

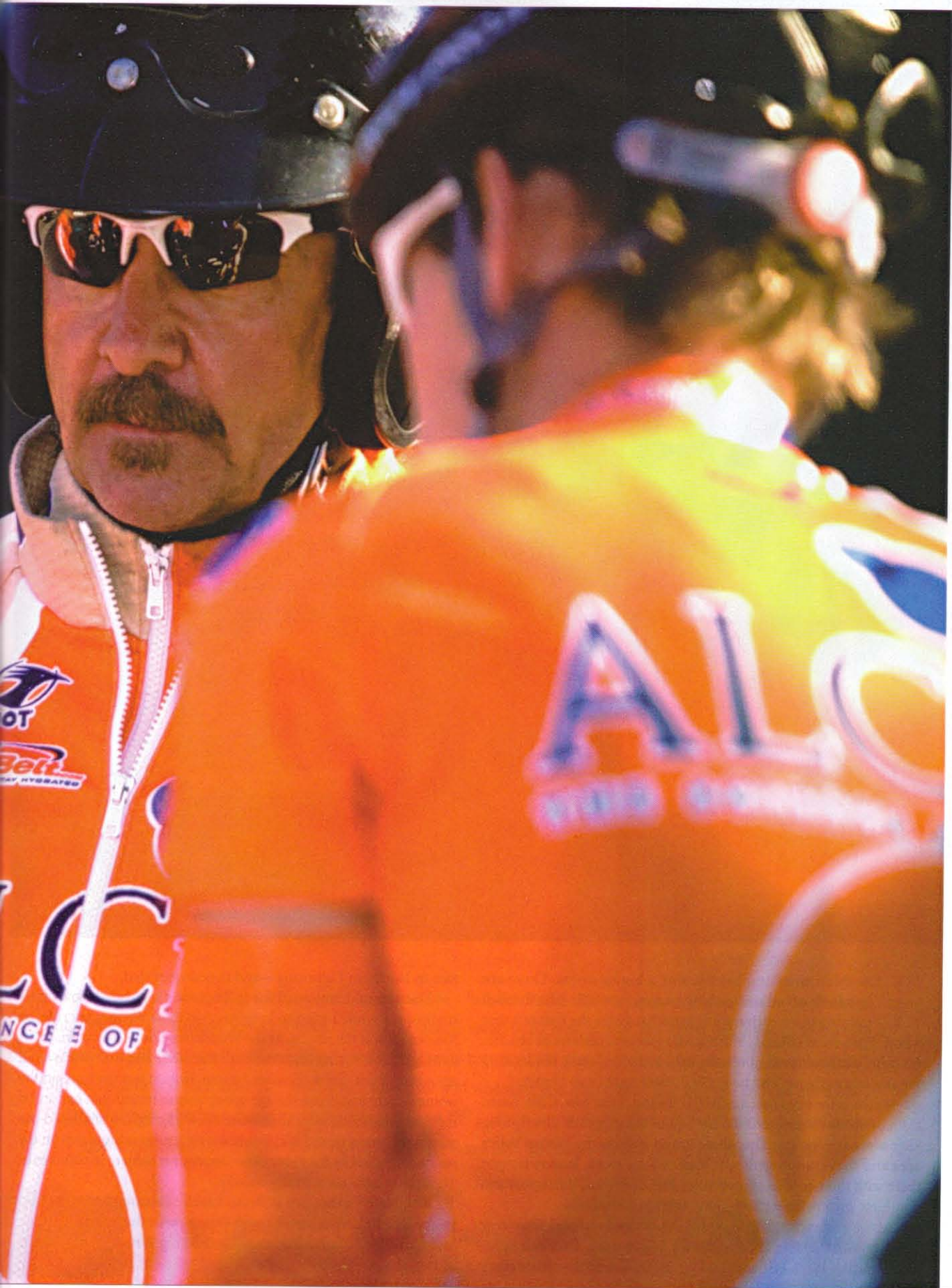
In It for **ALL THE RIGHT REASONS**

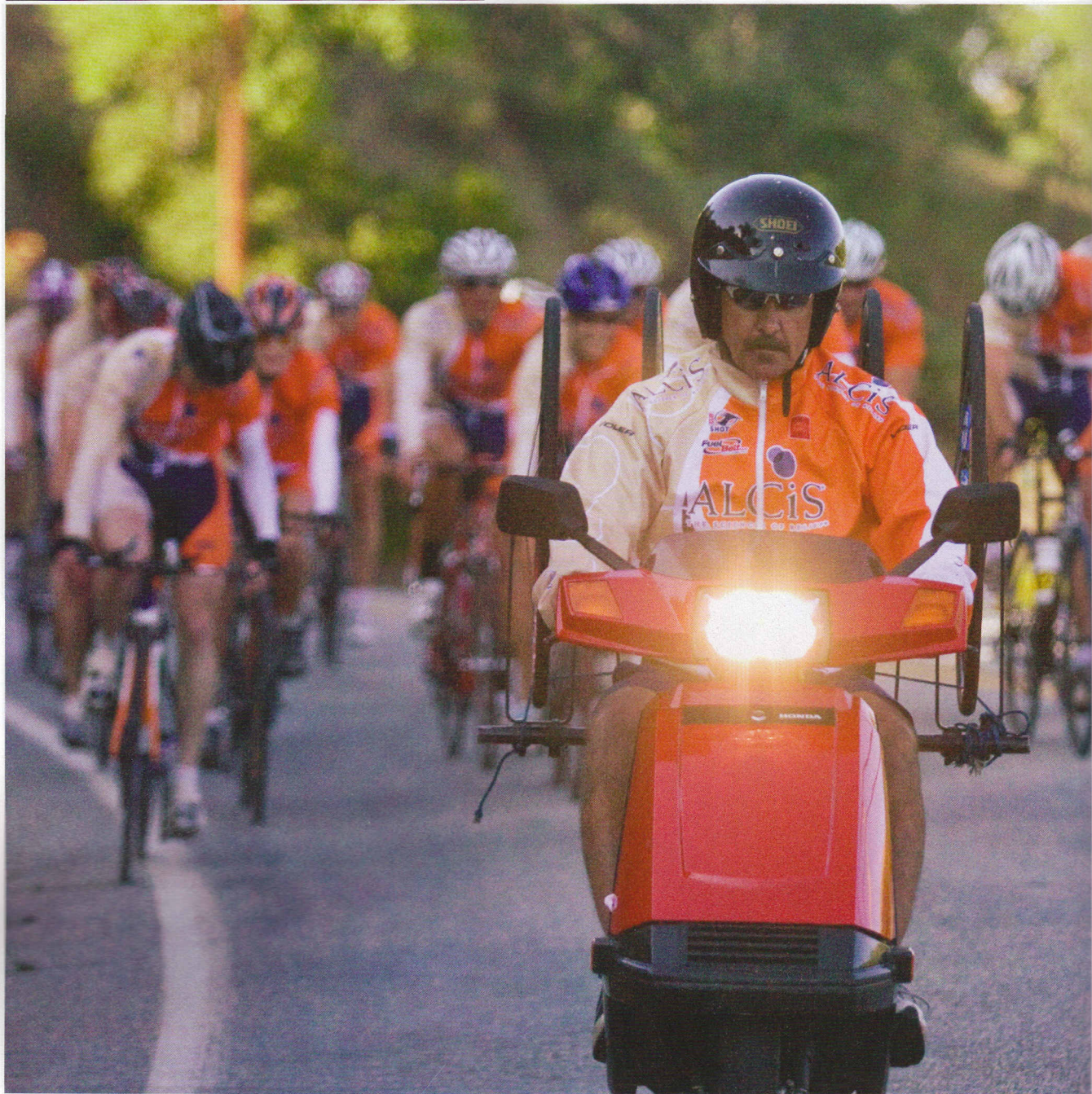
Why a laidback gardener from Northern California is one of the world's best tri coaches—but you've never heard of him and he won't coach you.

By Brad Culp

Photos by Larry Rosa Photography







Triathlon coaching has become a big business. There are hundreds of online coaching programs, which offer detailed training plans each month in exchange for the cost of a disc wheel. Then there's Muddy Waters, who gives the athletes he coaches his heart and soul for almost nothing—but sorry—he's not looking for any more athletes and he really doesn't want your money.

Waters is the head coach of ALCiS Racing, a San Jose, Calif.-based team of about 30 athletes, who for lack of a less explicit description, kick some serious ass. The whole group is from the Silicon Valley area and they train together at least twice a week. Waters is right there with them on their group rides, but nowadays, the former pro duathlete prefers his tricked-out scooter to his tri-bike.

ALCiS Racing isn't an ensemble of weekend warriors who wear their sponsors' jerseys in exchange for a little swag. They're a tight-knit group of scary-fast guys and girls who aim to dominate every

race in Northern California—and they do just that.

You can take my word for it, because even their “slow” girls smoked me while I tried to keep pace on their Wednesday ride, or you can look at the results. At the Wildflower Long Course Triathlon in May, ALCiS Racing captured both the men's and women's overall age-group titles. Team member Lauren Swigart put the hurt on the women's field and broke the age-group course record that had stood for more than a decade. Teammate Nick Thompson shattered the men's age-group record and finished with a nine-minute gap on the runner-up. Luckily for every other amateur triathlete in California, Thompson now races professionally.

The team's other pro is Brian Lavelle (husband of superstar Becky Lavelle), who has charged Waters with the task of turning him into a long-course standout—something Waters knows a thing or two about.



