

TRIATHLON toPELOTON

Shane Buysse is a man with a bike-racing plan

Story and photo by Mark Johnson

After turning in a time of 11:15 at Ford Ironman Wisconsin and clocking the fastest bike split at the 2008 Ironman 70.3 in Oceanside, San Diego triathlete Shane Buysse decided to have a go at bike racing. After all, he was consistently crushing his competitors in triathlon bike legs; he figured shelling them all in a bike race would be cake too. So in July 2009, the 24-year-old San Diego State University graduate entered a race at Cal State San Marcos in north San Diego County—and promptly got tanned, stomped and walloped by the cruel fist of pack bike racing.

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“I figured I could just go to the front and ride away from everyone, but that wasn’t the case,” the friendly San Diegan recalls of his first bike race on a hilly circuit. After getting shelled—bike racing lingo for having his ego handed to him as a steaming plate of humble pie—Buysse watched the race ride away from him. “I was just pretty clueless. I was back of the pack. I got dropped, and I didn’t know what was going on.”

The six-foot, 158-pound triathlete was nonetheless hooked on the new sport. “I liked the variety. It scared me at first, riding so close to everyone,” he recalls of his introduction to bike racing. “But eventually I got

used to it.”

Today Buysse has gone from the beginner Category 5 level to Category 1 (essentially pro-level racing, only without the paycheck). He started off 2009 by winning the San Dimas Stage Race as a Category 4 in March, then upgraded to Category 3 in April and won the Mogollon stage of New Mexico’s Tour of the Gila. The stage takes place in the oxygen-depleted air of the Rockies and finishes with a seven-mile climb that wilts all but the very best. “I crossed the line and I was like, ‘Oh, that was it?’” the talented Buysse recalls of his Gila win. “It felt almost easy. I guess I was in the zone. It didn’t really hit me until the next day when I had the leader’s jersey, and I was trying to defend it for the next four days.”

The following month, Buysse upgraded to Category 2. In 2010, Buysse is riding for the elite-level SoCalCycling.com team and has his eyes firmly set on winning the national time trial and road race championships this summer in Bend, Ore. He had a promising season start by winning February’s Valley of the Sun Stage Race in Arizona, after which he upgraded to Category 1.

To appreciate Buysse’s meteoric rise, consider that most serious racing cyclists spend their entire racing careers without ever cracking Category 2. Indeed, according to USA Cycling spokeswoman Keri Kahn, at the beginning of 2010 only two percent of the 50,835 licensed riders in the country were Category 1.

The next logical step for Buysse is a pro contract. And that’s a goal Buysse holds firmly in his sights. “I’m definitely going to give it a shot,” he enthuses.

While domestic pros put in close to 30

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hours a week on the road, Buysse says his training, though limited to 15-20 hours due to work obligations, is strictly focused and closely monitored by data from his power meter. “It’s all really specific. No junk miles.” Since Buysse doesn’t

have a coach, he relies on “just my trusty PowerTap.”

Prior to taking up triathlon, Buysse had no endurance sports background. Then, while shoe shopping for his cross-country-running sister in 2005, the pair saw a triathlon advertisement posted in the shoe store. They entered on a lark. “She beat me,” Buysse recalls. “It was pretty embarrassing, and I vowed to get revenge and get in shape.”

Buysse soon joined the Triathlon Club of San Diego and says he “got addicted and was looking at every race within a hundred miles. It just kind of took off.”

However, by 2008, Buysse says, “Triathlon got kind of boring. It’s always a race against yourself. You are not really influenced by what other people do.”

Bike racing soon caught his eye; and in 2009 Buysse’s high pain threshold caught the attention of Frank Sarate, who invited Buysse to join the elite SoCalCycling.com team. Sarate directs the team from his Los Angeles home and says he was attracted to Buysse because he did well in multi-day stage races.

“Looking at his résumé,” Sarate recalls, “I figured this kid had a lot of talent.” Along with his consistency, the team director was impressed by Buysse’s dedication.

“He wants to turn pro, and he seems really focused on the direction he wants to go. He just needs more time in the saddle racing.” 



“In road cycling, there is strategy—and you’ve got to conserve your energy and use it at the right time. And it’s a whole ‘nother kind of suffering, too. It’s just a different kind of pain.”
—Shane Buysse

A special thanks from Buysse for hi-techbikes.com and all the help they gave him as a triathlete.