

The Skinny on Cycling
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“I hit the lottery!”

You know how we all play that little mind-game called “How would I spend the money if I hit the lottery?” Have you ever wondered what you’d do if someone gave you several thousand dollars to blow any way you want? Have you ever hit the lottery? Well, I have. Sort of.

You see, I work for a non-profit agency, Easter Seals Crossroads in Indianapolis. Last fall I was awarded a renewal grant designed to help human service workers avoid burn out on the job. It’s literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I was blessed with several thousand dollars to spend on whatever activity, equipment, trips or training that would culminate in my feeling refreshed, renewed and ready to continue working in human services for years to come.

No, I’m not kidding and yes, we’re about to play a little game of “How did Wade spend the money on cycling?”

A little Internet research reveals some commonality among lottery winners and how they spend their fortunes. Most tend to pay off debt, provide financial assistance to family and friends, set up endowments and scholarship programs, take trips and make investments.

Although I didn’t receive millions of dollars, I was awarded enough money to make many of my cycling dreams come true. Now that I look back on how I’ve spent the money, I’m surprised at how my choices sort of mirror the choices made by those who’ve hit the mother load.

The first money I spent was on a complete fitting. During this fitting, my old road bike was adjusted and fitted with some new components so that the bike now fits like a glove. This leads to my second and most significant purchase, a Giant OCRC2 full carbon road bike. This bike rides like a dream. To me, it’s the cycling equivalent of the perfect cross between a Corvette and a fighter plane. It’s smooth, fast, light, fits me just right and looks pretty darn cool!

Because I knew that this money was a one time windfall, I decided that I needed to know how to work on this new hot rod. So, I bought a complete set of bike-specific tools and signed up for the intermediate and advanced maintenance classes at BGI on the south side. During these classes, a great guy named Shane taught me more than I could have imagined about my bike. We covered basic adjustments, repairs and, for the class’s grand finale, we actually took one of my road bikes completely apart, down to the bearings, and built it back up again.

With my new bike, a new cycling wardrobe, new mechanical knowledge, and some money left in the bank, I signed up for two fully-supported tours with Adventure Cycling Association. I just completed the first tour and you might have read my previous column about an amazing cycling experience in the Hill Country of Central Texas. By the time you're reading this column, I will be somewhere in the Columbia River Gorge enjoying my second tour, making new friends and regretting how few base miles I put in this spring. Somehow, I think I'll survive!

I've decided that any money left will go to refitting my older bike into a touring rig. Although I can't afford to trek across the country each year on fully-supported cycling tours, I have learned that there are some really great self-supported cycling tours here in Indiana and in nearby states. I've been bit by the touring bug and I'm looking forward to ways to extend this experience just a little longer.

It seems that, like those who win millions in the lottery, I've found a way to take a couple of nice vacations, bought a fancier mode of transportation that I would not have been able to afford on my own, invested in my education a bit and found a way to give a gift to my family—a few more hours of me on my bike, which not only helps me stay in shape but, I suspect, provides them with a few welcome hours of time without the burden of my endless rambling about all things cycling.

So, if you hit the cycling lottery, how would you spend it?

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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.