

## CHRIS BALDWIN

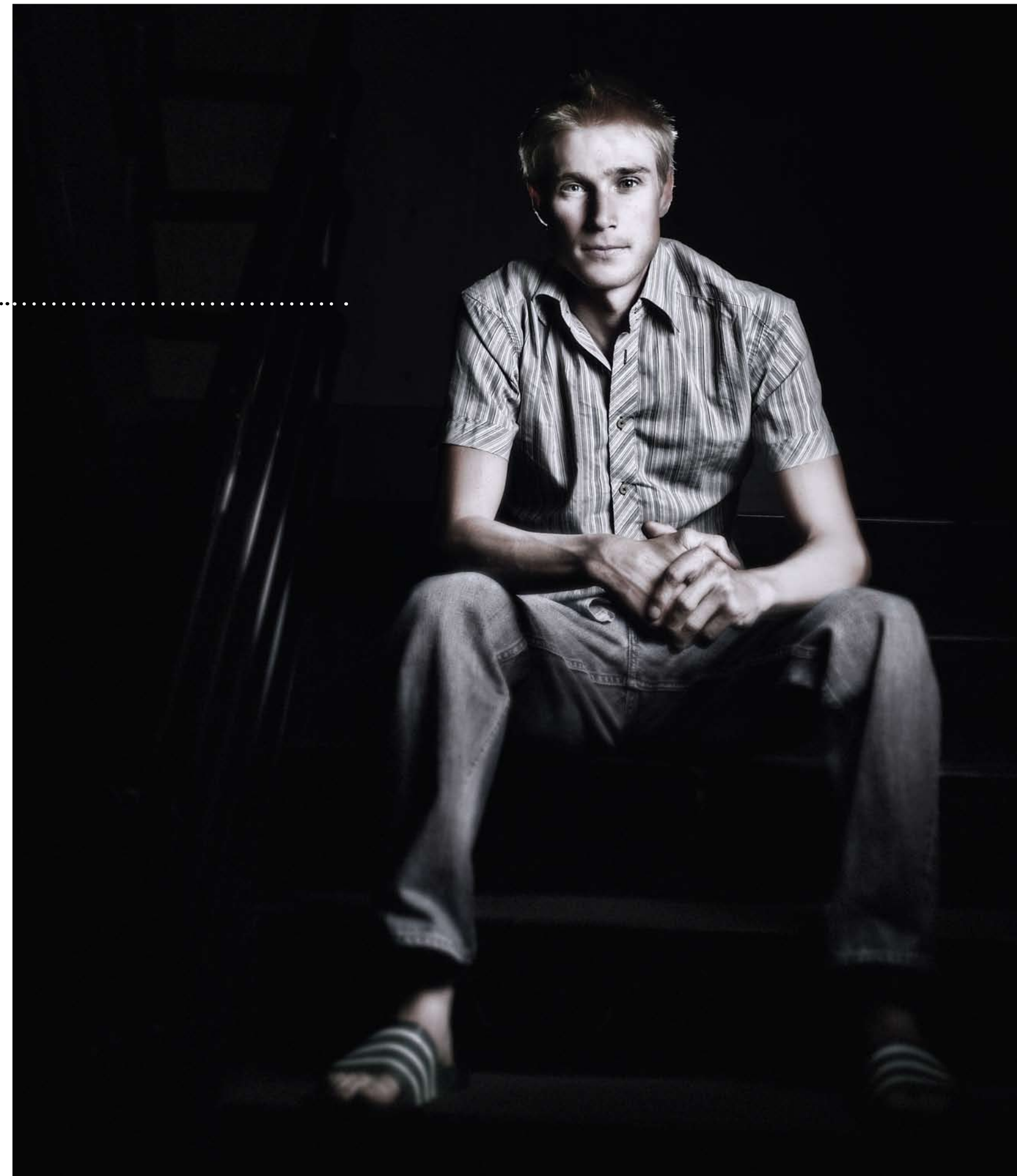
is one of the unheralded stars of the Toyota-United squad. Sure he isn't taking stage victories like super-sprinters Ivan Dominguez or Hilton Clarke, but without solid riders like Baldwin the aforementioned racers would not be able to post up in the victory circle. However, it hasn't always been Baldwin toiling in the shadows of his teammates; he's produced strong results himself. Going back to 2000, Baldwin was the King of the Mountain winner at the GP Stad Vilvoorde in Belgium. This was not the only race where he has

