

WHEN THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD

One look at Bill Evans and you can tell he lives, breathes and burns for biking. Like a mighty handshake or a confident gait, it's a distinctive part of who he is. Some folks find happiness collecting stamps or rare coins—Bill rides 72 miles in 17-degree weather in a single sitting. If exercise is his love, then biking is his crush.



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Bill talks about racing the way an artist explains the ebb and flow of colors on canvas. Sitting there, you're invested in his desire, watching his eyes light up like beacons, until you find yourself reaching a definitive conclusion: This man's bike is his instrument and the open road his muse.

And to think, it all happened on a whim.

Bill Evans didn't start out as a bike racer. It wasn't like he pined for competitive racing between lunch breaks at Spotsylvania High School or classes at Virginia Commonwealth University. It was more of a fateful thing, like finding true love. You could even say that biking found him.

Fresh out of college in 1994, Bill enlisted in the Air Force, eager to explore the world and learn more about himself in the process. While there, he adopted the discipline and structure he now applies to his life and work. After six years of service, he decided to leave the military and pursue other avenues of business. It just so happened bike racing was on his path to get there.

"When I got out of the military, I was looking to do something new in terms of exercise. A few of my friends purchased mountain bikes, so I bought an old one and did one or two rides," said Evans. "As it turned out, there was a race that weekend, and I wound up finishing seventh out of a hundred riders. I never once switched gears, and I had a twenty-one-speed mountain bike at the time."

That unexpected win stoked Bill's competitive spirit. Thanks to the extreme health value of the sport, combined with a chance to compete against top-notch athletes, Bill became hooked on mountain bike racing. Over the next few years, he evolved into a regional professional, improving his agility and performance in local and national races. Today, he's an integral part of the road racing

scene, actively participating in time trials, criteriums, grand prix racing and cycle-cross. It's an arduous, yet rewarding, lifestyle that keeps Bill at the top of his game.

"To be a competitive cyclist, it's a complete lifestyle. You need to make sure you're maximizing everything, doing things that no one else is doing and training harder than everyone else. That's what keeps driving me out of bed when everyone else is sleeping in," said Evans. "The more you compete, the more you need to train and the more rewards you receive. It's a cycle that builds on itself."

While it may seem easy from a plush-couch perspective, bike racing is a tremendously complex sport. During a competition, a rider must be cognizant of the wattage he produces, unexpected headwinds and tailwinds, the aerodynamics of his clothing and much more. Every part of his bike, every motion of his body—a simple itch can lose him seconds—affects his overall time and performance. This is a sport that builds confidence, strength and skills; one that requires a strict command of the body and mind, as well as an unrelenting desire to succeed the second rubber hits road.

"What many people don't realize is that bike racing involves a huge amount of upper body strength,



Bill shares a laugh with teammate Steve Norair while gearing up for a midweek training session.



and your cardiovascular system is absolutely maxed out. So although you're spinning the legs, you're maintaining a position on the bicycle, which is all core," said Evans. "Strength-to-weight ratio and total body strength is everything. That's what keeps you going in this sport."

During the road-racing season— which is primarily in the spring— Bill stays fit and focused by training 13-15 hours a week. To fuel his exercise goals, he consumes 5,600 calories a day by eating seven to eight small meals, which largely consists of fruits, vegetables and protein-heavy nourishments. There's no room for lethargy; his body must be in superior shape to ensure it can handle the extreme rigors of competition. Sticking to a specific regiment helps Bill and his teammates compete in roughly 45 races a year.

Bill belongs to Bike Works Racing Team, a locally sponsored group of nine riders, eight of whom race competitively. All together, Bike Works has several state champions and medalists on its roster. And though they're the smallest racing team in Virginia, they more than make up for it with their serious work ethic. Three weeks before every race, they look for an edge on the competition. The riders find an identical course and analyze the landscape, research what speeds they need to take at every corner, decide when they should be attacking and build a definitive game plan. This team methodology has proven successful: Bike Works has won 11 out of 80 races in the past two years. That's an astounding feat considering they typically compete against 100 riders.

"Biking is one of the biggest team sports out there. When people think of the Tour de France, they think there are a hundred guys going for it and only one person wins," said Evans. "One person can't cross that finish line without the assistance of their teammates. I know I could not have had any success were it not for my teammates."

What started out as a spur-of-the-moment purchase seven years ago turned into a life-altering love that's made Bill a healthier, happier person. His commitment to excellence, coupled with

his competitive drive, has made him one of the region's most prominent athletes, and certainly, an inspiring fixture in the racing circuit. But this is only part of what Bill Evans does. He has another role to play; one that requires just as much passion, discipline and attention to detail.

He is a teacher.

When he's not road racing, Bill is a fourth-grade teacher at Fredericksburg Academy. Unlike biking, though, he didn't just fall into teaching.

"My father is a historian and my mother is a teacher, so I am exactly those two things," said Evans. "My father was the kind of guy who took us to battlefields every week. We would go to a historical site, and he'd eventually start asking questions. At the end of the tour, everyone, including the tour guide, would be following his lead."

Like his father, Bill is committed to providing his students with the education they expect and deserve, often times taking a hands-on approach so that learning is both enjoyable and engaging. For example, when he discusses the Civil War— one of his favorite subjects— he shows students how to make and eat hard tack, march into battle and identify enfield rifles. It's this type of experiential approach to learning that inspired Bill to teach in the first place.

"I knew that I could make history fun and interesting, and I wanted to share my passion with younger children. It's one of the reasons why I selected that age bracket. They're open books and want to know everything," said Evans, who, prior to Fredericksburg Academy, worked in an inner-city Richmond school. "I get great joy providing my students with the tools they need to grow in life."

"A good teacher, much like a coach, can find great ways to stay focused and motivate. When I'm in class, I'm pushing my students to learn and engage history. When I'm on my bike, I'm pushing myself to achieve greatness," said Evans. "When it comes down to it, being successful at all aspects of my life requires hard work and dedication; it's committing 100 percent or not at all."

He wouldn't have it any other way. 

