

My cycling glory – and Bradley's too...

Bradley 'Mr Cool' Wiggins – the greatest cyclist in the world. A man I have shared a village hall with and a man I once disqualified from an event and, because you ask, he raced with a Zipp 1080 front wheel. Any the wiser? Thought not.

Nobody seems able to quite work him out – I can. He is a very typical cyclist of the no-nonsense variety. Cyclists and particularly time-trialists are not showmen. In fact the skin suits are at odds with the wearer. When time trialling began, they wore black to be invisible. Times have changed.

I am going to unashamedly name drop in this column. I am a cycling time trialist with three National Championships to my name, so I feel I can. Cycling time trials are on the ascendance so I am going to ask you to forgive me. This once.

On the day Bradley and I shared the village hall he took the 10-mile record with a time of 17 minutes 58 seconds on a course in Cumbria. Yes, Cumbria. Four years later, Michael Hutchinson – a floppy-haired solicitor-cum-writer-cum Olympic commentator for the BBC, took it from him by one second with an average speed of 33.4mph on a road in Hull.

An Olympic gold medal was also claimed during the Olympics by the American Kristin Armstrong in the female cycling time trial. I would like to lay claim to being half Armstrong. It is my crooked little finger that singles me out – I'm told. Armstrongs are proven cyclists – my uncle Bryan for one, and Lance.

For all those Olympians out there, it is their day job. For those cyclists, the road is their office. They know that, without injury, come their day they can physically perform, and it will be instinctive. What they don't know is how they will mentally perform. They need an edge.

Being an Olympian is not unlike all aspects of life. You get back what you put in. Is that Olympian drive something you are born with? Or is there a demon at work? I think there is. I believe you need something to propel you.



Carol won the Ladies National Cycling Time Trials 24-Hour Championship in 2006, with a distance of 445.461 miles. It was the third-longest distance covered by a female in its 58-year history.

I have to thank an official who thought girls and distance cycling didn't go together for my first 12-hour glory. With a desire to prove him wrong I took the North District course record with a distance of 240 miles followed by a National Championship a few years later with a distance of 243 miles.

I have always been of the belief that you should allow life to flow and evolve. You must serve an apprenticeship. For the Olympians it's four years. I would say I was rocket-fired for my 24-hour Championship. An unjust result in the previous year's 12-hour and a desire to allow myself 'time off' to take a honeymoon six weeks later were my driving force.

Father was very against this gruelling feat: team 'me' consisted of just my soon-to-be husband and panic.

I have never asked the question, but I expect Father was always going to be by his girl in her day of need and he didn't disappoint. On his arrival our team became three and at that moment I knew I could achieve what my heart had set out to do.

Thrilled to see I had my best opposition in the form of prolific distance cyclists Lynne Taylor and Marina Bloom, there was a chance I could shine. Lynne holds the Road Record for 1,000 miles. She did it in 2 days 19 hours and 38 minutes and with Marina the 24-hour was home territory.

A win with the third-longest distance in a 58-year history was the proudest and happiest day of my life. Christine Roberts has held the competition record since 1993 and she was a Carlisle girl. She would encourage me to cycle as a teenager. So who is going to be next? Carlisle girls clearly have something special. I will be holding auditions.

Stage four of the Tour of Britain arrives in Carlisle on September 12. If all this talk of cycling has put you into gear then head down to the Old Town Hall. You know who will be there.

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