

# NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH

**ED VIESTURS RECENTLY BECAME THE ONLY AMERICAN TO SUMMIT THE WORLD'S 14 HIGHEST MOUNTAINS—A FEAT HE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT SUPPLEMENTAL OXYGEN. HE CLIMBS WELL IN THE SADDLE, TOO.**

Viesturs, 51, has an American record—and a new custom IF road bike.

Lance Armstrong has won seven Tours de France, but you've climbed Mount Everest seven times—I think you have him beat.

[Laughs] Thank you.

## How does cycling make you a better climber?

Cycling is all about endurance and strength. And it uses your quads—the perfect muscle to work for climbing. I train for months before a climb to build a base. Even when I'm not planning a climb, I bike or run every day—that way if somebody calls and wants me to go somewhere tomorrow, I'm ready. I still guide trips on Mount Rainier every summer, and I have to be stronger than my clients. I have to have the strength and endurance to deal with situations.

## What are your riding workouts like?

If I have an hour and a half or two hours, I just go. I tend to push myself, but I don't really have an agenda as to how far—it's more like, how long? However far I get, I get. Sometimes I'll put one of my kids in the trailer. I live on Bainbridge Island [in Washington State], and it's fairly hilly here. You've got to decide, "Can I make it up this hill pulling a trailer?" Our kids are 13, 10, six and 15 months. Usually it's the six-year-old in the trailer.

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## As a climber, what's it like to watch Tour riders tackle the mountains?

I can relate in a certain way, because of what I do. But those guys are phenomenal aerobic machines. I read Lance's book and they basically call themselves birds. They have nothing on the upper body, but from the waist down they're all muscle. I barely watch TV, but I Tivoed the Tour. It's pretty exciting, the way they set up the controversies—the heroes and the villains.

You've said you prefer to climb without oxygen, to "climb the mountain for what it is." What do you think when you see cyclists busted for drugs?

It's sad that they're resorting to these tactics to win,



and that it has gotten to this point, where you're cheering for someone you think is clean, and then he's not. But you can see how people get pushed into it. There's fame involved; there's fortune. And if they don't take drugs, they're at a disadvantage. In climbing, for the most part you're personally motivated. No one knows who we are.

## Would you care to share any motivational secrets for cyclists?

Whether it's a big bike ride or a climb, it's always nice to have a goal. My training is like doing my homework—when I go climbing, I take the test.

## During your two-wheeled training, do you prefer ascending or descending?

If I'm looking for a workout, I have to enjoy the going up. That's where I get the satisfaction of being in shape. Then your reward is going down the other side. You've got to earn it—just like [mountain] climbing.

## Any tips for enjoying the going up?

I look at a hill and go, "That's great, that looks perfect. I'm just going to crank up this hill." You have to accept it—or else move to Texas.—Emily Furia

## SMALL TALK

### Favorite ride

My family has been spending a lot of time in Ketchum, Idaho. There's beautiful riding everywhere—not only singletrack, but also roads. You can go for miles.

### New wheels

Independent Fabrication built me a road bike. I sent in my measurements. We kind of free-formed it. I let them do what they thought was best.

### Next climb

I'm going to Antarctica in January to climb the Vinson Massif. It's the continent's highest point [16,607 feet].