

LOW-IMPACT & FULL SPEED AHEAD

How to get out and run when you can't get out and run anymore

By Bob Babbitt



Bryan Pate is a Marine, Ironman finisher and the founder of the ElliptiGO, which you have probably seen cruising the coast of Southern California sometime in the past year or so. In 2005 Pate lost the ability to run for fitness because of injuries to his knees and hips. He wasn't into cycling so he turned to the elliptical trainer in the gym until he couldn't stand being indoors anymore. Then he asked his friend Brent Teal, a fellow endurance athlete and mechanical engineer, to develop a low-impact substitute for running outdoors. The solution was the ElliptiGO, and the response has been amazing. We spent a little time with Pate to chat about his brainchild.

AFTER YOU HOOKED UP WITH BRENT TEAL, WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The company began with a handshake at a coffee shop in Solana Beach; and about a year later Brent completed the first prototype. The first time I got on it, I rode it for 20 miles and knew that we were on to something. In 2008, I rode the 50-mile Rosarito-to-Ensenada bike ride in three hours and 16 minutes, or more than 15 miles per hour. At the end of 2008, we formed ElliptiGO Inc., and in 2009 we both rode prototypes from start to

finish at the Death Ride (Tour of the California Alps)—129 miles in the Sierras, with more than 15,000 feet of climbing. Since then we've begun delivering production models to customers in San Diego, and we're expanding distribution to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE SO FAR? The response so far has been overwhelmingly positive, both from people on the street and competitive athletes. Dean Karnazes began cross-training on an ElliptiGO in October, and a pair of professional distance runners who are part of the Nike Oregon Project have incorporated it into their training regimens as well. We've even had a top pro triathlete inquire about getting one to cross-train on. Every day, people from across the country put in orders through our website, even though the vast majority of them have never so much as seen an ElliptiGO in person. As we suspected, there are a lot of people who are looking for a low-impact outdoor running experience.

I HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WERE FORMER RUNNERS REALLY EMBRACING THE ELLIPTIGO. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS HAPPENING?

They seem to really identify with the unique value that the ElliptiGO delivers—namely, a running-like experience that eliminates the damage running can cause. Running is such a fantastic activity for mental and physical well-being, when it's taken away because of injuries it can leave a pretty big hole in your life. We think that's a fairly universal experience for former runners, which is why we think they are embracing the ElliptiGO—it's enabling them to enjoy running again.

Check out elliptigo.com for more information.



DEAN KARNAZES (LEFT) AND BRYAN PATE DURING THEIR 500-MILE RIDE FROM NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TO THE HONDA LA MARATHON.

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WHAT IS YOUR GOAL FOR ELLIPTIGO? We want to build elliptical biking into a sport so that injured and former runners can go out and compete again like they did when they ran. We think that one of the biggest losses to an injured runner is the inability to enjoy the camaraderie and personal satisfaction that comes with accomplishing endurance-related goals like a marathon. We want to restore those opportunities for our customers.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE GIVE THE ELLIPTIGO A TRY, AND WHERE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CAN THEY FIND ONE TO TEST OUT? You should try it if you value a low-impact, high-performance exercise experience and you enjoy the outdoors. Plus, it's a lot of fun and surprisingly easy to ride. We do test rides frequently

in San Diego and also have monthly test rides in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

DEAN KARNAZES JUST RODE THE ELLIPTIGO 500 MILES FROM NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TO THE HONDA LA MARATHON. ANY FUN STUFF HAPPEN ON THAT JOURNEY? There were all sorts of fun adventures during the ride down. My favorite was watching Dean floss the bugs out of his teeth. A close second was when we recruited a local guide in Monterey to lead us onto Highway 1 as we were leaving the city. Our guide promptly took us up a freeway off-ramp in the wrong direction onto a road where bikes are prohibited—forcing us to climb up an embankment and jump a chain-link fence to continue our journey south. The one time we got really lost, rather than navigate back along paved roads, Dean chose to ride his ElliptiGO across the fairways of a golf course in the middle of the day to get back on the correct route.

HOW MUCH CLIMBING WAS THERE DURING THAT TREK? There's actually quite a bit of climbing along the coast. The first big climb came at the end of the first day as we ascended the Santa Cruz Mountains out of Los Gatos. We ended up finishing that climb in the dark, since I had neglected to look at an elevation map and assumed it would be around a 400-foot climb (it's actually more than 1,600 feet of elevation gain). Also, the Big Sur coastline has some good climbs and descents from Monterey to just north of Cambria. Basically you're either climbing or descending along that entire 100-plus mile stretch of Highway 1. **CM**