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Transcript

Speaker 1

It's time for the outspoken cyclist your weekly conversation about bicycles, cyclists, trails, travel, advocacy, the bike industry, and much, much more. You can subscribe to our weekly podcast at outspokencyclists.com or through your favorite podcasting app to listen anytime. Now here's your host, Diane Jenks.

Speaker 2

Hello and welcome to the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. Thanks for tuning in today. Last time we began our series on favorite bike trails with the Ohio to Erie Trail and today we'll be exploring the Nicholson Trail in South Dakota. A couple of years ago, Jim Sayer, who was the executive director of Adventure Cycling Association for many years, was riding cross country and stopped in to stay with Brian and me for a night. We got to talking about the trip he was making. He told us he will be taking in some of the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota. On his way back home to Montana. When several people mentioned the Mickelson Trail as one of their favorites, Brian reminded me that Jim had traveled it and suggested I contact him. He was happy to share his thoughts about it, and Jim will be with me in the second-half of the show. My first guest is not new to our show either. Leah Goldstein is arguably one of the most accomplished ultra athletes I've ever had the honor to speak with. She was world kickboxing champion at the age of 17. She was an undercover police officer in the Israeli army. She's a national cycling champion and recently she completed the grueling 4000 plus miles self supported Trans Am Road race. The last time we spoke with Leah, she had just completed Ram winning the event. Overall, I thought that was crazy then, but the Trans Am race is another level altogether and today's conversation covers the gamut from weather and equipment to wildlife and aspirations. Hi, Leah. Welcome back to the outspoken cyclist. It's so good to be able to talk with you again. You are recovering.

Speaker 3

Yes, thank you for having me.

Speaker 2

It's my pleasure. So we were talking just before we started the recording that this one is the one you've been afraid of. This trans am ride. Tell me, tell me.

Speaker 3

Yeah. Well, I mean, for one like the distance of race across America, which I've done four times is 5000 kilometers, right, 3000 miles. This one is just under 7000. So you can imagine the difference, and with Transamerica the race I had just done. Also I can't have any help, right? You are completely on your own. So navigation your food, your bike mechanics, your your well-being, your cleanliness, all that stuff is on you, you know, so it's scary, right? Cause it's to say something goes S there or something. Since my bike then I can't fix it. You have to think of all these things. Right. And you know, when I was asked many years ago, if I'd ever considered doing something like the self support racist, I'd never do it in a. Million years, right?

Speaker 2

And here you are.

Speaker 3

Yeah, but I thought, you know what the challenges get sometimes just get to come. Go outside of the box a little bit and do things that you're afraid of, right. It's always kind of been intrigued me, you know, and I just thought, you know what? I'm just going to give it a shot, but I completely went in there as a rookie, like, not knowing anything. And physically I felt like I got, like, I I I did the. My homework like to get on the physical side, but is everything that could go wrong just went wrong from, you know, losing my DI shifting to my brake, falling off to my shift or falling off to. Cracking my front wheel to being being chased by a bear like it was just for every mechanically wise and just I had like, I think 10 or 11 punctures I used. I used basically the wrong equipment. You know, it's a really hard race and it's really hard on the bike. So you know you have to have. Something a little bit more Hardy. You know, beefy when it comes to the the bike market, we're still keeping it light. And I think I completely overpacked I was so afraid of getting too cold or whatever that I think I was probably carrying a good four to 5 lbs. Too much on the bike and as you. Can see on. The pictures I'm completely loaded like I'm doing, just a tour ride, right? So compared to the other racers like I came in 3rd overall, but if you look at the 1st and 2nd place finishes I mean. Their bikes aren't half as loaded as. Mine. Right, you.

Speaker

Ohh.

Speaker 2

Know I I. Have just a comment about that and then I have a a question about the distance why it was so. Different. First of all, I yeah, I did watch your equipment being in the bike business and knowing what it takes mechanically, you probably would have been better off with the mechanical shifting mechanical brakes and. A metal bike I don't.

Speaker 3

Know about it. If you could get away with mechanical shifting because your hands because of the pressure on your hands. It makes it really difficult to shift thing like when I did race across America the first time on Madden called many manual shifting right, I had to use my whole arm to shift cause your hands go completely numb. Right. So I was originally I had planned to use mechanical shifting in the beginning, but the guy that was helping me, my coach Greg, he just said, you know, you might wanna reconsider, right. And the DI shifting the electronic shifting it should. Be bomb proof. Right. Which it was. It didn't give me any issues if I understood. Kind of the mechanism of how it worked. I wouldn't have spent half a day in the bike shop when all when it disconnected so would happen was when my brake fell. Off right actually cause of the jarring, you know, cause you have to check the screws on on your bike. Yeah. Your your the bike is going through 7000 kilometers, right? Right. So you should be checking everything just to make sure things are tight and in place. And as the tires, right, I mean, all it was was just a plug that was unplugged. That's it. That's all it was. And if I would have known that I would have saved myself. Half a day sitting in a bike shop. And riding a full day with no shifter and no break. Right. So you think about those things if you know. And that's just me. I blame myself for just going in there, completely unexperienced, you know what I mean and all of that is not knowing the course like there's areas of 200 kilometers of nothingness like you have nothing. So there's no food, there's no houses, there's no nothing.

Speaker

Wow.

Speaker 3

There's no reception in certain places. Right.

Speaker 2

So if it was. Trans am start where was the start? Finish.

