

ESPN.com -- E-Ticket: So You Wanna Be An Olympian?



By Kathryn Bertine
Special to ESPN.com

Editor's Note: Just how hard is it to make the U.S. Olympic team? Does it require a lifetime of training and devotion? Would an average person with an athletic background have any shot at all?

E-ticket will find out the answers over the next two years. We've tapped Kathryn Bertine, a former ice skater, professional triathlete and accomplished author, to see whether she can somehow find her way to Beijing in 2008. In what sport? Well, that's what she's trying to decide.

This is Part 3 in our series on Bertine's Olympic quest in which she tries out the redheaded stepchild of biking — track cycling.

If you are new to "So You Wanna Be an Olympian," let me fill you in on what you've missed in Parts 1 and 2:

I am a bad pentathlete.

I am worse at team handball.

Therefore, getting to the 2008 Beijing Olympics is going to be hard.

After blundering my way through two sports (six, if you break down pentathlon into five little athlons, then add team handball), it has become crystal clear that my only legitimate shot of getting to the Olympic trials will necessitate finding a sport I know how to play. Common sense is such a drag.

Somewhere in the midst of getting stabbed by fencers, chafed while riding horses and pummeled with handballs, one of the voices inside my head suggested cycling. "You like riding your bike," it pleaded.

"Yes, I do," I agreed. **"I could try track cycling!"**



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Before the team got started on the track, we saw a bit of Colorado Springs by bike. Here I am atop the road loop at Garden of the Gods State Park.



Pro riders Sarah Tillotson, Kathrine Carroll & Alison Powers give me advice on track cycling. They all agree having your own bike - instead of a loaner - helps tremendously.

"Is that the one with brakeless bikes and lots of riders going 30 mph around an embanked concrete track?"

"Yes, brain."

Long pause. "How about golf?" Unfortunately, if golf is played at Beijing, it will only be a demonstration sport.

More ...

Don't miss out on Kathryn Bertine's series on her efforts to become an Olympian. So far, she's explored pentathlon, team handball & track cycling. Check out earlier columns at ESPN.com

So I e-mailed USA Cycling in Colorado Springs, Colo., to inquire about getting started in track cycling. I told Jim Miller, the head of USAC, that I was an elite triathlete and that while I was not new to cycling, I'd never been on a track bike. He passed my info on to the [then] women's national team coach, Colby Pearce, with a message that read: "Looks like she's fairly legit."

Compared to my feedback from pentathlon and handball coaches, "fairly legit" sounded like just about the best compliment I'd ever received. I immediately envisioned climbing through the track cycling ranks: moderately legit, mostly legit, legit, then perhaps someday if I work very, very hard ... truly legit.

An Uncomplicated But Terrifying Sport

Track cycling has one of the most uncomplicated histories of any sport. In the latter half of the 1800s, someone invented the bicycle. People liked them very much and rode them all around England. But the roads in London were rough, so velodromes were built to help people avoid potholes, horses, carriages and really wide petticoats. Some people wanted to bike fast, so races were set up. The end. I'm sure there is an unabridged version, but my articles are long enough as is.

Fast-forward a century and a half, and track cycling finds itself at the top of the list of Sports You've Never Tried But Are Harder Than Hell. In the past few years, road cycling has enjoyed a surge of popularity (thanks to Lance and EPO — separately), but track racing remains the redheaded stepchild of cycling, mostly because it is rarely seen by the American public. Though there are hundreds of velodromes worldwide, there are only 22 in the United States.

The 7-Eleven Velodrome in Colorado Springs is a truly idiosyncratic architectural structure. The track is 333.3 meters (so that three laps equal one kilometer) and, unlike a regular horizontal, pancake-flat running track, cycling tracks are banked so that the straightaways are slightly curved, but the ends of the track are much steeper and more vertical. Imagine a giant contact lens pinched into an oval, or a giant rubber band pulled flatter along the sides with the ends rounded upward. Now pour concrete over that, paint a few lane lines and drop in a girl who has no idea how to stop a bike with no brakes. Or start one, for that matter.

Before we go on the track, Colby has me fill out a USOC Training Center 15-page waiver. I waive what I assume are things like death and blame and whatnot. We go outside to a trailer that is stocked with old track bikes. Some of them have faded race numbers attached to the top tubes. Some of them hang vertically from the



Photo courtesy of Scott Zvitzanski

USA Olympic speedskater Apolo Anton Ohno pauses with me for a photo in the OTC dining hall. He's quick, but I beat him to the dessert carousel.



in a box marked "Free Stuff" at the OTC Athlete Center I find an omen disguised as a felt banner with "Go for the Gold" emblazoned on it. I know I'm supposed to be here.



