

RALEIGH

Celebrating 125 years



RALEIGH AND RACING LEGENDS

Arthur A. Zimmerman was the greatest racing cyclist of his day and one of the world's first international sports stars. A gentle kid from New Jersey, 'Zim' was acclaimed on three continents in the early 1890s. His reign coincided with the first great frenzy for bicycles, and with the emergence of track racing as the number one spectator sport in the USA. He won over 1,000 races as an amateur and then a professional, including two gold medals at the first world cycling championships in Chicago, in 1893. His elegance in the saddle was purportedly the reason Baron Pierre de Coubertin granted cycle racing Olympic recognition, when he revived the Games in 1896. Zim's status as an amateur was significant in the establishment of the first international cycling body. He brought American cycling to the attention of Europe and Australia. Perhaps most importantly, Zimmerman brought the name of Raleigh to the world.

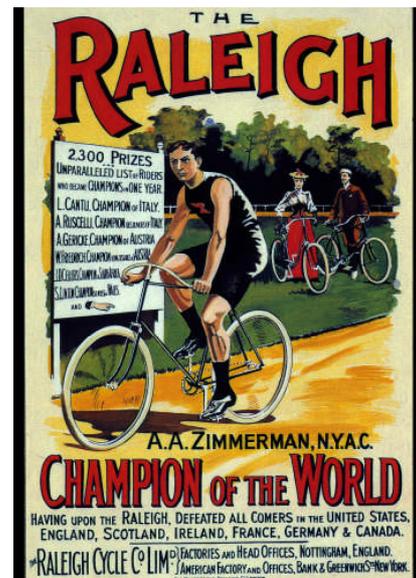
Raleigh began humbly in 1887. Frank Bowden, a successful entrepreneur bought a bicycle from a small workshop making three frames a week in Nottingham and was so impressed, he asked to buy a stake in the business. The industry was still in its infancy: the diamond-shaped 'safety' bicycle, the type of bicycle that 'set the fashion to the world' and which we still ride today, was first manufactured in 1885. Cycling was the exclusive preserve of young, athletic, wealthy males. Bowden, however, was convinced of



the ‘future of cycling for health, pleasure and business,’ as he wrote.

Bowden clearly had good timing. Demand for the new ‘freedom machine’ was unprecedented and Raleigh grew quickly. By 1892, 400 workers were producing 3,000 bikes a year. Bowden’s principal commitment from the start was to bring affordable bicycles to a wider public, yet he could still recognize a sporting PR coup when he saw one.

Zimmerman was already an American sensation when he arrived in Britain in 1893. He was still, supposedly, an amateur but the foundation of this claim was rocked when he embarked on his itinerary of races and exhibitions on a Raleigh racing bicycle. To compound matters, Raleigh launched a nationwide advertising campaign showing ‘Zim’: ‘Champion of the World,’ the posters boasted, ‘having upon the Raleigh defeated all comers in the United States, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany and Canada.’



The outraged British National Cycle Union banned Zimmerman from all competitions. Cycling was at the forefront of the rationalisation of sport then emanating from the British universities and public schools, and central to one of the period’s big social questions: the ‘Gentlemen vs. Players’ debate – should people be paid for playing sport? The following year, Zim made his sponsorship contract with Raleigh public, and turned professional. It was the beginning of pro cycle racing.

Raleigh has almost continually used professional racing as both a testing ground for new technology and a means to strengthen the company brand ever since. In 1908, the record-breaking cyclist Harry Green rode 837 miles from Land’s End to John o’Groats in under three days, on a Raleigh fitted with the latest integrated hub gear/coaster brake component. Tommy Godwin set the ‘cycling year record’

in 1939: he rode a staggering 75,065 miles in a calendar year on a Raleigh Record Ace with a four-speed Sturmey-Archer racing hub. The no-nonsense, Lancastrian hard man, Reg Harris became the first Englishman to win the world professional sprinting championships, in 1949. Sponsored by Raleigh, he won again in 1950, 1951 and 1954, becoming one of the best-known and most popular sportsmen of his era.



It may seem odd that Raleigh's long association with track cycling did not extend to sponsorship of a road racing team until the 1970s. The indifference of the British public to the rigours of mass-start, multi-day, road races partly explains this. Nonetheless, in 1974, the directors of Raleigh decided to test the water. When Britain joined the EEC, import tariffs came down and it became commercially viable for Raleigh to sell bikes on the Continent. With a new market in its sites, the company enacted an ambitious plan to claim the jewel in the crown of cycle sport, the Tour de France.

The TI-Raleigh cycling team was formed in 1974 with the charismatic Dutchman, Peter Post as manager. Dutch passion and British engineering proved to be a triumphant combination. TI-Raleigh was pro cycling's first 'super-team', adopting the 'total football' philosophy of Post's beloved Ajax. Post allowed different riders to lead and win in different races. The victories soon stacked up: TI-Raleigh won innumerable races, dominated the Classics and won 55 stages of the Tour de France over a decade.

The elegant, steel, red, yellow and black bikes the team rode were made to measure and hand built at the nascent Special Bicycles Development Unit, the department overseen by master frame-builder, Gerald O'Donovan. As Post said (possibly because he knew what was good for him): 'We are perhaps the best team in the world because we have the best bikes in the world.'

In 1980, the company directors got what they wanted: the Team claimed an impressive 11 stages, Joop Zoetemelk won the Tour de France riding for TI-Raleigh. The bike Zoetemelk rode is the only British manufactured winner in the Tour's history.



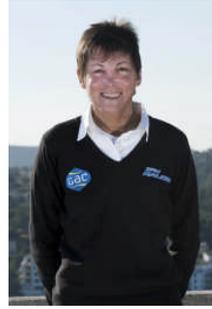
Raleigh continued to sponsor a domestic road racing team through the 1980s and a mountain biking team in the 90s. There was also one further foray into Continental race sponsorship: the great Laurent Fignon lost the 1989 Tour de France, by the smallest margin in history, on a Raleigh bike.

After a ten-year hiatus, Raleigh recently began sponsoring a professional cycling team again. Now in their 3rd season, Team Raleigh-GAC is UCI Continental accredited and full of ambition.



The team director is Cherie Pridham, a combative ex-pro and one of only a handful of women in the testosterone-fuelled world of men's pro racing. With a group of new riders for 2012, including Graham Briggs, the National Criterium Champion, the Team is hoping to live up to an illustrious heritage.

'We certainly want to get back to a level where Raleigh as a brand deserves to be,' Pridham said. 'We need results in the UK as a stepping stone into Europe, and maybe we can ride at Pro Continental level in a few years time.'



'The Team is about encouraging dealers and customers to believe in the brand again. It's about creating a brand that people aspire to buy,' Geoff Giddings, Raleigh Marketing Director and a former rider, said. It's a sentiment Arthur A. Zimmerman understood well.