Speaker 3

Astoria OR and it goes through 10 and then it goes down through like it's Oregon, it's Idaho, Colorado, Montana or and it might have the orders not correct. They're going to Kansas, IL, Kentucky and then Virginia. So it's a.

Speaker 2

Yeah. OK. Ohh. It was like. Diagonal chart.

Speaker 3

Yeah. So it's that's why it's yeah, that's why it sound like like RAM is kind of right.

Speaker 2

Instead of a straight across.

Speaker 3

Right. And also we also have to be detoured a lot because like in round because you have a follow car, you can go on some of the freeways if you have that whole, you know the whole car behind you. But in this race. He did a lot of detours just to keep us safer so that, you know, you're adding on an extra 500K, whatever, you know, but the IT it's not that the course was much more difficult than race across America, much more climbing, way more climbs in the Appalachians, which makes it really hard. Like, you know, you're climbing the last climb with an insane. It's 10. Kilometers average grade between 14 to 19%. So imagine doing 10K with you know an extra or whatever, you know 20 lbs on your bike at a 19% grade. It was insane, like just the difficulty of the race was in is crazy right, you know in regards to the like the you know the gear selection. I went right with using a 34. Back cracks in the front, but it was my whole idea of using like my wheels had a deep dish in them. So when there was a strong winds I was blown off the bike because you know how the bike is like you know? So I needed to go a little thinner there, maybe a little bit lighter and also my my selection of time. Those, I mean, they were so tight on the rim that that's why I ended up cracking the front because I had to use a metal lever to get the wheel on and that's when I had slightly cracked it. And you know what? I rode that that wheel all the way from Colorado right across to Virginia. I mean, my my sponsor visions couldn't believe that I got away with that. Maybe because I'm the lighter? Rider who knows? Or or God's protecting me? I don't know. But it was just like I said. The gear selection was off. I used tube tires rather than tubeless. You know what I mean? So. Just like a little thorn, I mean, like I said it. Was insane of of the. The issues that I had. Like everything that could go wrong. It just it went wrong know.

Speaker 2

And you still took first place as a woman.

Speaker 3

Yeah, I yeah, yeah. I won. Yeah. The second woman came in. She was about 600 K behind me that she was from Poland. And then the third.

Speaker 2

You still took third place. Overall, up with all.

Speaker 3

Yeah. Ah.

Speaker 2

Stuff going on. You did pretty Dang well.

Speaker 3

Yeah. I mean, always I can't say that I wasn't disappointed like it. It took me way longer than I had anticipated. But I think after doing it, I I definitely want to do it again because now the knowledge of knowing the course and knowing what equipment to ride, I just feel like I can knock off at least three days. I I really feel like I can.

Speaker 2

Wow, that would make a huge difference. Let me reintroduce. Let me reintroduce you. We're speaking with Leah Goldstein. She finished the Trans Am tour. She's done so many wonderful events and is.

Speaker

You know.

Speaker 3

So Oh yeah.

Speaker 2

He's just a beast. I want to know about beasts. Tell me about this bear.

Speaker 3

Well, I was. Well, as you know, in Kentucky, there's a dog issue, right? It was warned like we were warned prior to entering that state, that those dogs on the loose there, you know, and they weren't kidding like I thought, oh, they're exaggerating. I had a little itty bitty thing of pepper spray. And then I used this. I bought this electronic whistles. I didn't want to spray any dog. I feel bad, right? I love animals. I have two of my own right, but once I hit that statement every 15 minutes, you'd be charged by a shepherd by a Pitbull, by a Rottweiler. And how I didn't get bit was a miracle from God. Good. So I ended up riding with pepper spray in one hand and then, you know, it always stayed in my hand because it was that bad. And the worst thing was when you're descending and then you have these dogs charging at you, just coming out of nowhere. Right. So in the in the second day in Kentucky, I was climbing this really steep grade. It was like, I think 16% was out of saddle.

Speaker 2

What?

Speaker 3

I had my head down. And then I kind of lifted up my head and I saw this big black creature kind of come out of the the bushes and I thought, OK, that's a big dog. So I went down to grab my pepper spray because I was out of saddle. So I had it in my little pouch that I had on my shoulder here. And then already there was a car, an SUV on the other side kind of really close. And that SUV hit the bear was a bear, wasn't a dog. Right. And then the bear kind of tumbled over, kind of right across the street that I

realized when he was over on to my side, that it was actually a bear that was charging me. It wasn't a dog. So yeah, it was. That was that woke me up. I'll bet.

Speaker 2

It.

Speaker 3

I just wanted to get out of that state. As fast as I could, right? Yeah.

Speaker 2

Exactly. That's not even I want to take a. Picture no, I don't.

Speaker 3

Want even? But I mean, I think that's really unusual because I live in Vernon, BC, and I mean this is bear country, right, you know. So and it's not normal for them to charge you, but maybe because I was moving, they didn't know what it was. I don't know. Like what? What startled him?

Speaker 2

Right. So let's talk a second about the weather, because this has been the worst weather summer with the heat.

Speaker 3

Oh my God. Oh my gosh. I mean, you're not kidding. That's another thing. What I think. I mean, there's 18 riders, that DNF that they dropped out of the race, 18. It was almost half the field, right? I mean, basically in in Colorado.

Speaker 2

Wow. Oh.

