

with the editor

Stephen Madden



WELCOME TO THE CLUB

It's been a central tenet of this magazine that if you want to have a long, happy relationship with a bicycle, then you should buy it at a reputable bike shop. The store's experts will make sure you're on the bike that's right for you, that you get the appropriate equipment to enjoy and safeguard your ride and will, in all likelihood, give you a good deal. You'll also get a better rate on service for a bike you bought there and, if the owners come to know you as a regular, they'll probably perform minor mechanical tweaks for free. Of course, there are shops in which surly is a service philosophy, not just a brand name, and it always pays to let the buyer beware. But all in all, your best bet is to go to a shop and get to know the people who work there. ■ But there's an even more important reason to find a good shop: There's no better way to learn the culture of cycling (short of reading this magazine, of course) than by hanging around a bike store. The regulars on your weekly ride might get sick of hearing you talk about nothing but bikes and the precarious state of your physical health due to your tendency to overtrain and may eventually try to steer the conversation around to things like your family, your job, world events, etc. But you can be sure the guys at the shop will be willing to discuss Q-factor and trail in minute detail. There will be a bulletin board with fliers for local events and regular club rides, a TV playing DVDs of some long-ago spring Classic, and above it all will be the deliriously promising smell of new tires. ■ Some shops are de facto clubhouses for the local cycling community. South Mountain Cycles, the shop here in fabulous Emmaus, Pennsylvania, where our editorial offices are located, serves the best espresso in town, has free wi-fi and a flat-screen TV that's always playing something interesting. It's a place you want to hang out, because it's a place where you can discuss—before 9 a.m.—the nuances of tire pressure for a Clydesdale rider on a Pinarello F4:13. And from what I've seen, it's also a place where the local moms and dads feel comfortable having Junior's training wheels removed. ■ There are 123 bikes reviewed in this, our annual celebration of the bicycle. One of them is right for you and out there waiting, just waiting, at a bike shop. Drop in and get the relationship rolling.

Steve