization that sells used and donated cycling equipment to cover the expense of taking kids from high-risk neighborhoods to the mountains for riding. It may be the first time that these kids get to experience the fun we all take for granted. There is no doubt that Marilyn's programs change lives for the better.

**SAL RUIBAL**

Photo by Sharon Raboin

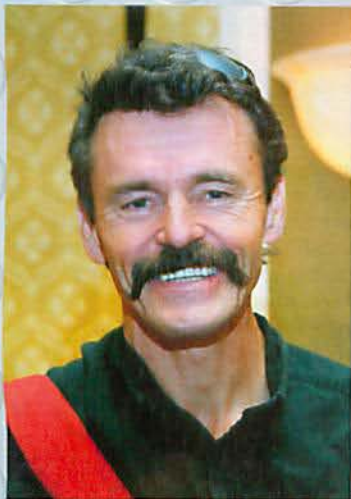


Sal was the cycling reporter at *USA Today* and the first prominent journalist to chronicle our sport in the mainstream media. Since he began covering the sport in 1995, he's introduced mountain biking to a mass audience around the world. His articles in the nation's largest newspaper would reach more than 10 million readers a day. He always covered mountain biking like a regular sport, instead of a hyped-up extreme sport.



**HANS REY**

Hans, a multiple Trials National and World Champion, could be the best-known biker outside of the mountain bike scene. When photos of his death-defying ride along the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland went viral, he brought a lot of attention to mountain biking. And it was not the first time this adventurer and showman had gone viral. Cementing his rightful place in our 25, Hans formed Wheels 4 Life, a charity organization that supplies low-cost bikes to people in Third World countries.



**TOM RITCHEY**

Tom, an accomplished racer on the road, was on the scene with the other pioneers in the early days of mountain biking. He transferred his road racing skills to mountain bike racing, but it was his desire to make better bikes and components that left the biggest imprint on the sport. And when we say "make," we mean it. Tom was a prolific frame builder who put his ideas into practice with a welding torch in hand. Ritchey Components remains strongly respected to this day.



**KEIZO SHIMANO**

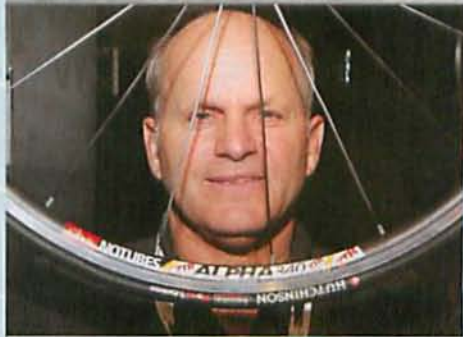
His bio at the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame says it best: "Every shift, each pedal stroke, every dusty smiling face at the run out of a descent on a mountain bike is a tribute to Keizo Shimano—a man whose brilliance questioned the status quo at every step. He studied ceaselessly, motivated his colleagues and listened to the world's greatest riders, all the while pioneering the development of the bicycle component technology so widely used today." Although no longer with us, Keizo's influence is still felt by every mountain biker.



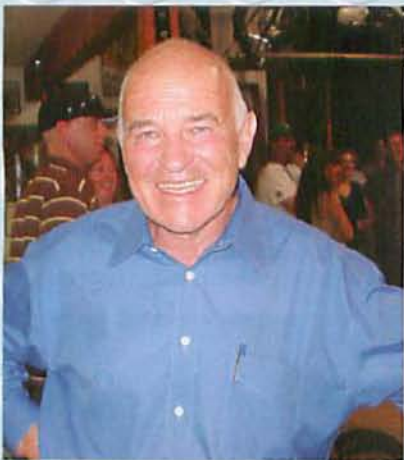
## LAIRD KNIGHT

You might not recognize his name, but we'll bet you recognize his race promotion company, Granny Gear Productions. Laird is the guy responsible for introducing endurance racing to mountain biking with his 24 Hours of Canaan mountain bike team relay race. These events put the fun back into race events that had become too intimidating for new riders. Riders who never raced could race a 24-hour event with a bunch of friends and have a blast no matter where they finished. His events have attracted up to 1700 racers.

