

## Riding and Racing Skills

### INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

#### Preparation

- *Why it's useful:* Races are won with proper planning. Control what you can and let go of the rest.
- *How to do it:* Complete a checklist before each race / ride:
  - PREP the NIGHT BEFORE a ride/race, not the morning of.
  - Fresh tires, tire pressure
  - Brake cables
  - Headset
  - Fuel
  - Hydration
  - Clothing

#### Riding alert and relaxed

- **Look ahead**, well to the front of the pack and through other riders.
- Anticipate what's coming, or what could occur.
  - Especially if there is a crash in front of you. Ride through it.
- When a tenuous situation presents, **look at where you want your bike to go**. Avoid looking at the trouble. Your bike will go where your mind's eye looks.
- Ride relaxed so that your body can absorb a pothole, or adapt to another rider's error.

#### Riding with no hands

- *Why it's useful:* Nourishment and taking on/off clothing
- *How to do it:* Practice in an open parking lot.
  - Start by perfecting riding with no hands.
  - Look straight ahead (toward the horizon). Avoid looking at the road right in front of you.
  - Steer with your hips, continuing to look at where you want the bike to go.
  - Next, practice taking off your vest and placing it in your back pocket.
  - Don't just stuff your vest / jacket in your back pocket. You'll have a disaster on your hands the next time that you pull it out.
  - Advance to taking off your jacket, arm warmers, and leg warmers (yes, this can be done!)
  - Carefully fold/roll up your clothes before placing it in your back pocket.

#### Drinking from a water bottle

- *Why it's useful:* Controlling your bike while hydrating will protect you, your team mates, and the field from unnecessary accidents.
- *How to do it:*

## Riding and Racing Skills

- Grab the water bottle with your LEFT hand, regardless of whether you are left or right handed.
- Keep your right hand on the right hood. (the drops are safer)
- This will allow you to both steer and apply the rear brake if necessary.

### Passing and receiving a water bottle in a feed zone

- *Why it's useful:* Feed zones are notoriously dangerous. A proper handoff will protect your rider, make it more comfortable for them to grab the bottle, and avoid dropping the bottle.
- *How to do it:*
  - Open the water bottle pull-up valve. This allows pressure (and water) to exit the top of the bottle when your rider grasps the bottle.
  - Hold the bottle with your right hand finger tips. Hold from the top of the bottle (right palm down).
  - Find a spot at near the end of the feeding zone (it's usually less crowded).
  - Stand behind the designated line in the feeding zone. If you cross the line, your team will be penalized and you're making the feed zone even more dangerous than it already is.
  - Stretch out your right hand with a loose grip a relaxed arm.
  - Don't move.
  - Give your rider a steady target.
  - Allow your rider to make any adjustments necessary to grab the bottle.
  - If they miss, no big deal. There will most likely be a common water bottle zone at the very end of the feed zone.

### Running over obstacles while in a pack

- *Why it's useful:* Maintaining composure in a pack when approaching an obstacle will keep you and your buddies upright.
- *How to do it:*
  - If you're in the front and you see an obstacle, point it out so that others can prepare and avoid it.
  - If you're not in the front and you are fast approaching an obstacle:
    - Aim for the obstacle (e.g., water bottle, pot hole, rock)
    - That's right, aim for the obstacle. Chances are you'll miss it.
    - If you hit it, your bike can take the abuse.
    - Today's bikes and tires are strong, durable, and can absorb big shocks.
    - Swerving to avoid the obstacle will create havoc for you and everyone else behind you.
    - Practice by placing several water bottles on the ground in a parking lot.
    - Run over the bottles and you'll see how bottles either spew out to one side or the other, or you'll simply ride right over them with no problem.

## Riding and Racing Skills

### GROUP RIDING SKILLS

#### **Riding in a pace line**

- *Why it's useful:* Aerodynamics is the key to cycling.
- *How to do it:*
  - Have a conversation before you start your ride / race to ensure that all riders are in sync about pace line etiquette.
  - In a race situation when you are at the head of the pace line, pull off INTO THE WIND and allow the line to pass you. You will then provide an additional wind screen for the rest of the line as you move to the rear.
  - When riding on the shoulder of a busy road, pull off to the left and allow the line to pass you on the right. This places only one person, you, closer to the traffic, maintaining safety for the rest of the pace line.
  - When taking over the lead, maintain a moderate pace. Don't accelerate too much. You don't want to drop the rider that just moved out of the lead.

