



Challenge Magazine Spring 2003

"Runners Amazing Comeback No Surprise to April"



Rx for **Fun!**



Adaptive Cycling Expands Recreational Outlets

By Ian L. Lawless
Adaptive Adventures

Outdoor recreation is a must for any healthy person today. In recent years, cycling has become one of the most popular forms of outdoor recreation. Cycling has always been a great way to enjoy the outdoors, improve cardiovascular fitness, and socialize with friends and family. With the exception of the occasional spill, cycling is low impact and not detrimental to the body.

Until recently, not everyone had the luxury of hopping on a bike and going for a ride. Technological advances, however, have opened the door for the disabled community to enjoy cycling. With help from adaptive sports and recreation programs across the country, almost everyone can hop on a bike and feel the wind in their face.

Adaptive Cycling is really a very simple concept: modify and adapt cycles to suit

mobility impairment (i.e.; spinal cord, CP, MS) to propel a 3-wheeled cycle using their arms. In the last five years, handcycle development has exploded to become the most popular and widely practiced form of adaptive cycling. In addition, it is the newest and largest component of the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) Disabled Cycling Program. An event has been added for the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece, although it excludes divisions for women and mid-level injuries.



Handcycle racing has exploded in the last 5 years.

an individual rider. We're not talking about a few strange bikes for a few individuals either. Disability affects each and every one of us, and I can practically guarantee that you already know—or will soon meet—someone with a disability who could benefit from adaptive cycling equipment. The beauty of adaptive cycling, is that it is truly a multi-disability sport. No two disabilities are identical, and there are endless adaptations that can be made.

Fortunately, the last ten years of research and development have produced a variety of adaptive cycling equipment, making it possible for nearly anyone to ride. There are adapted bikes for amputees, paraplegics, quadriplegics, hemiplegics, sight-impaired, cerebral palsy, and so on. The list is endless. Most of the time, the modification is slight: a "standard" 2-wheeled bicycle with a retrofit brakeset (2 brakes on one lever, for instance) for an amputee, or a tandem with a blind "stoker" on the back, or a "holster" for an above knee amputee.

One of the most significant developments, has been the handcycle. Introduced about 15 years ago, handcycles enable riders with a lower-limb

Handcycling is the great equalizer. Unlike its predecessor, the racing wheelchair, handcycle's come in a variety of shapes and sizes, are easy to get in and out of, and have a very short learning curve for new riders. The racing wheelchair has always been intended for one purpose: racing.

This all changed with the development of the handcycle. Manufacturers began to realize that only a small percentage of the disabled community really wanted to race, but the rest still wanted to exercise. Thus, the handcycle was introduced as a strictly recreational piece of equipment, enabling it to develop in a more sensible fashion. Today, there is a mass-produced handcycle for almost everybody. Of course, racing versions weren't far behind. Today's cutting-edge racing handcycle's are technological marvels ridden by elite athletes whose average speed inches closer to that of able-bodied racers every year.



Demo Days and introductory clinics are a great way to try the newest equipment.

Its recent inclusion in the Paralympics program means that handcycling is here to stay and that developments will continue. Invacare's Chris Peterson, a long-time leader in the production of wheelchair sports equipment, is leading the pack in handcycle development.

"We sell more handcycle's than almost anything else, and I don't see that trend changing," says Peterson.

This prediction is echoed elsewhere, too. Sunrise Medical's Jim Black, who has managed the Quickie line-up of athletes and equipment for years, notes, "Handcycling is where it's at — It's just where everything is headed. It's just such an accessible sport, you can't ignore it."

Still, cycling equipment has never been cheap. Adaptive cycling equipment is no exception. Modifying a \$1,500-plus bicycle for an amputee is obviously going to cost a few bucks. Buying a brand new handcycle can set you back anywhere from \$1,000 to \$3,500. Ouch! It's also hard to plop down that much money without being sure of what style of bike you want. Most bike shops don't stock handcycle's or tandems, or bikes with holsters for the potential buyer to view and test ride. Fortunately, there are some other options for new riders:

Abilities Expo

Each year, a traveling trade show

various adaptive cycles and connects people who want to ride together. For starters, try these links:

- www.handcycle-friends.org — This resource connects people across the country who ride handcycle's;
- www.ushf.org — This is the national governing body for handcycling in the U.S.;
- groups.yahoo.com/group/handcyclists — This is an online e-mail discussion list that includes hundreds of handcyclists with whom you can share information and learn all about handcycling.

