

EVALUATING YOUR SEASON

Take a good look at '06 to have a better '07

Winter is the time to evaluate the past racing season to make positive changes for the next one. A season evaluation should determine how your goals, likes, dislikes and attitude have changed. Although some transformations can be recognized as they happen — “you know, I don’t feel anything special about the local race series anymore” — deeper reflection can reveal other changes such as improved climbing ability or a propensity to overtrain.

Next month we’ll look at planning your 2007 season, but we can start now by gathering information about last season with this four-step process.

STEP 1

Is it time yet? It’s not a good idea to take stock of the season immediately after it ends. We all need to decompress before we can evaluate things clearly. Think about your friend who swears after every bad race he’s quitting the sport for good — until you see him the next weekend with a number pinned on. Post-race venting is normal, but your perspective becomes clearer with time. I suggest waiting at least a few weeks after your last race to begin evaluation.

STEP 2

Answer the following questions in writing:

1. What went well?
2. What didn’t go well?
3. What are your respective strengths and weaknesses?
4. What did you enjoy?
5. What didn’t you enjoy?
6. What would you have done differently?

Answering questions 4 and 5 are important, even if they seem touchy-feely. Athletes perform best when they can achieve a state of what noted psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls “flow” or what some coaches refer to as “the zone.” A prime ingredient in getting into the flow or the zone is doing the type of races and training that you enjoy. Sounds simple, right?

STEP 3

Share your answers from Step 2 with an objective person, be it your coach, teammate or anyone else you can trust who is familiar with your racing and training. Then ask them to answer the same questions about you. Your perception of

your season might not match reality, and it is this person’s job to diplomatically identify those disconnects. Your source doesn’t need to be a professional coach or even a cyclist to tell you when you seemed stressed out or happy. Offer to take them out for coffee or lunch to really get their thoughts on the subject. You may be surprised at some of the details they noticed and how your perceptions differ.

STEP 4

Gather information. If you have power meter files, go through all your data to see whether it supports, contradicts or adds to what you put together in Steps 2 and 3. If you’re new to this sort of data analysis, consider hiring a power-savvy, experienced coach to evaluate your data as a one-time consultation. Similarly, read through your training/racing log for the season. Matching up your race results from the season with your pre-season goals is an excellent way to get additional information on what went well, what didn’t and why. Perhaps many of your best results were in races of a certain type, or during periods where you approached racing with a certain attitude. These are all excellent clues as to what you’re good

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at, what you enjoy and what motivates you. Now you're ready to plan the 2007 season. We'll get to that next month. **VN**

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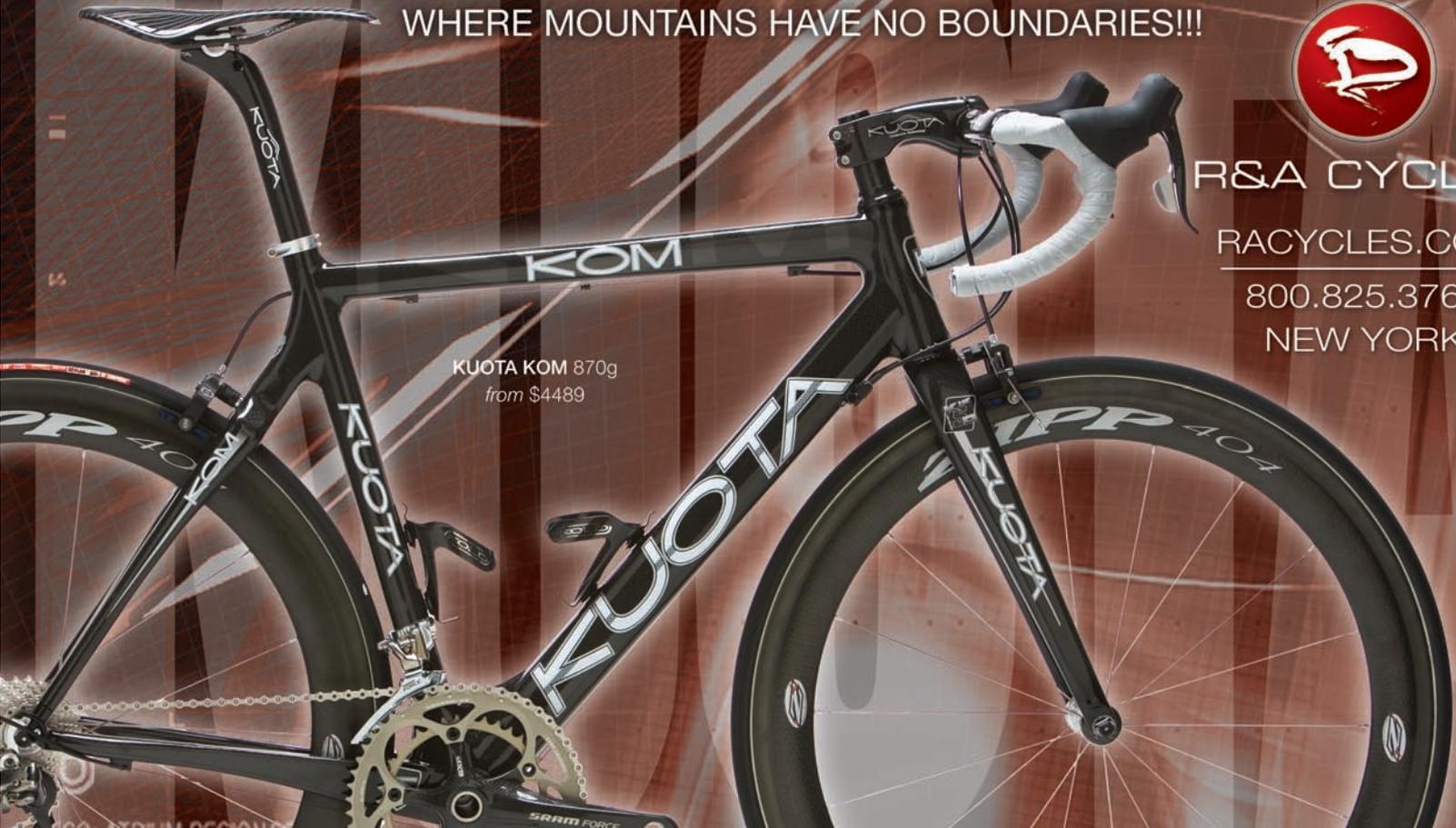
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