

Three Ways to Make Fitness Fit

If you're an avid competitive track cyclist, you may find you'll receive interesting offers from time to time. Bill Giffen, 32, can attest to this: After four years as a "serious rider," Giffen was asked to appear in a promotional film piece for the internationally famous Tour of Texas event. Giffen will play the part of a Soviet cyclist, he says, who is "knocked off" competitively by an American. "My days are numbered; I've already read the script," he laughs.

The same does not hold true, obviously, for Giffen in real life — in 1987, he was the Veterans' National Sprint Bronze Medalist. His moment of triumph, so to speak, occurred at the Alkek Velodrome before a hometown crowd. "Things seemed to go my way in 1987," Giffen says modestly. The following year, he finished fourth in the state in the senior (18- to 30-year-old) category, improving 1987's seventh-place finish. Not one to rest on his laurels, Giffen now eyes goals that include a top three seniors' category finish in the state, plus a first in state, veterans' category.

To reach those goals, Giffen must follow a stringent workout regimen that requires a 20- to 30-hour-per-week commitment — no easy task when one also has a full-time career as the owner of an electrical contract-

relegated to a secondary position. "Because I own my own business, I work my schedule around my racing. When I get real poor, I go back to work," he says, laughing. When Giffen's professional load is light, he usually spends three to four days a week on track training, and two more days doing road cycling; both activities are supplemented with weight-training.

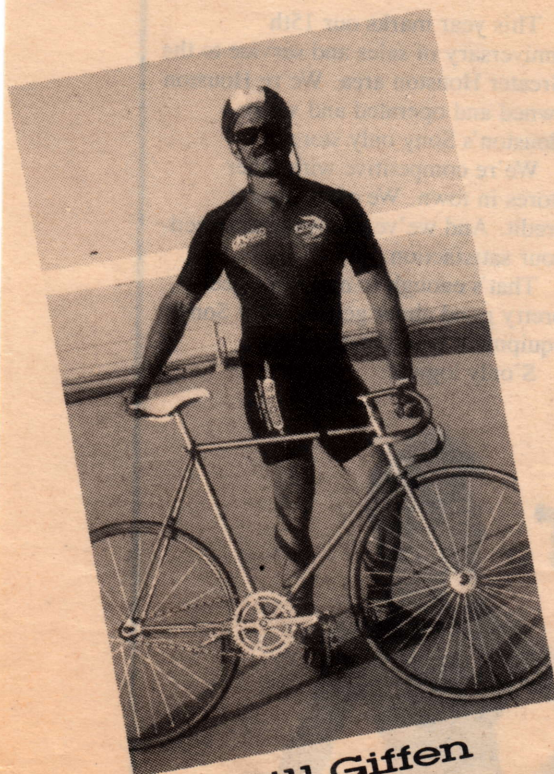
While most would agree that this kind of workout would inevitably yield a fit physique, Giffen freely admits that exercise is not a motivating factor. "I'm not doing this for fitness — I'm doing it for the competitive reason and the thrill of it," he says. Giffen is almost lyrical as he describes the excitement that accompanies the sport of track racing, in which cyclists often exceed 40-mile-per-hour speeds. "I really like the thrill of going fast...the power and the feel of centrifugal force. When you hit that curve, it really feels good..."

Formerly a competitive water-skiier, Giffen was initially attracted to cycling when he sold his power boat. "I had a bicycle at the time, and I just started riding it. I did some longer road rides; I did terrible road racing, though, because of my size."

However, Giffen, who weighs 210 pounds and is six-foot-two, found his frame was well-suited to track racing. "I'm built more like a sprinter, more muscular. Road people are generally lighter — they don't carry a lot of weight," he adds. Track racing, he notes "is so different from road racing. Everything happens 100 times quicker. Your concentration has to be higher, and your reflexes faster."

Even the bikes used for track racing differ from those used for road racing, adds Giffen. "The bikes are quicker handling. There are no brakes, and the gears are fixed. You're always pedaling, never coasting." Unlike most road cyclists, Giffen notes that track sprinters are "not so much concerned with the weight of the bike as its stiffness." For his needs, Giffen has found a custom-built Romic with tandem tubing works well: "It's very heavy-walled, very stiff. The slightly sloping top tube actually lowers my body, and gives me more of an aerodynamic shape."

Like many competitive cyclists, Giffen exhibits somewhat of a maverick personality. He refuses to go in for trendy, color-coordinated cycling gear, and, with the exception of a jersey announcing the name of his sponsor, Ye Seekers, he prefers simple T-shirts and sweats. "There's something about wearing a name that I didn't earn, like the Tour de France. When I see a guy in one of those, I want to go up and ask, 'So, you were in the Tour de France?'" he laughs. "And I know that the guy probably cycles only ten miles a week!" After talking with Giffen, however, it becomes apparent that even though this competitive cyclist may never choose to wear the Tour de France name, he most assuredly will make a name for himself.



Bill Giffen

ing business. "Working out two or three hours a day is not too bad — but sometimes I'll do a two-hour morning workout, and then go to the track for three hours in the evening, after work," he explains, detailing his very demanding schedule.

Giffen sometimes concentrates on his training program to the extent that work is