Cycling can be tough on the body. Sima Trapp & Lara Kropesch demonstrate the importance of stretching and being flexible for a fuller range of motion.

ceilings on wheel hooks, others lean clumsily on one another, some are missing wheels or lie in piles of disarray. A few are ensnared head on, handlebar to handlebar, like two-point metal bucks locked in battle. Cyclists are prone to treating their expensive equipment like live beings, so there is something odd about this dark trailer of captive, neglected, orphan bikes. I want to free them. I also want to be perceived as sane, so I decide to keep this thought to myself.

"Here's one," Colby says, handing me a seemingly generic purple bike. It's light, only about 15 pounds. He adjusts the seat and handlebars to fit me. To the unknowledgeable eye, track bikes don't look all that different from regular road bikes. They have two wheels, a metal frame, a seat, handlebars and pedals (onto which special cycling shoes clip down and lock the foot into place so that the rider can not only push down on the pedal but pull up). But track bikes lack some of the components of a road bike (derailleurs, double chain rings, etc.). In other words, there are no gears to shift and no wiry brake cables slithering around the frame. There is a big chain ring in the front and a little bitty chain ring in the back. To slow down, you have to pedal backward like you did on your old Huffy or Schwinn. However, dramatic skids with the rear tire don't make you look cool on track bikes.

Colby and I walk our bikes to the track by way of an underground tunnel that stretches from the parking lot to the center of the velodrome. In the metaphorical doughnut hole of the track, there are a few anemic-looking bleachers, a stumpy and faded wooden three-tier awards podium, a couple of dribble-happy water fountains and a small scaffolding tower of metal and wood, probably for video cameras to get a 360-degree lighthouse view. There are also four Hercules-thighed men in matching lycra, emblazoned with sponsors' names, spinning away on stationary rollers, warming up for their practice session.

"That's the national team," Colby explains.

"Then they're adept at avoiding collisions?" I ask.

"Usually," he confirms.

Before we go out onto the embanked oval, Colby has me ride around on the inner loop of the track's flat shoulder. As I clip in and pedal forward, the track bike feels just like a road bike. I circle while Colby chats with some other riders. Because of the fixed gearing, every time the wheel moves, the pedal moves. And with it, so does my leg. There is no pedal-free coasting, like in road cycling. Colby warns me I'll probably forget this from time to time, and the effect of neglecting to pedal will feel like the bike is trying to buck me off the saddle, rodeo style.

As I come off the warm-up lap, I am reminded that I do not really know how to stop. I stop pedaling. Yeehaw! My body responds by sending a ripple of momentum from my feet to my shoulders, lifting me off my seat for a moment, like I'm doing The Wave.

"Apply back pressure to the pedals," Colby instructs.

I do, and the bike slows considerably. I feel the controlled muscle pressure in my thighs, reminiscent of downhill skiing, and understand immediately why track cyclists have quads shaped like tree trunks. I wait until the bike is at a near stop, then clip out of one pedal by turning my shoe in a quick, horizontal movement. With one leg



Coach Pearce & his trusty assistance act as track snads, holding us in place until the starting gun fires. Kind of like horses at a derby... Wearing lycra.



Getting ready for a rolling start, cyclists line up a la roller derby and cruise around the track together until the starting gun fires.



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free and one leg still attached to the bike, I hop along on the free foot as the other foot circles around with the still-turning wheel. Awkwardly, I eventually roll/limp to a stop.

"Ready for the track?" Colby asks.

"OK," I lie.

"Follow me, stay right on my wheel." This is cyclese for one rider riding directly behind the other, almost touching wheels.

Colby leads me onto the straightaway of the track, into the lowest lane where there is a black line painted "uptrack" off the shoulder. The embankment is very slight and hardly noticeable. After a few laps, we go up a lane, in between the black and red lines, and I feel the gravity a bit more. This area is called the pole, as in pole position. This is where people race, so we can't stay in the pole for long. We continue upward. Three meters above the pole is the blue line, where riders warm up or do pace lines and try to stay out of the way of the faster people.