#### **Riding through the middle of a pack**

- *Why it's useful:* Advancing to the front of the pack will inevitably require riding straight up the middle. It's important that you get comfortable riding in close quarters where contact is unavoidable.
- *How to do it:* Practice with friends in a parking lot:
  - Start by forming two pace lines that are several shoulder widths apart.
  - Take turns riding up the middle.
  - Move the two lines closer together (perhaps one shoulder width).
  - Repeat moving up the middle.
  - Now, touch the back of the rider moving up the middle.
  - If you're the rider moving through, touch the back of the other riders, alternating left and right touches.
  - While it is technically illegal to take your hands off of the handlebars in a race, it may be safer at times to simply touch another rider to let them know that you are close by.

#### **Sanding wheels / crossing wheels**

- *Why it's useful:* Your front tire is your responsibility. ALWAYS. However, if you make contact with the rider in front of you, you need to know a simple technique that will allow you to quickly recover and stay upright.
- *How to do it:*
  - Practice with a friend on a grassy field.
  - Ask your friend to ride very slowly in front of you.
  - Ride up behind them and allow your wheel to cross theirs on the right.
  - Move into their wheel.

## Riding and Racing Skills

- As the contact (sanding noise) occurs, **turn your handlebars into their wheel.** This will allow you to move your center of gravity upright. Leaning away from the contact will force your front wheel to turn to the right and you'll end up on the ground.
- Practice the same drill allowing your wheel to cross theirs on the left.

### Making contact with another rider

- *Why it's useful:* Contact is unavoidable. At times, you may need to make contact to advance your position. At other times, you will need to protect yourself from another rider trying to move you out of your position. There may also be times where you provide support to another rider (friend as well as foe) who may be falling into you, thus allowing them to recover.
- *How to do it:*
  - Practice with a friend on a grassy field.
  - Ride slowly side by side.
  - Move closer to each other until your shoulders / arms touch.
  - Lean into each other.
  - Move away.
  - Lean into each other with a bit more force.
  - Move away.
  - Try to physically move your friend off of their line.

### Riding Etiquette

- *Helmet:* It is a good idea to wear one and politically correct. This needs no explanation.
- *Group Riding:*
  - Try not to hammer up every little roller and then coast down the following one
  - Keep your power consistent
  - If you are tired, sit in
  - If you are feeling strong, take longer pulls but not a harder pace
- *Racing:*
  - Never yell at another rider
  - Never shout obscenities
  - Don't chop corners or pull into peoples lines when racing
  - Thank other riders for helping pull. It works to your advantage
- *Riding in Traffic*
  - Be courteous to motorists and pedestrians

## Riding and Racing Skills

- NEVER yell at a motorist, even if they come close to you. Chances are they did not mean to get near you.
- Stop signs. Technically the law says STOP but at least slow down to a crawl even if there is no traffic in the intersection. Cyclists just look bad blowing through them. Make eye contact with drivers at stop signs. Chances are they will waive you through ahead of them.
- In traffic/small towns. Please do not weave through cars and pedestrians
- Single file. The traffic laws permit you to ride side by side or anywhere in the road you want if you are going the speed of traffic. Use the whole road but if there are cars around, get out of their way. If it is safe, to the right of the road.

### General training tips

- Winter riding
  - In general when training go easier but keep the power consistent. Don't hammer up small rollers and don't coast down the backside either. An "Hour of Power" or steady power is more productive than two hours of on off power. Think as if you are running where you get no break.
  - Over dress
  - Watch for debris
  - Don't forget to hydrate
- Group rides
  - Group rides often turn out to be hammerfests. Live with it, it is fun. Don't be all anxious about how people should be riding or what time of year it is. If you are so serious about your training you are better off riding alone. If in a group and don't like the pace then politely break off. If you are wanting to go hard, then tell people what you are doing, take longer pulls and burry yourself. Be smooth, start your pulls slowly and build speed. If you want to hammer up a climb, tell your mates what you are doing. Turn around at the top and ride back to pick up the last rider and get more time on the hill.