



channel mastery

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Kristin: Welcome back everybody, to another episode of the Channel Mastery podcast. I have been trying to get somebody from one of my favorite publications, Cycling Tips, on the podcast for years now and I succeeded and I have an all star guest for you today. Please join me in welcoming Abby Mickey, who is the head producer of the cycling tips podcast network and associate editor at Cycling Tips. Welcome to the show.

Abby: Hello. Thank you so much for having me.

Kristin: And I realize that I As I just put that title out there that you said isn't really public facing, but here we go. I mean, you are literally like, that's what you're doing. And I think that's one of the greatest parts of the visibility that you're creating within their network. So we're here today to talk about the, I think, kind of the way that your job came into being, your background and where we are with women's cycling, what channels are most effective in terms of promotion and engagement of that.

But this is part of our once a month series where we highlight a marginalized group of people, whether that is somebody, you know, of a person of color, who somebody who identifies differently from a gender standpoint or a woman leader in the business, frankly, and I was excited to have you on the show because you're doing so much, I think for elevating women's cycling and you're in your chair at a really special time. So I wanted to really start by introducing you to the awesome channel mastery audience, talking about your background and how you came to be the associate editor of cycling tips.

Abby: Yeah. Well, first of all, this is really weird cause I usually host a podcast on the other end of it. It feels kind of odd. But yeah, the way that I kind of stepped into this position is I started off racing a bike. I went to college first. I had never really gotten into bikes. I was a ski racer and basically just lived for the snow. And I eventually found bikes in my latter years at the University of Colorado in Boulder. And I was studying history and took a couple journalism courses as well. And when I retired from cycling in 2019, I'd already started a podcast. I think I started my first podcast in 2017 called the Wheel Talk podcast. And basically I just thought there's so many cool women in cycling, but no one knows about because there's not enough coverage. I just wanted people to get to know some of the really amazing women who do, who are so much more than bike racers. Like some of them are mothers, some of them have PhDs. Some of them are just hilarious

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and I just thought it would be cool to get their voices out there. And pretty soon after I started the podcast, I got picked up by Vox women, which is a British media company that covers women's cycling. So I started podcasting for them and I did that throughout the rest of my career until I retired in 2019. And when I retired, I was already friends with Caley Fretz, who's the Editor in Chief at Cycling Tips. And I've been bugging him about having a woman on their podcast for a while. And it just so happens that I quit boxed women and retired at the same time. And he thought, okay, well you've always been bugging me, I guess you're it. So that's kind of how, how that happened. And then through the crowdfunding campaign, not really crowdfunding, but kind of a push in our membership, the way Cycling Tips kind of funds itself is there's, there's a lot of issues with the sponsorship model.

And I think publications are having a really hard time coming up with money with the internet and everything being free. Cycling tips way to get around this was to have a member, a membership thing where you can sign up, you get access to the Slack where we, we all have Slack conversations going on all the time. There's channels about music, there's channels about food, there's channels about bike racing, there's channels about just women. There's just tons of awesome conversations going on all the time. You also in the beginning, I think they had, you know, you get deals on stuff, but it turned out that people joined because of the community and in the winter, I'm just rambling now, but the winter of 2019, they said, okay, well we want to cover more. Women's cycling, but we need the funds to do it. So if we get X amount of people to sign up for our membership, then that's called Velo club, the Velo club membership. Then we will cover all the women's worlds who are racing and we'll hire someone to cover women's cycling. And so I was kind of the product of that when, when they needed someone who knew the sport and they just needed someone to who knew, knew what people should know about, women's cycling.

Kristin: I absolutely applaud everything you just said about how you came into this role and I'll have links in the podcast notes to an October 21st, 2019 announcement of you Abby. So people can read Kaylee's overview on how your, your position came into being, but you signed over 300 new members during that membership drive. And what I love so much about that is you all decided to really take a step away from the traditional model that wasn't working and you now being in media, like you see that people are like, well, why isn't this working like again and again, it's the definition of insanity. Let's keep trying to make this stand. You know, this foundation that has kept us alive for 25 years, I'm sure we can eat out one more season with sponsorship or advertising and it's not working. Right? So now we're seeing all kinds of different, you know, front and back, a paywall, et cetera.