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“Every member of the team who wanted to qualify for Kona this year has,” says team member Todd Hinders. “The rest of them will be racing Clearwater, because that’s what they set out to do.” Twenty-two of Waters’ athletes raced in Kona and there will be 11 at the 70.3 World Championship in Clearwater, Fla.

Hinders is known to his teammates as “The Godfather,” since he was the original member of the team. It all began when the now 37-year-old businessman was sitting at the San Diego Airport after competing in the 2005 edition of Ironman California 70.3 and was popping anti-inflammatories like they were Tic Tacs. Brian Berchtold, ALCiS president and chief executive officer, happened to be sitting nearby, watching Hinders plow through the bottle of pain pills. Berchtold offered the ailing athlete a sample of his pain cream and a business card and then both went their separate ways. The cream must have worked, because Hinders called Berchtold the next day and the two laid out the groundwork for ALCiS racing.

“Our sponsorship in triathlon started as a fluke, but is now a part of a very focused strategy,” Berchtold says. “If [ALCiS] works

for these extreme athletes, surely it will work for recreational athletes or anyone who needs pain relief. And our team members have been able to prove that our product works.”

Once the team got rolling, the next step was to find a coach. Hinders suggested Waters, who had coached him in the past, but Waters wasn’t an easy sell. He prides himself on only coaching a few athletes so that he can give each one the personal attention he or she needs.

“You can’t coach everybody,” Waters says. “I spend about 5,000 minutes on the phone each month talking to my athletes. That’s what it takes to really get to know them.”

Getting to know each of his athletes inside and out has been critical to Waters’ success as a coach. Instead of emailing training spreadsheets to his athletes one month at a time, Waters handwrites individual plans every week, for every athlete, based on how each felt the week before. Not bad for a guy who also works up to 12 hours a day as a gardener in the San Jose area.

Waters’s training plans are meticulously detailed and personalized,