Colby leads me higher up the embankment. Immediately, my vision gets wacky. I'm not sure whether to focus on the blue line of the track or to look straight ahead into the curve of the oval, and there is an odd feeling of dizziness as my eyes try to figure it out. They settle on the blue line, and let the rest of the details blur. Because of the slope of the track, it becomes apparent that my right foot is very close to the concrete and the entire left side of my body is very far away from the ground. It feels like hiking along a steep switchback, where there is a wall of uphill on one side and a sheer drop-off on the other. My heart rate has gone anaerobic, my knuckles are white against the handlebars, and I ask Colby if we can go faster because I have already noticed that speed makes the gravity feel less scary. Other than that, I don't say much.

"You've got a really low freak-out factor," Colby says.

After 10 years, I've finally derived some benefit from my college theater minor. "Thanks," I whisper, through petrified vocal cords.

A bit later, after I've gotten a bit more comfortable, I ask Colby what I need to do to get started in competitive track cycling.

"There's a women's development camp in September," he says.

"How do I get into that?"

"I'd have to get you on the list."

"Can you do that?"

He smiles. "You're on the list."

Development Camp, My Ass

On Sept. 18, I arrive at the Olympic Training Center for the Women's Track Cycling Development Camp in Colorado Springs. I am assigned to Room 317 of the Innsbruck dormitory, which is right behind the Oslo dorm where I stayed during pentathlon camp. I wonder if I'll run into the pentathletes and if they'll think I'm an obsessed nutball stalking the OTC. Oh, well. I guess that would be accurate.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Warming up above the pole lane on a clear but freezing Colorado day.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Look Ma, no brakes!



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

I'm so fast that you can barely see me!
Members of the US Women's Track Cycling Development Camp warm up in the 7-Eleven Velodrome in Colorado Springs.

This time around, I have two other roommates in the 12-by-15 room. There will be 12 women here for the weeklong intensive camp, which will consist of four-hour morning practices at the track, two-hour road rides in the afternoon and a lecture in the evening. I assume from this schedule there will also be a lot of eating and sleeping.

To my great surprise, I know one of my two roommates. Lara Kropesch is a friend of mine from Boulder, where I lived for three years while training under renowned triathlon coach Siri Lindley. Lara lived in a house with my triathlon friends, and I saw her on a near daily basis. As I unpack my road bike, I wonder why she is here. After all, she rides for Team Lipton, one of the best women's road cycling teams in the country. She's a Category 1 rider, which is the cycling level equivalent of a black belt, and I'm not sure why she's coming to a development camp for new track cyclists. Within the hour, my other roommate arrives. Sima Trapp, a striking Iranian-American, unpacks her bag to reveal the team-issued clothing of Colavita-Cooking Light. As the other cyclists arrive, she says hello to them when they pass by our dorm room.

"Do you know all these girls?" I ask.

"Yeah, we all ride together on the pro circuit," Sima says.

The pro circuit? I thought this was a development camp, as in first-timers, fledglings and neophytes only.

"Why are you here?" I ask, probably sounding both frightened & rude.

"Most of us are contracted to ride at Track Nationals next week, so we do this camp as a warm-up," Sima explains.

Nationals!? *They're all going to nationals?* "So you've ridden the track before?" I ask.

"We do it at least a couple times every year."

Wonderful. Of the competitors here, there are 12 professional, seasoned Category 1 riders and me, a non-category, amateur road rider who has been on the track once, amassing perhaps a lifetime total of 45 minutes of experience. Development camp, my ass.

Day 1

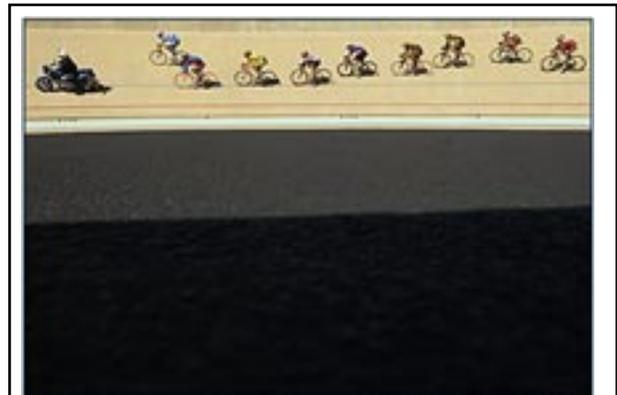
After unpacking our road bikes (camp officials loan us Specialized track bikes to use for the week), we all go on a 90-minute ride around some local bike paths. The pace is relaxed, but I'm not. I want to make friends with these professional cyclists, not end their careers by causing a mass pileup because I can't navigate around some unseen pothole. I keep my eyes wide and unblinking and talk in monosyllabic grunts to the other women. I chat/grunt with a cyclist named Kele Murdin (of Kenmore, WA) in the hope she will impart her track cycling wisdom to me as we wind through the roads of Colorado Springs.