shown ability to climb. At the always tough Cascade Classic in 2005 he was a KOM winner too. His Cascade Classic glory doesn't end there. This year Baldwin finished in a strong fourth place overall in GC against Levi Leipheimer and a motivated Jeff Louder. Earlier this year at the Redlands Classic Stage Race, Baldwin was a solid second place in GC, just 54 seconds behind a super strong Santiago Botero of Rock Racing. Not to be pigeon-holed as only a climber, Baldwin can put his lanky body into

an aero position for the time trial or long break away. Case in point is his 2005 USPro time trial win. And many wondered what could have been at the 2006 Greenville USA Cycling time trial when he over-cooked the final corner and crashed 400 meters from the finish, which not only landed him in the ditch but also into second place on the day to another time trial specialist, David Zabriskie. With the Toyota-United team as we know it coming to an end, Baldwin discussed his past and future.

\* *indefinable*

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**You're a native of Chicago. Some strong riders have come out of that area like yourself and also Christian VandeVelde. Does that weather turn riders into tough men.** I was born in Chicago, but we moved to Michigan in grade school. But a lot of guys are coming out of Michigan right now and guys from the mid west have a good work ethic. Kind of a blue collar mentality.

**In Europe it is seen as a blue collar sport. Same type of thing?** People from the mid-west have been instilled with a good work ethic.

**How did you get into cycling?** It started when I got my first 10-speed. I took to it as a means of transportation and freedom. Once I got that bike I was hanging out a bike shop pimping my ride and those guys at the shop got me into racing. That was the beginning. Anything with hand-eye coordination I was terrible at. For self confidence I was driven toward anything with an athletic pursuit, like running. I had more of an aptitude to that type of sport.

**You wrestled in high school? You must be the only professional cyclist who can claim to have competed in that sport.** (Laughing) I did! Where in the world did you find that? I wasn't any good, but I was really small so that was an advantage. In seventh grade I was 75 pounds, in eighth grade I was 85 pounds. I didn't break 100 pounds until sophomore year in high school. I was a late bloomer (laughing). Cycling was the first thing I found that I was any good at. I played soccer and made it with hustle. That's the story of my life; make it up with hard work for lack of talent.

**Your wife (Kimberly Baldwin, T-Mobile) was a professional cyclist. How does that work in the family?** I have a hard time imagining how anyone can make a marriage work when the spouse doesn't understand what the other spouse is doing. It's a blessing that Kimberly was a professional cyclist. I think that's the only way a woman could put up with me. She understands the sport and the sacrifices I make. When we were both racing

simultaneously there was definitely a lot of cycling in the household. It was kind of intensive and at times we both wanted to get away from cycling, but it also made us much more compatible. It was great. She is my biggest fan and where most of my support comes from.

**Your strengths are in the time trial, but you have the body type of a climber. How do merge both those talents?** To be honest it's an evolution of my career. As strange as it looks from the outside I started out naturally as a time trialist and never worked on it specifically. I have a lot of slow twitch fibers. It's just what my body does best. It works well at that threshold level. Then I worked on my climbing but have lost some of that time trialing ability and have become a top-10 time trialist, rather than a guy in the top-3. I'm sort of struggling right now at my age figuring out how I can do both well. I've been struggling to put that together.

**The Toyota-United squad is racing on Fuji time trial bikes. How do they perform for you?** They have been good all year and Fuji has a new time trial bike coming out. It looks phenomenal and I hope to try that out.