Adaptive Sports Programs

Probably the single-most important resource for the new or potential cyclist, adaptive sports programs are often grassroots efforts that offer new rider camps and/or clinics, and provide expert instruction as well as a variety of equipment for test rides.

Denver-based Adaptive Adventures (www.edaptive.org) provides a huge cross-country network of clinics.

Chicago-based Creative Mobility (www.creativemobility.org) has an adaptive cycling trailer with just about everything under the sun.

U.S. Handcycling Federation (USHF) is a Colorado-based organization dedicated specifically to handcycling. The USHF is the leader in developing high-profile handcycling events in the U.S. For details, contact www.ushf.org, e-mail info@ushf.org or call (303) 910-9851.



known as the Abilities Expo visits major cities across the U.S. Typically, major handcycle manufacturers are there to display their bikes, and let you ride them.

The Internet

Modern technology has enabled people everywhere to connect with each other. There is a plethora of information on the Web that covers

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So how do you learn more? According to Joel Berman, executive director of Adaptive Adventures, attending a new rider clinic is vital.



Cycling lets the entire family enjoy the outdoors together.

“You can come to one of our clinics, try out any bike you want, meet other riders, get tips from a national team coach, and sign-up for individualized instruction and/or consultation all in one day. You can be out riding with your friends and family in no time!” Berman points out. He adds that, although not everyone can afford a new handcycle, many programs across the country are increasing their inventory of bikes.

“We have 12 handcycle's, including five children's models, so we can put people out on the road even if they're not yet ready to buy a bike.”

reserved just for elite athletes. Sometimes, the greatest funding sources may be in your own community. Begin by checking with a rehab hospital or with a disabilities resources center.

In the meantime, if you're looking to ride, or know someone who is, get online, get outside, or get on the phone — because your outdoor experience is just around the corner! Ride On!

For more information, contact Adaptive Adventures: (877) 679-2770; e-mail: info@edaptive.org; or visit www.edaptive.org.



The USHF National Handcycle Championships attracts the best handcyclists in the U.S.

Photos courtesy of Adaptive Adventures

1st Annual High Altitude Handcycle Camp
presented by Adaptive Adventures
May 27-29, 2003 in Breckenridge, CO

This adventurous trend for people with disabilities is catching-on all across the U.S. Contact Adaptive Adventures for a list of organizations in your area that may have a bike for you to test ride. E-mail us at info@edaptive.org.

There are also some organizations which can help purchase a bike, utilizing grant programs. Try the Challenged Athletes Foundation (www.challengedathletes.org) which distributes over \$1 million in grants each year to disabled athletes. Don't be afraid to apply! Grants are not

The camp is open to all levels and abilities, from elite racers to recreational weekend riders. You must have your own handcycle unless pre-arranged with Adaptive Adventures. Camp Activities: Experiential riding, equipment maintenance and fit, nutrition and diet workshops, learn to race workshops, equipment demos, race skills, long distance training workshop, and much more!

For more information, contact Ian Lawless: (303) 910-9851, or e-mail: highaltitude@edaptive.org or visit the web site: www.edaptive.org

Racing is Cycle Camp Focus



The 2003 U.S. Disabled "Cycling Introduction to Racing" Camp slated for June 15-22 at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., is being hosted by the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes, in conjunction with

Disabled Sports USA and the National Disability Sport Alliance.

Open to disabled cyclists age 17 and older, the camp will focus primarily on road racing, with instruction in track racing as well. Athletes eligible for participation include: blind and visually-impaired cyclists who race on tandem bikes with a sighted partner, cyclists with cerebral palsy or head injury who use both standard bikes and tricycles, and amputee cyclists who ride single bikes. Emphasis is on identifying potential athletes to compete for the U.S. in future international races and Paralympic

Games, according to Pam Fernandes, camp coordinator.

Camp staff members will include certified cycling coaches, a U.S. Cycling Federation-certified mechanic, and guest speakers from a variety of sports-related fields. Activities will include riding an average of twice daily in skill drills and practicing race simulations, plus evening lectures and fitness testing.

While some subsidy will be provided to most riders, participants will be responsible for a portion of the camp cost. Food and housing will be provided at the U.S. Olympic Training Center. Riders should bring their own bike and gear; tandem riders are encouraged to bring their own partners.

For more information or to request an application, contact Pam Fernandes at pamala@quik.com or call (781) 449-9563. Interested riders may also visit USABA's Web site (www.usaba.org) for more information and to download an application.