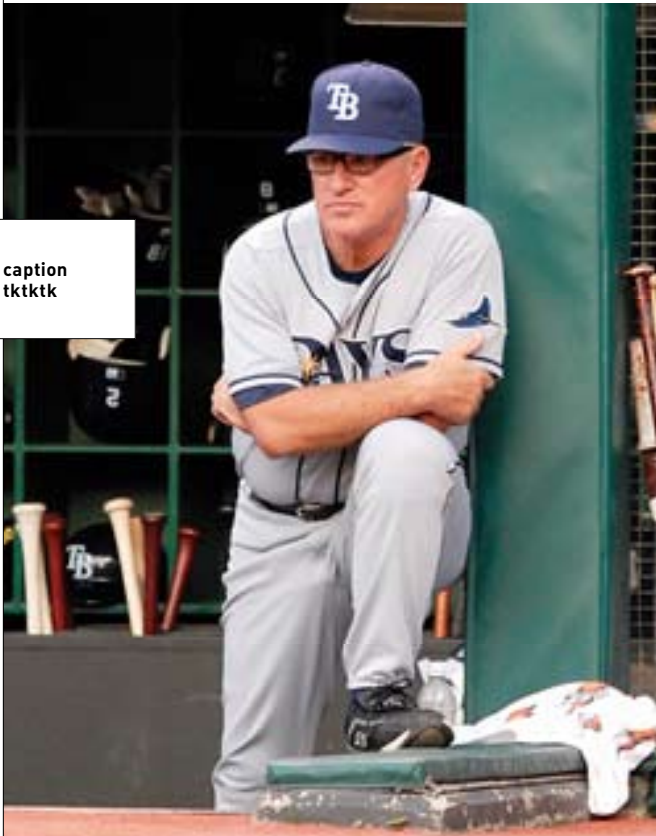


JOE MADDON

Three years after being hired to manage the perennial doormats of the American League, cyclist Joe Maddon led the Tampa Bay Rays to the World Series.

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Why did you start riding?

In 2001 or '02 I couldn't run anymore. I went to this bike shop in Belmont Shore, California, and picked up a Giant. I don't remember the model, but it was a giant, very heavy. Soon I reached the point where I'd ride either an hour or an hour and 40 minutes a day, depending on my schedule. This was when I was a coach for the Angels, and when we won the World Series in 2002 I bought a Trek 7700 FX.

Ever ride to Angels games in Anaheim?

I did it a couple times. I was living in Long Beach and they had all of these dry river beds.

I'd ride from Long Beach to Seal Beach and down to Huntington. Right before Newport I'd take this other canal to Anaheim Stadium and then Sosh [Angels manager Mike Scioscia] would give me a ride back after the game. That was 35 miles, all trails. I'd ride to work here in Tampa if there was a better way to get there, but there are a lot of bad roads I don't want to mess with.

What's your riding ritual during the season?

I like to get my coffee in the morning and come back and do some work on the computer. I ride from 11 to 12:30; then I come back and do a push-up

and pull-up routine. The tough part is when I'm on the road; I used to take the bike with me on the road with the Angels. Now if I have time I'll rent one.

What are your favorite places to ride on the road?

In Boston, I ride up and down the Charles and end up at Boston College. Toronto has a great path along the lake. In Chicago, I go downtown past Comiskey Park and the only time I've been to Wrigley Field was on my bicycle. In San Francisco, I rode over the Golden Gate Bridge and stopped in the middle, checking out Alcatraz. That was a bit religious there, very cool. In Arlington they have a great route by the ballpark, but the people in Texas don't really appreciate bike riders. It's more like they want to see how close they can get to you.

Does riding help you deal with the stress of managing?

Absolutely. I get absorbed in what I'm doing and my thoughts just start flying all over the place. My biggest

problem sometimes is not forgetting what I thought about.

You came up with your slogan of "9=8" [Nine players performing together for nine innings to land one of eight playoff spots] while riding.

I've already worked out next year's idea. I'm keeping it under wraps right now, waiting for the appropriate time. It seems like you come up with new ideas while on the bike, especially when you ride by the water.

Ever taken any bad spills?

I fell three times the first day I wore [clipless pedals]. The first time I was at a four-way stoplight in Huntington Beach. I forgot to unclip and people were laughing their butts off. You hope nobody's watching, but of course everyone is.

Do you ever get players to ride?

Not really, but guys are cool with it. I guess I was inspirational to Paul Byrd, who pitched for us in Anaheim in '05. Byrdie went out with me once in Minnesota. Normally I'm by myself, though Jaye, my wife, will go out with me on occasion.

—Pete Williams

Small Talk

LAST RIDE? Here in Tampa, on Bayshore Boulevard and Davis Island. The wind was a little rough around the water. It's hard to get 10 miles per hour in some of this wind.

GOOD ADVICE I've found if I can ride an hour and a half, that's when you start losing weight and really making a difference in how you feel. An hour is good, but it's sort of just maintenance.

SHAVED LEGS OR HAIRY? No shaving. Straight up, whatever's there is there.