**Are you doing something differently this year to reconcile that?** I've always done things differently every year. I'm not the guy to be afraid to experiment and training is something that has always interested me in sports. I've always been willing to take a risk and try new forms of training. I tried some new stuff at the beginning of the year and went back to stuff that had worked for me in the middle of last year. I got my climbing back, but never hit my stride time trialing all year. Next year this is something I'm going to address more to get back to that level. To be honest it's a mystery. I did a lot of work in time trialing, but it hasn't resulted in better time trialing.

**You raced in the inaugural Tour of Utah. How do you compare the two?** It was a great race both years. Obviously the guys in Utah considered it their hometown race, but I think everyone in the west and the Colorado guys also considered it their hometown race. It was nice to have a true mountain stage race with multi-mountain passes per stage and those kind of grueling courses. This year they did a good job and it seemed more focused in terms of the transition stages. But all in all they were both good events.

**On paper, stage 2 was a tough stage. What was that stage like for you?** For me personally it was one

of the best sensations I've had all year. I felt great and it looked great for the overall and it built up a lot of confidence. It was a tough stage right out of the blocks, going up the climb out of Ogden. That was hard to start a stage like that with the high temperatures. It was an epic, true mountain type of stage that guys like me like.

**Stage 3 was the criterium. It was full-gas the whole time. You guys didn't bring a sprinter to Utah. What is going on with the team?** We brought a team to chase the GC and going into it we

were going for the team GC. We focused everything on the stage to Snowbird, which is the Queen stage. We knew that this is where the race would be decided and to be ready for that stage. The whole week was about Snowbird in our eyes.

**How did you feel when you came to the bottom of the Snowbird climb?** I didn't have the legs I had on day 2. I might have come into that race a little too primed. You want to time everything just right so that you are not only peaking for the race, but also the day that the race is decided. Like Cascade, the

first day is important and then day 2 with the time trial. Not a lot happens the last couple of days. I came into Utah for something like that, ready right out of the blocks. I wasn't getting better as time went on, I was getting worse. I wasn't bad going up to Snowbird, but I didn't have the legs to make something happen. It was compounded by the fact that I was caught in a group that contained Burke and Jeff that was behind and instead of working together to catch Chadwick and Blake, which we should have done, we got into in-fighting and attacking ourselves. It was not the day I was looking to have, but it could have been worse.

**You know both Blake Caldwell and Jeff Louder. Did you think that Louder could take the leader's jersey from Caldwell?**

Absolutely! It was a pretty exciting race with those two going at it. Bookwalter had a great time trial and came over me for fifth place, so there was quite a lot of movement for a 7-mile time trial. There was no question in my mind that Jeff could move over him. He's been phenomenal on the time trial bike this year. Blake is very strong as well, but Jeff is a bigger guy and it was down to the wire.

**Toyota-United, as we know, is ceasing to exist at the end of this season. Do you have plans for 2009?** Everyone knows the same information as I do. Everything Sean [Tucker, the team owner] has said is up to date. He's been courting a few sponsors, the problem is that things are happening slowly and riders know things are going to happen late. I think things will happen with Sean. It's unfortunate that the UCI paperwork has to be in on a certain date to be registered as a pro continental team. I think teams should be able to come on at any time during the winter or spring and file paperwork if riders are available. I think Sean will find something and that even a few teams will pop up that no one is expecting. Everything will work out. It looks right now the perfect storm; all these teams are going under all at once, but I think it will work out for everyone. There will be a bit of drama, that's all.

**What does the off-season hold for you?** My routine is to get off the bike after the last race and do a trip with Chuck Coyle, Tyler Hamilton, and another guy we train with, Bruce Hogins, and do a mountain bike trip with camping. It's a boy's trip. It's a month off the bike and its house project time and catch up with everything I've let slide all year. Then maybe a vacation with Kimberly and some relaxation. *R*