Speaker 3

Auto, I mean we first of all, we started in in a crazy storm like it was just sheltering down storms and winds of like 70 kilometers an hour. It the first two days were insane. It was just I I I don't even know how to explain it. Right. And then all of a sudden then go into Colorado and they start and it's about 30°. So a little bit uncomfortable but not. Really, you know, and then just moseying on across the country, the temperature slowly started to rise, and in Kansas it was 42 Celsius and even hotter because of the hot aspelt, you know, from the bottom. So I mean, you're basically surviving from 1 store or gas station to the next. And like, I was telling you, there's areas where there's nothingness. And I got stuck. Actually knocking on people's doors, asking them if they don't mind if I borrow their hose just so I can kind of douse myself and refill my bottles. And even when you could refill your bottles. I mean, it got so damn hot that you couldn't drink it. You were

drinking. Like you know, very lukewarm water or hot water. Yeah. So it was super challenging. It wasn't just Kansas again. It was like a repeat of what, you know, what happened to me in RAM. And it went right to Virginia. It kind of cooled down to, like, 3435, which felt kind of like a relief after going through those 40 plus temperatures.

Speaker 2

Yeah, boiling. Sure.

Speaker 3

Like it was challenging, it was incredibly, incredibly hot, and it felt terrible because, I mean, I kind of sprayed myself with suntan screen. I just got blistered everywhere and trying to navigate that is really hard, right? You're. You got someone or you want to try and douse yourself? It's, you know, the everything is being washed off. You're respraying, and then you're done. It was just a mess, so I tried to kind of shift my training that I was riding more at night. Right, you know. But then again, you have the challenge of nighttime lighting, where everything is closed, right. I still have to feed myself, right. You know, and so between like 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM. You good luck finding something that's even open. If you do right. So I mean, I can't explain to you how difficult it was, but I think the weather sure you know it it. Didn't help, didn't.

Speaker 2

Help. What kind of navigational devices did you have? GPS.

Speaker 3

Yeah, I had a garment. I used two garmins, and then I had two, actually, 2 phones, right. But a lot of times my a couple of times, my Garmin kind of kicked out, right. And I did go off course because sometimes you're not paying attention. You know, and I didn't have the app on where it actually notifies me that I've I've errored right. So especially the last day I was just making so many mistakes. I didn't know what was going wrong. I think my brain was just on vacation. So I'm. Not doing this anymore so.

Speaker 2

And fried it could have been a little fried.

Speaker 3

Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, the navigation, like you said, you just have another thing too is you have to, you know, keep your your devices charged, right. So carrying that extra battery pack. And on the first day, I actually lost my phone, it fell out of its holder on the bike, you know, cause I didn't. I'm secured enough and I spent an hour and the first day looking for my phone. It's that's my lifeline, right? You know which? And it ended up. I found it in a ditch and it had water damage to it. So I didn't have any communications for three days till it kind of dried out. Right. You know.

Speaker 2

You're lucky it came back.

Speaker 3

Yeah, I'm lucky I found it. I would have had to. Well, I had a spare phone that it didn't really have everything. It just was more for calling. Right. But the the my main phone had like, you know, the ride with GPS and all the contacts and right. Not. That's another mistake is having two device always having a spare. Right. You know, it's just little things like that and just. A lot of I just guess I had a lot of bad luck. Let's just put it that way, you know, and and again it's just not knowing right. You know, when you don't do something for the first time, I like to be over prepared than underprepared. So like I said, carrying way too much stuff. It was like my bike just felt like it weighed 50.

Speaker

Sure.

Speaker 2

Pounds, yeah, but you could have been in a situation where instead of having. It be really hot. It got really cold at night and you might not have had enough. So you, I understand being able to kind of balance those things well, you said you would do it again.

Speaker 3

Right.

Speaker 2

I think we should have. A movie made of you.

Speaker 3

You know, and race is like that. I always say the first time as a learning experience. The second time as a racing experience, right? Cause even with race across America, when I did it the second time, I was a. Day. Faster. Sure. In the 24 hours is huge. You've had more a day and a half, right? So because I know where the course is, I know what. It feels like I know. Kind of. What I needed to work on so it's same with this which. Is even greater right you. Know, but I think too there's many factors that could affect you. I just suppose I. Cracked my bike, you know. Then I have to go find a new bike. So I mean, it's really you really need luck in this race as well as as well as us being, you know prepared, you can just have really, really bad luck, right. You know, like, you know, your chain breaking or something like that, like, you know, so if not everybody knows how to put a chain together. Just something that is unrepairable that you need a whole new.

Speaker 2

Again.

Speaker 3

Bike, right? So like I said, it is a lot of luck.

Speaker 2

With this race, it is. I mean not having any support whatsoever. Having said that, did anybody ride along with you, anybody who's following?

Speaker

Oh.

Speaker 3

You're not allowed to have. I had my because. I had to. Get it? You know, back across the country so you can have support. They can kind of stand on the side of the road, you know, every day or take photos or whatever. So yeah, I had my media crew. Was there just taking photos and I'd see them once there, twice a day. But they can't help me in any which way or form. Right, you know.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

You can waive and whatnot so that that's OK, but you. Otherwise, you're on your own.

Speaker 2

I thought maybe you'd pick up a rider along the way who was just following online.

Speaker 3

No, actually, it's so funny that the start of the race, I kind of kind of by the the second day I was in fourth, third position and then from day five I think I was in 3rd place and I and it was first, second, third. The whole way across the country.

