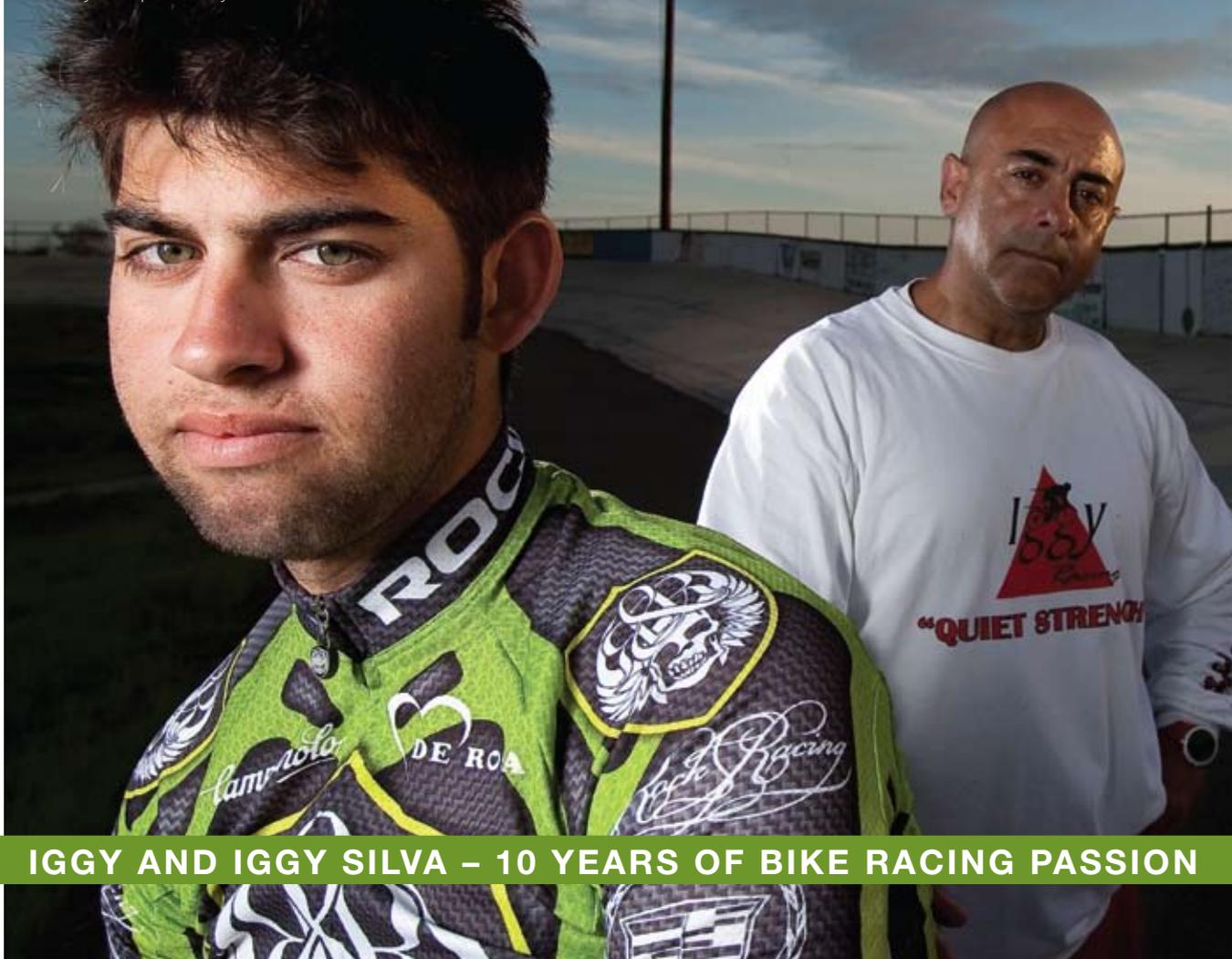


Gootch! Gootch! Gooootch!

Story and photos by **Mark Johnson**



IGGY AND IGGY SILVA – 10 YEARS OF BIKE RACING PASSION

If you've been to a bike race in Southern California, you've seen a brawny bald guy bounding around the course like a friendly Labrador retriever. When riders rush past, the bald guy barks out "Gootch! Gootch! Goooooootch!"

"Gootch" is 18-year-old Iggy Silva III, and the hyperactively friendly man is his 49-year-old dad, Iggy Silva Jr. The two Iggys are fixtures in the Southern California bike-racing scene. And in his first year racing with the pros, young Iggy is landing significant results.

Silva, who rides for Rock Racing, won February's prestigious 120-mile Merco pro road race in Merced. A few weeks later, riding against the best domestic teams in America, Silva took a third and a seventh in individual stages and won the best young rider's jersey at the San Dimas pro stage race.

Winning the Merco road race is no small feat for a seasoned pro, let alone a first-year teenager. Past winners of the Central Valley race

include Tour de France veterans Baden Cooke, Chris Horner and Juan Jose Haedo.

Track coach Tony Olsen taught Iggy how to ride at the San Diego velodrome. Olsen recounts that his dad brought Iggy to the velodrome when he was 7. "He was younger than we normally allow, but his dad said he would be there for all the classes. At first his talent did not stand out. He always showed a lot of enthusiasm and put in great efforts. You could tell he really enjoyed riding and racing. His dad always encouraged him to give his best and Little Iggy never gave less than 100 percent. It wasn't until Little Iggy was about 12 or 13 that he really started to show his potential. By the time he was 15 he was a national-caliber rider in his age group."

When Iggy became a 17- to 18-year-old age group rider, he stepped up to the international competition – earning an invite to the World Junior Track Championships last year in South Africa. He has also raced in three-day

track races in Belgium and on the road in Italy, Canada and Mexico.

