

# Aged to Perfection

Three athletes share their formulas for beating the pants off competitors half their age BY ANNE SASSO

## [BADASS BIKER]

### Ned Overend

With six USA Cycling Mountain Bike national championships, two Xterra triathlon world championships, and membership in both sports' halls of fame, Overend, 51, could retire on top. Instead, he's competing in slick-tire sufferfests like the Mount Evans and Mount Washington hill climbs. In 2006, he finished second in both races, putting the hurt on cyclists 30 years his junior.

#### LESSON LEARNED: When to back off.

Training works like this: Stress your body, recover, come back stronger than before. Repeat. "You need the recovery before you can improve," says Overend. "So knowing when to stop and knowing how long to recover are important." To get it right, learn to read your body. If you fall apart on the last repeat of a set of hill climbs, it's a sign. "Stop, go home, and recover," he says.

#### SECRET WEAPON: Cross training.

Overend says nordic skiing (he won January's Durango Langlauf 30km nordic race), winter trail running, and other

sports keep him fit, prevent burnout, and balance muscle groups to protect against sport-specific injuries.

## [RAPID KING]

### Eric Jackson

A former Olympian and three-time (and reigning) world freestyle champion, Jackson, 43, literally rules the sport of whitewater kayaking. He's been a nationally ranked kayaker 18 years running.

#### LESSON LEARNED: Commitment.

Jackson paddles every day. "I never feel like I want to take the day off just because I want to take the day off," he says. Translation: If you want to be the best, then it isn't enough to love a sport. You need to love doing everything it takes to get on top. That includes training on and off the water, and even traveling to and from competitions.

**SECRET WEAPON: Fun.** Jackson says most people approach sports the wrong way by always focusing on the desired result: the win. "A competition is just to show off how hard you've been playing. If you're doing it every day for the fun

## [SMART FIX]

### Get a Partner

It's the best way to push yourself. The perfect training companion is a friend who's good-humored, disciplined, and competitive—and someone you hate losing to.

factor, the events are just part of the deal. It takes the pressure off," he says.

## [MULTISPORT MUTANT]

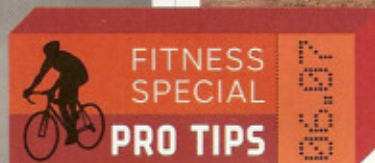
### Steve Ilg

From nordic skiing to road cycling to ultrarunning to rock climbing, Ilg has excelled at more sports than most people have tried. The 45-year-old, with partner Lisa Goldsmith, 42, won the Overall Pairs



**BREATHING MACHINE:** Multisport champ Steve Ilg outside Flagstaff, Arizona

**STRATEGIC REST:** Ned Overend takes a break near Durango, Colorado.



Division at February's grueling Mt. Taylor Winter Quadrathlon (bike,

run, ski, snowshoe) and beat all but one four-person team. His 2005 book *Total Body Transformation* delivers a detailed plan for integrating multiple training and lifestyle disciplines in one comprehensive program.

#### LESSON LEARNED: How to breathe.

No kidding. Breathing, says Ilg, fires up the body's "energetic pathways" and turbocharges your efforts. You need to lay a foundation of real fitness, but yoga and conscious breathing extend peak performance without taking a physical toll. "Enroll in a hatha yoga class," advises Ilg. "Overcome your fear of the esoterically weird and learn to breathe." There's nothing weird about Ilg's results.

#### SECRET WEAPON: Balanced strength.

Train your body's weakest part and you'll bring it into balance with the rest of your anatomy. Then watch your performance go to a new level.