And what I love most about what you just said is you are making it possible to go deeper with a community. That's what we all want, especially coming out of COVID. So I think that's fantastic. And I also love that we voted for you. So if anybody has any question, if there was a question from a sponsor and an advertiser, because obviously you still have those, it's easy to say, Hey, you know, we've listened to our audience and that's really different than how we've seen the fits and starts of starts and stops of coverage of women in endurance sports over the years. So I think we're at a really time and the way that cycling tips created the opportunity for us to vote you in also engaged us on the

level to try and make sure you're successful and they're successful covering more women's racing. And so we're almost like we're sharing the responsibility of that, getting it across the line successfully month by month. Would you agree?

Abby: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think all of those people who joined up for Veloclub because they wanted more coverage of women's cycling, they are the ones that read my articles. They're the ones that listen to my podcast. They're the ones that are, that are so supportive of what cycling tips is doing in covering women's cycling and supportive of me. And I think that they're them putting their money on the line to push for there, to be more of this. I mean, it just means that they are invested in what we do and it also pushes us to return a better product for them. And the best thing about Veloclub is the community. I mean, in COVID the Slack was blowing up all the time. People were starting Swift rides together and everybody was talking about, there was one string that went on recently.

That was about one of our new members reached out to the entire Slack, which is like over a thousand people, for sure at this point, I don't know the exact number, but reached out to everybody saying that she was struggling with mental health in the pandemic and if anyone else was kind of feeling this way and everybody was, there were so many responses that were just so supportive and that's just the community that we've built with the Veloclub. And I think they are instrumental in pushing cycling tips to what we are today and how much we've grown in the last year. But it's also really nice that we as a media outlet are we don't have to cater to sponsors. Yes, it's really nice that we have partnerships with specific brands and stuff. And I don't think that that's ever going to go away, but when we're talking on the podcast and something comes up and it might be controversial for, for a brand, we don't really have to worry about saying the truth because it's, it's not where our base income comes at this point. And it's really made a huge difference with cycling tips. And I think it all goes down to Wade Wallace, the founder of cycling tips the, Veloclub, but we also have an amazing C basing team behind the scenes of that, that are really pushing the membership forward and making sure that people are getting what they sign up for.

Kristin: That's awesome. Editorial integrity. That's what Wayne figured out. And I realize it's going to be, you know, we're going to have to keep evolving with that, but it's awesome to see what you guys have built and put in place. So I'm going to go back to March 8th really quickly. So that was international women's day. I was at the gym excited to be at a gym, but I was listening to your podcast and I was like, you and Caley were talking international women's day. And then you went into interviews with Ellery Slater. Who's the marketing VP at pivot, as well as Louisa Greppone engineer at hunt wheels. But you guys spent some time talking about media and your onboarding. And I really want to spend a little bit of time talking about that before we move on to like how you're growing your coverage and the engagement around it, et cetera.

I was just so touched by that. And also a little bit touched in a positive and a negative way to be honest, like nothing negative. Like I wish you hadn't done it, but negative more like, wow, I can't believe that's still happening. So what I'd like to do is have you share a little bit around, you know, what the conversation was like with you and Kaylee. And then I would just like to really applaud Kaylee for like being right there with you.

Because ultimately like he's breaking the system in a way, like just by being with you and like allowing you to share your experience and going to bat for you and basically being like really, you know, like, so let's talk a little bit about that. And then we can get into, you know, some other things around the forward momentum of the content you're producing.

Abby: Yeah. that episode was really special to me. I didn't ask me to do it. I kind of threw it together. And then I was like, Kaylee, do you mind if I publish this episode? And he was like, Oh, we should do an intro for it. I'll interview you. And he caught me on, on a day where I think I'd just been reading the YouTube or the Apple podcast reviews. And so I was particularly upset by one of the comments that said I only got my job because, because of my partner who's a pro. And, and so I think if you'd asked me that any other day, I probably would've been like, yeah, I mean, it's fine. As, as we are kind of trained to do as women as kind of just not talk about how we feel about things, but he caught me on an off day and I happened to kind of want to tell people what was going on.

