

# A fascination for historic bikes



Marco Köhler  
Process Engineer

wheels, a drive ratio of one to one, so utterly straightforward. But it works – and how!”

Our recommendation: The third weekend in September is the regular slot in the calendar when Marco Köhler joins the other members of Fahrrad-Veteranen-Freunde Dresden in the Stallhof of the Residenzschloss to demonstrate his penny-farthing. The public can also sign up for his ‘Hochrad-fahrschule’ (Penny-Farthing Academy) and learn the art of riding a high-wheeler.

“THE HIGH-WHEELER IS A MACHINE FOR HONING THE SENSES”

**Marco Köhler** (33) conducts research into the production of synthetic gasoline (pp. 10-12) at the Chemnitz pilot plant as well as in the demonstration plant at Freiberg. He joined CAC straight from university where he graduated in Chemical Engineering. As plant manager, he has a thorough understanding of how these two production facilities operate, and he also enjoys the hands-on aspect of working there.

*“I live for my job,” he says. “I always aim for 100% and more, but I know that you can only achieve that with a strong team, because you can’t construct a plant on this scale all on your own.”*



Picture: privat

Marco Köhler’s girlfriend is a remarkable woman. While other men generally struggle to persuade their partner to allow even one beloved bicycle into the apartment, she tolerates no fewer than 14 of them within the four walls of their home. And that is not even half of his inventory. Marco Köhler’s collection consists of 30 bicycles ranging from racers to historic models and from a recumbent to a penny-farthing.

The high-wheeler is his favourite. As a member of Fahrrad-Veteranen-Freunde Dresden, a club for like-minded friends of veteran bikes, he wheels the penny-farthing out for club excursions, parades and public presentations. Isn’t it dangerous, we ask? “Yes,” he replies with a chuckle. “The high-wheeler has always been a sports bike. The rider needs strength and courage. The hardest part is not climbing onto the saddle but bringing the bike to a stop. That’s why you need to have all your senses in full receptive mode and to ride with total concentration and anticipation.” With one turn of the pedals, his 54-inch front wheel travels four and a half metres. Marco Köhler can reach speeds of up to 40 km/h on his high-wheeler. “I’m fascinated by the simplicity of the technology,” says the engineer. “Two



## MARTIN GROTHKOPP: “OLYMPIC CHAMPION IS A TITLE THAT STAYS WITH YOU A LIFETIME”

Martin Grothkopp was a pusher in the four-man team captained by Francesco Friedrich which won gold in the 2017 and 2019 world championships and at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics in 2018. Emblazoned on the yellow jacket of the German Bobsleigh & Skeleton Federation (BSD) which Martin wears at award ceremonies is the logo of CAC. This sponsorship is essential for this particular water engineer. Fortunately, he gets excellent support from senior management at CAC who share his enthusiasm for the sport.

**HERR GROTHKOPP, WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO HURTLE DOWN THE TRACK IN A BOBSLEIGH?**

In a bob, you can really feel the speed. We sit on the bare carbon-fibre floor of the steel skeleton. The cornering exerts forces of up to 5 g. That means you have to sit tight and move as little as possible so as not to interfere with the aerodynamics. A run lasts between 50 seconds and one minute, and it’s all systems go. Each member of the crew has an active role to play. We have a mental map of every single twist and turn, because looking where you’re going is not an option when you’re speeding down an ice channel at more than 100 kilometres per hour.

**IS THE PILOT THE BOSS?**

Yes. It’s like running a company. There has to be one person who sets the direction. However, we are all involved in the choice of materials and other decisions. We have all been totally committed to this team for the past six years, and we spend six months a year travelling around together. We also have a very good mutual understanding and even go on holiday together.

**DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE TRACK?**

No question, it has to be St Moritz! It’s the oldest and only natural ice course in the world, constructed from natural ice blocks, water and snow. It blends in beautifully with the landscape and, at 1,600 metres, is exceptionally long. Its smooth curve radii make it a very enjoyable ride.

**WHAT SORT OF TRAINING CAN A BOBSLEDDER DO IN THE SUMMER?**

Athletics. Sprinting, jumping, weight training. Once a week, all four of us get together at the speed track in Riesa and train in a wheeled bob. Our homes and places of work are all over Central Germany, but we need to meet here regularly to stay in peak form.



Picture: © Grothkopp

**DOES THIS PROGRAMME LEAVE YOU ANY FREE TIME?**

I have a busy routine of work, training and physiotherapy, but I always make sure that I set aside time for the family. I try to pick up my daughter from kindergarten as often as possible. That’s really important to me.

**YOUR BOBSLEIGH TEAM CAPTAINED BY FRANCESCO FRIEDRICH HAS WON JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING THERE IS TO WIN. WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT OBJECTIVES?**

With Altenberg in the Erzgebirge staging the world championships next February – a home fixture for the German team – that is going to be an outstanding occasion. The venue in Altenberg is right on our doorstep and is known for pulling in super audiences and generating an amazing atmosphere. That really gets through to the competitors and gives us added motivation. As the home team, we will obviously be intent on defending our world champion titles in the two-man and four-man bobsleigh. We’ll be going flat out, and I’m really looking forward to it. Looking further ahead, of course, we also want to compete in the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing and defend our title.

**DOES HAVING AN OLYMPIC MEDAL FEEL VERY DIFFERENT FROM HOLDING A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE?**

It certainly does. I wouldn’t have thought so before, but it feels incredibly good. The moment you’ve achieved it, you can’t really take it all in. It’s like being in a dream. I keep watching the videos from the last run, which is incredibly motivating. All those great feelings come surging back. Olympic champion is a title that stays with you a lifetime.

**HOW IMPORTANT IS THE CAC SPONSORSHIP FOR YOU?**

I’m the only member of the entire German world championship squad who isn’t sponsored by the German police. I work 25 hours a week in an engineering office and then go training. In the winter months, my boss releases me from work obligations. It is therefore essential for me to have enthusiasts high up at CAC who enable me to pursue my sporting activities with their support. I am infinitely grateful for that.



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