

HARD TO BEAT

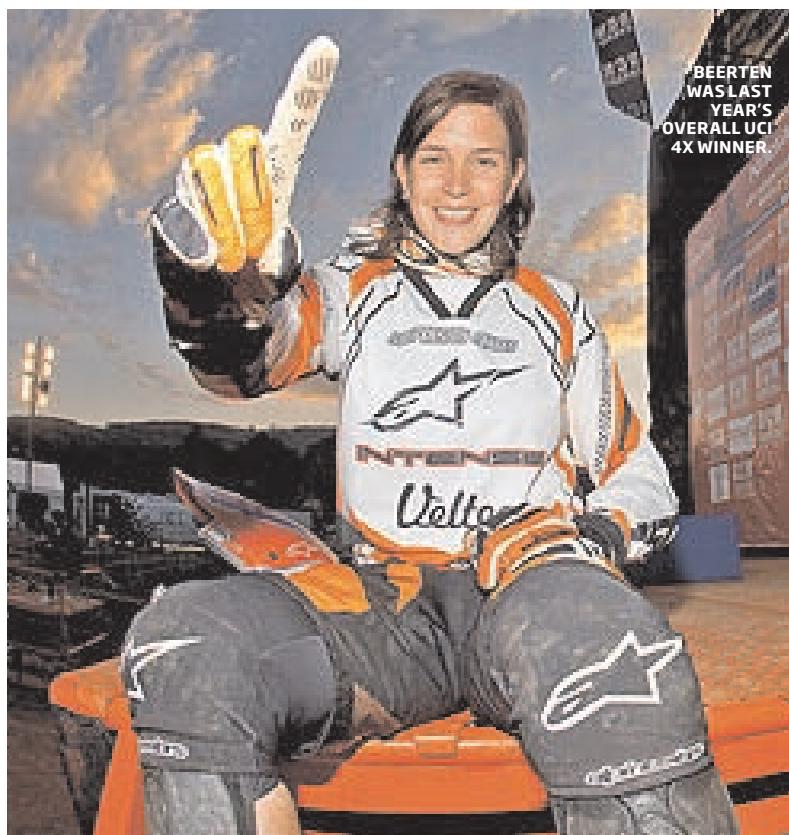
Four top riders—and their fistfuls of world cup wins, signature gear, endorsements and Olympic medals—have news for you: The hardtail is very far from dead. By Michael Frank

While most mountain bikers ride full suspension, many riders who earn their living racing still prefer hardtails for certain situations. We sat down with some of the finest XC racers in the world—as well as two-time overall UCI 4X winner Anneke Beerten and street rider Anson Wellington—to get some insight into what makes each of them tick, and to plumb the virtues of keeping it hard.

DUTCH POWER

Twenty-six-year-old Anneke Beerten has been the overall UCI 4X winner two years running—and second at Worlds in both '07 and '08. Nonetheless, she had a bit of work in the off-season chasing sponsors, but Beerten says the hustle didn't bother her.

You started racing BMX at age 4? Yes, the BMX culture is quite strong in Holland; [the terrain] is flat as a pancake, so you have to make the competition for the conditions you have. [Beerten is a former BMX world champion.] **You've been injured from riding BMX?** Basically, there's no more cartilage inside one of my elbows. **So you must train a lot to prevent further injury; does it get old?** For five years I worked as a salesperson in a record shop—I did the nine-to-five. I just have to think about going back [to that job], and suddenly training's easy. I work with weights and do



BEERTEN WAS LAST YEAR'S OVERALL UCI 4X WINNER.

plyometrics. But I'm built more for endurance. Look at someone like Melissa Buhl [KHS]; she's more about raw power. **What can we learn from you?** Have someone watch you. There was this one double I just couldn't get, and another rider said I wasn't exploding at takeoff. Next time it was easy. **Everyone in the Netherlands seems to speak flawless English...** We get English really early in school and all the movies are in English and it's subtitled. It's not like in France where you have Arnold Schwarzenegger talking in French with a high voice.

BEERTEN, ON HER INTENSE TAZER t



SETUP Because I'm not that big, I go for the lightest cranks, Ti hardware, Mavic Crossmax wheels and Specialized Tubeless [The Captain, 2.2 in.] tires. A light bike is easier for me to control, especially in the air. **LIGHT WHEELS DON'T FLEX?** One guy on our team had that problem with Crossmax, but I don't weigh so much. **DECIDING BETWEEN HARDTAIL AND FULL SUSPENSION** On a smooth, pedally course like Mont-Sainte-Anne, I have to go hardtail: I'm faster out of the gates and in the corners. I can be smooth on a hardtail when it's technical or steep, but you need to practice to do it well.

PRICE: N/A **WEIGHT:** 24.25 lb. (M) **GEOMETRY:** (w/ 100mm fork) HA: 68.5 degrees; SA: 70 degrees; TT length: 22 in.; CS length: 16.5 in.; WB: 41.5 in. BB Drop: 19mm **TWEAKED FOR BEERTEN:** Fully custom for only a few pros **INFO:** intensitycycles.com