## STAN KOZIATEK



There is not a more unlikely member of our "Most Influential People" than Stan Koziatek. Working in his garage in Big Flats, New York (no, we didn't make that up), Stan devised the NoTubes tubeless tire system, which has become the preferred method of converting a standard mountain bike wheel into tubeless and keeping tubeless tires from going flat. Stan's secret sauce has been often imitated but never equaled. A tire engineer for an unnamed company gave Stan the ultimate compliment saying, "We have a tire sealant but use Stan's. It is the only stuff that works." Anyone who can almost eliminate flats from mountain biking deserves to be on this list.



## HORST LEITNER

You cannot overestimate the influence this man has had on mountain biking. His original suspension design, the Horst Link (now owned by Specialized and called FSR), served notice to every bike maker that slapping a spring or elastomer on a bike and calling it suspension would no longer cut it. The Horst Link forced other designers to come up with suspension that really worked for mountain biking.

## NED OVEREND



Ned nudges John Tomac out of the way as the most influential mountain bike racer of all time. He has so many championships to his credit that there are too many to list. The amazing thing about this guy's career is that it is not over yet. Ned won another national championship last year. His full-time job is working for Specialized as a product tester, racer and visionary. He is a familiar face at cycling events where he is easily approachable and willing to spend time with anyone and everyone.



## CHARLIE LITSKY

Charlie made mountain biking a legitimate professional sport as the agent for top stars like John Tomac and Tinker Juarez. Riders were often taken advantage of until Charlie got them paid for the impact they had on product sales. And even riders not signed to Charlie benefited from his efforts. But Charlie was more than a shrewd business negotiator; he was in love with riding, an announcer second to none and one of mountain biking's biggest cheerleaders. Sadly, Charlie died in 1993 at the age of 33 from a massive heart attack. He was announcing a race at the time.

## MIKE SINYARD

In terms of dollars and cents, Mike has to be the richest man on our "25 Most Influential People In Mountain Biking" as the founder and owner of Specialized Bicycles. He deserves every penny. Mike started out selling imported Italian bicycle components to bike shops out of a Volkswagen van. When Schwinn management failed to see the importance of mountain bikes, it was Mike who stepped in and stepped over the company Ignaz Schwinn founded in 1860 by introducing the world to the Specialized Stumpjumper. What may have been more important was Mike's realization that bike tires available at the time were holding mountain-bike evolution back. No problem; he made his own.

## JOHN TOMAC

Every new sport needs a rock star, and Johnny T was ours. His go-from-the-gun-and-hope-I-don't-blow-up style changed the way mountain bikes were raced. And since most early racers came with a roadie background, Johnny introduced something else to them: the bike-handling skills and the style of a motocross racer. John was the last top professional to excel at cross-country and downhill. Heck, the guy even won a National Criterium Championship! Still involved with a bike brand that carries his name and also with Kenda tires, Johnny spends a lot of time coaching his youngest son, Eli, an up-and-coming motocross professional.

## DAVE WIENS

Dave made every mountain biker proud when he beat Lance Armstrong and 1,498 other riders at the Leadville 100. People who know Dave only from his Leadville wins are missing a lot of history. Dave epitomizes the mountain bike ethic as a racer who got into the sport, and remains in the sport, because he loves riding mountain bikes. Dave trained almost exclusively off-road while many pros only rode the dirt on race days and were roadies the rest of the time. He lives in the coldest place in America (Gunnison, Colorado), and even that doesn't slow him down. In addition to being a great representative for our sport, he is a true gentleman and proud father and is married to Olympic mountain bike racer and bronze medalist Susan De Mattei. □



## SCOTT TEDRO

Depending on your point of view, the American cross-country race scene was in decline or, at best, in a holding pattern until Scott Tedro blew into the sport and applied defibrillation to its weakly beating heart. Scott, a guy whose life was turned around when he discovered mountain biking, formed Team Sho-Air, but that was just the beginning. He rejuvenated professional cross-country racing by paying a purse 25-riders deep at Pro XCT events (the year before, there was no purse) and later formed the US Cup and Triple Crown All-Mountain Pro Series. The best news is that Scott treats the amateur riders with as much respect as the pros.



## PAUL TURNER

Paul is the guy who started RockShox, and what we remember best about his first fork is that it didn't stink. From prototype on to the first production suspension fork, Paul took all he had learned as a motocross racer and mechanic and applied it to his bicycle fork. Scoffed at at the time by the sport's elite, guess who got the last laugh? Paul is retired and living in Hawaii.