

# ROUTE CAUSE

How Londoner **ALEC BRIGGS** is challenging the norms of competitive cycling – with a sprinkling of cheek and charisma

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Imposing, with a thick ginger beard, and wearing a colourful jersey emblazoned with a dinosaur, Alec Briggs stands out in a road-cycling peloton. And that's just the way this Londoner likes it. He's the founder of Tekkerz CC, a team bringing positive change to the increasingly inaccessible world of competitive cycling – for a start, the 'CC' stands for 'Cycling Charisma' rather than 'Cycling Club'.

Combining greater athlete autonomy, a colourful kit he designed himself and – crucially – a sense of fun, Briggs' aim is to make cycling more inclusive and increase its fan base. And with a roster of riders that includes World Champion and Olympic hopeful Meg Barker, a fourth limited-edition team-kit collaboration with prestige cycling-wear brand Rapha, and its first-ever, professional-level, one-day road race in April, the seven-year-old, south London-based outfit is gearing up for its most exciting season yet.

The team's mission was inspired by its founder's own journey. With no financial backing to his name, at the age of 16 Briggs persuaded a local shop to lease him two high-end bikes so that he could compete for the British and world cyclo-cross titles. Although ultimately falling short, still the young rider hustled to pay his debts – all without his parents knowing. Briggs has gone on to build a reputation as a skilful criterium racer, with wins at a national level in both crit and cyclo-cross races. While never the most naturally gifted cyclist, as he readily admits, Briggs combines panache and masterly bike handling to go tyre-to-tyre with the strongest riders around.

Tekkerz CC is a space for young riders who, like Briggs, now 30, might have missed out on traditional pathways to

high-level success. And he has imbued the group with a touch of Briggs magic – whether that's riders pulling wheelies over the finish line or turning heads in the Volvo 850 Estate team car.

“[The car] is synonymous with our ethos,” he laughs. “We went to [cycling expo] Rouleur Live and all these Aston Martins were parked up, but everyone was taking photos of our £3,000 Volvo. Money doesn't buy class or charisma.”

## **THE RED BULLETIN: What inspired you to set up Tekkerz CC?**

**ALEC BRIGGS:** My route into cycling was very alternative: aged eight or nine, I was a bit lost at school and my parents took me to Herne Hill Velodrome to regain my confidence. I never really had the natural talent, but my bike handling was good. I wasn't good enough for the British Cycling talent team or the Olympic Development Programme, but I was fortunate that [British Cycling] still helped me and appointed me a coach who said, “Why don't you try to beat all of them [on those teams] anyway?” I wanted to be that voice for someone else. I still wanted to make a living riding a bicycle and challenge those making it the traditional way. I respect those guys, and I love racing against them, but I wanted to offer an alternative route.

## **What's your aim for the team?**

[When I started Tekkerz] I was looking at the general side of cycling – everyone was focused on power and aerodynamics, and it was becoming like an arms race. Bike costs were going through the roof; financially it can be so hard. I wanted to be able to take the weight of equipment costs, logistics, and share my knowledge. I imagined it would be skilful 16-year-old kids who perhaps lacked some discipline or knowledge, or who didn't come from a

cycling background. But by year two we had an Olympic and a world champion on the team, too. I want to cater to anything and anyone who comes up with a cool story or idea: preparing for the Olympics, impressing a team and getting a WorldTour contract, trying to inspire young Black kids because they only see white guys [in the sport]. I keep things small, with eight riders maximum a year. Most teams have 15, but don't have the resources to cater to every rider. That backward way of thinking needs to go.

## **You have a different approach out of the saddle, too, with lively launch parties you DJ at. What inspired this?**

Cycling is one of the most intricate and exciting sports, but explaining all the finer details is tough. You have to entice [people] in different ways. For example, I like doing cool team cars because I love cars and they interest motorheads. There is a divide between drivers and cyclists, but if they see one of the coolest cars on the road and it's something to do with a cycling team, they'll be like, “Hang on a minute, these people do have a life.”

## **What's next?**

Long term, I want Tekkerz to be a brand that interacts with different subcultures – sport, fashion, art – and becomes its own convoluted mess that anyone can interpret in their own way. But it'll stay rooted to cycling. We're doing our first UCI road race in April: the Rutland-Melton CiCLE Classic. We've got to be challenging for the win and show what we're doing is worthwhile, cool, and that we can challenge those bigger teams. @tekkerz.cc



**"I wanted to challenge all those making it in cycling the traditional way"**

Tekking over: Alec Briggs offers an alternative pathway to success for talented young riders