And when I first started with cycling tips, when I was on the podcast in the very, very beginning, Kaylee got from the very beginning, he started getting emails about me being on the podcast that were, that were very negative. And a lot of them, he, he didn't share them with me. He didn't tell me he was getting them. He kind of chalked it up to misogyny and, and deleted them because that's just who Kaley is. He's super supportive of everyone he's hired to cycling tips, but he could read between the lines of those criticisms. And as I started working more of a cycling tips and covering men's racing, particularly during the summer when we were short-staffed and there were so many races going on at once because of COVID, we had so many things overlapping that they really needed me to cover. Men's cycling, which I just up to then I'd only been doing women's cycling.

So I did it, I covered the men's cycling and after that, there was a huge influx of personal messages to me, just saying that I didn't know what I was talking about. I had no qualifications. I only got my job because my partner and all of this stuff, her voice is grading, you know, stuff like that. And it really got to me because I felt like, look, I, I was a professional for six years, I studied writing in college, so I know how to write. And, I have always been good at talking. So I don't know. And so it was a really big blow to my ego. And I got to a point where we were doing the weekly podcast and I would just not speak. And I would see how long I could go without talking because I knew the second I said something like there was someone listening who would just be like, "Ugh, God, I wish you'd just shut up."

Kristin: That was actually the part in the podcast that literally got me the most fired up when you said that.

Amy: Yeah. I mean...we're all human beings. Like all of that negative criticism, all of those keyboard warriors who felt that it was okay to write me messages like that of course like affected me. I'm a human being. Like I have feelings. I have colleagues that are men who would also get, you know, not as bad and not as many, but I think everyone at cycling tips, even Caley has gotten criticism at some point. But since I'm so

green to it, I green to the job, I just wasn't aware that that was going to happen. And I didn't know that you shouldn't read the comments on, on the podcast and you shouldn't read the comments on the articles because I thought that everyone was just going to be kind of stoked to have me writing about cycling. And it was definitely not the case. And I mean, Caley has been like I said, he's so supportive and especially with all of those people, I love that he just kind of is like, no, no, your opinion doesn't matter here. Like she's qualified. Just no.

Kristin: Love that. He also, I'm not sure if I'm putting words in his mouth, but I almost believe he said bro nation.

Abby: Yeah, he probably did. At some point

Kristin: Was like, Oh, this is threatening. The bro nation, well tough, everybody. And then, you know, he didn't throw this out for a few minutes, but he just became a father to what will be a very strong girl. Right. So congratulations to you, Kaylee for a number of reasons. But most of all, because you have this awesome fierce warrior of a daughter, who's going to set the set the whole world up. Right. I'm sure. But I really appreciated your vulnerability so much. I forwarded that podcast to probably five or six women. I really wanted them to listen to it because it was important that as we're seeing more content come up more visibility, we're definitely hearing loud and clear the call for parody. Right. in, in competitive cycling, but we absolutely have to have that in journalism too. And I just feel like it's okay to upset the Apple cart.

Like, especially after COVID I feel like if we were to stay the same, Abby, and like really, you know, like, Oh, well we have to pay attention to the peanut gallery over here. We would keep talking to the same group of three to 5,000 riders. And I know it's about that many because I've worked for so many brands over the years and they're like, and they are, of course always wanting to grow the pie bigger. Now that we've had this pandemic, and it's almost like we have to consider a different way forward for so many reasons. Like the low-hanging fruit of product, for example, in media reviews, we don't have that, right. Like we have to really be thinking differently, but it really does seem like we're at this crux moment where people just really need to like, not only accept, but hold up the future and we can't hold onto the past anymore.

The past is gone and it's always sand through our fingers anyway. So I wanted to just have you on first to just tell you like that took a lot of guts and I absolutely became an even bigger brand fan of Cycling Tips going through that. You also brought you know, such a positive, but realistic spin to Ellory's. My saying her name. Right. Ellory okay, great. I have heard such great things about her, but she was even saying, you know, she shared some challenges, but ultimately the opportunity at hand. And then I, you know, I just thought it was so interesting how she even, she was like, yeah, people just, both of them actually were saying, people just thought I was like a marketing girl in my job. And like, she is a marketing VP, but she also owns a retail shop. And like, it just, I've gotten the marketing girl thing a lot over the years too. It's really frustrating. We actually can do a lot more than that, but at the same time it was just cool to see like you, you guys addressed it, but then you pushed it forward. And that's what I'm seeing your imprint on

Cycling Tips to what I, I listened to your shows and I look at just how everything's growing, like tell us about the free Freewheeling podcast, because that came out. I think it was like at the start of this year. Am I right? Or was it,

Abby: It started at the beginning of 2020.

