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This boss rides 300km a week (and drinks too much coffee)

Acuity Group director Rob Bentley's first bike was homemade and broke in two the first time he rode it. Now his pride and joy is a titanium cycle worth \$13,000. He answers our Time Out Q&A.



Rob Bentley, left, is daring to dream that he will be able to ride in competition's in Europe this year.

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Rob Bentley is director of Acuity Group, a business coaching and professional development consultancy. He lives in Perth.

First memory of riding a bike?

My dad built me a bike for my fifth birthday, in his shed, from scratch. It broke in half on my maiden ride down the driveway.

How many bikes?

Three: a 30-year-old Avanti Gazelle touring bike, an Eddy Merckx aluminium road bike, and my pride and joy, a titanium Baum Corretto, which took 20 months to build and cost \$13,000. It was a 50th birthday present to myself, and designed to climb the Alps comfortably and descend safely. So far, so good.

Dream bike and equipment?

I have my eye on an electric road bike, after hiring one at Le Mans in 2017 and riding half of the famous racing circuit. Mercedes brought out an e-bike range recently. I wish Bentley would hurry up and do the same – I don't want to confuse my branding!

Has COVID-19 forced you to change anything about riding?

Every two years, my cycling team goes riding in Europe, and 2020 was supposed to be a tour of the Jura in France, the Black Forest in Germany and the eastern lakes of Switzerland over 10 days. The WhatsApp group chat title is now "2022 – Dare to Dream".

Kind of riding?

Our team mostly rides the roads and hills of Perth on the weekends, with the occasional gravel ride to mix things up.

Tips to become a better rider?

Yes, don't ride with us. You'll just pick up bad habits and become coffee addicts.

Kilometres per week?

When training for the French Alps, up to 300 kilometres per week, and in the off year, 100 to 150 kilometres per week.

Hills or the flat?

Flat for fun and hills for training and complaining.

Most love about cycling?

Two things. First, the freedom that comes with cycling is something that has stayed with me since childhood – it's exhilarating. And second, no-one ever seems to talk about the incredible descents in the French Alps; it's always about the climb. The descents go on forever and are the best ride in the best park in the world.

Dislike about cycling?

Nothing.

Most like to go on a long ride with?

The Dutch women's cycling team. They have the most incredible depth of talent at the moment.

Will you ever be too old to ride?

The legendary Australian cyclist Sir Hubert "Oppy" Opperman died riding his exercise bike. That'll do me!

Favourite refuel station?

Hands down the best coffee and croissant in Perth is at Willing Coffee in Guildford, owned by Tim Willing, a former Australian track cycling champion and a top bloke.

Favourite piece of cycling gear?

My Selle Prima TRK saddle. It's like riding on a Chesterfield lounge.

Favourite ride?

The circular rivers ride [along the Swan and Canning rivers] from Perth city to Fremantle and back is one of the best and most scenic city rides in the world.

Dream bike holiday?

Any tour organised by Geneva-based www.cyclomundo.com. Owner Bruno Toutain knows the best routes and extraordinary places to stay in Europe.

How do you feel about overseas cycling adventures?

Can't wait. When I travel for business, I rent a bike. On my last trip to Paris before COVID-19, my friend Dean Gallagher of Five Senses Coffee and I hired Uber bikes and rode the Champs-Élysées and around the Arc de Triomphe early one morning.

Crashes? Catastrophes?

The team and I climbed over the top of Col de Turini in 2016, and disappeared down toward Sospel, on the way to Monaco. I quickly got to the front, leaning into the hairpin corners, releasing the brakes as early as possible, except for this one corner. I underestimated my speed, and the tightness of the bend. I pulled a bit harder on the brakes, and my rear wheel locked up and let go.

As my back wheel passed underneath me, my legs flew in the air, and time slowed. Andrea Bocelli started singing *Nessun dorma*, I put the kettle on, popped a couple of pieces of gluten-free toast in the toaster, and settled back to read *The Australian Financial Review*. Fascinating stuff. Then the toaster popped, Andrea stopped singing, and some fool was shouting “whoaaaaahhh”.

My suspension three feet off the ground came to an end, and I slammed hard onto my back. The contents of my bike were strewn across the bend, and my camera was flung from my pocket. I was far enough in front of the boys that I had time to stand up, collect my detritus, pick up my bike, and begin to put on my windbreaker for the remainder of the descent. Teammate Daragh Monaghan came past and pointed out that I had dropped my bandanna – “Thanks, mate!”

Ever felt scared on a bike?

Yes, when teammate Jim Reid crashed hard into the tunnel wall while descending the Stelvio Pass in Italy in 2018. I was scared for him, but mostly for the tunnel wall, which needed repairs.

Lifeandleisure@afr.com