

Physical Culture

GEAR TEST WITH Josh Simonds, Cycling Coach

When Bikes Need a Lift,
They Thumb for a Hitch Rack

CYCLISTS looking to travel with a bicycle or two face the challenge of how to safely cart them, without damaging the car or their precious cargo. Racks that attach to the back hitch under the bumper are one solution. Sport utility vehicles, station wagons and trucks typically come standard with hitches, with either a 1.25- or 2-inch-diameter receiver.

Hitch racks are better for a car's aerodynamics than roof racks. And unlike carriers strapped to the trunk, empty hitch racks usually don't have to be removed from the vehi-

cle to access the back of the car. Raxter Racks, a two-year-old company in Broken Arrow, Okla., sells only hitch racks, and its sales have increased about 300 percent since last year.

"Hitch racks are stable, secure and easy to use," said Mike Farney, the founder.

Josh Simonds, a bicycling coach with the Peaks Coaching Group based in central Virginia, toted bikes on five hitch racks recently.

YISHANE LEE



Steve Ruark for The New York Times

SARIS THELMA www.saris.com, \$249.99. This folding rack holds two bikes using contoured wheel trays to avoid scratching the bike frames. Mr. Simonds said he "especially liked" how the rack's open design allowed him to stand between the wheel supports instead of having to awkwardly lean over to adjust the bikes. Although the rack was "intuitive" to use, instructions did not arrive with the box he received.



HOLLYWOOD SPORT RIDER 2 www.hollywoodracks.com, \$199.95. This rack, left, holds two bikes by their wheels, using rubber-padded hooks that clamp over the bike frames. Mr. Simonds found the rack was "easy to load" and "light enough to carry one-handed." He found the rack "secure" with "little wobble factor," but the plastic and aluminum parts he deemed "too lightweight."



RAXTER FOLDING 2-BIKE RACK www.raxterracks.com, \$329.99. Wheel supports that secure two bikes in place, above, are horizontally adjustable, eliminating the need to alter bike-seat height to make the bikes fit. Mr. Simonds liked this "fantastic" feature. "Solid, simple, lightweight," and "quick" to install, this rack was his favorite. Still, as with all the racks but the Yakima, the bikes must be removed for trunk access.

YAKIMA FULLSWING 4 www.yakima.com, \$450. Even with four bikes on the rack, the trunk is accessible. Mr. Simonds called the rack's "swing away" ability a "reliable, easy-to-use 'get out of my way' feature." But securing the bikes by their frames rather than by their wheels meant "the potential for paint scratching," he said.



THULE 916 T2 www.thuleracks.com, \$369. Using padded wheel supports to hold the bikes, this two-bike rack folds down for trunk access. It "required the most effort of any to assemble and install," said Mr. Simonds, but once completed, he complimented the "quality construction." "If you appreciate a design that will survive the apocalypse, this is your rack," he said.