"You'll catch on quick," she says. Where have I heard that one before? Oh, yeah, just prior to getting beamed by a handball. I've learned the truth behind these baptism-by-fire camps for elite athlete. I've also learned that Finland has more than 159,000 islands, as coach Colby has taken to giving us a new noncycling



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Members of the Men's Camp race in the pole lane. Coach Pearce, third from left, finished 14th in the Points Race at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Motorpacing is one method of training, where the cyclists draft behind the motorcycle & each other.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Keeping pace on the blue line. The black armwarmers help in the cold. When they stay up.

fact each day. At least I will leave track cycling camp knowing that I have 159,000 new opportunities to start over if ESPN cans me for not making the 2008 Olympic Team.

That night at dinner, the conversation among the elite female cyclists consists mostly of boys and injuries, the latter usually having nothing to do with the former. We're in the glorious OTC dining hall, which is an all-you-can-eat cafeteria (complete with a rotating dessert carousel!), and it is free for athletes staying on campus. Our daily dose of road and track cycling definitely spikes the appetite curve, and it becomes absolutely normal to consume upward of 3,500 calories a day.

Day 2

At 8:45 a.m., we convene at the USA Cycling offices and ride six blocks south of the OTC to the 7-Eleven Velodrome. That is its actual name. Much to my chagrin, the only beverage/snack around is the lukewarm water fountain. Colby has us warm up by circling the track in a single-file pace line for 20 minutes, each of us taking a half-lap lead at the front, then pulling off and falling back to the end of the line. He has us do this twice, for a total of 40 minutes, then dismisses us from morning practice. No race tactics, no sprint drills, no sore limbs. That's it? I can do this! I think. Then my brain sends me a photo-memory of Handball Camp, where the first day was easy, I got extremely cocky, and the next day I was pelted unmercifully with the muscular equivalent of fire and brimstone.

"Today is just a warm-up," Colby explains. "It will get harder and harder each day, culminating in a race simulation."

That afternoon, we go for a road ride up to Manitou Springs, winding into a neighborhood housing development. Housing developments are typically not synonymous with difficult road rides, so I assume we won't be expending too much energy. As usual, I'm wrong. Before I know it, we're riding up an enormous peak of pavement, and I'm sucking down whatever is left of oxygen at 7,000 feet in panting, wheezing breaths. I feel the need to be in the front of the pack to prove myself worthy of being at the "development" camp. Unlike pentathlon and handball, cycling is probably the only sport in which I've got an itty bitty legit shot of impressing anyone. I stay in front near the coach for the whole ride. I later find out the other women are fresh off a road race from two days earlier and have probably not recovered at all. My ego, an inflatable air mattress in the best of times, whooshes as it deflates.

Day 3

It's mid-September, and the mornings have grown cold here in the Rockies. This one happens to be 40 degrees, which is not a happy cycling temperature. Fingers are numb, hats are worn sub-helmet. We warm up with two 20-minute pace lines and then work on two-kilometer (six-lap) sprints. We do this in groups of three, and I'm paired with Sara Caravella of Team Lipton and Sarah Uhl, the former world junior sprint track cycling champion, who is only 24 and regularly passes half the cyclists in the men's development camp. Fun! I manage to stay with them for five of the six laps, but drop quite far back on the last one when they crank up the speed. I seem to have two speeds: slow and fast. The rest of the girls have at least four: slow, fast, faster than me, and much faster than me.

We then do Flying 1Ks (three laps) from a rolling start, as opposed to starting from a dead stop. This involves circling around the very top of the velodrome, then sprinting down into the pole lane and



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Between sprints, riders hang out in the center of the track & tune up their bikes.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Looking like a smurf between two big male cyclists, pros Scott Zwizanski & Tom Zirbel.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

I signal my exit from the track while hoping no one will run me over.

hanging on for dear life as you try to follow the rider in front of you and hope that no one crashes or passes out from exertion. I immediately understand that sprinting will be a challenge to my steady-state aerobic pace, the inevitable result of years of long-distance triathlons. When we're done with the Flying 1Ks, the agitation of near-freezing air on our already-taxed lungs causes all the girls to cough intermittently and speak in raspy voices for the rest of the day, as if we all had pack-a-day habits.

