

Age is irrelevant when it comes to fitness

By Nick Heil, Outside

Last February, 59-year-old Ned Overend, aka “The Lung,” aka “Deadly Nedly,” won the first National Fatbike Championships, held in Ogden, Utah. Fat Bike Nats isn’t exactly the Tour de France, but it’s no charity ride, either. Overend had to compete against a field of much younger pros, including former national mountain bike champion Travis Brown, 46, on a tough 19-mile course.

It’s tempting to dismiss Overend as a genetic freak, an outlier who defies comparison with the rest of us. He has dominated nearly every sport he’s entered since the early ’90s, from cross-country mountain bike racing to off-road triathlon. But even among the genetically gifted—and many elite athletes are—Overend is unique in his competitive longevity. Which is the reason he’s also one of the dozen or so athletes spotlighted in Joe Friel’s latest book, “Fast After 50”, part of a growing library devoted to salt-and-pepper chargers past (and occasionally well past) the half-century mark.

I recently spent a few weeks immersed in “Fast After 50, along with a few other books on the topic, including Margaret Webb’s “Older, Faster, Stronger”, Lee Bergquist’s “Second Wind”, and Bill Gifford’s excellent and entertaining “Spring Chicken”. My interest was both professional and personal. I was staring down the gun barrel at 50, the ominous milestone, just a year and change away. Should I prepare to surrender to backgammon and bocce, or was there still hope for my lifelong addiction to biking, skiing, climbing, and other outdoor activities and races?

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