

FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH RYDING

Written by Danielle Dean · Photography by Wes Battoclette

It is safe to say that few 20somethings truly know what they want to do with their lives upon graduating from college – the possibilities are endless. As a senior preparing to graduate with a psychology and pre-med degree from the University of Michigan, Casey Hilmer found herself wondering what her next step would be.

“I went to the University of Michigan because I wanted a big school with spirit, sports, and endless opportunities. I had no idea what I wanted to study. Freshman year, when most of my classmates were on track to become engineers, doctors, and the next business men and women of America, I took a lot of intro classes; but I always had an affinity for psychology. I liked learning about people, their problems, and how and why we interact with others. At the end of freshman year I decided I would major in psychology while taking the prerequisite classes needed to apply to medical school. My ‘plan’ was to graduate, attend medical school, and become a child psychiatrist,” says Casey. “That didn’t happen. I studied for the MCAT, took the MCAT, applied to medical school, but I didn’t get in. Surprisingly, I wasn’t upset. I was just confused, because what would I do now?”

Casey began looking into options for her future, such as reapplying to medical school and/or getting her PhD in clinical psychology. But the thing she says she has always been extremely passionate about is fitness. An avid runner since the age of 10 and a health-food aficionado ever since she can remember, Casey loves to sweat, loves to cook, and loves to lead a healthy life. It wasn’t until her dad suggested that she and her mom, Meg Hilmer, consider opening a cycling studio, that she felt she had the freedom to make a career out of what she loves. “I thought it was a cool idea, but I never thought that it would be a possibility,” Casey says.

The timing couldn’t have been more right as Casey had yet to figure out the next step in her journey and Meg had recently retired from her job of more than 30 years at Cincinnati Bell. Both mother and daughter were wondering what’s next? Fitness was the clear answer.

Casey’s interest in health and fitness began at a young age. The avid runner, indoor cyclist, yoga enthusiast, and healthy chef was introduced to running by her dad when she was still in grade school.

“My dad is the one who got me interested in running. It was the summer before the fifth grade, I remember him coming home and saying, ‘I’m going running and you’re coming with me.’ I told him, ‘No, I am not.’ And he said, ‘Yes, you are, get your shoes!’ That was that,” Casey says. “It wasn’t awful; we only ran two miles. After that run I thought I was in the clear, but every day for the rest of the summer my dad would come home and have me run with him. I slowly began to like it because some days I would beat him. It became competitive. And there was nothing I liked more than winning.”

Casey would also accompany her mom to weekend step or kickboxing classes. “I really think my parents are the ones who got me so interested in health and fitness,” she says.

Running became a part of Casey’s routine and later became her salvation after she fell victim to a stabbing while out on a run at the age of 13.

“I was attacked when I was 13 and I always tell people that I think running is the one thing that really helped me recover,” explains Casey. “I had severe post-traumatic stress disorder. I couldn’t do anything alone or be alone, ever, because I was constantly scared. I lost all independence and innocence I had prior to July 13, 2003. But I wanted people to think that I was OK. I didn’t want my friends and classmates knowing I slept in my parent’s room and couldn’t stay home without a babysitter. It was embarrassing. So to appear like any normal teenager, I got right back into running and winning races. I think running gave me a sense of control and independence in my life when I had neither.”

Casey ran competitively throughout high school and recreationally in college. Casey has had a number of accomplishments – finishing fourth at the Columbus Marathon and qualifying for the prestigious Boston Marathon; but has also suffered a number of running related injuries. It was while recovering from an injury that Casey was first introduced to spinning.

“After I got injured I had to find something, so I did spinning. It was a love/hate relationship. I loved it afterwards because it felt like one of the hardest things I had ever done but I just found it to be so boring. It was very much a struggle to get myself to go to class; sometimes I would just go to the gym instead,” Casey says.

Casey’s view on spinning changed soon after she opened an email announcing the opening of a new indoor cycling studio near campus. At first glance Casey didn’t think she would be interested in checking out the new facility but decided to watch the attached promotional video anyway.

“I watched the video and saw that the bikes were moving side-to-side – I’d never seen bikes like that so I went to the studio and after my first class I thought, ‘Oh I liked that,’” she says.