Speaker 2

Wow. Wow, So what is next? I mean, obviously Trans Ams a.

Speaker 3

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Year away so. What's going to happen between now and then? I know you give wonderful keynote speeches and you. Yeah, you know, inspirational stuff. So is that what you're going to do between now and then or.

Speaker 3

Yes. Yeah, no, I actually am going to do The Who do 500 in Utah. I'm gonna do the voyage. I'm going to do the self supported one just to see kind of where I'm at in comparison to other racers that I've done that race. And just for me, I know like I actually hold the record for supported, which is 37 hours. So I just want to see how much more.

Speaker 2

Do you have another event coming up?

Speaker 3

It would take as a Voyager rider and again I have the fitness now and a little bit more knowledge. So just to check out my new setup, what that feels like and then again like you said, I am booked pretty much for September, October, November, December. So I'm booked for keynote speaking in different places you know throughout Canada and the state.

Speaker 2

Let's take a short break, and when we come back, we'll speak with Leah Goldstein some more. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm Diane Jenks. I want to preface the next part of my conversation with Leia with a comment. Back in February, Leah was to have given one of her amazing motivational keynote talks to the inspires International Women's Day. Then she was suddenly disinvited. The reasons given and the behind the scenes truths were completely different. And regardless of how you feel about the war in the Middle East, what Leah experienced was both uncalled for and clearly anti-Semitic. So we'll cut this if you don't want to talk about it, but do you want to talk? About what happened in February? Ohh sure, yeah. I mean, so you and I both share a heritage and I read that the Inspire inspire women's.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 3

It was, yeah.

Speaker 2

I don't remember what it's called now. What's it called, Leah?

Speaker 3

Inspired women's network that's inclusive. To everybody, that one.

Speaker 2

Right. That's right. The International Women's Day event last February that you were invited to be the keynote speaker and suddenly you were disinvited and the only thing you could figure was because of what's going on in Israel now, we were told.

Speaker 3

It's it's not. I was told that was the reason why they. Sent me. Well, I mean, after October six, I I kind of had a feeling because of the uprising in the anti-Semitic, you know, demonstrations and whatnot, right, you know, so I I felt like some possibly something could happen, you know. But I didn't think I would completely be disinvited and and they wanted me to make a statement saying that I condemn what Israel is doing that. I you know, I shouldn't have been part of the IDF. I mean, the emails that we got, it just triggered me and I said, you know what, this is not OK, right, you know.

Speaker 2

Ohh it's not.

Speaker 3

So I just went public. I wrote a, you know, and and mind you too, that I've been speaking for 12 years and in 12 years of speaking to every platform you can imagine. And I don't hide who I am or what I did in Israel and with the idea of not one time have I ever offended anyone or ever anyone ever come up to say saying to me or there's something you said that really offended me. Right. And I've spoken to, you know. The Iranian Palestine, whatever they were, I'm sure they were in the audiences, right, you know, or even. And you know, whoever it may be, and because I don't speak about religion, I don't speak about politics. I don't speak about COVID. Right. You know, I just speak about life, about the things. That you know. How you know precious life is and that there is no limits, right? And I talk about the crazy things that I've done, which applies to everybody. Right? And apply just to one group of people, you know, to men, women, kids. You know adults, whatever it may be. And so I felt this is crap. I'm the most non political person you can think of, right? You know, and I would also, I also adjusted my presentation not to offend anybody by focusing more on the race across America, more on my cycling career. You know what I mean? And. Just briefly talk about it, right, you know, cause I'm not gonna hide who I am and.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

You know, and I'm proud of what I did in the military. I was the first woman to train the, you know, commando officers. Right? Right. So why wouldn't I be proud of that? Right,

you know, and it's my country. And it has the right to defend itself. But. I wasn't gonna. Include anything in that, but once the story came. No, I mean, I honestly did not think anybody would care, but it just freaking exploded. I could you on every newspaper I was on Fox News for, you know, Fox and friends. It was crazy. The attention that, that that brought right. Which I'm glad it did and it was completely unexpected and I didn't want to do it at first. But then I thought you know what? And talk and talk to my cousin Dina Goldstein. She says you'd be stupid not to do it, right? This needs to be out there. And so yeah, that's basically what happened. And what happened is the whole event got cancer. Sold. And also there was an investigation on that particular kind of organization because it's against a lot to be an anti-Semitic right, you know or you know sending the emails that we received from the organization. We're very anti-Semitic, right saying you know, I'm responsible for the genocide that's happening in Israel, all this this the absolute crap. Right you. You know and it. Was it was pretty. Hard like at first I I was so disturbed by the emails and I fell. I was. I was walking around in the days for two days. Could not believe it could not believe it, you know, so I did. I just forwarded those emails to every freaking news outlet you can imagine. You know so they can see exactly what I was going through and that there was no exaggeration.

Speaker 2

I'll bet you were.

Speaker 3

With what I. Was told.

Speaker

And.

Speaker 2

Everything I know about you and everything I've read about you is it's all about the no limits. It's all about equality. It's all about all of those things in here. This is what they've decided.

Speaker 3

Absolutely. I mean absolutely you, I don't know if you read.

Speaker 2

To focus on.

Speaker 3

The statement I. Wrote. I wrote the statement, write my letter and you know, I mean God, I wouldn't be offended if there's a Palestinian woman going up there telling me what, you know, the things that she had my life. Right, you know, by no means would I

want her not to present just because she's a Palestinian woman. Right. And the question I had.

