

# A Peiper's Tale

Contributed by Daniel Cann  
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Allan Peiper  
with Chris Sidwells

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This is a sports biography with a difference. I have read plenty of ones that I thought were of the 'from the heart' and 'warts and all' variety but they pale in comparison against 'A Peiper's Tale.' Many sports stories are of the 'rags to riches' kind where the athlete has to escape a harsh background and this is no exception. Where it differs and where it excels is in Peiper we have a sportsman who is one hundred percent brutally honest and giving of himself in telling his story. This is no glossed over account.

Early chapters describe a harsh youth where his family frequently moved as a result of Peiper's father's employment. He attended no less than fourteen different schools and this itinerant lifestyle had to be unsettling for the young Peiper. He explains that because of his early years moving all over Australia he was prepared for all the travel overseas as an adult sportsman (although the pull of home never left him).

The early chapters make it clear that he adored his mother and younger sister, but had to deal with an often violent and abusive alcoholic father. Peiper is candid about his early family life and how it affected him. He often clashed with his father and found himself defending his mother. These are hard chapters to read, but Peiper does not flinch from telling it like it is and explains that he rode with 'a lot of anger' as a young cycling competitor.

The book is full of insights into what he thought of his contemporaries in Australia and overseas, people such as Alaric Gayfer, Phil Anderson, Sean Yates and Robert Millar. He is an excellent raconteur and the book is full of humour and candour as he describes his time competing in events across the globe. His time in Belgium when he was just a teenager are moving and show just how determined he was to make something of himself. He really did live in Spartan conditions.

Peiper is a true character, someone who lights up any sport. In the tough world of cycling that is something of a rarity with many cyclists appearing as dour, stoic and private individuals. Peiper is a breath of fresh air and reading this book I felt that I was sharing a few beers with him as he told me his story, testament to his skill as a writer.

I think that anyone interested in cycling or becoming a professional cyclist should read this book. It is quite simply the most revealing and personal account I have read of just what it is like to be one. Peiper is keen to share his experiences and views on a range of subjects related to the sport. He does not shy away from revealing his personal search for who he is to the reader either.

What really comes over in the reading of this book is the closeness that exists between riders and this quote from the man himself sums up the book best:

'I miss bike racing. Nothing can replace the feeling I had in competition. The feeling of achievement, not necessarily in winning, but in doing your absolute best. I also miss the bond, the brotherhood. In cycling...men are bonded by their pain and by their suffering. We feel for each other because we know how each other feels...'

The cycling world has lost a great competitor but the literary world has gained a rare thing: an honest, forthright, expressive writer.