Now that the San Diego High School graduate has left the junior ranks, his decade of racing experience and his calm demeanor serve him well. While Big Iggy is a loose fire hose of energy, his son is quiet, calm and unruffled. "We are so opposite," dad Iggy explains. "Two opposites make a coin. I think the only thing we have in common is that we don't quit and when you tell us we can't do something we are going to prove you wrong."

Over the last 10 years, Iggy has been coached by legendary cycling coach Eddie Borysewicz, and last year coach Mark Whitehead started working with him too. Whitehead, who raced on the 1984 U.S. Olympic cycling team and won over 200 races in his career, coaches Iggy at the velodrome twice a week. Outside of that, the young rider, who now rooms with other cyclists in a house near La Jolla, trains three to four hours daily on the road.





“It’s not rocket science, man. If you do the work and you have the talent and are dedicated, the door is opening and you have opportunities. If you don’t do the work you are just pack filler.”

–Mark Whitehead



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When asked what has kept Iggy racing for 10 years, Whitehead explains: “He’s got a passion for it, otherwise he wouldn’t be doing it.” Whitehead says it’s unusual for young cyclists to stick to their sport. “It’s very rare that they last because the world just pulls you away. Cycling takes a lot of dedication and time. You have to be dedicated or you just aren’t going to win. That’s all there is to it.”

Last year at the world junior championships in Cape Town, Iggy raced with U.S. teammate Taylor Phinney, son of gold-medal-winning cycling parents, Davis Phinney and Connie Carpenter. Comparing Phinney with Silva, Whitehead says that thanks to his genes and his family cycling connections, Phinney is “A 100-percent phenom. In the realm that Michael Phelps is in his sport, Phinney is in cycling. There is no comparison.”

Whitehead also points out that there is no comparison between Phinney’s connected bike racing family and Iggy’s humble roots. While Phinney was born into a cycling family with all the attendant equipment and financial perks, Silva grew up in a poor single-parent household. That means scraping by for equipment, entry fees and gas money. When it comes to connections, money and industry support, Whitehead says Phinney “is on easy street” compared to Silva.

Whitehead, says Iggy, has racing skills beyond his age. “He’s got a lot of experience. He’s raced a lot of national champion junior events. He’s raced on the track with the elite level track cyclists in the United States 50-60 times. He’s got the experience of a 25 year old at 18.” Randall Coxworth agrees with this assessment. A racing cyclist for 25 years, Coxworth has watched Iggy race for five years and now races with him in the elite cycling ranks. He says that Iggy isn’t one to shy from suffering, either. “He’s never afraid to ride at the front. He has no problem doing the work. To think that this kid is only 18 years old when he has the maturity level of a 28 year old – to me, that’s impressive.”

Young Iggy has big dreams for the future. “I’d like to race professionally in Europe. My big race goal would be to do Paris-Roubaix.” What’s the appeal of the infamous Hell of the North? “The intensity of it. It’s a

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USA Cycling extended Iggy an invite to race in Belgium in April. "I've gone twice as a junior. They want me to come back. This will be my first year as a U23. It will be a period where I will show if I can go good in the U23 ranks as well. I'm going for six weeks. I start out with little races and depending on how I do, go to bigger races. It's more of a trial run for years to come."

Iggy relishes racing in Europe. "I loved it. It's awesome. Even the junior races, like 100K kermesses. It's just all out, the whole time. It's good racing, like pro racing over here. Everyone is just going out and going hard and trying to win instead of sitting around and doing nothing."

Can the teenager make it to the Pro Tour European level? Whitehead says he's got a chance. "It's not rocket science, man. If you do the work and you have the talent and are dedicated, the door is opening and you have opportunities. If you don't do the work you are just pack filler."

Allen Ritchburg has been Iggy's doctor for the cyclist's entire cycling career. Ritchburg, a long-time racing cyclist himself, cautions against expecting too much of the 18 year old too soon. "He's got a ways to go and he's just got to stay level headed." The doctor recounts that it took Astana pro Chris Horner a good decade to become a top European pro after his initial successes in the early 1990s. "He went through a lot of struggles. You try and fail. You try and fail. You try and fail. It took him years."

What Iggy and his father don't have in money, the father makes up for in attention. Ritchburg explains. "His father makes sure that he holds a straight line and doesn't sway from his goals. He really looks out for him. He's a very positive influence on his life. I get a lot of fathers who come in and want me to give their kids growth hormones to get them better. Iggy Sr. is just really focused on being healthy and keeping him mentally tough and trying to build him from the ground up."

Ritchburg also notes that Big Iggy has sacrificed for his son. "He's out there most every night on the track and he gives very positive support. Not all people can say their father has been behind them all their years. It's something very refreshing and unique." Tony Olsen recounts an episode from a criterium that shows how much attention Big Iggy pays to the details in his son's life. "I remember hearing someone comment that Little Iggy's middle name must be "Drink Up, Son" because we all heard Big Iggy yelling that every lap for 45 minutes."

Randall Coxworth underscores the fact that while Iggy and son are very different people, the father has had a strong influence in making his son a decent human being. "His dad is the kind of guy who walks around the race, and says hello to everyone, and calls everyone by their first name, and tells everybody good luck, and is there to help anybody. People kind of say he's like the Little League dad, but his father is a true sportsman, and I think that's where Iggy gets it from."

So where did the nickname come from? "When he was a baby I used to tickle him and say 'Gootchie, gootchie, gootchie,'" Dad Iggy explains. "Now it's just Gootch." Does Dad's effusive support ever bother Iggy?

"Yeah, sometimes. I tell him to stop, but he doesn't listen." ■

