

Riding Skills Program for Manukau Vets Training session.

Subjects Covered.

- 1. Tips on handling your bike when you are not on it.**
- 2. Bike set up for Recreational Cyclists**
- 3. Cornering, leaning not steering**
- 4. When to change Gears**
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Tips on handling your bike when you are not on it:

When maneuvering your bike around the garage, or tight corners, or through doorways, tip the bike up on its rear wheel hold onto the brake grips and guide away, you will find it much easier to shift and will often avoid the need to lift it.

When you are putting your bike on a car bike rack, make sure the high end of the bike is above your vehicle's exhaust pipe; often the error is made with a wheel down, quietly burning your tyre or more insidiously overinflating it with exhaust temperatures until it bursts.

If you have a composite or alloy frame, it is wise to use the triangle of the frame below the seat as the main carrying point, it is the strongest part of the frame.

Equally, if your carrier has the clamp style fittings you should be very cautious not to over tighten the clamps and crush your upper tube. It is terminal damage in many cases.

If you have expensive wheels, computers and pumps, consider carrying these inside the vehicle, not on your bike hanger.

When your bike is on a wind trainer it pays to cover the top tube and headset with a towel to collect the perspiration. I usually have three; one for me, one for my bike and one for the floor.

Wind training is best done with a computer that has both cadence and speed, so it will need to operate off the rear wheel, or come with the windtrainer. If you are wealthy enough to have a power meter good luck to you, it's the best, but I can't afford it. Maybe the club could buy one and hire it out??

Bike Set Up for Recreational Road Cyclists:

Performance improvement is an uphill challenge if your bike geometry is not adjusted to your physical attributes.

- I believe that before setting your seat height and rake you should firstly move your shoe cleats as rear-ward as they can go. This particularly applies if your foot size is greater than a size 41.
- Next work on seat height and front and back, handlebar height and reach, then if necessary go back to the cleats for minor adjustment.
- Seat height **needs to be reviewed constantly**, particularly at the start of a season or starting to ride as the mm start to fall off your butt. I give the example of my wife, who training for a 3 day ride around the Eastcape, followed a few months later by the Ironman lost around 27 kg. This resulted in an accumulated lifting of the seat by more than 1 ½", including two adjustments during the course of the 3 day ride!
- After or before every ride inspect your tyres for shards of glass or wire, much better option than having a puncture.
- Almost as regularly check your brake blocks, if there is a squeal or squeak take the wheel out and lightly scrape brake blocks too remove any ingrained particles.

Riding Tips

Cornering: Lean don't steer

- inside pedal up and outer pedal down
- Point the inner knee to where you are going means the outer leg must be straight/down.
- learn to pedal out of corners by accelerating down pressure on your inner knee as you pass the apex of your corner. It will help your balance and bring you around.
- develop lean not steer;
- Do figure of eights and circles to force the leaning action,(practical exercise)

When to change gears:

- If sharp corner may need to change to easier gear **before** entering the corner, remembering that the gears won't change if you are not rotating the pedals!
- Firstly, and quite early on, move to the small front chain ring, definitely before your gear changes have gotten to the two easiest cogs (biggest cogs) at the rear cluster.
- Reaching the bottom of a hill you are about to climb, start selecting your preferred rear cog before you are under pressure to change during your climb.
- Do not use your largest front chain ring to your 2 largest rear cogs. If you do this when riding, invariably you will sling shot your chain off at the front. Better to prepare for moving off your large chain ring by changing off you large chain ring and compensating your rear cogs harder by 2 or 3 cogs. If the chain comes off at the front try re-engaging your big chain ring, sometimes this will lift the chain back on.
- Don't be swayed by what others are doing, use your gears as they suit you.
- Remember when you go easier, you limit your potential to go fast. Mostly it pays to increase your effort to keep your cadence up before choosing that easier gear.

Using Your Handle bars when riding:

- When you are nervous, or are anticipating a need to brake, keep your hands near your brake levers.
- If you have small hands you can get brake levers for smaller (female) hands, particularly for ensuring you can grip when riding on the drops. I understand you can purchase retro fit kits for these.
- Don't be shy to use the drops into head winds or "out in front" as it reduces wind resistance by up to 15%. It feels ungainly for some, but **practice** the position so you can get the benefit.
- During every ride move your hands around different positions on the bars to use different pressure points and to avoid "white knuckle" (building up of stress) by gripping too hard and too long in the one position. **Practice this on your rides**, you will quickly get better.
- Climb using the brake hoods if standing, or top centres with elbows dropped and forearms parallel to the ground, for seated climbing. When using your arms for leverage, push your opposite arm away from you rather than pulling on the same side as the leg is thrusting. It is less tiring and has a better effect than pulling

Riding close to each other for Bunch Riding:

Bunch riding techniques and etiquette; is available on the Club web page.

