

THE STORY OF TRACKSTAR

We opened the shop because we didn't want to deliver food anymore. Or we wanted wholesale. Or because we wanted to pick up hot messengers. That was three years ago, Trackstar has stolen my youth.

The beginning

I was working at this sweatshirt company, which was basically a sweatshop for recent art school graduates. Brad was delivering food for Mama's in the village. He was the one who got the big idea to open a bike shop. He came to me, and asked me to be his partner. He says that's the biggest mistake he ever made. I said no, I still had big dreams from art school. He asked many more times, eventually I said yes. Probably while I was under the influence.

My broken arm

In the beginning, the odds were against us. Before we opened, we were renovating the shop. I shirked my responsibilities one night, and ended up breaking my arm in three places while I was out partying. For awhile, I was all hopped up on painkillers, being totally useless. Not to mention that I refused to heed the good judgment of everyone around me and continued to ride my bike. I crashed two more times, first from riding drunk on someone's top tube and putting my foot through the front wheel. And then I got doored by a Hasidic man in a minivan, that's when I sprained my other arm.

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A can of whoop ass

About a month after we opened, the shop got broken into and almost half of our stock was stolen. A few months later, a messenger from the neighborhood came in and tried to sell us some of our stuff back. He said it was at his company's office. We played it cool, and pretended like we were interested. This guy had no idea it was ours. Later that day, some of the boys went over there and repo'ed it all back. You mess with the bull, you get the horns.

Brad's plight

Brad got in a bad accident where he ended up wrapping his bike around the front of some lady's car. His hip looked like a woman's, it was so swollen, and he couldn't really walk. Then he got dumped by his 18-year-old girlfriend. And then he got fired. That's about the time the shop got broken into, all within the same week. You can only take so much. We sent him away to Boston that weekend for a vacation.

The Head

So since Brad chose the shop instead of getting a new apartment, for the first three months he was sleeping on a dirty tore-up mattress in the back of the shop with his man-hungry pit bull, The Head. The Head was a fighting pit bull from up in Harlem that got pasted on to Brad through one of our other friends. They had to get rid of it because it killed their vet's cat of like 20 years and kept attacking her boyfriend's eight-year-old son. We eventually had to get rid of The Head too after he attacked a few people at the shop, including myself and the guy who came to set up our credit-card machine. We didn't have a credit-card machine for almost eight months because of The Head.

Man up

It was the Trackstar learning process, we had no idea what we were doing. Eventually we wised up and became business owners. And we're fucking huge in Japan.

Patty Bowman is co-owner (with Brad Baker) of Trackstar, a track-specific bike shop on the Lower East Side. She moved to New York in 1998 and has lived here ever since.