Speaker 2

All I did, of course I did.

Speaker 3

Was if I was a Palestinian woman, would this event still be canceled? Right, you know.

Speaker 2

Ohh, interesting question. Of course nobody came back with an answer to that.

Speaker 3

Yeah. No, I I contacted the the the organization directly personally from me. I said if you had such a concern, why wasn't I, you know? You know, you know, asked about this and if they really were, you know, worried about their security or the people inside or whatnot, then why wasn't that discussed with me? You know what I mean? It wasn't. They just sent it to my, you know, to the agency that books me and Christine said that would, you know, they're on my side. They said this is insane, right? You know. And you know, and and they said people say ohh you should go sue them. And this is that wasn't the purpose. I don't. I don't do this for the money. I do it because I love it. If I can inspire one person to live their life best life possible. I've done my job right, you know. But just, you know just simply because. My name is Leah Goldstein and I joined the I know I was part of the IDF guy like 30 years ago. That's the reason why you're that's what they say. But that's not the reason why, right. And then just some of the comments were just, it's just people like, you know, we're like sheep, right. You see a big crowd of people you don't even know what they're protesting part of. That group, and that's who. That's a lot of them. Like, not all of them, but many of them are. You can ask the people that are doing those pro Palestinian which are not, you know, peaceful by any means. They're all violent, right? You ask half the people what they're there for. They don't even know. Like, they don't even.

Speaker 2

Know. Yeah. When you ask, when you ask them.

Speaker 3

No.

Speaker 2

What does river to the? Sea mean they have no idea.

Speaker 3

I know exactly. You don't even know where Israel is. Oh, my God. You know, so it's so ridiculous and so ignorant that it's almost scary how ignorant ignorance, how much ignorance is out there. Right, you know.

Speaker 2

And. Well, reading what happened to you? Made me unbelievably angry 1st and then sad. Yeah. And and it's still.

Speaker 3

But unfortunately, you know I'm not a sole case. It happens to many. My cousin is a famous photographer, Dina Goldstein. She was just invited. Like was it like five months ago or six? The same thing. Exactly the same thing organizer said. They're afraid of the protests that are going to happen in front of the venue. All this kind of, you know, and all this kind of stuff. And so she did. She went public with it too. You know.

Speaker 2

3.

Speaker 3

It's almost like the norm now. You just kind of go. Oh, it's like, you know, like the shootings in the states, right. You don't even, you know. Ohh. Another one. Right. So it's just it's just almost becoming the norm. You know, it has become the norm.

Speaker 2

And we all know about history. So yeah, I I know, I know.

Speaker 3

Exactly.

Speaker 2

Anyway, let's move on to a a happier note, and that is how can listeners follow you? You've got such a great voice.

Speaker 3

Ohh, thank you. Actually good news there. In 2019 they started doing a documentary on My life. They and we just finished filming I think. Like two years ago. And so it was picked up by JRB Productions in Los Angeles. So they have the film now, and they're going to be, it's called Cactus Tree Jr. slash JRB. So they have the film right now, the rights of the film and hopefully they'll get it out there in the public, maybe, possibly in Netflix, I don't know. So that's kind of a new development we just signed with them two months ago. And then we're gonna. Hopefully soon I'd like to update the book as well, right? The No limits book, yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah. I think it's time to do that given all that that you've done in the. Last couple three years, right?

Speaker 3

Yeah, yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Speaker 2

Well, it's always wonderful to talk with you. And I'm so happy to to hear that you got through the bear and the dogs and the and the.

Speaker 3

Yeah. And everything, yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah, you got it. All this year. So when's trans Am next year? Is it next year? You want to do it?

Speaker 3

Yes, correct. Yeah. I mean I think now it's fresh in my head. I've got all my notes down, you know, so it's the time to do it and yeah and just kind of follow through like I said, just do some tweaking with the training and yeah, I think I'll.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 3

Come in a. 100 times more prepared, right, you know, and riding a little bit lighter is a huge thing. So it's going to be the first week of. June, as always. So that's the. Yeah, that's the next big one.

Speaker 2

OK. Well, we will be watching and we will stay in touch and I really appreciate you taking time to talk with me.

Speaker 3

Yeah, anytime. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you for having me. Thank you. Alright. Take care. Thank you. Watch.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Leah for joining me today. I don't know what is worse, being chased by a bear or being blistered all over by the sun. Regardless, Leah is ready to go again with a

lot more knowledge under her helmet. I also appreciate that she was willing to share her thoughts about the Inspire incident last February as I am sure you can imagine. It struck hard when I learned about it back. Then you can follow Leah on her website, leahgoldstein.com. We also have a few photos of her during the Trans Am event since that was all the support she was allowed. Someone taking a picture as well as the link to a short video of Leah on course during the race. You can find them all on our website. Outspokencyclist.com. Let's take a short break, and when we return, we'll speak with Jim Sayer about the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm Diane Jenks. Jim Sayer, who was the executive director of Adventure Cycling Association, stepped down in 2021 and decided it was time to complete his perimeter tour of the US. Stopping by our place in Cleveland for the. It was during that ride that he spent some time on the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota, and since we're highlighting trails this summer, I knew he'd have some honest and forthright things to say about it. And so he did. Hi, Jim. Welcome back to the outspoken cyclist. Thanks for joining me. It's good to catch up with you. How have you been?

