



The RIDE of his life

After narrowly escaping death in 2013, Grant Lottering is back in the saddle doing the Im'Possible, writes Eugene Yiga

"July 2014—from death to the top of the Alps in one year—was my biggest challenge ever on a bike. Never in my life have I had to dig so deep and endure as much..." Lottering had successfully completed the race that had almost claimed his life only a year earlier. The impossible had been made possible.

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ver since Lottering saw South African professionals such as the late Ertjies Bezuidenhout and Alan van Heerden race in his hometown of Randburg, he's been in love with cycling. "As an 11-year-old, my friend and I would wear black shorts and yellow T-shirts and chase each other in our neighbourhood, pretending we were racing," recalls the 48-year-old Johannesburg native. "But as South Africans [living under apartheid], we were banned on the international stage, which made it difficult."

Although he started cycling professionally in 1989, Lottering only competed in Europe for a year before he returned to South Africa to study marketing management and pursue a 'normal' career instead. But even though he was satisfied already to have received his national colours three times over, his love for cycling wouldn't fade. It's why he found himself in Italy on 21 July 2013, gearing up to do what he loves most. "It was raining when I woke up, and it concerned me," he recalls of the day he competed in La Leggendaria Charly Gaul in Trento, the international cycling event to the summit of Monte Bondone. "I stood next to the amateur world champion and knew I was in serious company. I was nervous [but] I was confident I could win my category."

But while descending the first mountain, Lottering entered a wet corner at over 66km/h and crashed straight into a rock embankment. Because he didn't hit his head, he was conscious through the accident—until he could no longer breathe and knew he was dying. "I came round in ICU some 30 hours later," he recalls. "I had tubes in my throat, an epidural in my spine, and couldn't move. I thought I was paralysed and became traumatised before they sedated me again."

The prognosis wasn't good. Lottering required half a dozen surgeries as well as countless biokinetics sessions. But he pushed through, grateful he wasn't paralysed and determined to make the most of his second chance at life. "I had a clear vision of going back and doing what I had been told wouldn't be possible," he says. "I knew if I went back within one year, it would be an amazing story. I became so determined that nothing was going to stop me."

True to his word, a year later he was back where it had all begun—about to embark on his first ImPossible Tour. The Italian doctors who saved his life welcomed him and the tourism board hosted him like a VIP. A day before the race, he went to the crash site and the memories came flooding back. "I cried, but then focused on where I had come from and that I was back," Lottering says. "I spent time praying, and visualised myself racing past the corner the next day. It would be my biggest victory. I left feeling confident and with total closure of what had happened there a year ago."

Indeed, racing past the corner where he'd crashed was the biggest victory of his life. It was an emotional moment, but also gave him an incredible sense of overcoming. And reaching the



PREVIOUS SPREAD: 2km from summit of Col de la Croix de Fer 410km covered

THIS PAGE, TOP: Descending Col du Glandon at 85km ph 430kms covered

THIS PAGE, ABOVE: Night 2 620km Gran Colombiere. Died a thousand times over

THIS PAGE, BELOW: Approaching first climb, Col d'Allos before sunset

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Day 2 39hrs Col de Joux Plane 890km

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: 15min stop halfway mark. Col de la Madeleine. heat exhaustion a real concern; 920km suffering on the Col de la Colombiere





summit of the Col du Galibier at 2 640 metres, still seeing thousands of cyclists behind him, made him realise that he'd reached the summit of the biggest challenge of his life. Because he'd believed, had faith and refused to give up, he'd made the impossible possible against all odds.

"I felt a sense of extreme gratitude to be alive and to have been given this opportunity of doing something considered impossible," he says. "At the start, I was scared of what could go wrong, but a hundred percent confident that it was my destiny to be there and that it would work out as it should. And it did. Somehow I just knew it would, and I gave myself no opportunity to think about failure or doubt. That helped me overcome the fear of going down those mountains again."

Last year, in his second ImPossible Tour, Lottering cycled 420km non-stop through the Alps in 19 hours and 38 minutes, climbing 10 000m over 10 mountains through the night. And even though his seventh shoulder surgery was still due (completed last October), he finished the route thinking he could've gone further. That's why he decided to do double on 3 August 2016, with the aim of completing it within 48 hours to make him the first person ever to do so.

"I've realised how important it is that our thinking is in line with our goals, plans and vision," he says. "We must have a clear vision of what we want to accomplish in life. When we have that, we can see beyond where we are. Our subconscious mind is more powerful than our cognitive conscious mind, and we need to use this to drive





1 km to go. We did it!

our behaviour and attitude. I used this to get through recovery and back on the bike sooner than anyone thought possible.”

Lottering cycled from Cannes to Les Saisies ski resort with the help of his friends and support teams in France. He did so as an ambassador for the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, with the sole purpose of raising funds for underprivileged children. Several weeks before the challenge he’d already ‘sold’ every mountain to corporate donors and raised over R1 million, with all the proceeds going to the charities the foundation supports.

“I worked for a major South African bank for 16 years, and left the corporate world to pursue the direction my second life has taken me,” he says. “So I’m now in a position to focus on my career as an international speaker and building the Im’Possible brand.” Still, there’s a lot on his plate. As a full-time professional speaker, Lottering has made several trips to Europe following requests to share his inspirational and thought-provoking story. And because he shares the journey so authentically, he’s able to connect with audiences of all ages, teaching them that “the mind is infinitely more powerful than we think” and that “the brain listens to the mind, not the other way round, and the body in turn responds to the brain”.

“Our potential is unlimited, but we have limits because we impose them on ourselves,” he adds. “We have to apply our minds and tap into this incredible resource we have to achieve more than we ever thought possible, to see our invisible become visible, and to inspire and encourage. But, just as important, we need to

surround ourselves with the right people. I could never have done what I did if it weren’t for the team of doctors I had, or my support teams in the Alps who believed one hundred percent in the plan.”

Lottering, who grew up wanting to become an architect, currently manages a residential property portfolio to feed his passion. He’s also working on putting together a corporate cycling

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event and a possible television show. But, up until now, the biggest focus has been on completing the 1 000km Im’Possible Tour III, which he considers a privilege to be able to do.

“I love the beauty we get to enjoy while riding, the freedom of expression on a bike, being one with a high-tech piece of equipment, and being a hundred percent reliant on your own physical strength,” he says. “The reward of standing on top of a mountain, enjoying the scenery after having endured and suffered to get there, is symbolic of life.”

For further details about the Im’Possible Tours, see Grantlottering.com.