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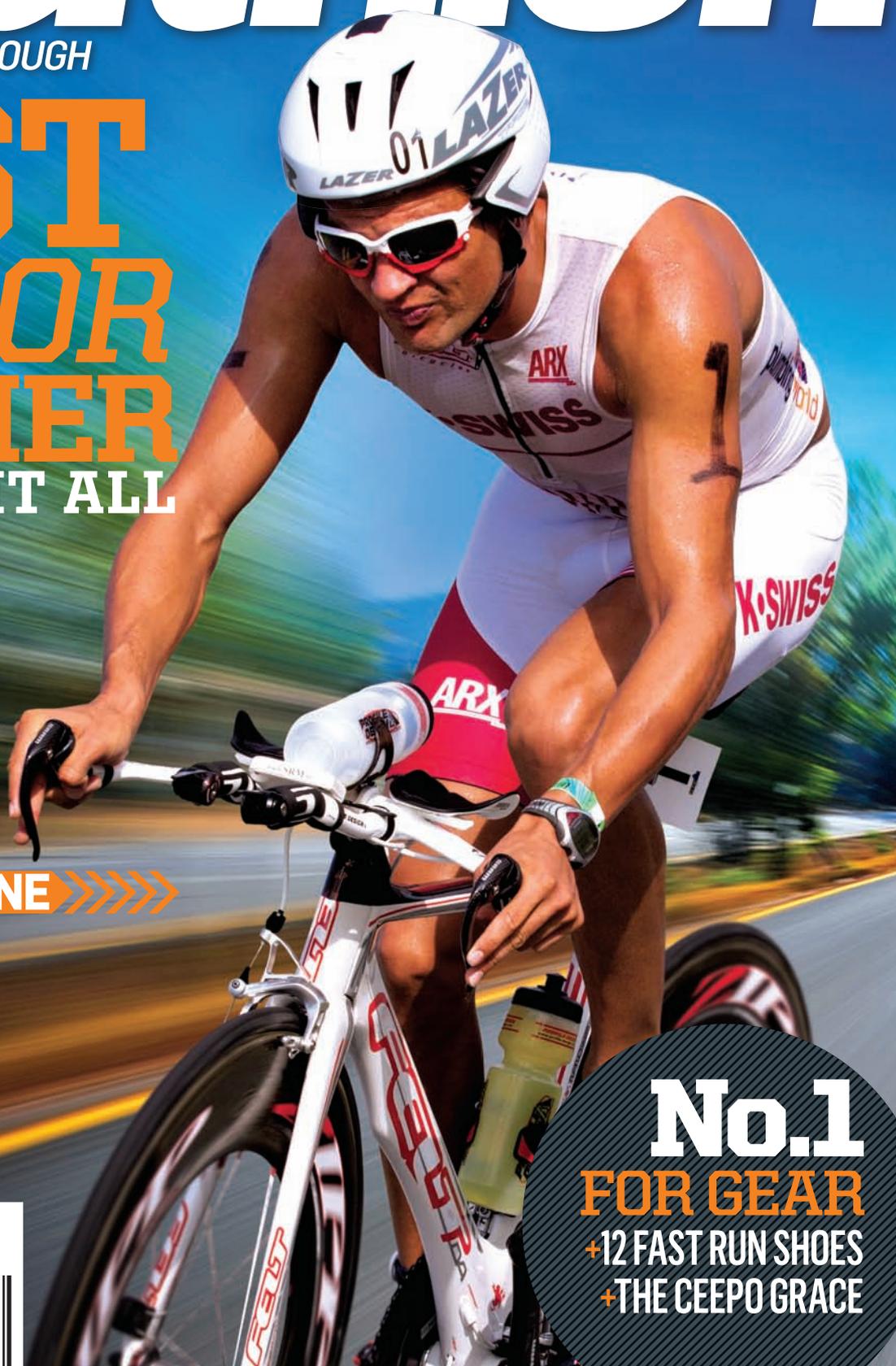
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MISTER TRIATHLON

WE CHAT TO **SCOTT TINLEY** ABOUT LIFE AFTER TRIATHLON

TRIATHLONS HAVE only been around since the early 1980's, with humble beginnings in the USA and Hawaii. During the early days of triathlon, there was one particular man that stood out from the crowd – his name was Scott Tinley, who became known as “Mr Triathlon”. His über-cool looks, quirky outfits and extreme fitness were what made athletes around the world want to be just like him.