Speaker 4

I've been good. Thanks, Diane. It's nice to be back on the outspoken circles.

Speaker 2

Well, thanks. Well, you know, we're doing a series this summer on trails we love and I know that when you were here and that was, gosh, that was already several years ago. You were on your way through and you were going to discover the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota, and Brian brought up that you had written. Part of it. And so I thought I'd pick your brain about it. And. Let listeners learn about the Mickelson Trail so I know that you didn't do the whole thing. It's 100 mile trail. It's got 100 bridges and. 4 tunnels and on an old railroad bed. But tell. Your version of the Mickelson Trail, where it is and and how you got to it.

Speaker 4

Well, I got to do one of the sweet spots about 35 miles, and I did it partly because I knew through our tours department at Adventure Cycling where it was for a long time that the Mickelson Trail is one of the best in America. According to Rails Trails Conservancy, but also all these participants in our tours over the years. So I really wanted to do at least part of it and so. So also adventure cycling had just put out a new route, which goes from Minneapolis to Yellowstone National parks. Really cool route. It's called the parks, peaks and Prairie route. And it goes from southwest Minnesota to South Dakota and then across. Northern Wyoming. And then you get to Yellowstone. And so that was part of. A cross country trip I did from Maine to Missoula in 2021. So Mickelson is part of that and to get there, I went from Rapid City SD, which is right on the cusp of the Black Hills, which is an amazing area on its own. Biking, driving, hiking, whatever. Really beautiful area in western South Dakota. And you do some serious

riding up and down steep grades, especially on a loaded bike, which I have. To get to Hill City and Hill City is a small, now, very tourism oriented town right in the middle of the Mickelson Trail. So that's where I caught it. I think it's around milepost 60 or so. And then I headed north about 35 miles started in the morning. I had camped in Hill City and headed north up to. You I can't remember about Mile plus 95. There was no town or anything, but the adventure cycling route takes you off and then you climb a little further on some back roads and a little bit on Hwy. Riding to Spearfish Canyon, which is just phenomenal. Very Western part of South Dakota and you drop. I can't remember a couple 1000 feet. You just slice right through this amazing Canyon and it was during the fall, September of. You want and everything's going gold and red. All the trees are just flaming. And it was gorgeous. And then you end up in. I ended up in the town of Spearfish, which is 10,000 people and it's a great outdoors town. So but. If I had. Stayed on the Mickelson Trail. I could have gone another 10 miles up to the. Right. Northern terminus, which is Deadwood, SD, which sounds as interesting. It is as interesting as it sounds. It's so it was a. It's an amazing trail and I yeah, I can tell you a little bit.

Speaker 2

Where did you have to get a trail pass to use the trail?

Speaker 4

You do get a trail pass. It's pretty cheap. I mean, if you're gonna bother going, I think it's now 4 bucks a day or you can get an annual pass for \$15 and the money goes. I think. I don't think it's just maintenance. I mean, it's really not that much money to do. True. Infrastructure stuff. I think it's the State Park system that maintains the trail and I was amazed by how many parts of my 35 miles were freshly resurfaced limestone or crushed gravel pathway. So it was. It was a good trail and well marked. I really enjoyed the surface they recommend if you're going to do it that you're not on a skinny tire bike. In my case, I had my via my salsa vaya great bike. It's a touring bike, but you can use it on gravel and I had 38mm tires so they're wider than your average tire and those work perfectly. In fact, I I looked it up and they recommend no no narrower than a 32mm. Tire. So for all you bike geeks, or for whoever wants to do this. You'll you'll find out fast if you got the right tire or not, but anyways, it's fairly smooth. There's some places that were a touch wedged or maybe a little bit rougher, but generally it's not like a mountain bike trail or anything like that. It's a nice but generally smooth rail trail.

Speaker 2

Let me take a moment to reintroduce you and then we're going to. I want to ask you a couple more questions that you may or may not be able to tell me you did. We're speaking with Jim Sayer. He is. Just a consummate cyclotomic wrist. He was here in 2021 on his way to the Mickelson Trail. Actually, he left here. We he spent an evening with us, which was wonderful. We got to catch up after a long time of never having met in person. And we did see his via sell Samaya.

Speaker 4

No. Yep.

Speaker 2

The shop. So did you. Encounter any of the tunnels or bridges. There are allegedly 100 bridges and four tunnels on the Mickelson Trail.

Speaker 4

I did actually. I discovered that this is really, if not the sweet spot. One of the sweet spots on the trail, because I think all four tunnels are on that 35 mile segment. So letting North Hill City, yeah, it's just the nature of that particular part. It's it's it's fairly up and down. It's really a gorgeous.

Speaker 2

Wow.

Speaker 4

Alright. I mean, I'm not saying that just. Just to puff it up, I I it really was, I appreciate. It of course it. Was a prime time of year the weather. Was perfect and. You know, we had changing foliage, but it was really beautiful. So we had the tunnels and then I went across quite a few bridges, not 100 for sure. But you see that a lot with rail trails too. You know, they have a lot of trestles. Bridges, because they're cut, you know. You know, rail roads were going over creeks and rivers and everything else, right? So, but I went over quite a few and they were well maintained. A lot of them were wood surfaced so.

Speaker

Thanks.

Speaker 4

It was gorgeous and and it added a lot to the character of the ride. I I I was just impressed the whole way with the scenery, but also the maintenance of the trail.

