

Thanksgiving Steelhead: PG.54 Houseboating for Bass: PG.66

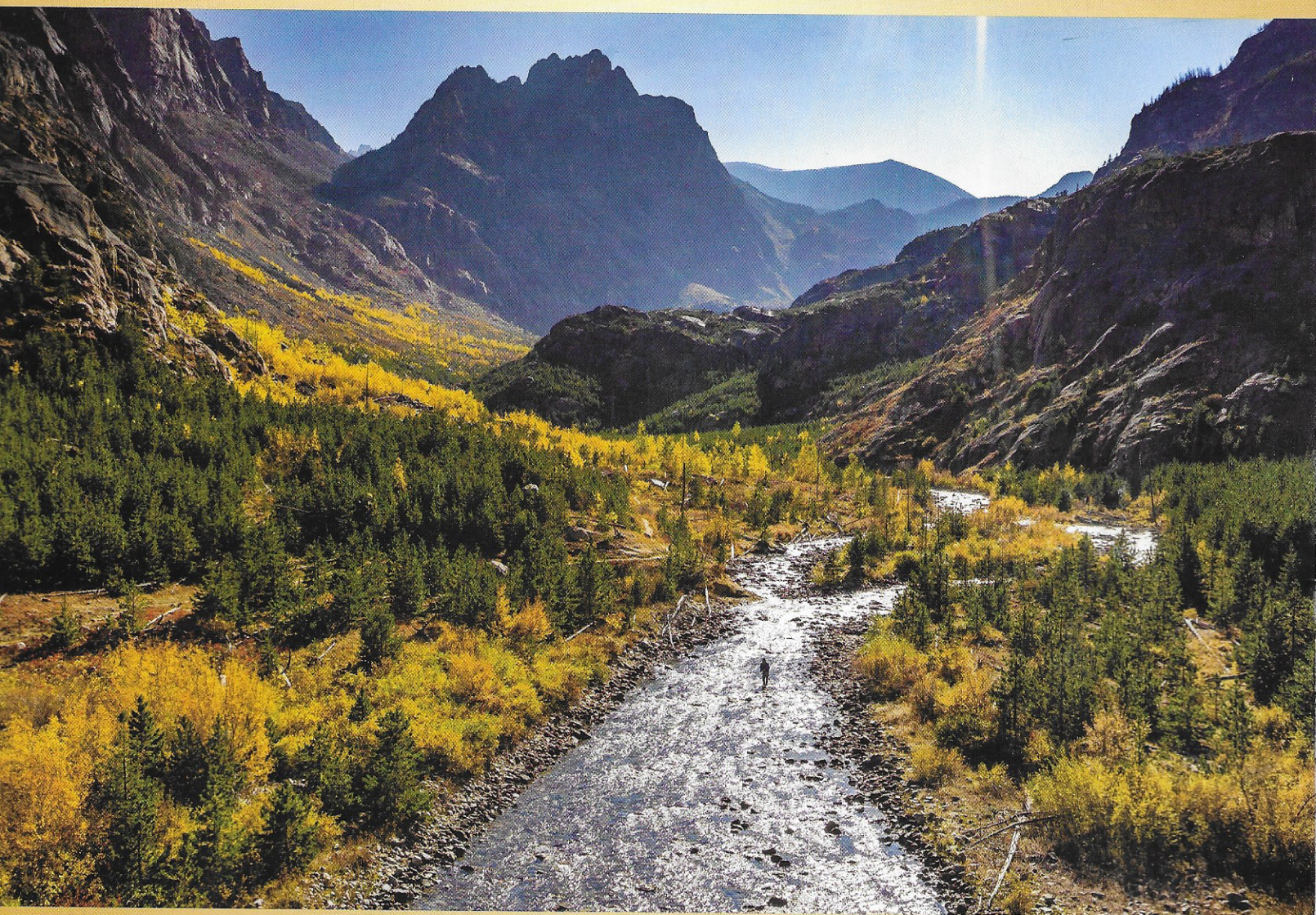
TEN BUCKS

\$20 FOR BAIT FISHERMEN

The Drake



FOR THOSE WHO FISH



INSIDE: Iowa brookies, Tennessee smallies, ranch cats, Florida's flood-tide redfish, love and albie fishing, Idaho mousing, cutthroat and community in Wyoming, Jersey stripers, Mongolian taimen, Italian marble trout, AirBnB for flyfishers, backcountry Colorado, Oregon's wildfires, unexplored Argentina, and one uncultured musky dude!