To ride successfully in a bunch you need to feel comfortable riding close to another rider. Demonstrate and practice drill of touching, both sides. **Touch don't lean.**

Balance Drills:

- Arms out-stretched
- Ride touching the shoulder of another team member, extend practice to prolonged touch.
- Do figure of eights touching, remembering to swap sides
- Develop the touch to bumping forearms and then shoulders, swapping sides.
- Pushing another rider
- Holding
- Teach to ride on the drops as well as the break hoods and the top bars.
- Ride along slowly and pick up a drink bottle placed on the ground.
- Do not look backward, unless skilled at moving one buttock across the seat and looking without twisting the arms and changing direction.
- Learn to use peripheral vision, and looking under the arm for following riders, watch for the following rider's shadows if there are any.
- Keep your main vision ahead as you ride a straight line.

Practice one of these in the first 2 km of each ride up Burnside Road, which has low traffic densities, until you have become comfortable, help new riders when you are comfortable. **Teaching is learning**

Safety Skills: In separate paper on Web site

Looking about / Feeding and Drinking;

Until you can get the fear of riding close together sorted out, do your feeding and drinking towards the rear of a bunch.

If you are concerned about what is happening behind and you need to look;

- Use your Peripheral vision
- Looking under you arms
- Balance off another rider, but tell them what you are doing
- Shift your weight to one of your thighs and hold the front of your seat with the opposite hand. Have a quick glance ---- It is not a place to be having long looks
- Look well to the front, but not focal, and not solely on the wheel and tarmac immediately in front of you.

Always use your peripheral vision in harmony with your long vision, which whilst you may be looking at traffic lights ahead, you can also see glass in front on the left and a car overtaking on the right, and the shadow of someone coming up behind you.

With practice these should become natural riding instincts.

When to “Own the Road”:

Do not slalom parked cars, i.e. weave in and out, as motorists will not predict what you are doing or allow for your weave out.

If a vehicle is parked and has occupants, give it a 1 meter wide berth, (a door width), again don't slalom your action, by all means indicate with your arm that you are moving out. When you do, hold this position until well clear. Thank any motorist held up, with a flick of the hand or thumb-up as they pass.

Squeezes on the road; In East and South Auckland, there are several Pedestrian crossing “squeezes” some with, and some without zebra crossings. Indicate that you are moving out to clear the left concrete platens, and if I am riding on my own I clearly indicate then hit the squeeze dead centre which means no vehicle can pass until I am clear to pull left again.

Traffic Islands: The Road Code does not give a cyclist a very fair go here because it is impossible to safely change you indicating arm. My choice is to continually point with my right arm at the road I am going to exit the roundabout from. It is recommended to use a high vis. Wrist band that motorists can see in all lights.

As described in the Land Transport Cycling Guidelines (a 300 page document accessible on the web), a cyclist is best to “own” the lane so as no vehicle can pass you in the lane in which you are positioned, but to move left as quickly as it is safe to do. The road code clearly states that a vehicle may not pass another on an intersection, and this applies equally vehicles versus bikes as it does vehicle to vehicle, at roundabouts unless they are in separate lanes.

Remember as per Road code you must signal for a minimum of three (3) seconds, before changing direction. I believe it is safer to continually signal, even though it means riding with only one hand on the handle-bar. Look behind to check what is there before signaling and moving across a lane, sometimes the best judgment call is to pause or wait until a space or generous motorist comes along.

Your signal must be clear and precise. [A Limp flick of the wrist doesn't cut the mustard as a good signal.](#)

Drills Options for technique improvement:

Endurance; Longer rides, mixed terrain, do stops; spin and time in the saddle is the essence

Strength; This will enable you to manage the mix of speeds in a race, or a mix of terrain, or racing or riding on consecutive days. Strength work is hard gears low cadence, either on hills (not on hills for hill work training) or into head winds.

Repeats into a headwind, or hill climb, is a good option for strength training

It is wise to finish off hard efforts with a warm down in a spin gear.

Hills; This is for improving your hill climbing ability and training should include a sequence of ;

- Spin seated;
- Spin off and on the saddle in 30 stroke swaps, change 2 gears harder on each stand, and back 2 gears when re-seating.
- Interspersed with a strength drill of low cadence hard gear,
- When climbing, break the hill into sections with the top section being your hardest effort.
- Finish off with a spin session, then repeat this sequence.

