

SPINNING, THE STUFF OF LIFE

If making a perfect circle was simple, we wouldn't need a compass in geometry class, the Egyptians wouldn't have needed to discover Pi, perfect, freehand-drawn circles wouldn't be the goal of aspiring artists, and cyclists would have it a lot easier.

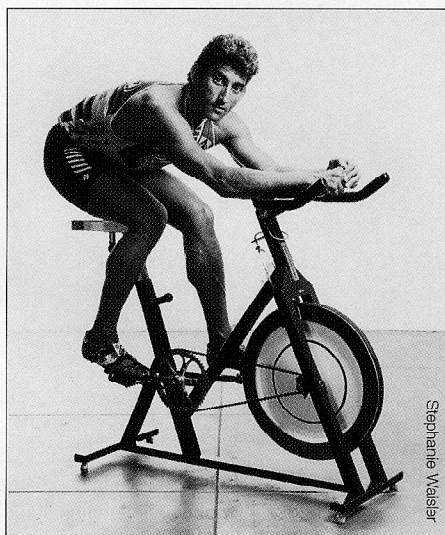
Nothing is more central to the sport of cycling than The Spin, spinning the pedals in a perfect round circle. There have been scores of articles on developing the perfect spin, lots of coaches, numerous products and, yet, when the dust clears, The Spin is still just out of reach. Interestingly, spinning is still viewed almost solely from a mechanistic point of view. This misses much of the point, though. Subconsciously, our desire to improve our spin is a reflection of our quest for perfection.

Cycling is one realm where perfection seems attainable. Mastery can come to the diligent—and sometimes the flagellant. The chief manifestation of this potential is The Spin — the flag of excellence that Masters carry to inspire others in their wake.

Who are these Masters of the Spin, who appreciate both the physical dexterity AND the intrinsic meaning of The Spin? They're not pros, not Olympians; they're not even traditional cyclists. Instead, they are wide-eyed participants in the hottest new trend in the fitness club scene in LA and New York. Invented by black belt martial artist and former Race Across America (RAAM) bicycle racer Johnny G (short for Goldberg), Spinning is a total body aerobic fitness program that uses special single gear stationary bikes, music and the instructor's motivational efforts to cke out the best workout and best possible spin from the participants. Living by the motto, "Let Go, Get Fit, Live Life, Spin," G's athletes learn far, far more than just how to elevate their heartrate or burn fat. "In Spinning, as in life, there will always be new hills to climb and new challenges to face. If you continue to spin and actively pursue fitness, then strength, awareness and balance will surely be yours," explains G.

I'll never forget the day I received a call from Johnny G inviting me to come to LA

and participate in one of his Spinning classes. "I think we can do some powerful things together, Chris," he said. In LA shortly thereafter and heading to the posh Loews Hotel on the beach in Santa Monica for one of G's classes, I kept remembering what I'd seen of G before: when he won the RAAM



by **Chris Kostman**

qualifier hands-down in 1986, he had a brand new, black Mercedes for a support vehicle. At the following RAAM in 1987, he had a less stellar performance and dropped out halfway across. G was back in 1989 with a Range Rover support vehicle and a swank-looking crew and placed 12th on the tough LA to NY course. Since then, he's earned black belts in two different martial arts disciplines and has become one of the most sought out personal trainers in the Hollywood jet set scene as well. He's trained Kenny Rogers, Brook Shields, Dolly Parton and others, and has even appeared on *Geraldo*. Even the *New York Times* has annointed him. So I knew that a Johnny G Spinning Class would be no small production, whatever it was. But nothing prepared me for what I experienced...

The fifteen or so of us rode beefy stationary "Johnny G Spinner" bikes, while G rode an identical bike perched on a small stage and facing us all. First we just spun and warmed up a bit on our own, getting our bike adjusted correctly. Things changed

quickly, though, once G began the ten second countdown that would begin the actual class. With us all chiming in with the countdown and picking up the pace on our bikes, the low hum of spinning cranks and chains took over the room. The lights were soon extinguished and music blared from speakers in each corner of the mirrored room. Things were getting serious.

The next fifty minutes were a blur in a sweat lodge. We rode fast, we rode slow, we pedaled in the saddle, we pedaled out of the saddle, we did things I've never seen done before on a bike. Like pedaling no-hands and holding our arms straight up until the lack of blood made our arms scream. Or doing forceful breathing exercises while making different arm motions in the air in front of us. Or spinning the cranks around so fast that it seemed like a loss of concentration just might have made the bike flip over on top of us. Or listening to G say things like "let the roof disappear overhead and let your mind explode into the cosmos above. Become one with your bike, with the universe, with yourself. Defeat this hill and you defeat all of the challenges in your life!"

Before the class was over, my quads were blown and I was seeing stars, but I wasn't hallucinating or going hypoglycemic. Instead I discovered my union with the cosmos, my small but significant spot in the intertwining cycles of life. Yes, for a brief moment, I was Illuminated.

The lessons learned in that one class have forever changed the way I ride my bike, not to mention my view of my role in the universe. And I can vouch for two things about G and his students: One, I've never seen any cyclist spin anywhere near as well as G and his "non-cyclists" do; Two, I've never before met cyclists with such clear vision of What It All Means.

So my query is this: Have the egos and technology gone amuck in our sport separated The Rest Of Us from our inborn gifts to realize perfection as we ride our bikes in this universe? I'm not sure, but I, for one, am riding fixed gear and rollers a whole lot these days, just in case. See ya on the Wheel of Life! •