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*Tech transactions lawyer Brian Pass rode in the L'Etape du Tour after months of tough training.*



## Enduring the Pain

*"Climbing up a mountain on a bike is going to hurt."*

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**L**OS ANGELES — For attorney and cyclist Brian Pass, the end often justifies the means.

"One thing about cycling — especially if you ride long distances — is it's a sport about suffering," Pass said.

No matter how fast or talented a cyclist is, "climbing up a mountain on a bike is going to hurt," he explained. "There's a great feeling when you get to the top and you've accomplished a climb, but you have to endure the suffering along the way — it's unavoidable."

Pass got into cycling from "a couple different directions," he said, noting he did a bit of mountain biking while attending UCLA School of Law.

"But I fell down a lot, so I stopped doing that," he said with a laugh. About 10 years ago, "a convergence of things" caused Pass to revisit the sport. His brother was training for a triathlon and a few of his friends started biking regularly.

"So I got myself a cheap bike and figured I would ride with my brother, occasionally go on rides with my friends, and maybe commute to work once in a while," said Pass, a partner in Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP's Century City office.

Before long, Pass was hooked.

"[I] had to get another bike and had to ride in all my free time — and that's what I do," he said matter-of-factly.

Each morning, Pass gets up at 5 or 6 to ride. Most commonly, Pass will go down to the Ballona Creek bike path, which starts in east Culver City and extends about 7 miles to the Coast bike path along the beach.

It's a quick ride to the bike path, he said, "and then I can ride and train a little along



Photos Courtesy of Brian Pass

the bike path without cars or stop signs or anything."

On days where Pass feels like doing "some climbing in the morning," the attorney rides through Beverly Hills, up Franklin or Benedict Canyon.

"That's usually all I'll have time for during the week," he said. "And then on the weekends, sky's the limit."

On some weekends, Pass and his friends will "do the big climbs out in Malibu" or ride to Griffith Park. On others, they'll ride "up Angeles Crest and the bigger mountains, [and] occasionally down south to Palos Verdes and loop around there."

Sheppard Mullin partner Kent Raygor is an avid mountain biker and often compares adventure notes with Pass.

"We park next to each other, and we have the same bike rack," Raygor said, chuckling. Noting he and Pass ride different terrain, using a different type of bicycle, Raygor said his partner often rides hundreds of miles a week, training for large scale rides in the French Alps or "100-mile rides in the desert in summer."

"[It] takes a certain kind of focus and stamina and strength and commitment that I find laudable in any person," Raygor said. Suggesting those skills might translate into Pass' legal practice, he added, "You can't do those sports without ... being incredibly focused and committed."

Pass focuses his practice on tech transactions.

"I work on commercial agreements, typically in the internet or software space," he said. Drawing a parallel between cycling and practicing law, Pass said, in a commercial agreement, or any kind of legal battle, "there's some of the same pain and suffering."

Pass said closing a big deal gives him the same feeling of accomplishment as reaching the top of a big climb.

"You do something very positive for your client and get good results," Pass explained. "But there is usually some pain along the way."

In July, Pass rode in the L'Etape du Tour, an organized ride for amateurs covering a single stage of the Tour de France that began in the French Alps, covered 106 miles and included four major climbs with nearly 12,500 feet of elevation gain.

"They start you in waves of 1,000," Pass said. "Unfortunately, I rode it with a couple friends and we were in the last group, so we had the least amount of time to finish."

If a rider doesn't manage a certain time, they're taken off the course, he added.

"In the back of our mind, there was always the possibility that we might get swept up if we were too slow," Pass said. "I survived, but just barely."

Irell & Manella LLP partner Richard Birnholz also rode in the L'Etape du Tour.

"Brian and I are cycling buddies," Birn-

holz said, noting he and Pass have been riding together for about 3 years.

Birnholz and Pass live down the block from each other, and when Birnholz started getting serious about riding, a mutual friend suggested the attorney reach out.

Describing Pass as his "bike sensei," Birnholz said the two of them started going "on all sorts of rides at increasing levels of difficulty."

The L'Etape du Tour was a "bucket list kind of ride," Birnholz said. "You want to not only do it but prove to yourself that you can do it."

"So we had to train for many, many months," he added.

Describing Pass as a calm attorney with an even-keeled manner, Birnholz said his friend "takes a very personal approach with his clients and opposing counsel."

In his personal life, Pass is a calm, quiet — but not reserved — sort of leader, Birnholz said. "He is a good person and a good friend."

Jack S. Weiss, a former federal prosecutor and two-term Los Angeles city councilman, takes credit for being the first in their cycling group to suggest riding in this year's L'Etape du Tour but said Pass was the first to jump on board.

"You can train hard, which we did, but then — when we were in the event — [it] was harder than anything I've ever done," he said. To train, Weiss said each of them rode over 3,000 miles in a six-month period.

Going into the event, "you've trained your body, your cardiovascular system [and] your legs, but you still haven't trained your head," Weiss said.

Fifteen thousand riders started in the L'Etape du Tour, but only 11,000 finished.

"We saw thousands of people walking their bikes up the hill, sitting on the side of the road," Weiss said. "It's pretty gruesome because they're all fit, and they're all pretty much younger than we are."

"That plays tricks on your mind," he added.

According to Weiss, Pass manages his "cycling habit" like a lawyer manages a case.

"He's methodical, he's organized, he's relentless and he shames the rest of us for lacking his level of commitment," Weiss said.

After a brief pause, Weiss asked, "You know that guy in the law firm who bills 3,000 hours a year and wants the rest of the firm to know he works more?"

"Brian is that guy on the bike," he added, laughing.