



ELLEN "THE ANIMAL" VAN DIJK. 2013 ITT WORLD CHAMPION.

WHATEVER IT TAKES:

SUFFERING

"That's actually what you're aiming for: to be as dead as possible."

- Ellen Van Dijk

YOUR PAST. IT DOESN'T MATTER.

Your previous palmarès, your potential future, and the fact that you are the current World Champion. None. Of. This. Matters. All that matters right now, in this moment, is your ability to truly suffer. Through the screaming in your legs, the thunderous doubts in your head, and the burning pain in your lungs.

A voice in your ear says, "0.5 seconds."

You are half-a-second back. Time to go. Faster, faster, faster.

The Individual Time Trial is affectionately known by all as the Race of Truth. For good reason. You can't bluff your way through it. You can't sit in and let your teammates pull you to the line. Nope. This is all down to you. And it's that honesty—that truth—that makes it Ellen Van Dijk's favorite discipline, and as the 2013 ITT World Champion, she knows a little about what it takes.

"It's just such a pure event," she says. "The strongest rider wins and there are no excuses. In road racing you get, 'Yeah but this happened and this happened' [when you think about why you didn't win]. But in time trialing, it's only about who is the fastest rider, who has the most power, and who's the strongest. That's something I just really love about it."

As romantic and pure as that sounds, let's not kid ourselves here. Time trialing hurts. It really, really hurts. And because of its truth—no team, slipstream, no help—you must rely on your ability to compartmentalize pain in a valiant effort to ignore its attention-seeking ways. You must be willing to go even harder when all your body is doing is screaming at you to, for love of Merckx, just please stop.

"It's really hard to explain the pain and what's going on in your body," says Van Dijk, affectionately known as "the Animal" because of her huge power and beastly speed. It's a name that also can't hurt when it comes to her ability to slough off the pain and just push through.

"All you want to do is just stop and sit next to your bike and not ride it anymore," she says, when talking about those pain points in the ITT. "But you know that you have to go 'faster, faster, faster' and always try to get more out of your body. You're never satisfied. You might be like 'oh, I'm hurting so much,' but you know you always have to hurt more."

"And everything has to hurt. When you cross that finish line, the best thing is to crash off your bike and just lay there for five minutes. That's actually what you're aiming for: to be as dead as possible. It's not just your legs in the end, everything is hurting. The trick is to not give too much attention to the pain."

It would be easy to romanticize Time Trialing. A beautiful discipline broken down to the simplest of elements—the rider, the bike, the road, and the clock. But under the surface, there is always that pain, and to be a true champion like Ellen Van Dijk or Tony Martin, a rider must learn to corral that pain. To lasso it and use it to their advantage.

"I don't know if you really get better at enduring pain," says Ellen. "But I mean you get kind of used to it. Time trialing is suffering. It's suffering to the maximum. The more you can suffer the faster you can time trial. The most important thing is to try not to think about that suffering. It's hard, but it's something that really belongs to time trialing."

Now, faster. Go faster, faster, faster. †