

A Portrait of Ashley James

Coach:

The phrase, “a picture is worth a thousand words” has been attributed to everyone from Confucius to Napoleon. But had any of its claimed authors had the chance to see this photo, they could have easily upped the word count to include everything in the library of congress.



Possessing a shyness that fails miserably in its attempt to disguise her brilliance, Ashley easily ranks among the most impressive people I have ever met.

She will quickly describe herself as painfully quiet and socially awkward, a guise that on the surface seems an adequate self-characterization. But just below this veil, this specter, be it a defense mechanism or an honest quietness, haunts a person of incredible depth, intellect, and frightening talent.

Question: Tell me why you race bicycles and what it does for you?

Ashley: I love everything about cycling. I love the traveling, the innate contrast, and how it simultaneously falls and breaks from rhythm. I love the atmosphere at bike races when everybody is just so psyched to be there, and I love all the incredible people I've met through the sport. I'm so grateful to be involved in something that means so much. A bicycle is a beautiful thing. It's mobility and it's the possibility of change. Also, when you ride bikes you can eat more ice cream.

Question: Why did you decide to come to L dub and talk about your experience here, good or bad?



Ashley: As soon as I saw the area I knew I wanted to live here. It's absolutely beautiful. Being rural and all; it's sometimes a bit boring but I guess we've made our own fun. In the past few weeks I've played (or tried to!) dodge ball, foursquare, and have gotten to duel with foam swords.

Coach:

In cycling there exists a myriad of athlete categories.

For a coach, there are those athletes that need to be motivated, and those that need no motivation. There are those that crave structure and guidance, and those that assume their talent or resume' is proof that they are above counsel. Ashley falls on the positive side of all such columns. The greatest challenge when working with her is reigning in her drive, for she will treat every ride, every training session, every instructional suggestion as if is the one thing she was always missing, and grind pedals, tires, flesh and bone to reach that next plateau. The challenge is getting her to rest.

Try teaching a hungry lion to rest.

Question: What do you want to do after graduation, what are your plans both on and off the bike?

Ashley: Oh man, I have no idea. Four years is a long time. The whole career thing terrifies me. I can't imagine my life without bikes now so I hope I'm still riding. Other than that, I'm fine with nothing concrete. I want to go on an adventure. We'll see.

Question: Describe something you are passionate about that has nothing to do with cycling. Include all the whys and because's'.



Ashley: I love music. I love how something as trivial and transparent as notes can blend into something nearly transcendent. It's such a pure mode of expression. I'll listen to anything, but right now I'm really into some great folksy stuff. Besides that, I'm extremely passionate about the transformers. Not the awful movie remake, but the old 80's carton. Love them.

Question: What goes through your head when you are racing all out? What pushes you to ride, train, and race like an animal?

Ashley: There's really no external force that motivates me. I'm kind of a spaz and structure is really hard for me so I don't follow a training plan very well. I don't think I could either. Having a set of intervals to accomplish each day would stress me out. It doesn't make sense to me to quantify what's qualitative. I just really like going on bicycle rides. It's fun. I'm all about just enjoying it.

Question: Why are you so quiet? Are you only shy around certain people, or everyone?

Ashley: Haha! I guess it takes me a while to warm up to people. I might be kinda weird and it's good to hide that at first. Sometimes I'd rather listen to people than talk. You learn a lot about people that way. I love finding people's quirks.



Coach: Gaze of a lion. One of the few times I have ever actually seen Ashley looking up. As if the veil is taking up the task of shyness that her trademark downward gaze usually affords. Silence speaking volumes.

Question: If the world could only learn one thing about you, what would you want that thing to be?

Ashley: Hmm, that's a hard one! Once someone told me they thought I was rude and snotty because I am sometimes quite. I sure hope no one believes that!

Coach:

When I began work on this edition of *On The Rivet*, and knowing the subject for this entry was Ashley, for some indescribable reason a Hemingway quote kept popping into my head. The quote was, "*If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.*"

I struggled to figure out the connection between this athlete on my team and the seemingly obscure reference. But noting that the simplest explanations are most often the correct ones, here goes; Any person who brings a smile to your face simply by being there, Any person who possesses both an incredible work ethic, and a positive attitude, Any person that makes you feel better just by being around them, it stays with you. Their positive energy stays with you. The positive energy they bring to you is indeed, a moveable feast.