During practice, speedskating Olympic gold medalist Apolo Anton Ohno shows up at the velodrome to visit his national team track cycling buddies. I bet Ohno would be good at track cycling. He's pretty talented at going around circles. Later, I'll see him in the cafeteria (near the dessert carousel!). I do my best not to awkwardly gush at his accomplishments, as he does not seem like the kind who appreciates gushers. He's very humble. I ask for a photo with him, he obliges, and I decide to leave him alone, before I say something stupidly fawning.

After dinner, we shuffle off to our lecture. Last night we learned about proper nutrition, and tonight Colby has arranged for Chad Weikel from the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency office to talk to us about drug use and steroids. Lately, it seems that USADA's mission statement — "Fight for the clean athletes" — is getting harder and harder to achieve. After the Floyd Landis debacle at the Tour de France and the apparent rampant steroid use in pro cycling, everyone is interested in the latest doping developments, though it is highly unlikely that anyone at this camp has ever touched the stuff. Chad shows us before and after slides of athletes on steroids, which include hairy, beefy, alto-voiced women and men with imploded arm muscles. We see dissected hearts of EPO users and pictures of Korey Stringer, the Minnesota Vikings tackle who died of heatstroke in 2001 after using ephedra as a stimulant. We talk about the conundrum of Zach Lund, the U.S. skeleton star who had to turn in his 2006 Winter Olympic medal because he regularly and openly used Propecia (a men's anti-balding medication), not knowing it had ingredients found on the banned substance list. Asthma medication, cold pills, nasal spray and caffeine are also among the substances that have led to forfeited Olympic medals since 1972. Worse still, in 1968, Swedish pentathlete Hans-Gunnar Liljenwall drank two beers to calm himself before the shooting event and became the first athlete to test positive for "drugs." (Beer is no longer a banned substance, though it probably should be in rifle and archery events.)

Chad gives us a pamphlet of medications, vitamins and supplements that athletes are and are not allowed to use while competing. I scan the banned list, which includes:

- Ma Huang
- Nontherapeutic use of genes
- Ritalin
- Ephedra
- Cocaine, marijuana, hashish and heroin
- Ethanol (mmmm!)
- Just about anything ending in -terol, -terone or -olone

On the permitted list:

- Tums
- Prozac
- Monistat
- Tinactin
- Dayquil and Nyquil



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Between the red & black lines is the pole lane, where sprints take place. Here, I'm doing a 500 meter all-out sprint effort.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

At the top of the velodrome. Notice how close my right foot is to the concrete & how far my left foot is from downtrack. That's one steep embankment. [35 degrees in the turns]



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Sima Trapp (red), me, Sara Caravella (white hat) & Liz Rachetto wait for Coach Pearce's instructions.

- Ortho-Cyclen
- Ex-Lax
- Bengay
- Aspirin
- Valium

I'm free and clear, seeing that my personal consumption of drugs and alcohol tops out at a cup of hot cocoa. The dehydrated marshmallows are questionable, though. If sugar were a banned substance, I'd be screwed and you'd be reading my latest column on CompetitiveKnittingWeekly.com.

Chad's lecture reaches a high point with The Whizzinator. While telling us about the ways in which athletes have tried to fake out doping control agents, Chad flashes a photo of a prosthetic penis and rubber bladder combination that, when worn undercover, delivers "clean urine" right before the eyes of any lucky USADA witness. While the lecture has its humorous moments (I can't help but wonder how the first Mr. Whizzinator got busted), the message is sad yet clear. Cheating happens. A lot. Too often.

Days 4 And 5

The 7-Eleven Velodrome is not an enclosed structure and rain causes the slick concrete to become even slicker, so there is no riding in inclement weather. Until some genius invents the Dryboni, outdoor track cycling will remain subject to delays and cancellations, and thus inspire coaches to create imaginative alternative workouts. Coach Pearce tells us that we will have two individual watt-output tests; one a 10-second test, the other a 30-second test. This means we will ride on a stationary trainer connected to wires and computers that measure how much power we can put out. Great. Short bursts of powerful strength. Just what every endurance athlete loves! The total time of this workout tops out at 40 seconds. Normally, this would be about a thousandth of a triathlon workout, but my muscles are not at all happy that they are being asked to churn out a 30+ mph pace even for 30 seconds. Still, I put out 7.7 and 10.76 watts/kg respectively, which is OK but not great. Perhaps it would seem greater if I were on one of the 159,000 islands of Finland competing against local ice fishermen and not accomplished Category 1 cyclists.

