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Outside

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YOU COULD DO.
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Finish
Your First
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Learn
to Save
a Life

#24
Beat Your
Fear of
Heights

#28
Ski an
Expert
Run

**Kelly
Slater**

The Surf King on
Living Large
and Giving Back

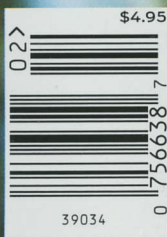
SPECIAL REPORT
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Sick of Being
Green?

**My Girlfriend
Kicks My Ass**
By Eric Hansen

**How We
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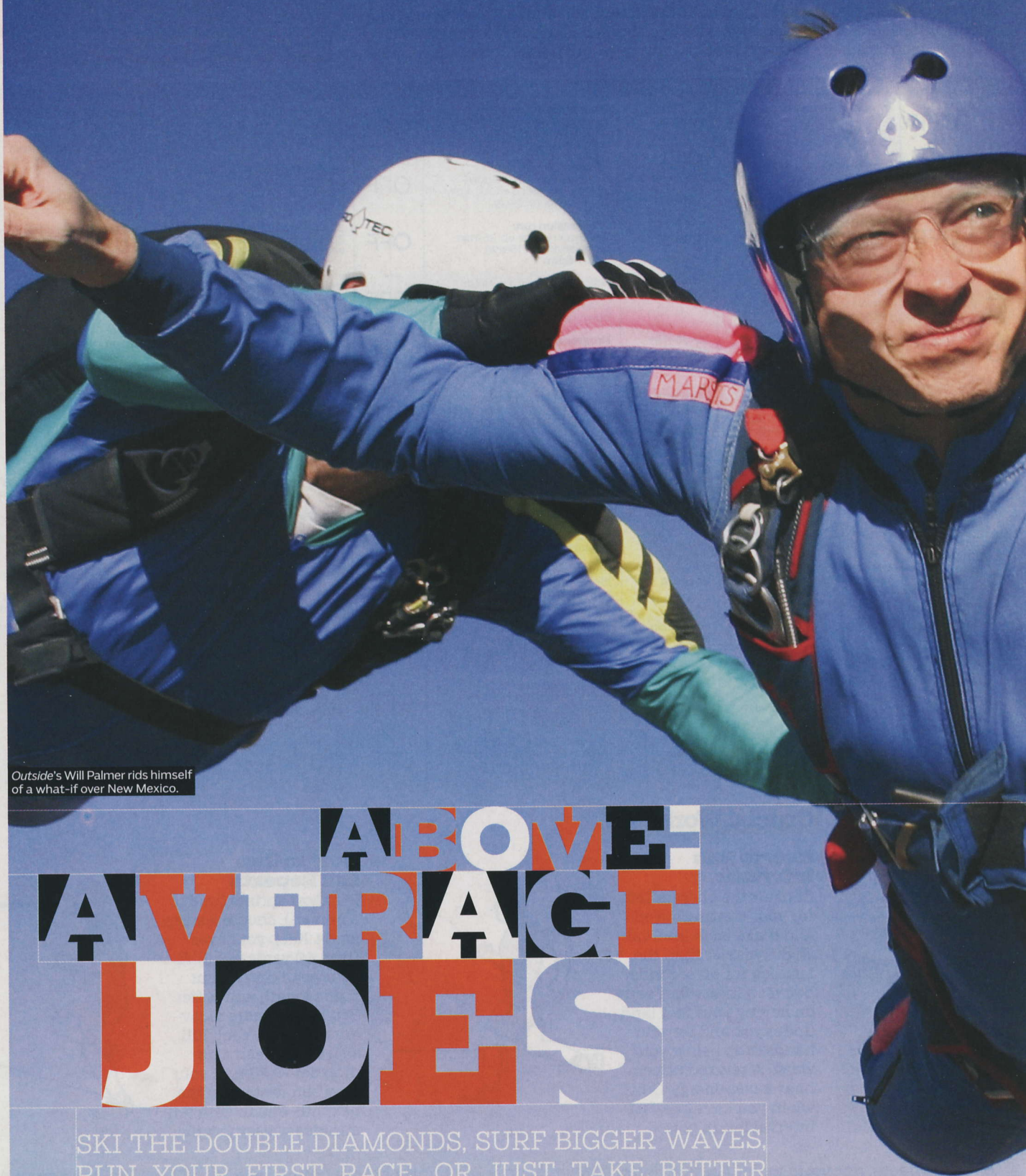
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THE COUSTEAU FAMILY'S NEXT ACTION HERO
JACK JOHNSON AND SURF ROCK'S NEW WAVE
STEVE ZAHN'S BRILLIANT CAREER



