



JIM MEYER

—
 FOUNDER OF QUARQ
 SPEARFISH, SOUTH DAKOTA
 JOINED SRAM IN 2011
 RIDES A TREK PROJECT ONE

I was a competitive swimmer in elementary and high school. I started mountain biking and road biking later for fun. Then in grad school I got into triathlon.

I went to the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, Ind., and studied math and mechanical engineering. Then I went to grad school at MIT. I'd say I survived grad school. When you walked on that campus, you could poke your head down any hallway or lab and see some of the country's top experts in any field. You could stop and talk to any random student there and they had an amazing life story to tell you. The feeling of amazement I had never wore off.

In 2006 my wife, Mieke, and I decided to go to Australia for a year. She planned to work on her MBA over there, and I thought I'd do serious triathlon training. I wanted to get a power meter to train for the cycling portion of the race, but I wasn't impressed with the options. I was looking at mainly the CycleOps PowerTap and SRM models. The PowerTaps are built into the rear wheel, and my race wheel was a Hed trispoke, so I couldn't use it. That left SRM, which works off the crankset, but it was very expensive. I couldn't figure out why SRM wasn't doing a meter that was more competitive on price.

I realized that starting a power-meter company would be a good fit with my background. When I called my parents to tell them I wanted to start a power-meter company, they were happy. Then they said, "What's a power meter?"

I explained that a power meter is a device on a bike that measures your power output. That's the rate at which you're releasing energy. If you know how quickly the crankset is spinning and you can measure the torque in the crank arms, you can compute your overall power output. The difficult part is figuring out the applied torque. For that, we use strain gages carefully glued to a specially designed crankset. It's a thin foil, and you measure how much the gage stretches in parts per million. The gage has to do it accurately and do it live while you're pedaling. Then we compute an average torque during the revolution and combine that with the RPM of the cranks to get an overall power output.

When I built the first prototype, it was an enormous box. It took 18 months to get to the point where I could go for a ride with my own power meter. It didn't feel as great as you might expect. As an engineer, I was trained to keep

thinking about problems. So all I noticed was flaw after flaw after flaw.

I don't know how a chef feels when they taste a new recipe for the first time. Maybe the good feeling doesn't come until later, when they show it off and see the pleasure in other people's faces.

I didn't get to see that look on people's faces until Interbike in 2007. That was the first time I got to talk about it with outsiders. Kevin Wesling and Brian Benzer came by the booth. Then in spring 2008 we gave one to Hunter Allen. He started riding Quarq and giving us feedback. So that was rewarding. And that year Wesling called me and we started really talking. Kevin bought one of our meters and cut it in half and looked inside. Then Charles Becker called me.

We really struggled, financially. I had started working on the project in Australia, and we didn't get our first dollar of revenue until June 2008. That was two and a half years of waiting, so we lived off a bit of savings and by persuading our parents to take large mortgages on our behalf. Mieke's dad had ranchland; my parents had a nice house.

You know, entrepreneurs get help from the three Fs: friends, family, and fools. We relied entirely on our family. We were lucky to have that option. They say it's the same thing about screening good athletes. There are six essential elements to being world champion and number six, the most important, is to choose your parents well. So we had that working for us. They're still involved and supportive. Quarq is using a building that my dad owns.

The potential market for power meters is big. I say our customer is potentially any cyclist wearing Lycra. If you're willing to get out of your comfort clothes and put on Lycra, you're probably curious about your power output. If you're a mountain biker who only jumps off stuff on your bike, you're perhaps not our customer. Basically anybody who is trying to go fast, as opposed to riding purely for recreation—that's my market.

For now the base unit is priced around \$1,800, which is out of reach now for many riders. Investing in a Quarq meter is like buying a Zipp wheel. Now that we're part of SRAM, we can work on figuring out how to bring the product to a broader market.