Kristin: Oh, okay. I didn't realize that. Okay, great. Okay. So how has that been going for you?

Abby: Oh man, it's been so much fun. I think that it's, it's grown a ton and I mean, in the beginning we were just doing every other week and we just recently, a couple months ago, bumped it up or maybe a month ago, bumped it up to weekly, which is just because the people demand a bit. The people wanted us to, to chat more. And I've originally was doing it with my friend Lauren Ronnie, who's another retired professional cyclist, but we've also now picked up Amy Jones who is an incredible journalist for Rue layer. She writes a Cycling Tips. And she's just awesome. So she's been in addition to the podcasts recently, that's been so much fun and it's just three of us ladies talking about women's cycling, which is really great. I mean, we don't have a huge audience and it's growing every single time we put out an episode, but we have such loyal listeners that it's, it's been a really fun, fun project. Definitely

Kristin: Just, you know, going back again to like the mission of channel mastery, how have you brought community into the women's specific content that you're doing?

Abby: I think that the, what we do with this podcast is the same thing that happens with the Cycling Tips podcast. That's been, been around a lot longer is we basically treat it like it's just three friends getting together to have a conversation. So when people listen to our podcasts, they feel like they're sitting at the table with us, just chatting about women's cycling. We don't have a script. We don't have any idea what we're going to talk about before we sit down, we kind of chat before the show about the biggest things that have happened that week and maybe have a little bit of a run G, but other than that, we just kind of go and talk for an hour. It's actually really funny. Usually the calls are two and a half hours and the podcast recording is 40 minutes. So it's, it helps that we're all really good friends, but that's the community that we've built is because of the openness that the three of us have on the podcast. And I think because of that, people want to be involved in, in our coverage of women's cycling because they feel like they know the characters better because we're so open about it. They feel like they understand the racing more because we have no problems saying that people did stupid stuff. If they race dumb or I mean, a weekly feature of the podcast is us just hating on the UCI

Kristin: It definitely does. It's just being real frankly and having the conversation and that's ultimately anything that we promote at Verdi or anything that we do from an event standpoint, the more we can have it feel like, Hey, you're an insider, come join us. That is just, that's the emotional connection. That's what everybody's after. And, and I think it, it really through COVID with the realness and the unscripted-ness and the lack of production that we saw even on, you know, broadcast television. Like I think that even speaks to it more. It's what we expect now.

Abby: I mean, my mom always says she puts on the freewheeling podcast and the Cycling Tips podcast when she's in the kitchen, because she pretends that I'm in the house with her and that I'm just hanging out with a couple of friends. That's awesome. It puts it's something that is very, very different about our podcasts than any other cycling podcasts that I know. Not that those ones aren't any that aren't any worse than ours. I love a lot. I listened to a lot of cycling and I like them all. But I think that that is one of the reasons that we have grown the Veloclub so much. And one of the reasons that Cycling Tips and for you willing have such a big following or a loyal following,

Kristin: I agree. And you have a lot to talk about now. And one of the things I wanted to ask you about as a former pro and now a journalist, it must be so awesome for you to see SD Worx, Mobistar, Trek Segafredo, Canyon, SRAM. SRAM has been around for a couple of years, but we're seeing a proliferation of women's specific world tour teams. And I would love to get your take on that.

Abby: Yeah, I mean, with the UCI is recent rules about world tour teams and their separation between it used to be just, it was a UCI team or it wasn't a UCI team. And now they're changing the game so that you have clear stepping stones in the sport where you have, you know, non UCI teams, UCI teams and world tour teams, and the world tour teams have very strict rules about what they, what they need to have in place for the riders and as teams in order to hold that license. And the minimum salary is a huge thing with the world tour teams, that's really growing the sport and putting those teams above the rest. It does have some drawbacks because it's further pushing away the developing teams from the top of the sport there's as those teams grow, there's a huge gap in between the, the continental, they're not continental teams, but basically like the continental teams and the world tour teams, where they're all racing the same races, because there's such a lack of women's racing that they don't have the ability to have, you know, like the men have the pro series races and stuff.

