

Cycling, running assessments help keep athletes healthy

By Kathryn Reed

Flexibility – good. Hamstring strength – not so good. Seat – broken and didn't know it. Pedal efficiency – could be greatly enhanced by losing the toe cages and getting clip-in pedals.

Riding a bike has gone high-tech. Beyond what the two-wheelers are made of, the specialties for road-mountain-tri, and all that lycra, some riders have cycling power meters on the handlebars. The handlebar area in bike lingo is known as the cockpit.



Beyond degrees in kinesiology and physical therapy, Jason Collin has training in bike fitting just for people in health care. Photos/Kathryn Reed

And now cyclists in the greater Lake Tahoe area can be professionally fitted to whatever kind of bike they pedal.

Jason Collin has been fitting people to their bikes for several years, but it was just last month that the physical therapist working out of Tahoe Fracture & Orthopedic Medical Clinic in South Lake Tahoe started offering the service in Tahoe.

Biomechanical expertise and knowledge about anatomy are the things Collin brings to an adjustment session that a bike shop usually doesn't have. He also takes about two hours to do the whole assessment – time the bike shop doesn't give. Barton Health charges \$199 – a much higher fee than a bike shop.

My mountain bike was bought sometime in the early '90s when I lived in Las Vegas. I road it around the parking lot, liked it and bought it. The shop may have adjusted the seat. That was it.

My road bike is a few years old. My girlfriend who likes to ride bought it for me so I wouldn't be so whiney on my mountain bike while she cruised ahead of me. I never liked the person who assembled it in South Lake Tahoe. Maybe his less than friendly demeanor is why he is out of business.

I had heard a bit about Barton's Pro Bike Fit and Runner's Program, but wanted to know more. I was skeptical about how paying nearly \$200 for the bike fit or the \$150 for the running program could be worth it. Then I let my cynical reporter's brain be taken over by my health conscious massage therapist brain and thought, hmmm, just give it a try.

I know proper equipment is key to preventing injury and enhanced performance. (Stronger hamstrings and not so tight hips would help, too, Collin pointed out.) I don't have a laser to look at my biomechanics. I can't take measurements while I'm on a bike. I don't have mini-jacks to balance my pedal on while the measurements are taken. I don't know a shaky seat can mean it's broken and therefore a real hazard. And even if I could get a friend to do all of what I went

through on Thursday, neither of us would know what it meant.

Collin knows. And the next closest person to tell you about your bicycle mechanics is at UC Davis.

Barton decided to tap into Collin's expertise as a way to expand its sports medicine offerings as well as expand its destination health care. The same goes for Alan and Caroline Barichievich, two physical therapists, who offer the runners' assessment at Stateline Medical Center.

The next closest runners' program is in Carmel.

"It's for anyone who runs, hikes, or walks. We do a full muscle-skeletal evaluation, including video analysis," Alan Barichievich said. "A lot of changes can be made by getting in the right shoe."

Both programs are available to anyone – wherever they live. Insurance is accepted. Sometimes a cycling injury covers the bike assessment. Barichievich said most people he's seen have a prescription. Knee issues can warrant the type of evaluation the Barichievichs provide.

These programs are geared toward everyone – the novice athlete, the weekend warrior, the competitor. Collin and the Barichievichs know their sports firsthand – not just the medical aspects to the assessments. They know what it's like to do a tri, ride a century or run an ultra-marathon.

No bike shop is going to have a customer lay on a table to test strength and flexibility. Nor are they going to explain how my ACL is threatened via cycling and skiing when my hamstrings and hips are, um, lacking in muscle.

And they certainly aren't going to send an email at 11pm with your assessment, pictures of exercises/stretchers and a mild lecture that says, "Please get that seat swapped out soon so I don't have to see you for rehab after a crash! Bike shoes and

clipless pedals will make a world of difference for you, too. Don't worry, the learning curve is quick!"

For more information on the bike program, call (530) 543.5896 or [click here](#). For runner info, call (775) 589.8953.

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