Speaker 2

Were there any amenities along the trail, or did you have to get to someplace like another trail head to like, like a bathroom for example?

Speaker

No, no, no.

Speaker 4

There were definitely periodic stations where you had bathrooms. Usually you know Porta potty caliber, but they were fine and the and the signage was good. There were

maps all along the way. So all of that was in on that 35 mile stretch was really good and I.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 4

I think I think the entirety of it's 110 miles. My understanding and I think the no, it's become such a tourism magnet in general for cycling, but also for hikers and and others that they have every incentive in the world to make sure it's it's up to snuff cause it was. Inducted into the rails and Trails Conservancy's Hall of Fame, you see signs along the way for that and I think. That local pride has also, you know, encourage them to keep everything up to stuff too. So it was all good. I, a lot of benches too, even, you know, not that I looked for those. But I remember having lunch near one of the tunnels, the entryway. And I think they get a lot of private donors too, who have stepped up and sponsored benches or other. Facilities along the way, I think there were several repair stations also. So and then I mentioned that I started in Hill City, but there you know, because it was an old railroad line. Of course it goes through. A bunch of different. Towns. So there's camping, there's, you know, you, you name it. There's there's good facilities, groceries, restaurants, all along the way. And then. Many of the towns like Deadwood. They have their own stories that you could spend the day there if you wanted. So.

Speaker 2

It's 100.

Speaker 4

And 10 miles. And it's like any bike route. You could probably. Go out and back and it's going to be a different ride because you know you're looking at it a different way and so. You could easily. Make it a one week trip if you wanted to 220 miles. And with stops along the way and really take advantage. Of it and. Of course you. Go through Custer SD. You go near Crazy Horse. You go right near the Crazy Horse monument that's still being sculpted and probably will for many decades. Come and then you're pretty close to Mount Rushmore. I did not go over there. I think you go. I think on the route you go through Keystone, which is like the tourist town near Mount Rushmore. I have seen Mount Rushmore and didn't want to ride over there, but it's really close. It's it's great. You know, riding and you can do what you want.

Speaker 2

Well, the website bikemickelson.com is really comprehensive. They have an interactive map, a trip planner, a timeline, a trail forum, the towns and services are listed mileage charts. It's really and it's very simple. It's not a complicated website at all, just easy click and and and do what you need to do. So I I appreciate that kind of simplicity. Let's see

when you're on the road. And my guess is you can probably download the the trail into a GPS system too. Was there connectivity? Did you lose connectivity? Were you able to use?

Speaker 4

Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 2

Your phone.

Speaker 4

Ohh yeah, that wasn't an issue. I mean I I try not to focus too much on my phone when I'm doing a ride like that, but when I really needed it I usually had some kind of access to, you know, whatever the route was or but the other good thing about Mickelson Trail is. It you know, rail. Trails are all different vintages, but.

Speaker 1

This one I think.

Speaker 4

Was opened in 1998, so it's been around for 1/4 century now, and so that's great because they've really worked out the kinks. And again, you've got this flourishing tourism support economy along the way that, you know, makes it really easy, if that's. What you're looking for? And I mentioned earlier Spearfish, but. This can just be the spine of an amazing adventure, because you've got this. Fantastic Rail Trail, which? Is so mellow, you know no traffic, right? You got some cross traffic, you know where roads are going across it, but otherwise, you know, very mellow. But adjacent to it, you have some fantastic Rd. riding and other gravel. Routes too so. You know for. The really ambitious, you know, cyclist, you know you can do lots of stuff in the Black Hills and I highly just recommend that area as a a destination too, for for somebody who's got the. Time there are a.

Speaker 2

Couple of things more on the website, which I think would be helpful to anybody who wants to see. What's going on? Are there are GPS coordinates and geolocations of the towns along the trail? There are elevation charts. Current weather's always interesting. This year's probably been tough with the heat. I don't know what it's like up there. There are bridle trails. It is a, it turns out, horseback riding is allowed on the trail.

Speaker 4

Yeah, I can.

Speaker 2

Believe it. Did you see horses?

Speaker 4

I'm trying to remember. I could have, but there weren't very many and the and honestly the the population on the trail was was not that high. I did see a decent number of cyclists there. Also, I did see some B.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 4

And B's or some? Converted horse properties that were, you know, for overnight stays. And you can go more upscale if you want more camp. And then I saw some people doing, you know, mostly locals, I think doing walk. Now, again, this was late September, so you know families are back at school and everything is starting to settle down, so it's not probably a true reflection of summer time activity, but it wasn't. It wasn't that busy there and it was really pleasant.

Speaker 2

Well, I know you've written lots and lots of trails, so even though you only did maybe 35 miles of this one, if you were to give it a rating from zero like I never want to write it again to 10, would you give it a 10?