Round off your session in a warm down spin mode.

Speed Work: Road speed! Doing the hard yards as you ride along.

- Practise fast bursts up to 90% Heart rate max (full effort and unable to talk) for distances of at least 800 meters and up to 4km as you get fitter.
- An option to develop road speed is to choose down wind courses **and use a hard gear and high cadence.** (Get a lift back or just mooch back in easy gearing on your return.)

If all of your training is slow, you will ride/race slowly.

Comfort and Hygiene:

The less you ride the more discomfort you may suffer from with pressure points.

- One way to over lessen sore bum is to ride 700 X 24 or 700 X 25 tyres instead of 700 X 23. You will get a far more comfortable ride with minimal reduction in speed or increase in resistance.
- Ride on heavy chip with your tyres around the 100psi mark. 115 psi on most NZ roads causes bounce and resistance and therefore they are not as fast or as comfortable. Definitely do not over inflate.
- Get gel cushioning fitted under your handle bar tape. (Breast implant stuff)
- Buy mitts that have good padding in the pressure area of your palms.
- Don't wear knickers under your bike shorts, instead use a good chamois cream varieties available from all bike shops.

- Wash Lycra on cold wash (or possibly warm) but not hot, usually hand wash surplus chamois cream out using sunlight soap, then wash with non-bleaching washing powder. I use “softly” a product made for washing woollens it is far gentler than the common laundry powders and leaves no laundry powder wash marks as some times happens on dark clothing. Some manufacturers recommend this on their labels.
- Wash head bands from the inside of your helmet weekly.
- Fold your Velcro straps over so they don’t tear apart your other washing or put in a washable laundry bag.

Drink Bottles (bidons):

Be aware that drink bottles can be a source of tummy bugs and the “trots”.

Make sure drink bottles are scalded and washed properly after **each** use. Camelback type systems also need to be taken apart and washed thoroughly.

The non BPA are the best option for cleanliness and re-use, **but;**

- some of these models have difficult or leaky drinking nozzles and
- some bidons have a waist that does not fit drink holders too well.
- Very good is that they have semi transparency and
- Measurement lines up the sides so you can be quite accurate with your re-hydrating. I would prefer measurements to work from the top down but any measurement lines supplied is better than none.

Make sure your drink bottle is held firmly in its bottle cage. If it doesn’t fit firmly find one that does or change your cages or your bottles.

Stages of Training; Separate web article on creating your own training program

The first issue is to get your brain over perceived obstacles:

- I have not ridden this far before
- I am not a hill climber
- I think the hill is too steep
- I won’t survive a ride with “that group”

Seven to Ten hours a week is ample time on a bike for fast recreational riders to achieve high levels of fitness.

Nearly every sport has a similar basis for reaching fitness and competitiveness:

- Building a base, ie doing Kms, or laps distances etc. This works on a basic premise that **you should only increase a correlation of distance / effort / time input, by about 10% per week**, to avoid a high risk of induced injury if you go too far, too soon.

Identify any event you wish to target to ride, such as “round Taupo” and balance your training to this special event. Interim events should be treated as "up tempo training".

Rest:

Resting is Training ! You must rest and recover between sessions and in a taper (reduce time and distance but increase intensity) as a lead up to big rides.

- Without letting laziness be the cause, **if you are in doubt about your rate of recovery or are injured, Rest.**
- Further is not better! Don't get sucked in by mileage hogs or by what other riders are doing, stick to your plan.
- **Don't ride until you "bonk"**, it can take weeks or months to recover from a highly stressful ride.

If you suffer from over or under hydration it could take years to recover. Weigh yourself, holding your full drink bottles, both before and after training to ascertain an indication of fluid loss.

General guideline rule of training:

- Exercising twice a week = exercise and muscle maintenance
- Exercising three times a week, rates some improvement but mostly maintenance of standards
- **Start of Gold Zone; Exercise four times a week will give significant improvements, as will 5 and 6 days a week.**
- At the other end of the scale **seven days (and sometimes 6 days) a week is over training**
- If you are doing a 16 week high intensity program make it 17 weeks and have a rest week (that is the full 7 days) of cold turkey no exercise about the halfway mark is hugely beneficial, both for muscle recovery and also for catching up on your social duties and needs.

Create your own Program: **See separate web article.** Don't think this is a quick job as most 17 week individualized programs will take up to 12 hours concentration to get right!