Day 6

In an effort to reveal a reality of cycling that otherwise might not make it past the ESPN.com edit room, I have written a Haiku entitled "Down Below" to succinctly explain my situation of spending six hours a day in the saddle:

Down Below

Ow. Ow. Ow. Ow. Ow.
Oww. Oooooowww. Oww.
Ow. Pain. Ow. Ow. Ow.

Although many bike companies make saddles specifically designed to accommodate the female anatomy, they are not on our loaner track bikes. There is a product called Chamois Butt'r that one puts "down below" before cycling workouts to ease the pain of the saddle. Today, bleary-eyed and tired at 7 a.m., I've accidentally put Bengay in my bike shorts instead of the intended cream. I don't remember the morning workout.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Coach Pearce signals to the where around the track, the finish of our Flying 1km sprints will be located.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Sara Caravella pulls the pace line. I ride directly behind her, or "on her wheel" in the slipstream.

I lead a pace line of the men & women's camps. Our shadows show how close our wheels are to one another in the long line.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Day 7

For our final day at the track, our main workout is a 40K time trial (120 laps), in which we ride behind a motorcycle. This is fun. We go fast around the big circle for an hour. Details not required. My main focus today is my meeting with Colby. I've asked him to sit down with me and explain the Olympic qualification process for track cycling and, more significantly to my immediate future, to ask him if he thinks I might have what it takes to make it as a track cyclist.

Colby and I sit in big comfy chairs in the dining hall. He knows about my ESPN project. He knows my goal to get to an Olympic trial, and that I'll do whatever it takes to get there. Colby explains that track cycling chooses its Olympians from a talent pool and that getting into the talent pool requires being of a certain level and having already achieved stellar results. Also, he explains that only two women represent the U.S. in the Olympics and only one woman per event is chosen. He tells me the reigning national champions are not retiring, and thus my chances of making it to trials in 2008 are slim. And on the talent front, I'm not a natural sprinter.

I hit him with my Plan B: What about road cycling?

That thought occurred to me during the week, as I struggled to keep up with the sprinters yet held my own on the afternoon distance rides. What are the qualifications to make Olympic trials in road cycling? What are the events? Could this be a better match for my body type and athletic abilities? Could I meet Lance?

Colby agrees I'm better suited to distance/endurance events. He tells me the Olympic cycling events for women are a 25-mile time trial and a 90-mile road race. He tells me that for each of these distances there will be an Olympic trials race event for 2008, not a hand-selection process for making the team. Colby explains that I'd have to move from Category 4 beginner level to the Category 1 professional level in the next two years. I'd have to get a coach, find a team and win/place highly in a lot of races.

"This could be very difficult," Colby warns, "but doable."

Doable.

The most beautiful and harmonious word in the English language! I let it linger in my ears for a moment. There was no doable in pentathlon, no doable in handball, at least not for 2008. But cycling — a sport I've been doing for eight years as part of my triathlon career — actually holds a shimmer of hope. A pale, thin, fragile shimmer, true, but a shimmer nonetheless. All right then, it is decided. I'm going to dedicate the next two years of my life to road cycling. I have absolutely no delusions about how difficult this will be. I will simply take my fairly legit self, find a truly legit coach and mostly legit team, and we will pedal off into the doable Olympic sunset together, while little birdies tweet happy songs and everything works out perfectly.

But in case that doesn't happen, I've got appointments to meet with archery, racewalking, rowing, swimming and luge coaches throughout cycling's offseason.

Up next: *To focus on cycling, Bertine puts her triathlon*



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Again I am leading the paceline... but only for about 200 meters. After a pull, the front rider peels uptrack and lest the rest of the paceline pass through.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Katherine Carroll cruise by me on a 500 meter sprint.

career on hold, but not before competing at the Ironman World Championships in Hawaii.

Got a question or comment?

Kathryn Bertine can be reached at ESPNOlympian@aol.com. She will answer selected e-mails in an upcoming installment of "So You Wanna Be an Olympian?"

AS GOOD AS GOLD

AS GOOD AS GOLD

KATHRYN BERTINE

1 WOMAN

8 SPORTS

10 COUNTRIES

AND A

2 YEAR QUEST

TO MAKE THE

SUMMER OLYMPICS

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Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

Tightening my pedal before practice. Forgetting things like this could lead to mass destruction.



Lucas Gilman for ESPN.com

With the flames on my jersey doing little to keep me warm, I have to sprint all out to avoid freezing. Lowering my seatpost might help, too. It's set a bit too high for me in this photo.



On the road at the 2011 Elite Road World Cycling Championships for St. Kitts & Nevis Cycling Federation