

## **Tips for Sportive riders**

- 1 Firstly make sure that your bike fits you, don't try to fit an unsuitable machine. Adjustments can be made to fine tune saddle and handlebar position, but it is as well to start with the correct sized frame. Take advice from a qualified coach or a good bike shop where many now offer professional and modern bike fitting services.
- 2 Take care in fitting cleats to your shoes. Position these so that the ball of your foot is centrally over the pedal spindle and allows the leg to function in the correct fashion, ie without twisting leg and particularly ankle and knee. It is as well to involve someone else when checking position, as it is not easy to see the set up while you are on the saddle. Tighten the fixing bolts securely once correctly positioned and check for looseness from time to time. A loose cleat will not release from the pedal in an emergency. Also regularly check for wear. Again a qualified coach or good bike shop can help with fitting cleats correctly.
- 3 Most people realise that it is necessary to look where you are going but it is just as important to clearly signal to others where you intend to go! This makes a lot of difference to the safety of the people you are riding with, as well as other road users. Communication is key! Don't be frightened to call out your intended movements particularly when riding in a group situation.
- 4 Learn to dress for the weather. Look at the thermometer, rather than the calendar and pay no attention to the light meter. Allow for changes during the course of the day. Always carry at least a lightweight rain jacket especially when riding in mountainous terrain.
- 5 Get used to checking and pumping tyres to the recommended pressure for both efficiency and safety when riding sportives. In wetter weather consider a lower tyre pressure for more grip.
- 6 Make a habit of- quickly checking brakes, tyres, wheels and transmission before every ride.
- 7 Carry a spare inner tube, or puncture repair outfit together with the necessary tyre levers AND a working pump on all rides, together with a small multi tool. Even if you have difficulty handling repairs it is as well to have the means for someone to help you.
- 8 Get used to carrying a bottle of fresh drink on all rides. Discard unused liquid, especially if using proprietary sports drinks. Choose bottles made from soft plastic, as these are much easier to squeeze when riding. Practice drinking whilst "on the move" without wobbling or slowing down during training rides.
- 9 Record everything you do when training, noting the effects. These records will prove very useful when planning later schedules and be invaluable as background for anyone involved in arranging a future coaching /training plan specifically for you.

- 10 For most efficient riding consider your pedalling action. To maintain a good cadence it is as well to treat your pedals like a treadle operated machine. With practice this will involve the ankles so as to create a smooth, complete pedalling action. Avoid the temptation to just push down on the pedals. Think of **Treadle** rather than **Treadmill**.
- 11 Keep to your training schedule, for best results, but if illness prevents this don't be tempted to miss out sections so as to keep to the dates of the programme. Once you are well enough to resume, go back at least to the point where you had to stop.
- 12 Carry some identification at all times. Add your next of kin details to your mobile phone under ICE - "In Case of Emergency". A great help to all, including your family and event organisers.
- 13 Invest in a good merino wool or synthetic fabric wicking base layer. This garment can make all the difference to your comfort and therefore performance.
- 14 Practice changing a tyre and inner tube at home. It is far more pleasant to learn how to do this in a nice dry garage or workshop, than on an open rain and windswept hillside.
- 15 Sleep and rest form an important part of your preparation. You will not train properly if fatigued, so ensure that a good routine is maintained. If circumstances create extreme tiredness choose to sleep well rather than train badly.
- 16 Check out energy and replenishment food and drink at home, so as to ascertain whether it agrees with you. Then try it on your training rides, so as to be sure that you are not going to encounter any problems on the important rides and later stages of your programme. A cereal bar that is very tasty at home may prove very difficult to consume on a ride, even causing choking. Once you have decided on the right food for you stick to it. If confronted with unknown drinks, it is probably as well to stick to water.
- 17 In cold conditions keep the knees covered. These badly designed but important joints are susceptible to cold and although apparently unaffected at the time, can suffer at a later stage. A pair of knee warmers can be added to your shorts and easily removed and stowed away once the weather improves.
- 18 A wind/rain jacket should also be part of your basic kit. These are available in the lightest materials, so that they can be folded and kept in a pocket or saddle bag. Quite apart from use in wet and windy conditions they can be an invaluable protection on cold descents and even on those unwanted stops when a roadside repair is required.
- 19 It is worth having an experienced person check your saddle position, particularly if you have experienced any discomfort. The fore and aft setting may well need adjustment, as might the angle of the saddle. Correction here may lead to the need for the repositioning of handlebars and stem.
- 20 Next confirm that you have a comfortable reach to all parts of the handlebars and experience no difficulty in operating gear and brake

levers. A shorter handlebar stem and/or repositioning of the bars could well prove worthwhile

- 21 Your closest friend should be the seat/pad of your shorts. Treat it accordingly, ensuring both self and shorts are cleaned meticulously after every ride. Failure to do so can lead to infection and time off the bike.
- 22 Check your gear ratios. Is the cassette right for your style of riding and the event chosen? Would a larger sprocket help you climb a little easier? If you are thinking of changing then allow time to make the changes and check with your supplier as to whether the derailleur is compatible with the intended ratios. Bear in mind that this could need a new chain as well. It is as well not to make such changes the day before your big ride!
- 23 Make a check list for ALL the things you might need. It is worth laminating this and keeping it with your kit bag. A small point, having made your list, refer to it when packing.
- 24 Check the indexing of your gears. Make sure that the changes are smooth, tweaking the adjusters where necessary. Ensure this is completed a few days prior to the target event.
- 25 Wash and sterilise your drinking bottles after use, particularly after using with active replenishing drinks. It is worth looking for bottles with a cap to cover the spout, although this will make drinking en route a little more awkward. This helps to keep the spout protected from road grime and other unpleasant substances that transfer from the road to cycle such as manure!
- 26 Application of "saddle cream" to the seat of your shorts should cut down friction and soreness. This tends to be very personal and the appropriate cream needs to be determined. There are several proprietary unguents available but *petroleum jelly* is often found useful. A coating of an antiseptic cream with *cetrimide* content will prevent infection occurring.
- 27 Correct brake pad alignment will give better and safer braking. The blocks should be slightly towed in at the front, so that the block closes on the rim correctly. This correction will improve performance and give more confidence when descending.
- 28 Even in the UK the sun can be quite fierce at times, so apply sun protection remembering to coat the neck, nose and ears, as well as exposed limbs. Sunglasses will protect your eyes from dust and insects as well as the glare.
- 29 Your hands can take a hammering, so a good pair of close fitting track mitts becomes a must. As well as cushioning the hands when holding the bars, they will stop unpleasant grazes, should you have the misfortune to fall.
- 30 Study and take a note of the route. It is not unknown for direction signs to have been removed. Even the best modern instruments can fail, or even suggest the wrong way. Don't rely on following other riders, they may be lost too! There is even the chance that the cyclists you are following are not riding the same event!

Notes on *Italics*

A *Vaseline*

B *Savlon* Not sure whether these products are considered generic.

The logo consists of a horizontal bar with a dark grey top and bottom section and a central blue section. The text "Andy Cook Cycling" is written in a white, cursive script font within the blue section.

*Andy Cook Cycling*