

# RIDE TIPS for the Tour de Pines

*(adapted from the Ride for Autism  
<https://ride4autism.rallybound.org/Static/Ride-Tips>)*

## **Tune Up**

Participants are encouraged to take their bikes to a professional bike shop for a tune-up to assure that braking systems, shifting mechanisms and tires are in good, safe operating condition. There will be a bike mechanic at the event to help with last minute things, but time does not permit complete overhaul or repair. You wouldn't embark on a journey without assuring your equipment is safe and reliable and if a failure occurs on the Ride For Autism, you will be greatly inconvenienced if it happens out on the course.

## **Check List**

Make a check-off list to be sure that you have everything you need in your car for the ride. Include HELMET, shoes, shorts, water bottle, and whatever you normally require for riding.

## **Hydrate**

You have two water bottles. Consider filling one with water and use the other one for your electrolyte replacement (ER) drink.

The logic is this: you probably don't need the amount of electrolytes that two bottles will carry between rest stops. What you might need is some cooling and a squirt of water down your back or on your head will go a long way towards cooling you down. The concept having ER all over your head and body is good if you have just won the Super Bowl, but can become a sticky situation on the bike. You could even drink the water--not a revolutionary idea!

I also suggest that you use opaque bottles so that you can easily tell what the contents are and not use the wrong one.

## **Prevent Cramps**

If you ever feel the need for electrolytes evidenced by muscle cramping, TUMS® (Ca) might help. Keeping a couple of these in a water-tight container in your seat bag could prove to be useful.

## **Clean Bike**

A clean bike will prevent many mechanical issues. I clean my bike after every ride: there

is always some dirt, goo or other foreign matter on the road that gets into derailleurs and other essential parts. Pros have mechanics that clean their bikes daily and unless you have a personal mechanic, you will have to do it yourself. It need not be a major task and can take less than 10 minutes.

Use Dawn® dishwashing detergent (DO NOT use car wash products as they leave a waxy residue on rims--squeaking), and Simple Green® sprayed on greasy or oily spots will make quick work of dirt.

## **Chains**

Chains have over 100 bearing contact points that can become dirty, increasing friction and robbing you of efficiency. Cleaning is a dirty job, but worthwhile.

You can use commercially available cleaners and cleaning devices, or use the KISS method of spraying WD-40® on it, wiping it down and periodically applying a commercially available chain lube. Do both if you have been riding in the rain.

Pay particular attention to wiping it clean and removing excess lubricants once they penetrate the rollers as they will find their way onto your rims and reduce braking or cause annoying squeals.

Old, worn chains are noisy, inefficient, and are the source of many shifting problems. REPLACE the chain every 3000 miles, or annually. A chain gauge is available to check the wear, if in doubt, and have a shop do this for you, especially replacing the chain.

## **Check your Brakes**

Squealing brakes are annoying and could be a sign of a real problem, such as the inability to stop. You may have to resort to going to the shop for professional repair, but try these fixes at home first:

1. Check the rims for oil or lubricant, usually at the rear. Too much oil on the chain will be flung or dripped onto the rim. A cleaning with alcohol will remove any oils.
2. Check your pads, and if they are old or hard, replace them. You should replace them annually anyway.
3. Use a toothbrush, clean the pad surface and be sure no grit or other matter is on the contact portion.
4. Your brakes may not be "toed in" correctly. A shop should provide the fix for this malady.

## **Safe Stops**

When approaching a stop sign, red light or if stopping for any reason, shift into a lower gear BEFORE stopping. It will be easier to restart, especially if you have to cross an intersection quickly. You can easily shift upward into the desired gear once underway

again.

## **Get in Gear**

Learn your gears until you instinctively shift when required. Shift to a lower gear prior to reaching an impending ascent. Even the modern mechanisms are easier to shift up, than down, and finding a lower gear under the stress of climbing is harder than the other way around.

This is not the place for instruction on riding, but you should find the cadence that is most comfortable for you and use gearing to stay in that range. There should be no ascent on our routes that are so severe that you need to dismount. Pedaling on the bike in a low gear is always faster than walking and it is ultimately easier.

It is just as inefficient to ride in a gear that is too low. Every individual has a "sweet spot" or cadence that is comfortable and efficient.

## **Tires**

If your tires cost less than a latte from your local bistro, you are likely to get stranded on the road.

Tires age and then proceed to rot, too. Get new rubber each season and buy good quality. Select based on your riding habits keeping things such as width, tread design and profile in mind. A professional shop can advise you, keeping in mind they are there to sell products for profit.

Tubes need regular replacement if they haven't blown from a puncture--new tire--new tube.

Tire pressure should always be within manufacturers' recommendations for durability and safety. Check them DAILY.

## **Pressure**

I love the age-old argument about reducing pressure if it rains. It is okay if you buy in to the theory, but do not go below the manufacturers' recommendation. I never reduced pressure and never crashed in the rain. All my crashes were on dry pavement. Here's hoping you never have one.

