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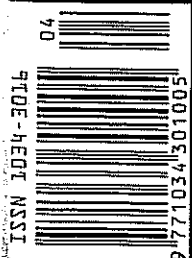
July-August 2004

\$6.95 inc GST



ROAD BIKES

What you need to know



The Cappuccino Club

What is the attraction of road riding? Why are the cyclists so obsessed with it? **Helen Katz** decided to investigate the Cappuccino Club and find out what makes these riders tick.

he radio screams in my ear. It's the crack of dawn. I groan and turn over as my husband quickly turns off the alarm and creeps into the bathroom. There awaits his gear – the flamboyant lycra clown suit that he will wear for the next two to four hours, together with the space-age helmet, the funny shoes and glasses. Has he gone mad? Where is he going at this time of the morning, when the bed is warm and I'm in it? The Cappuccino Club boys are going riding!

Just over a year ago I became a cycling widow. Before that I was a golf widow, a gym widow, a morning-running-group widow, (always a work widow) and now it's road-bike riding.

Approximately 45 riders make up the club. The ages of this fit

group of men and women range between late 20s and early 60s, with the majority in their 40s and 50s. They are mostly married and are businesspeople and professionals who can arrive late for work some days or take a few hours off in the middle of a weekday, without anyone caring.

I discovered that there are some outstanding sportsmen among them. "I've been doing triathlons for ten years," says a business consultant. "I've competed in 80 of them and won a few. But it's off season at the moment, so I'm swimming two-and-a-half kilometres, twice a week."

That's as well as cycling with the group four times a week. When do his wife and four children get to see him?

A similar story is told by a doctor. "I swim twice a week," he says, "run three to four times a week, cycle three to four times a week and some days I ride and run. I exercise six days a week." Phew!

Another passionate rider, an architect, was a serious runner from the age of 15, who took up cross-training (running, cycling and swimming). However his knees finally gave out in 2000 so, as he puts it: "Can't run, so now I'm a biathlete."

Others suffer Achilles problems, which also prevents them from running and other "pounding" activities. They were looking for an alternative that would keep them fit and trim. Cycling was the answer for them too.

"I went from 90 kilos to 76 kilos," says one Cappa, "and lost 10 kilos in the first year that I started to ride. People thought I had cancer or a mistress – or both!"

Even though the motive behind these people taking up road cycling is usually health and fitness, there is a passion for the sport that is not so simply explained.

One member said he began cycling to "do a sport and combine it with an affordable, beautiful piece of equipment". On the same track (excuse the pun), was the rider who said that it was exhilarating to "be able to go so fast".

Playing with "boys' toys" is obviously fun, but it's not just the bicycles. The lycra multi-coloured bodysuits; the aerodynamic helmets; the cool glasses; the gadgets that





road bikes

measure kilometres travelled, heart-rates, kilojoules, cadence, and speed are all part of the attraction. As are the gear clusters, cranks, wheels and frames with names that are just as important as high-fashion labels.

The social aspect of the club is also very important. Members have formed strong friendships within the group. In some cases, new riders were drawn into the club because their friends were already involved. A doctor said he joined in order to catch up with his accountant, who was then a keen Cappa and invited him on a ride. The accountant never showed up, but the doctor met up with an old school friend and so continued to ride with the club.



Despite the close friendships, the seriousness of the cycling and the rivalry between members should not be underestimated. As one rider says, "One for all, and every man for himself!" Riding with the Cappas can be a challenge and new members take forever to earn their stripes. It can take them quite some time to be able to keep up with the "guns" of the group on the flats and to conquer the hills.

The Cappuccino Club, which is an informal group of riders, has been in existence for about five years, although four of the members have been riding together for about 15 years. (The prize for

longevity in the sport goes to the 57-year-old engineer who has been riding seriously for 30 years.) Not all riders participate in every ride. Most prefer to ride three times a week. However the keenest and fittest of the group go out four or more times, and they clock up between 250 and 300km per week.

Club members don't restrict themselves to cycling around Melbourne. They have ridden in regional Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, and some have also cycled in other parts of the world including Spain, Italy, Fiji, Israel, the Hawaiian Islands, and along parts of the Tour de France route with Phil Anderson. Last year, a small group went on a memorable riding tour of the Canadian Rockies. In 2004, ten Cappas are planning a picturesque and exciting nine-day ride along the Amalfi Coast in Italy.

At the end of each year, there's a tongue-in-cheek Cappuccino Club Awards night. This is a fun-filled evening where Cappas and their partners share good food, some tall stories and lots of humour in a private room in an inner city restaurant. The most prestigious "Man of the Year" trophy is awarded to the rider who has excelled over all terrains and who has missed very few rides.

The Cappuccino Club provides a motivating, friendly, and challenging environment for people who share the same passionate interest. Cycling is not just a sport, it's an obsession that allows the riders to keep fit, remain healthy, maintain their desired weight and have a positive mental attitude towards their work, family and social life. The coffee and conversation at the end of each ride are just a bonus.

LOOKING FOR A CLUB IN YOUR STATE?

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