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(\$14 CAD)

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Wade Wisely

Drinking beer for brook trout in Iowa

BY PATRICK BURKE

WHEN THE AVERAGE fly angler imagines brook trout fishing, they likely picture blue-lining their way through tiny Appalachian drainages, or wading into the storied Northwoods streams of Michigan or Maine. An emerald-green backdrop, maybe be a moose thrown in for good measure. That's brook trout country. Few of us would picture ourselves casting to brookies in the shadow of a John Deere combine harvester in an Iowa corn field. But the northeast corner of Iowa is technically part of the "Driftless Area"—an unglaciated section of the upper Midwest known for its rolling hills and spring creeks. And while Iowa trout angling has historically been focused on put-and-take fishing for stocked rainbows and browns, the discovery in the early 1990s of a population of native brookies hanging on in one tiny stream (and subsequent genetic analyses of those fish), confirmed that brook trout are native to Iowa.

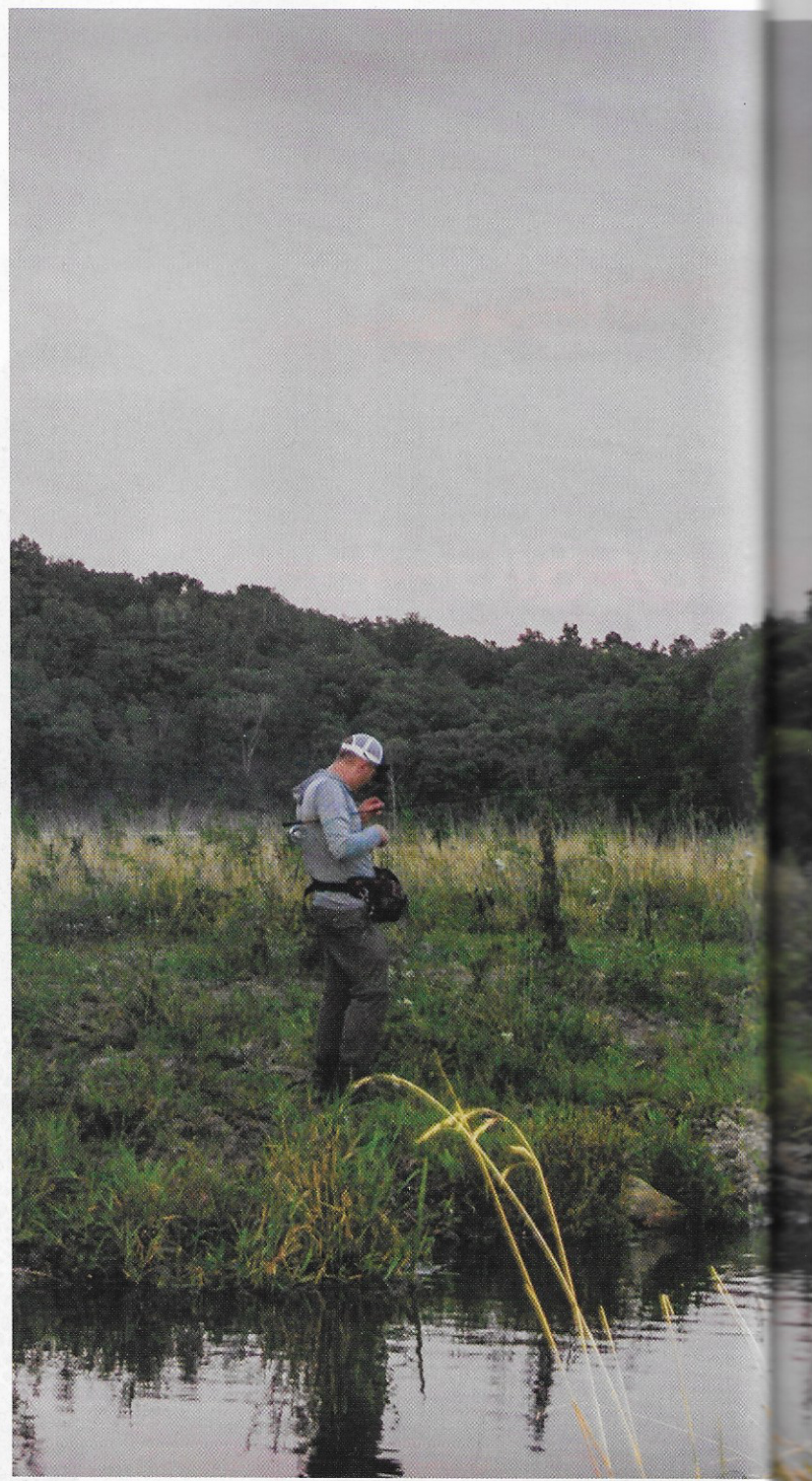
"That really helped guide our brook trout management program," says Michael Siepker, a fisheries biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "There's been a paradigm shift. Since the early 1900s it had been all about stocking. But we now know that we can work in the watersheds and create better conditions for trout. In the 1980s there were five streams in Iowa with naturally reproducing trout. We're now up to about 80."