Riding at pressures too high can result in the obvious---a blowout.

Riding at low pressure has many drawbacks, too. The reduced pressure can cause bad steering because the sidewalls flex too much, in rain, there is a larger "patch" for water to accumulate under, and most critically, low pressure can lead to "pinch flats" that occur when the weight of the rider causes the rim to pinch the tire on a road object such

as a pothole. Sometimes a "pinch flat" will render the tire useless and unable to repair, leaving the rider stranded. I have rolled a clincher tire off the rear wheel while riding due to low pressure-----it can be done!

If you experience a "pinch flat" the sidewall can temporarily be reinforced with a \$20 bill folded to fit between the tube and the carcass. In a pinch, a dollar bill will work as well.

## **Railroad Crossing**

Railroad tracks are part of our roadways and crossing them safely needs to be addressed.

When approaching RR tracks, be alert to all conditions. Attack the tracks at a right angle or perpendicular to the line of the track so you won't skid or slide and lose control. If it is raining, or the crossing looks unsafe, dismount and walk across.

## **Dealing with Flat Tires**

Flat tires are a way of life in cycling. Carry 2 spare tubes and an inflation device. I prefer a small pump, and there are CO2 cartridge devices available that appear popular. Although CO2 may be quicker, cartridges can be rendered useless if the gas is expelled inadvertently. I would rather pump away by hand and always have a useful supply to fill the tire. Tire "irons" are needed if you are not strong enough to remove the tire by hand.

PRACTICE removing a tire and replacing it at home until you are able to do it relatively quickly. Learning how to change a tire is not easily mastered on the side of the road if unfamiliar with the process.

## **Seat Bag Contents**

Seat bag contents. Carry only emergency necessities.

2 spare tubes/inflation device/\$20/tire irons/spoke wrench/compact tool kit

If you have a larger bag and want to carry more, OK, but remember it is weight.

Take your seat bag with you if/when you borrow a bike.

Keep Your Cell Phone Safe

Keep your cell phone in a high tech protective carrying case--a plastic sandwich bag--in case it rains.

## **Shorts**

"Once upon a chamois" is my way of saying that you should only ride your shorts once

and then thoroughly wash or clean them. Shorts are a haven for bacteria and it can be ground into your skin causing all sorts of problems.

Chances are no one rides on a real chamois (Carpathian goats are relieved), but on a synthetic pad that is much more comfortable. Originally it was found that the skin of the chamois closely resembled that of man in friction reducing properties and was thus used for protection and comfort on the bicycle. There are 6 contact points between you and the bike: hands/feet/cheeks. Shoes, gloves and the chamois are our protection against wear in a most delicate area.

It is not a good practice to wear anything between your skin and the pad or chamois. Fabrics have a weave that will be a friction point and defeat the purpose of the pad and cause rashes and abrasions. Use a good cream for lubricant, as there are many being marketed for this purpose. I have found that if I run out and need a quick substitute, a house brand jar of vitamin A & D (generic) from a drug store is effective and it contains lanolin, a substance also known to be beneficial to human skin.

### **Arm Warmers**

An effective, inexpensive and disposable set of arm warmers can be made from a pair of athletic socks. Just cut off the toe end.

### **Bike Maintenance**

Bike maintenance is a boring topic, but I have seen even the best (and most expensive) bikes rendered useless over a failed minor item that could be avoided with a little preventative work, so let's talk.

Annually, take your bike to a shop for inspection and preventative maintenance. Most good shops have an inexpensive package price for this purpose. Do it in advance of an important ride and allow enough time for you to ride prior to the event to assure everything is in operating condition and adjusted the way you like it.

During this inspection, renew brake pads, cables, tires/tubes and lubricate hubs, bottom bracket and headset. How about new handlebar tape?

Replace or upgrade any component that gives you problems or is just plain annoying.

### **Riding with Other People**

When riding with another person, or persons, the safety aspect is somewhat magnified. You have to start thinking about the other person as well as yourself.

Almost ALL states have a limit as to TWO ABREAST riding to the right. This is for your safety and should be adhered to strictly. Sometimes it is wise to go single file if the roadway is narrow or heavier traffic is encountered. Riding more than 2 abreast is not

only unsafe for the cyclists, it can serve as an irritant for motorists and turn ugly.

Obey ALL traffic regulations as they apply to STOP signs, control lights and other directions as indicated by signs. DO NOT EXCEED the speed limit!

Give verbal and signal warnings to riders behind you. Alert them to road hazards (potholes, debris, etc.) and when cars are approaching from the front OR rear. Communicate your intentions to stop or turn so you don't collide with each other—a very embarrassing thought!

### **Avoid the Swarm**

Do not "SWARM" at stop signs or traffic lights. SWARMING occurs when riders catch up with each other at a stop and then tend to congregate all over the road, impeding traffic and irritating even the most patient motorist. Share the road and be as considerate to others as you would like them to be to you.