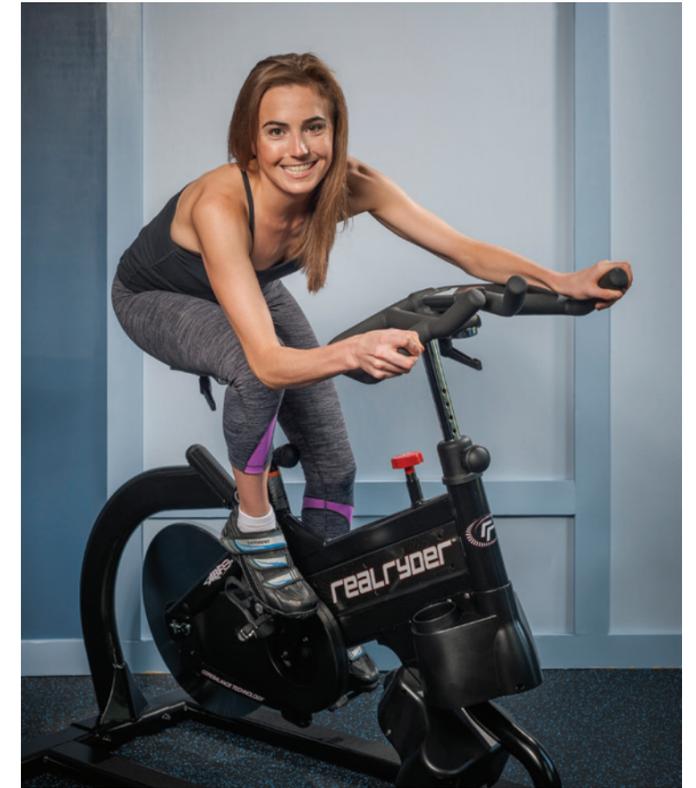
As Casey and her mom began toying with the idea of opening their own studio in September of 2012, they discovered that the RealRyder spinning Casey had loved in college wasn’t available anywhere in Greater Cincinnati. That’s when the mother and daughter began formulating a business plan and calculating the expenses associated with owning a business. In November, the pair traveled to Boston to receive their RealRyder certification.

“At the certification we met people who were opening studios which was great because they gave us great resources,” says Meg. “Spinning is one of the most popular exercises now but RealRyder takes it to the next level.”

They named their studio Power Ryde; their mission being to empower their ryders. Sure, with dozens of RealRyder indoor cycling bikes (a dynamic “spin” bike that turn, tilts and leans side-to-side, giving ryders a full-body workout), students are guaranteed a great workout, but Casey and Meg hope each student leaves feeling touched mentally, physically, and emotionally.

“Our goal is not to defeat ryders, but to test their boundaries and encourage them to go to their edge and dig deeper with each pedal stroke. It sounds twisted, but I love seeing people grimace in class during a sprint or a hill because once the sprint is over or the hill is off, each one of them is grinning from ear to ear. Personal experience has taught me the power of exercise and the wonders it can do for one’s confidence and self-esteem. I just hope to share that with each individual who walks through our doors,” says Casey.

“You tilt 22 degrees left and right – it isn’t difficult but it is a total body integration that teaches you how to use your arms, relax your shoulders, and engage your core while moving your legs and remembering to breathe,” explains Casey. “It is fun! It is easier on your joints and it is a 20-30 percent better calorie burn than traditional spinning.”



With a team of 14, the studio offers morning and evening classes ranging from 45-60 minutes. Classes are set to music, which creates a fun, high-energy atmosphere. Power Ryde has a great Introductory Offer for first-time Power Ryders: three classes for \$15, giving the student time to familiarize themselves with the bike. Future classes are available in 10 and 20 class packages. Student discounts are available for those who qualify.

Each Sunday, Power Ryde hosts a charity ryde to benefit Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. For \$8, students can participate in a class. This is great for first time participants and seasoned ryders alike.

“When we first started, I thought everyone who came was going to be an athlete, but it’s been the people who maybe haven’t done cardio in a while – it is the people that you would never think you would see at a gym taking a spin class that are coming and keep coming and that is what I love seeing,” says Casey. “They have so much fun. When I hear a potential Power Ryder say, ‘Oh I don’t think I can do it or I don’t workout,’ I tell them to just give it a try; the majority of our ryders had no spin experience prior to coming to Power Ryde.

“Power Ryde is for all levels. Our classes have 11- to 64-year-olds, so anyone can be in the same class peddling next to one another but depending on where they put their resistance they can make it their own workout.”

“It is a welcoming community. We have athletes and non-athletes, men and women, young and old. It is fun to see everyone as they leave class – they are dripping with sweat and red in the face, but they are beaming with smiles,” Meg adds.

Casey and Meg truly love sharing their passion of health and fitness with their students – from joining in on smaller classes to swapping healthy recipes, bringing in healthy treats for guests to enjoy, and more. Take control of your health and workout routine and go cycle, sweat, and strengthen with Power Ryde. ❖

Power Ryde is located at 732 Middleton Way, Loveland, OH 45140. You can reach them at 513.583.7433 or visit their website at www.powerryde.com.