There's just not as not enough racing for that to happen in the women's sport. But the world tour teams that are in place right now are just incredible. I mean, I can't say enough good things about teams like Trek Segafredo and team Bike Exchange, where they are required. They, they themselves have put into place that they'll pay their women the same as the men's minimum, which is more than double what the UCI have stated as the men's minimum salary. So that kind of thing is changing the game. SD works, They used to be bowls diamonds. They've been pushing the sport forward since they first started by having more money than anyone else paying their riders, a livable wage and allowing them to treat cycling as their full-time job. I mean, the reason that I started a podcast in the first place was because I was getting paid eight grand a year to race my bike and I needed to pay my rent.

And I, so I started like you know, trying to get money on the side. So there's so many riders in the women's field that you need a second job. And the world to our teams are making that, not a thing anymore, which is, is so great for the sport. We've seen because of that, the competitiveness in women's cycling grow so much, especially in the last two years. And I think as more teams are able to pick up more money and pick up more sponsors and kind of get to that level, we're just going to see the sport grow and grow

and grow. And it's been a really awesome to both be a part of when I was racing and also to now be able to cover from, from a journalistic standpoint.

Kristin: You must be so proud seriously. I mean, so much is happening too, as you're in the chair that, you know, leading and, and starting these conversations and getting the word out and really, Abby, we both know like that media exposure is so critical for the continued growth of, of this investment in women.

Abby: Yeah, for sure. I, I it's like a chicken and egg, right. Either the women's racing isn't going to grow if nobody knows what's happening, if a women's race goes on, but there's no live coverage of it and there's no coverage of it, then do you know who even won the race? But the media also has to say, okay, there is no live coverage of this race. Technically it's not that big of a race, but XYZ one in this particular fashion, so we need to write a story about it because people need to know. And that's kind of the approach that I take is I really like to write about races that aren't world tour, because I think that they deserve coverage as well. If I was only writing about the world tour races, I would work, I don't know, three times, maybe one fifth, the amount that Dane Cash works on the men's side, but, but it's, I think media has a huge role in pushing the sport forward.

And I love that I get to do something that, you know, gives back to this sport that I absolutely fell in love with, from the second that I jumped on a bike in college, I was just like so many people. I just felt like I'd found my home for the first time in my life when I found a bike and the fact that I can push the sport forward so that it's growing so that the next generation. And so that Caley's daughter, when she, if she gets into cycling in the future, she has an opportunity to race under, with the same salary as, as the men are racing for right now and may race the big races like that. That's kind of my goal. And I love that. I can, I love that. I have any kind of hand in what's going on. I don't think I do, but I mean, I'm trying.

Kristin: You definitely do. And I also just want to say you're working on, you're still not just, you know, since COVID, but you're still being brought in on the men's side too. I just recently watched your YouTube show. That was the Giro preview and it was really excellent and you're doing a great job and I love that you're not reading comments anymore. Just don't even look at them because you're doing a great f-ing job.

Abby: Thank you. I was told that I need to, I need to engage with the audience, so I need to read the comments and I conveniently ignored that email.

Kristin: Yeah. Let's let someone else handle that. Cause I really think you're hitting your stride and I don't want anything to, to take you off that course. Let's talk about the women's events as we're, you know, kind of talking about this, like you're on the inside. I feel, is there a possibility that we're going to get like a, a meatier, toothier, like women's tour, tour de France in the future? Like, do you think we're on the cusp of that or do you think we're still a couple of years away? I realize I'm asking you to look into a crystal ball, but just curious.

Abby: Well, the UCI or the ASO has said that they will put on a women's tour to France in 2022. And that is a controversial thing on the women's side of the sport. The women have been asking for a tour de France for a long time. And at a certain point, even when I was racing, we gave up, we stopped asking for it because there's, there are, there are race organizers who truly care about the women's sport and really want to see it grow. There's the women's tour in the UK that put on an incredible race, there's touring and Renfert, which is not a world tour race, but, but as a race in Germany that is just brutal and beautiful. And one of the best experiences I had when I was racing, there's the great race of the North. That's been kind of talked about a lot and hasn't happened yet because of COVID, but we have high hopes for that race in the future.