While statewide policy shifts often progress slowly, angler attitudes can be downright entrenched. In a state with more than 100 years of harvest-oriented trout management, the debate over managing Iowa streams for natural reproduction versus catchable stockers can get heated. But, like any debate, it's easier to find common ground over a beer. And Iowa has just the one.

Wade Wisely is a coffee-oatmeal stout from Big Grove Brewing in Iowa City. This special release was first brewed in the fall of 2019, for the Driftless Flyathlon—The Midwest edition of Colorado's Flyathlon race series. These trail-running/flyfishing hybrid events support local coldwater conservation efforts through the non-profit organization, Running Rivers.

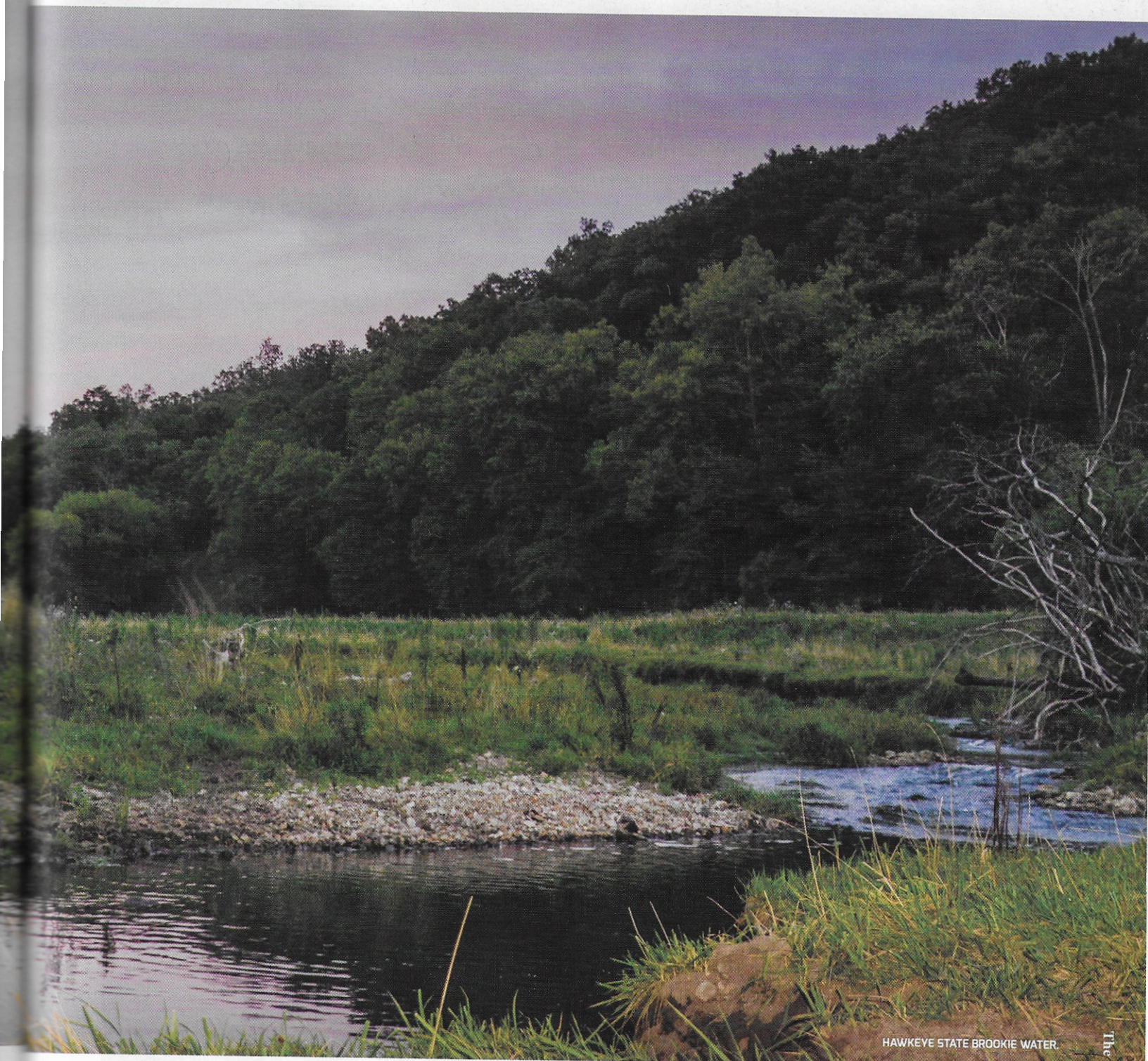
Three years ago, Andrew Todd, the founder of Running Rivers and the Flyathlon race series, began partnering with breweries in fishy locales as part of the "Rare Fish Rare Beer" Project. The goal of these partnerships is "to educate craft beer drinkers about the diverse challenges facing native fish species, while simultaneously raising money for projects that benefit their preservation." Wade Wisely is the 6th volume of the project.

