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GEAR

Presents for the athlete on your list

Reviewed: Camelbak Podium bottle, Polar FT80 training computer, TRX suspension trainer, "Your Home Bicycle Workshop" e-book, Spot Satellite Personal Tracker

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It's Christmastime, and you know the drill: The innovative products here are small enough to fit in a stocking, and functional and stylish enough to win the nod of a real athlete.

— Roy Wallack

Camelbak Podium bottle

The first true leak-free water bottle.

Likes: It works. Instead of the push-pull valve found on standard water bottles, which will leak when turned upside down, sometimes even when in the "closed" position, the Podium has a soft, self-sealing "bite" valve that does not release a water flow until you squeeze the bottle. No more pulling the valve open with your teeth to drink, and pushing it against your hip to close. Also, because of an innovative twist lock on top, it won't leak even when squeezed hard or stored upside down in a backpack. It is built of a harder, sturdier-feeling plastic than a typical bottle and includes an antibacterial coating that supposedly prevents the growth of gunk.

Dislikes: Expensive (but worth it).

Price: \$8. (21 ounces), \$9 (24 ounces). (800) 767-8725; camelbak.com.

Polar FT80 training computer

Stylish, comfortable heart-rate watch designed for use with aerobic and strength-training workouts.

Likes: Stunning looks and comfy feel. Soft fabric "WearLink" transmitter chest strap is the best in the business. Besides monitoring your pulse and beeping when you get out of your targeted training

zone, the computer can download strength routines from Polar's Web service via its included Flowlink data transfer unit) and can tell you how long to rest between exercises. Good graphics include legible heart-rate and clock numerals, a chart of your heart-rate over time and heart-rate zone. Can sync with Polar's optional GPS sensor and foot pod for speed and distance tracking.

Dislikes: Functionality does not match style. The FT80 does not show seconds in clock mode. A watch without seconds? Come on, Polar. Seconds appear only in stopwatch mode. Also, the clock and heart rate do not appear together on one screen, causing you to toggle through buttons to get the time, a hassle while running or riding. In stopwatch mode, the white letters on a black background are small and hard to read. Also, the concept of using a heart-rate watch to govern rest periods between strength exercises is debatable. But, hey, it looks cool... .

Price: \$349.95. (800) 227-1314; www.polarusa.com

TRX suspension trainer

Dual-strap, 1.79-pound device that, anchored on a door or a tree, allows you to do body-weight exercises suspended by your feet or hands.

Likes: Develops good all-body functional fitness by working upper, lower and core body strength and mobility. The variety of exercises you can do is unlimited: one- or two-legged push-ups, assisted pull-ups, dips. Portable and practical; hook it to a tree, pull-up bar, fence, weight rack.

Dislikes: You need a tree, pull-up bar, door.

Price: \$149. www.fitnessanywhere.com

'Your Home Bicycle Workshop' e-book

Renowned bike mechanic Jim Langley's take on setting up your own garage repair shop.

Likes: Direct, easy to understand, logical. Well-illustrated, including 201 photos and small parts and tools you don't often see. Includes four downloadable future upgrades. Like a website, has many links to related content and websites.

Dislikes: \$20 seems like a lot for a book you can't hold in your hands unless you print it out.

Price: \$20. www.roadbikerider.com

Spot Satellite Personal Tracker

GPS-based locator beam that keeps backcountry hikers, bikers and skiers in contact with the world.

Likes: Safety first. This device, using GPS and Spot's network, ensures that people can find you – or at least find where you were just before you dropped into a hole. It tracks you in real time via **Google Maps**, so your loved ones can "watch" you, and it can send three types of messages: a regular "I'm OK" to a predesignated e-mail address, an "I need assistance" alert to the same, and

has a 911 “help” button that goes to the Coast Guard or a search-and-rescue or other group. It retains your route history, posting your location on a website every 10 minutes. The device floats, handles temperatures down to 40 degrees and works in North America, Europe and Australia, and some of South America, Africa and Asia.

Dislikes: Requires a clear view of the sky – so you can’t be buried under rubble or snow or have any trees in the way. You can’t receive messages, so you can’t confirm that an alert has been seen. Can be slow in acquiring a GPS fix, especially if you are moving. You must pay a stiff annual fee. Some users have complained of signals not getting through and slow customer service.

Price: \$169 plus \$99 a year for annual service. (866) 651-7768; findmespot.com

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