And the tour de France is something that I think the women's Peloton would love to have a tour to France, but we got really sick of asking for it a long time ago. And at this point it's just like, if we get it great, if we don't get it, like just whatever. And I think it would be awesome in terms of the growth of the sport to have an event that size or with even a fraction of what the men's tour de France gets as far as coverage. But there's so much going on on the women's side of the sport that is from other sources that I think that I'm trying to figure out how to word this.

Kristin: We made a pact for honesty before we hit record.

Abby: The ASO has never really cared about women's cycling. All of their events are almost put on as an afterthought because they feel they're because we, we asked for it and people asked for it and there's been pushes for it, but the women's tour of California, when the ASO bought the tour of California and the women's tour of California was going on the quality of the race plummeted before the ASO got involved, that race was, was way more prestigious and the low chorus by the tour de France, the, the women's race that goes on right now, alongside the men's it's just one day, it's always been one day. They've never tried to make it anything bigger and it's an awesome event. But I think that if the, if they do end up putting on a tour to France someday, I'm not holding my breath.

They've said 2022, I'm not holding my breath. But at the same time, there are events like Flanders classics that are putting on, you know, they do all these wide, the Rhonda van Flander, and obviously [inaudible] stuff like that. And they are really pushing for the women's side of the sport to be equal to the men. They show the women's races after the men's races. So the viewing figures are so much higher than they were when they were showing them before the men's race. They're working on making sure that the women get everything equalized to the men. Of course, there's always issues with prize money, but the UCI has rules set where the men have to get a specific amount and to equal that is just putting a little bit too much strain on the race organizers, but the live coverage of all of those races this year was incredible. And that's where we're seeing the growth in women's cycling happen the most is when races are live and people are able to watch the women race. That's where we get the fans. Because once you see these women out there fighting for the win, it's impossible not to love the sport.

When they see the women out there fighting, I mean, you see Annemiek van bluden and then you see Ana Vanderburg and then you see Eliza Londervegini, and you, and you see them battling for the race, especially Cashin Iwadoma. I mean her this year, she was incredible. I know, want to know more about them. And that's when you go to cycling tips and you go to cycling news and you go to Velanews and you look up who these women are. And, and you learn more about the sport and slowly and slowly, that's where we're seeing this growth. And especially in 2020, when we had more races live than not, that's where we saw a huge growth in women's cycling fans. And those fans are now bringing their friends in.

And those people are, who are, who, who are going to bring more money into the sport because the more people who want to watch the sport, the more money is going to come in through sponsors. So it's kind of this tumbling effect that's happening right now that, I mean, there are a lot of factors behind it, but the women's tour de France is something that will continue to be kind of a controversial subject until the ASO really steps up or hands it over to someone else and lets another organizer put on a women's race in France. And hopefully they can actually do it justice.

Kristin: Right, totally with you. That is a fantastic response. So thank you so much. I would be remiss if I didn't ask you about other disciplines of cycling as well. So we've obviously seen just as you said, road has grown and the visibility of that has grown as a category. I think, you know, within the bicycle community of business, right? The business leaders, we've talked about road racing, not being like at the sharp end of the spear from a growth standpoint. I do think there's a lot of influence there. There's if she can see it, she can be, it is there like, so it's super important that that's happening, but what's your take on growth in other categories? I mean, we've seen, I always go back to the Girls Gone Gravel launch with their podcast in their Facebook group. And just, it really seems like they've tapped into their sweet spot from a niche stands standpoint. Again, it's a community. And I'm just curious, like I know Kate Courtney's done a lot for mountain biking. What's your take on other genres of cycling with women?

Abby: I mean the absolutely biggest growth in cycling right now is from the recreational rider, the amount of women that are jumping on bikes right now, especially because gyms are closed and the Peloton studios are closed. And especially in Swift, the amount of women who are getting into Swift is almost insane. And that's kind of where I'm seeing the most growth, just kind of observing my friends and observing, you know, people I went to high school with last year, I was getting messages from people that I knew in college that I haven't talked to for years who were like, Oh, we just, I just picked up a bike for the first time and I'm getting super into it. And I went to Volusia to buy some bibs. And you were at, you were on the comb page. So I wanted to reach out and like people who I never thought would, would ride bikes, they're getting into cycling, both because of the community.

