

The Skinny on Cycling
Wade Wingler (wade@wingler.com)

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Anticipation

I don't remember being this excited about cycling at this time last year. A few things have changed since then--little things--important things. Last year was sort of my sophomore year of cycling. I had finally figured out the mechanics of my bike. I had completed several century rides and had accomplished several cycling goals that had been completely foreign to me just a couple of years prior. I weighed about 15 pounds less than I do right now. But, honestly, I was approaching the cycling season with a little trepidation. After all, I had recently been on television to talk about my weight loss. I was gearing up for the RAIN ride, a 160-mile monster that seemed, at the time, the Holy Grail of Indiana cycling, but also the penultimate accomplishment for my health and weight loss journey.

To summarize last season very simply: I did it. I accomplished all of my goals. I completed the RAIN ride. I kept the weight off. I was even awarded a cycling grant that would provide me the opportunity to get fitted for a custom bike, purchase that bike and then embark on a couple of cycling tours--all expenses paid! From a 317-pound couch potato, I had transformed myself into something that closely resembled an "athlete".

But then...

As the cycling season was winding down last year, I went on a number of business trips throughout the US and Canada. I lived in hotels for about six out of eight weeks in the fall. I stuck to the Sugar Busters diet, which has been one of the key components to my weight loss, but I ate too much food, too often. I put far too few miles on my bike in the late fall and early winter.

While traveling, and through the holidays, I picked up about seven or eight pounds. I guess that's not too bad for the holidays. After all, it's a joyous time of year and there are treats that you only have during that time of year, right? After the first of the year, still sticking to the diet (but eating portions usually reserved for the high-calorie-burning cycling season), I picked up a few more pounds. I'm still not terribly out of shape, mind you. In fact, I still weigh less than when I was in high school. However, there are three of my favorite shirts that have sort of "migrated" to the back of the closet because they're just a little snug around the middle. Not too bad, but just a little snug.

As I write, I'm looking out the window at the little bit of snow that covers the ground. Yesterday at work, I bet a friend that we were finished with the snow for the year. I said, "Man! We have to be done with this snow soon. I'm ready to get out of the house and spend some time on my bike. I can't wait!"

So as I sit here, with my “off season gut”, eating an apple with organic peanut butter and drinking a cup of chocolate no-sugar-added soy milk, I realize: For me, setting goals is a critically important part of cycling, health and life. Last year I set some pretty lofty goals and truly surprised myself when I met them. Right after I met these goals, I found myself stunned--like a deer in headlights. I then made the mistake of celebrating myself into a diet and exercise backslide.

As I spend the next couple of months or so working off those extra pounds, I’m going to make a promise to myself: Just like childhood holidays, much of the joy and value of the cycling season is in anticipation. I will set goals and try hard to reach them but, as I’m celebrating those accomplishments, I will keep an eye on that next goal and, hopefully, stay on track and avoid a backslide next fall.

To borrow the words of Arthur Ashe Jr: “Success is a journey not a destination. The doing is usually more important than the outcome.”

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Wade Wingler, the author of “The Skinny on Cycling” is the father of one adorable little girl, the husband of a beautiful & talented librarian, a Yogi and an avid cyclist. His web site, www.HowILost100Pounds.com features common sense advice on losing weight without suffering and improving your cycling through healthy living.