

# IN THE NEWS

WEEKLY

HOT TOPIC

MEDITATION ON FAST ASCENDING

## Tejvan Pettinger

THE NATIONAL HILL-CLIMB champ explains why spirituality is integral to his cycling



### Richard Abraham

Every time triallist has their own pre-race routine. Usually it includes a warm-up on the rollers or the turbo, the pinning-on of numbers, taking on some last-minute fluid and carbohydrate, and perhaps a quick trip to the loo in the village hall. But how many testers can say that they start their ride with a meditation? Tejvan Pettinger can...

"It was just before I started to

warm up, so about an hour before my start time," explains the newly crowned national hill-climb champion, won on the Stang in North Yorkshire. "I was there quite early, and it just seemed like a nice thing to do. I had a good meditation for about 15 to 20 minutes."

Pettinger took his first hill-climb title last month after nine attempts, beating James Gullen by just three seconds. Sitting alone in silence in his little silver

car obviously had its benefits. "The essence of meditation is not trying to think about anything. You're just trying to be still inwardly," Pettinger adds.

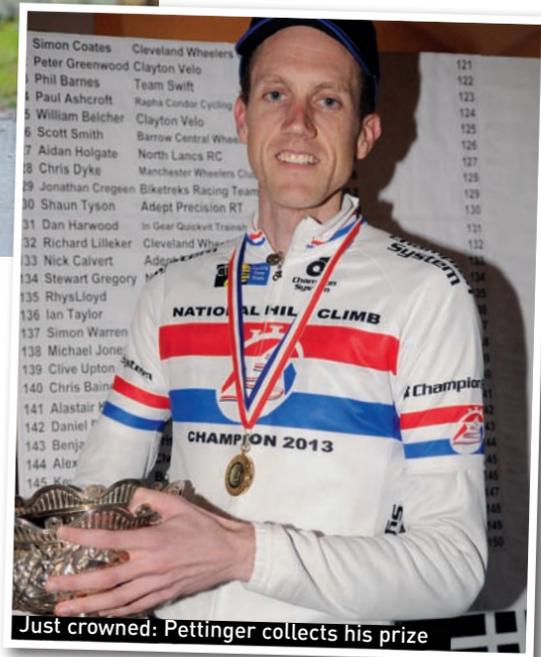
"It [the car] is not the easiest place by far, but I felt fairly calm and just cheerful."

There is a little clue to Pettinger's spirituality on every start sheet; his club is called Sri Chinmoy C.T. It's not the sort of club that regularly meets for 70-mile cafe runs. It has only a handful of members in the UK competing in bike races.

Sri Chinmoy, who died in 2007, was a spiritual guru who advocated meditation and physical exercise as means to spiritual contentment. Pettinger met Sri Chinmoy on several occasions, and on the guru's advice changed his name from Richard to Tejvan.

"I think the best way to describe it is that it's a spiritual path, and I see Sri Chinmoy as my spiritual guru," he explains.

With his spindly limbs that lever his lightweight frame towards the sky, it looks as though hill-climbing ability is encrypted in the 36 year old's DNA. Yet it hasn't always been that way. He started cycling with Otley CC as a teenager, but gave up during his mid-20s after several seasons hit by illness and injury while riding for Oxford University CC. He did, however, get to know multiple national hill-climb champion Jim Henderson while at the Oxford club, and the cycling bug came back to bite at the age of 28.



Just crowned: Pettinger collects his prize

"Meditation is about trying to be still inwardly — calm and cheerful"

"Sam Ward, my minute man [in the national hill-climb], was the first person to suggest I had a go at a hill-climb, when I was about 14," Pettinger recalls. "I did the Otley hill-climb a couple of times, and not very well, I have to say. I came pretty close to last."

### Mind and body

There is a lot more to Pettinger than his spirituality, and attributing his hill-climbing prowess to those 20 minutes in a quiet hatchback would be to ignore his remarkably successful, consistent season. His job as an economics tutor in Oxford allows him to train 15 hours a week around the rolling Oxfordshire lanes. He is meticulous in his preparation, and he was one of the few top riders to complete a race pace recce of the national hill-climb course a week before the event.

Yet the question of 'spiritual performance gains' is one he admits to having thought long and hard about.

"Racing is, in a way, a form of meditation because you're trying to be very concentrated on what you're doing," he says.

"If you can meditate and focus and be cheerful, I think that definitely has a positive effect on your performance. I was a little nervous a week before the race, but on the actual day, I felt surprisingly calm and cheerful."

So should Sir Dave Brailsford reach for his pen and paper and add another marginal gain to the list?

"It's hard to evaluate, but personally it's a thing which helps me on many levels. Whether it makes me go faster or not, I don't know!"

## HOT FAST FEET

On a course that suited him perfectly, Pettinger tackled one of the most important hill-climbs of his life with a skinsuit, lightweight wheels... and a pair of baggy socks?

"I didn't intend to race in them!" he says. "I get very cold feet, so I often wear two pairs of socks and one of those is often very woolly."

"During the warm-up I had my thermal racing socks underneath and a second pair on, and I forgot to take them off. If I'd lost by 0.1 seconds, I might have thought differently about them."

## WHAT NEXT?

Pettinger's main aim will be to become the first person since Dan Fleeman in 2010 to defend his title in 12 months' time. However, at 36, and best suited to long, draggy climbs, he recognises that his time in the national champion's jersey might not last very long.

"I'd also like to try a 12-hour TT and maybe go for the British Best All-Rounder," he says. "I always like the challenge and doing something with a different sense of transcendence. Some time I definitely want to do a 24-hour, but probably not when I've still got a chance of getting on the podium for the hill-climb championships."

# Longer. Higher. Tougher.

9.7 times the mileage of the Ride London 100.  
4.3 times the ascent of the average Étape.  
3.0 times longer than London to Paris.

There is only one Land's End to John O'Groats.  
There is only one Deloitte Ride Across Britain.  
9 days. 969 miles. 56,000ft of climbing.



6th-14th September 2014

Enter today at  
www.rideacrossbritain.com