But also because of, like I said, it's hard not to love riding a bike once you kind of open yourself up to it. And, and those are the people that I'm seeing really get into it. And I mean, that's kind of where the money's going to come from, right. In terms of all of the brands and stuff, is, is all those recreational riders. But I mean, there was a couple months in, in the beginning of the pandemic in the spring when I was in Boulder, that I

would go out on rides and I would see groups of women out on rides more than men. I would see, you know, four friends out for a ride. And then a couple of minutes later I would see two girls out on a ride. And I, they, the racing side of the sport is definitely growing. I think the more that there's live coverage, the more women are getting into wanting to race at whatever level that may be criteriums, maybe just doing some gravel races, that's definitely growing a lot, but my mom really loves to ride her rib bike. And that's kind of the demographic that I think is, is kind of growing the most. Right. That's awesome. They don't know anything about racing a right, or they don't, they don't know that there's professional bike racing going on out there. They just love to ride their bike.

Kristin: Yeah. And that is, it's a religion it's therapy. We've discovered so much more about the meaning of being a cyclist through COVID, whether it's rediscovering that later in your life or just diving in, even, you know, doubling down on, on what you love about being on a bike. And again, to me, it was partially a big part of it was the connection to other people and being able to maintain some semblance of normalcy in my identity, but then being able to meet new people during a time when we all felt so shelled, you know, like in the basement with the blanket over our head. So it's just a year like no other and I'm so, so happy to see what's coming out of it. And that you're, you know, just right in the mix there. I have to ask you before we wrap up here and you've been so generous with your time, can you share some insights because you know, you started podcasting in 2017, you've always been focused on, you know, women in, you know, in terms of highlighting their stories, getting their voices out there. What are some of the channels that you're seeing work or like what changed through COVID what's working now in terms of how people are discovering and engaging with this content?

Abby: Hm. I think that the more exciting the racing is, the more I see engagement on Cycling Tips or on social media. But I don't know how to answer that question.

Kristin: Well, I can prompt you. What about video? Like, are you seeing even just podcast downloads, like, you know, you said you have a very engaged audience that is growing, but it's not like growing like wildfire. Right. It's, it's sort of like sustainable you know, adding more listeners they're loyal. You know, I'm just curious to know, cause that I read and follow religiously anything I can around marketing trends around retail, you know, anything like that, that'll help our clients. And I was just curious to hear, I know that podcasts actually overall were kind of down last year, but I think they're coming back. And they definitely are doing really well when they're, when they are able to give their listeners a way to engage more deeply. So I was just curious to know, like what you're seeing from the cycling tips standpoint. I mean, you, you have a membership basically, right? I mean, it's, it's access into a community. So it's just super interesting for me to see, like Slack could be a channel that's growing.

Abby: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, podcasts are definitely down lesser. I think it's cause people weren't commuting and that's kind of the number one place where people listen to podcasts. But I guess where I'm seeing the most kind of influence is other people's YouTube videos. I see a lot of, there was a, there was a YouTube video recently that just kind of took Cycling Tips, work editorial Slack by storm. There was these three girls in S Silverton, Colorado who ride mountain bikes and just kind of rip around. And I can't

remember what the video was called, but it was just, it brought so much joy to my heart and kind of where I'm seeing the most growth in terms of things that can be marketable is, is that, I mean, we just had I just did a podcast with Marley and Caylee, the found the two women who are doing I think it's all bodies on bikes. And, and they just made their, their video through with Shimano about all, all bodies on bikes and stuff like that. Yeah. Yeah. It was awesome. I think I watched it like 30 times. I'm not even kidding. And, and that's kind of a form that I'm seeing grow a ton is just people telling their own stories via, via YouTube or kind of on social media and, and connecting it to cycling and also connecting it to brands and brands, being able to play a role in people telling their stories.