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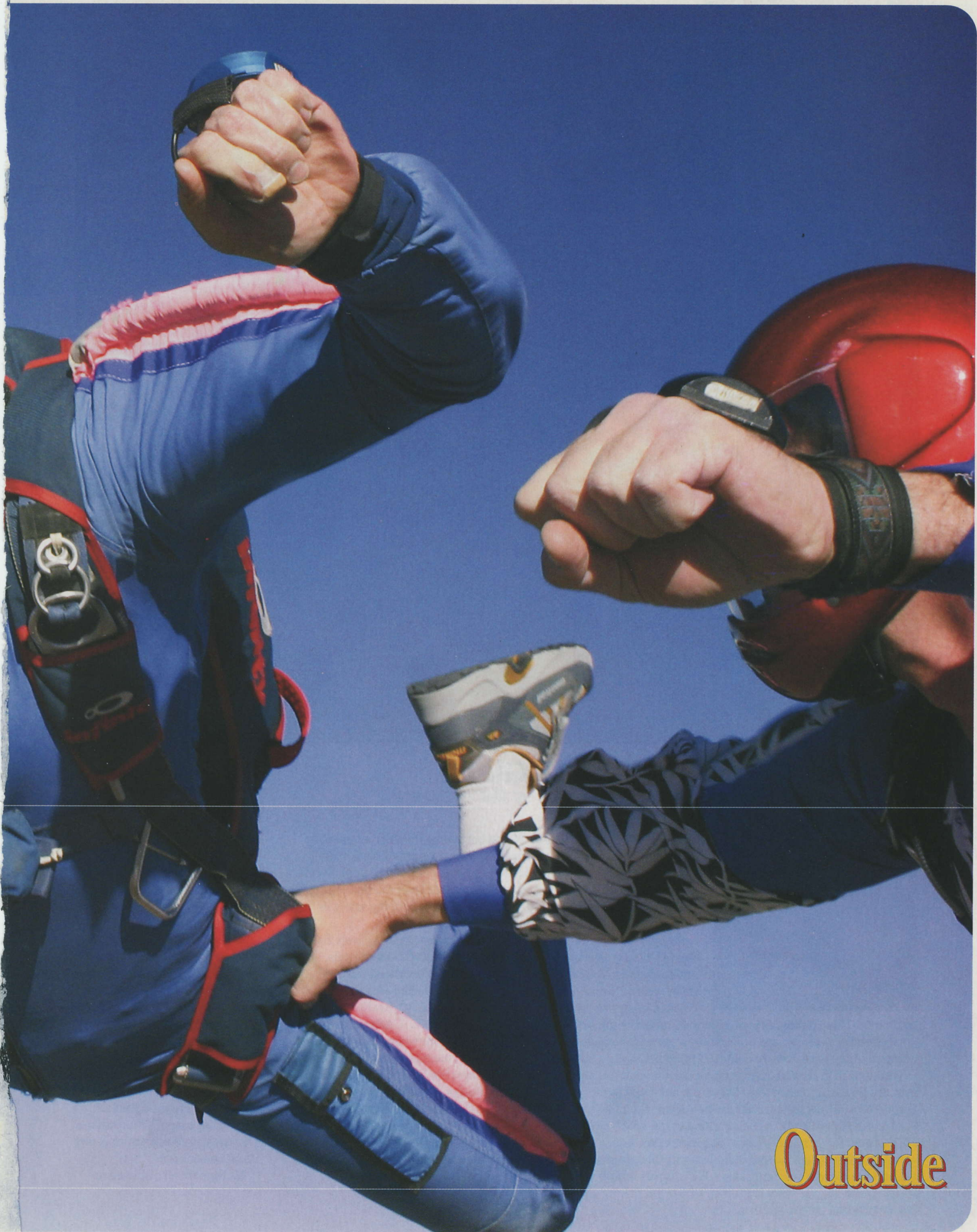
THE RUNNING GUIDE FEBRUARY 2008



Outside's Will Palmer rides himself
of a what-if over New Mexico.