Big Grove will be releasing Wade Wisely again this fall, timed to coincide with both the Driftless Flyathlon race (virtual this year), as well as trout spawning. The seasonal release also inspired the



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CLINT JOHNSON



HAWKEYE STATE BROOKIE WATER.

beer's coffee-oatmeal stout profile, with JBC coffee roasters out of Madison, Wisconsin, donating coffee to the cause.

"We knew the 2019 Driftless Flyathlon was happening in late October," says Andy Joynt, head brewmaster at Big Grove. "So it was going to be chilly, and folks would be out fishing and running around. We thought a coffee stout fit."

The name and concept for Wade Wisely were dreamt up by the organizers of the Driftless Flyathlon: Scott Stimmel, Clint and Angela Johnson, and Ryan and Amanda Rahmiller.

"To anyone who walks in and picks up a six-pack, we were trying to get the message out that we have wild trout here,

and that we have these beautiful places," says Ryan Rahmiller, who's also a local guide and co-owner of Driftless on the Fly in Northeast Iowa. "I can't tell you how many times I've guided people who live in this state, who'll say, 'I had no idea Northeast Iowa even looked like this.'"

Siepkner agrees: "You'd be surprised how many Iowa anglers don't realize that most of the trout they catch are actually wild, reproducing fish."

Messaging on the Wade Wisely label serves to educate Iowans on the presence of native brook trout in their state, as well as the importance of reading water for spawning redds, and leaving



FLYATHLETES OF THE CORN.

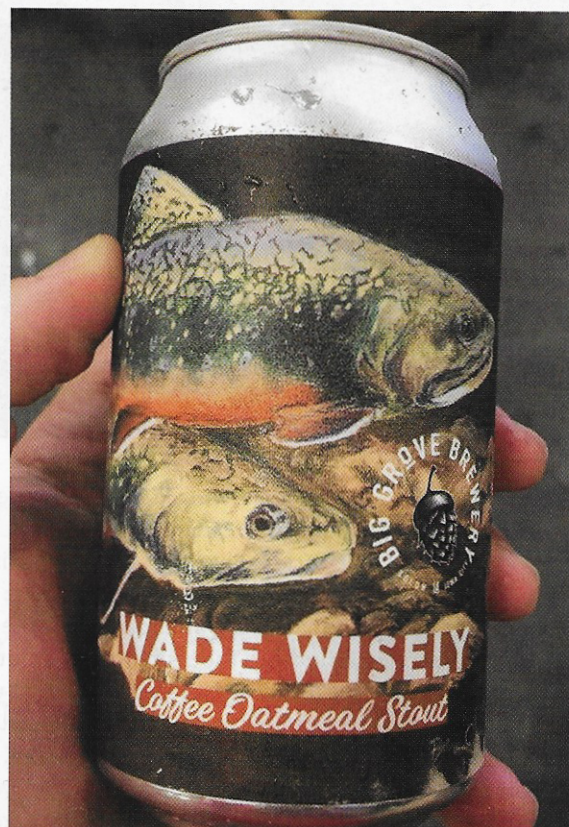
them undisturbed. The label artwork, painted by Iowa Flyathlete and local artist Brian Ingram, features two (tastefully) spawning brookies. "My first time flyfishing, I caught a brook trout," says Ingram. "Until then, I didn't even realize we *had* native trout in Iowa. It means a lot to be part of a project that makes a difference for something I care about."

A portion of the sale of Wade Wisely will once again benefit Running Rivers, for conservation and habitat projects directly benefiting Iowa's wild trout. Last year Big Grove presented a check for \$4,000 to the Driftless Flyathlon and Running Rivers. Together with funds raised by the Flyathletes and other local and national sponsors, the Driftless Flyathlon contributed \$25,000 toward bank stabilization work and other helpful habitat-restoration projects in one of Iowa's native brook trout watersheds.

In 2019, Wade Wisely was primarily available on draft, inside the Big Grove taproom in Iowa City—a three-hour drive from the nearest Driftless stream. It was a hit nonetheless. Based on the program's success, Big Grove is expanding the release this year, with more canning and wider distribution.

"Working with the Driftless Flyathlon, the DNR, and Running Rivers to invest in Iowa's waterways really connected with the Big Grove ethos," says Joynt. "We're all outdoors people here, and we love taking care of our environment. It was just an easy fit."

Local awareness and pride in Iowa's wild trout continues to grow, thanks to projects like Wade Wisely. Look for six-packs across Iowa this fall, beginning in October, and raise a toast to Rare Fish, Rare Beer, and the rare passion and generosity of all those involved. 🐟



ABOVE: JUSTIN CARFAGNIN; BEER IMAGE: DRIFTLESS FLYATHLON