Speaker 4

I think I I think I would I you know I I. Had done a lot of rail trails. And they vary, but I think Mickelson is nice because again, it's it's low traffic, it doesn't have a lot of cross traffic. The noise factor isn't there. You know, you go on some rail trails and they're right next to highways or or maybe an A railroad that's still in service. So it's very pleasant this. Direction and I I enjoyed it greatly. I would do it again if I'm back there and I I may go back there too, cause I'm living in Montana and one of my daughters has moved to Minneapolis. So, but we have to go if you want to go see her there, we have to go back and forth, either North Dakota or South Dakota. So. So this is this would be a great stop including. As I said, Spearfish or or Rapid City, so we'll see. I I I may get back there, but it's a really good trail and. I mentioned you know it's 26 years old now and two years ago I did the police, Cascades trail or parts of it, which goes from Idaho or the edge of Idaho and Washington state all the way to near Seattle. And that's also a budding system. That's really great, was also known as the John Wayne. Trail. And then they change it to police. Cascades. Long story, but they're building some fantastic bridges. Two years ago, they opened. Two of the key ones, one on the very eastern edge of Washington, and TECO, and then also the Beverly Bridge, which goes over the Columbia River. That was the key pinch point, and it's a half mile long railroad trestle that's been repurposed and modernized for bike walk.

Speaker

It's amazing, but.

Speaker 2

Nice.

Speaker 4

But you know, there are other parts of that trail that still need work. So the Mickelson trail is. I think a. 100% there that police Cascade trail. They're gonna be there eventually. It's pretty long trail too. It's it's several 100 miles, I think ultimately, but I. It's fun to. Watch all these different rail trails come to fruition, and oftentimes it just takes you know, segment by segment. You know, diligent. Work by governments, but also citizens to make it happen.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Well, we're watching the completion of the Ohio portion of the Towpath Trail and it finally got it finally. Did it finally got to downtown? You know, it looked like 40 years, but that's OK. It did get done. And it got done piece by piece. You know, you have to purchase property, you have to make deals. You have to do what you have to do, raise funds.

Speaker 4

Nice. Right. Right.

Speaker 2

But it got done and this one sounds Mickelson trail sounds a lot like the towpath, if it's got the same kind. Of packed limestone, you know, with a little bit of whatever else they throw in there. So I'm really glad to get to talk with you again. And you always have such interesting trips. What do you got planned coming up?

Speaker 4

I don't know. You know my wife and I are trying to stick more or less to a no fly policy. So we are trying to stay relatively local or nearby if we can.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 4

So that's why I rode from Missoula to the Pacific Coast two years ago and then this year I did an Amtrak and the bike trip to go see the eclipse with a bunch of friends and.

Speaker 2

Well, that's right. I told you to come here and you kept on.

Speaker 4

Going, yeah, upstate New York. We got, we had 10 friends got together and. So that was amazing. And we got to see a lot of really cool urban stuff in Minneapolis and New York and Chicago, too. So that was fantastic. So, yeah, we we had a great time and. And you know. Amtrak is an interesting experience, especially if you stay on coach the whole way. But I got a monthly pass at the urging of a bunch of friends and then got out there rode. Through the Adirondacks and a friend of mine had never done an overnight bike trip, but I always wanted to do one. He came up from New York City with his bike, so we rode from Burlington, Vt on the Empire State Trail, which is. Another big one that I.

Speaker 2

Great trail.

Speaker 4

Hope you're covering and I've done now both the Erie Canal. And the north-south Trail, which is still incomplete, going up. On the northern part of that towards Vermont. So that was an interesting experience too, but we got to New York City. And. Then I took the train back home to Montana, but so it's been interesting trying to kind of figure that out and integrate all these fantastic trails and routes all over America that are emerging and. I'm excited that hopefully we'll get to. A place where it will be really easy. For all kinds of cyclists availability. Just to to travel distance, you know, no matter what, what they want to do and it feels like we're getting there, as you said about the Ohio Trail, it's takes a while sometimes unfortunately, but.

Speaker 2

It does.

Speaker

The good news is with.

Speaker 4

All this infrastructure money pumping out I I think we're going to see some big leaps forward both for. Urban cycling but also trails so that excited about that.

Speaker 2

Me too. Well, Jim, it's great to talk with you. I hope you have a great rest of your summer. We will catch up again. I keep watching for what you're doing. Is there a way people? Do you have a way to for people to follow you?

Speaker 4

I have been really negligent in a good way social media cause I I realize how all consuming can be but.

Speaker 2

Ohh. You can.

Speaker 4

Yeah. I I I'm on Facebook once in a while, which I know where you see some of my photos and stuff. If I do decide to post something but not too much, I'm staying fairly low key right now, but the.

Speaker 2

Well, I'll post some of the photos from your trip through the Mickelson Trail, and I thank you for talking with us about it.

Speaker 4

You are welcome and best to Brian.

Speaker 2

Have a great afternoon.

Speaker 4

You too.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Jim for joining me on the show. He sure made the Mickelson Trail sound appetizing. We have some photos of his time on the trail on our website at outspokencyclist.com, as well as the link to the Mickelson Trail website. Before signing off today, I must bow down to this year's Tour de France. In addition to it being one of the most interesting and exciting editions of the race, it was truly inspiring to see such writers as Binyam grew. Eye and Remco Evenepoel become superstars, and I'm beginning to think that today, but gotcha might just break some long held records many thought might never be broken. Can you say Eddie Merks? As for the tour? Joe Lindsay joins me next time to wrap up this year's race. Chat about the remainder of the cycling season and we'll preview the Olympics. We'll also be continuing our series on favorite bike trails with the Empire State Trail in New York. Thank you for listening. I hope you enjoyed the show. Please remember that we have links, photos and a written transcript of the episode at outspokencyclist.com. Follow us on Instagram, Twitter alright X, Facebook and LinkedIn and subscribe at your favorite podcast app. Please stay safe. Stay well and remember there is always time for a ride. Bye bye.

Speaker 1

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