Kristin: That is perfect. So you didn't know how to answer it, but actually you nailed it. And I would love to just throw it out there to the listeners because we have a lot of brand leaders listening. So Chris Froome started to do his, excuse me, his videos. I saw that one of your competitors is having another really interesting fun to watch. Male cyclists kind of do commentary on the Giro, let's put a few women in front of the camera, like telling their own story because I, you know, I watch, I've seen every single one of Kate Courtney's videos multiple times. And I just want everyone to know, like, look at the views on some of these videos and know that women will, we want to see more women telling their story. It's super interesting. And most I'm just going to say it because I can, I think a lot of the women pros have such a diverse background. They're either, there's so many like PhDs, there's the, some of the stories in this Peloton and they've always been there, but like, let's get it out there now, you know, there's so much, and I know there's a lot of people who are really, really funny too. Like, so I just feel like if people could just take the leap and take us along for the ride on YouTube, I think that would really be amazing. And we'll see the numbers and engagement right there.

Abby: I mean, there was a video done recently in the lead up to the Segafredo race called the run-up, which was kind of a sneak peak at the behind the scenes of Trek. Segafredo works in Canyon stream as they got ready for leash bass on the ACE, the final spring classic, basically of the Ardennes and of the season, spring season. And we saw snapshots of some of the personalities on that video. And if you're listening to this podcast and you're like, man, is there, if there's one thing I could do to like, get to know these women better, I would say, just go watch the run-up because one more view might make the difference between them being able to continue producing that series or not. And I think if we could get more videos like that, because a lot of the women that I know in the sport, they're not about to go start their own YouTube channels.

They're really busy already. And they, they don't really, they're, they're awesome on social media. A lot of them are really, really fun to follow, but to get to know them personally, we need an another outside source following them around and making sure to get everything on film and all over overall at the run-up is doing such a great job at that. So we need just more of that and, and, and stuff like that. And I also, I love what Kate is doing. And I think, you know, the more, the more that she does that, the more that these videos continue to surface, the more we'll see in the future, it's just going to be organic growth because people will, will want to make, make their own stories heard.

Kristin: Exactly. And it's sort of what they're growing up doing. I've at 15 and a half year old and she, she doesn't like put her stuff out, but she shoots everything, right? So this is sort of the way they're going to be communicating. They're coming up fast generation Z is going to change the game. Right. So I think even if you look at it from that point testing and learning, you can't really go wrong and YouTube is such a great channel. It's linked to Google everyone. They're starting to put, you know transcriptions of these YouTube videos above their banners in Google. Like it's actually really important to be there. And there's great, like longevity to the content. So I just think that's a really great great insight that you shared. So yeah, go ahead.

Abby: Brands that get involved with stuff like that, they also then have their names tied to an incredible projects that will, it's great for them. It's great for the sport and it keeps, it wants people, it keeps people coming back for more so, as far as marketing goes, I mean, I know the, the, when I, when, when watching videos like that, you know, I watched the one about the three girls in Silverton and I was like, Oh man, I need to go get some jean shorts. It totally works. That kind of stuff like totally works from a consumer's standpoint.

Kristin: Definitely does. Did I miss anything? Cause I think we really covered a lot here and it's been so amazing having you on as a guest.

Abby: Thanks. I actually don't know anything about marketing, so I don't think people should listen to me!

Kristin: But yeah, you D you definitely, I will tell you one thing that we love about cycling tips is just the beautiful narrative touch that you bring. Like the, the, you know, I don't know if it's, you're trying to replicate or, or bring through the thread of your beautiful print publication throughout the year, but anytime you show like the photography and the storytelling is so much richer, like it's what we really consider you as like a point of differentiation at cycling tips. But you also do a great job allowing us to sit there and listen to you guys, like go through your bike reviews and you do really feel like you're sitting at the table, like listening to everybody go back and forth. So I'm just, I, I'm so excited. We're getting to see racing again. And I'm so, so happy to see just the focus and investment cycling tips has put on the, you know, coverage that you're providing. It's very good. And we're going to do everything we can to continue to get eyeballs and downloads on as much of it as we can over here. So thank you again. Yeah. Thank you. All right. And we will definitely be cheering from the sidelines and I'd love to have you on, maybe as we close the season to go over some more news that we might have in the works.

Abby: Yeah, for sure. All right.

Kristin: Cool. Thank you so much.

Abby: Thank you.