ABOVE- AVERAGE JOES

SKI THE DOUBLE DIAMONDS, SURF BIGGER WAVES,
RUN YOUR FIRST RACE, OR JUST TAKE BETTER
SNAPSHOTS. NO MATTER WHAT SKILL YOU WANT TO
ACQUIRE, THERE'S A PRO READY TO SHOW YOU HOW.



Outside

Ned Overend shows off his Mountain Bike Hall of Fame skills; far right, the author, with jitters.



The Chainring Gang

PUTTING AN END TO YEARS OF SLOPPY MOUNTAIN BIKING BY KATIE ARNOLD

CERTAIN WORDS SHOULDN'T BE THROWN around on a mountain-bike trip—like “broken collarbone,” “concussion,” and “raspberry face.” But that’s exactly what I heard when I showed up in Moab, Utah, last fall for a five-day cross-country clinic led by retired pro Alison Dunlap. Several returning students were sharing stories from last year’s camp—about the German guy who rode off a huge ledge and ended up in the ER and the rider who went home with no front teeth. I began to feel very afraid.

On a mountain bike, fear makes you do stupid things, like clip out at the wrong time or yank hard on the front brake when you know better. In my nearly 15 years of riding, I’ve made all these mistakes, and I have the scars to prove it. But that’s why I’d come. If anyone could tame my terror on fast and technical descents, it would be Dunlap. At 38, with one cross-country world championship and 13 national titles to her name, she’s the most decorated American mountain biker ever, and she’s been coaching full-time since retiring in 2005.

But my pre-clinic jitters only intensified when I learned whom I’d be riding with. My fellow students included a pro from Venezuela, an expert-class racer from Michigan, and two Dunlap groupies back for their third camp. Most worrisome was Kyle, a bodybuilder-turned-mountain-biker from Marin County who’d graduated from beginner to expert after just one year on the competitive circuit. With shaved legs, rippling quads, and head-to-toe Lycra, Kyle was a machine custom-built to crush us.

The first morning, after four hours of drills in a local park, we headed out to Moab’s Slickrock Trail. I’d ridden it a few times before, but as I swooped along the bald sandstone, trying to ignore the drops on either side, all I could think was: Holy crap! I knew what to do—Dunlap had taught us to shift our weight back on tricky downhills—but I was too panicked to try. “Flap your arms like a chicken to relax,” Dunlap suggested when she saw me hesitate on a lip of rock. By the time we’d finished, I’d wimped out on more than one descent.



From there we graduated to a more difficult trail, a staircase of steep, technical ledges that I wouldn’t have ridden on my own. The climbing felt easy, but, coming down, I lost it—all I could picture was my body somersaulting off the edge, my teeth scattered like candy corn along the trail. I scolded myself as I pushed my bike, shame-faced, through the worst of it.

The next day, after breakfast, Dunlap pulled me aside and suggested I ride what my map called “the best beginner trail in Moab.” I was too mortified to protest, but by the end of the day, careering down washes and launching off mini-drop-offs, I realized I was finally having fun. I’d stopped thinking so hard about technique—and mangling myself beyond repair—and started remembering what it felt like to ride, and love, my bike. The feeling carried over into the next morning, when we all drove to Sovereign Singletrack Trail. Snaking up sandstone ledges on Kyle’s back wheel, I thought I’d never get tired of looking at the hoodoos and cliffs spackled in red and orange and green. On the descent, I found myself drafting behind Dunlap. I felt her momentum and let it become mine.

“We give you the tools to open a can of whup-ass!” Dunlap called over her shoulder. She was right. I’d been waiting for her to give me confidence when, in the end, it was something only I could give myself. I let up on the brakes and let it roll.

● Alison Dunlap offers five-day clinics for intermediate and advanced riders in May and October. \$2,380 per person, including instruction, accommodations, meals, and daily massage; alisondunlap.com