

Martin, Declan, and Joy: three different cyclists whose lives have been transformed by cycling. All were inspired to get on their bikes by Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival



Photographs: Rob Spinning

Feature

Tours de force

We've awarded special jerseys to ten *real* cycling champions who've turned their lives around by riding, as **Christina Bengston** explains



CHRISTINA BENGSTON

Communications & Media Officer
Christina has been cycling more herself lately, after kickstarting her commuting with Cycle September

Martin Williams had been homeless, suffering from addiction, and battling mental health issues when he became involved in cycling through the Big Bike Revival. Joy Anibaba only started cycling in her fifties to help her lose weight and cope with diabetes; she's now a ride leader inspiring more women to get out on their bikes. And ten-year-old Declan Nangle thought he'd never be able to ride a bike because of his dyspraxia, a condition affecting his coordination.

Each of them has been gifted one of Cycling UK's inaugural Real Yellow Jerseys, recognising ordinary people who've used cycling to transform their lives. Jenny Box, Head of Behaviour Change in England, said: "We wanted to celebrate all those amazing people across the country who are getting back on their bikes, changing their lives and helping others to do the same. They're the real heroes of cycling. The Real Yellow Jersey is also a symbol of everything that's to be celebrated about everyday cycling, and an encouragement for more people to get in the saddle."

We gave out ten jerseys in total to people across the country who'd taken part in the Big Bike Revival,

Martin Williams

Martin Williams, 45, from Birmingham was homeless, addicted to drugs, and suffering from anxiety and depression before being put in touch with the Big Bike Revival group, New Roots.

After he attempted to take his own life in 2017, New Roots provided him with accommodation and

mental health support, and helped him kick his addiction. Martin then rediscovered a love of bicycles after being taught cycle mechanic skills.

"I feel like I have a real purpose and motivation. This work not only helps others towards a more positive lifestyle, it makes me feel good each day," Martin said.





our initiative helping people overcome the barriers stopping them from cycling, such as a lack of skills, financial hardship, disability, cultural background or health issues. Each 'jersey knit' garment took eight hours to complete.

CHAMPIONS ON CHAMPIONS

In the Tour de France, the yellow jersey has been worn by the overall leader since its introduction to the race in 1919. It is an iconic sporting symbol. Cycling UK's Real Yellow Jersey recognises that cycling isn't just about sport; it's an everyday activity for leisure, transport and health, and part of a solution to many of society's biggest problems, ranging from climate change and air pollution to obesity and mental health issues.

The Real Yellow Jerseys have been given the backing of two Tour de France yellow jersey winners; Sean Yates, who won his jersey in 1988, and Chris Boardman who wore yellow at the 1994, 1997 and 1998 races. Chris, now policy advisor for British Cycling, said: "The Real Yellow Jersey for the everyday heroes of cycling really shines a light on how cycling can turn lives around, improving health, fitness and wellbeing, and I applaud all the recipients for their achievements."

Sean Yates, who also played a pivotal role in helping Sir Bradley Wiggins become the first Briton to win the Tour de France in 2012, said: "The yellow jersey in the Tour de France remains the ultimate symbol of cycling sporting success. So it's fantastic to see ten inspiring individuals from all walks of life honoured with their own yellow jersey recognising how cycling can make such a massive difference to people's lives." ●



More info

Read the stories of all ten Real Yellow Jersey winners and watch a video:

cyclinguk.org/real-yellow-jersey



Joy Anibaba

Joy never learned to ride a bike as a child, but five years ago took to two wheels with the help of the Big Bike Revival. She's now supporting others to do the same as a ride leader.

Joy considers cycling a great way to beat stress. It has also benefitted her physical health. She is

diabetic and has high blood pressure but cycling regularly has helped her lose weight.

"If you're not into cycling already, it can be a bit intimidating to come out," said Joy. "But when you're coming to join a group and that group is welcoming and supportive, then it's more encouraging."



Declan Nangle

Declan, who's ten and from Kidderminster, didn't think he'd ever be able to ride a bike because he has dyspraxia, a developmental disorder that makes coordination and balance difficult. He's now cycling every weekend after being given a bike for his 10th birthday and learning to

ride with the Big Bike Revival.

Declan said: "When I first started riding a bike I was a bit scared about crashing, but that's something I don't have to worry about now. You learn to overcome your fear."

Declan and his family are looking forward to a cycling holiday at CenterParcs.