I induct Scott Tinley into *Triathlon Plus* SA's Hall of Fame for a number of reasons. At one stage he was the fittest triathlete on the planet. He was the epitome of what triathlon represented. His days of winning and being an outstanding triathlete are over, but he now fulfils another awe-inspiring role – one that most of you know all too well – he is the age grouper with a life, family and other interests besides triathlon.

What's your take on the cult following you built up in the early 80's when triathlon and Scott Tinley were one and the same? Did you realise what an impact you were making in a sport that was still unknown to the general public?

Cult? Man, if someone confused blonde hair for purple Kool-Aid I can't be responsible for that. In truth, it wasn't me or any combination of other early athletes that catalysed the growth of the sport, but a combination of desire, demographic shifts, and something innately powerful woven within the cultural fabric of three essential endurance sports. We didn't aim the gun. The target had always been there...waiting.

Compression socks, power meters, heart rate monitors - you never had any of these so-called 'essential' training and racing tools and yet you

performed well. Does the Average Joe need these items or should they just be 'training hard'?

The science of triathlon was and is part of its attraction. People are gear-heads and for whatever reason, equate technology with speed. There is nothing wrong with that so long as they don't delude themselves. Toys are fun. Training is work. The latter delivers the goods while the former enables us in some way or other. I would've liked a bit more technology to emphasise my passion-based program as I made some laughable mistakes. But that said, not many people get a chance to function as a living lab rat in their own lives. I wouldn't change anything.

Neon apparel and retro Speedo briefs (aka Kenny Souza style) were part of your generation. Would you pitch up at a race today kitted out in 80's style?

Neon is as fashion does. I raced a sprint tri last weekend in some pretty flashy colours. But you have to be able to pull it off—can't be too big, too cocky, or too serious. Fashion is fun. When it gets serious then you need to unplug your ego from the wall mirror.

Life after a Pro Career – how did you adapt? Give some advice to the many pro athletes who will someday be “past their sell-by date”?

It has been said before, the pro athlete is one of the only members of our society to die twice. The sooner we realise that at retirement the best parts of our lives are over, the sooner we can go on to having rewarding and fulfilling lives in a new, perhaps more authentic identity. I spent ten years unearthing everything I could about the subject and then one day, I gave myself a Viking funeral, just put all my notes and my old jerseys and former selves on a surfboard, set them alight and pushed them out to sea.

The big four – Dave Scott, Mark Allen, Scott Molina and ST – do you guys ever hook up and tell war stories?

These guys are still very special to me. My wife and I went to Scott Molina's 50th birthday party in New Zealand last February and had the best time. I see Dave and Mark from time to time, they're still very fit and making their way through life. They are all coaches - very good ones, I think - and perhaps wrestle with how to grow old gracefully when time and tide tends to pull down our waistlines and dreams. The sport has not fully embraced its history yet. I spent three years writing the definitive history of triathlon and people couldn't be bothered to care. Fair enough. We had a good run at it, put up some good marks, made a lot of friends. But it's not our time. It hasn't been for a long while.

Who's the funniest triathlon character you know?

Hands down, it's Jimmy Riccitello. The guy can create and tell stories that become urban myths before the sun goes down. Back when smoking was allowed on airplanes, he'd eat a special mix of granola to cause serious gas, and then walk back through the smoking section to “crop dust” the smokers with unearthly flatulence as payback.

And who was your toughest competitor ever?

In his own way, I'd have to give the nod to Mike Pigg for his unrelenting commitment to win at every opportunity. Quickest shower, largest grocery bill, longest piss, worst headache, dirtiest jeans...Mike Pigg would compete at anything that involved more than one person and existed in everyday life. He wanted to win so bad that after a while, instead of taking his bet, you just handed him ten dollars when you met him on the streets and walked away. Nice kid, good family. Tougher than a rusty railroad spike. ●

