

RIDER SAFETY

In the course of a season there are many thousands of rides done and it is quite likely that the percentage of accidents to rides done is extremely low. Over 2000 Opens in the Handbook this year and almost 1000 clubs have their own club event programme. However one accident is one too many.

Last season to my knowledge two riders were killed while competing. One on a quiet road was hit from behind. The other ran into the back of stationary vehicle. This year already there have been two killed. Early May an ex club mate of mine was taken out from behind while riding in an event in Berkshire.

Yesterday (Sunday 1st August) a rider competing in the Bournemouth Jubilee '50' was killed when he rode into the back of a broken down car. Of course there is an inquest to be heard. However a timely reminder that at all times riders must observe the road ahead.

I served for 30 years on the South East District Council. Each accident can provoke a District Meeting no matter how trivial. You can be sure that over that time there were numerous meetings. At least three brought about by the death of riders.

More than a few riders having recovered from injuries received following contact with the rear of stationary vehicles, were then asked to attend a Disciplinary Inquiry. A 6 month suspension from all forms of cycle racing is an automatic penalty, unless there are extreme mitigating circumstances.

I have now been on the Lincs DC Committee for 5 years. Fortunately there have been no fatalities in the District but there have been injuries to riders. Three of them belonging to our own club this season.

We know that as cyclists we are vulnerable at all times. But my concern is with the riding of Time Trials whether it be at Club Level or in Opens. Always the possibility of being in the wrong place at the wrong time of course.. What can we do to hopefully improve our safety?

- 1) It is Heads Up and Accidents Down. (a rider travelling at 30 mph travels around 75 yards in 5 seconds).
- 2) The Sleaford Wheelers is in line with CTT policy. **CTT recommend that a working rear light**, either flashing or constant, is fitted to the machine in a position visible to following road users and is active whilst the machine is in use.

Timetrialling is usually one's first introduction to racing on the Highway. Worth reading is **Time Trialling for Beginners** on page 39 of the CTT National Handbook. If you have not a Handbook, then one should read in particular the following. Not just Beginners.

3. Safety.

When time trial courses are designed safety is a major consideration. However, ultimately it is the competitor's conduct which determines how safe a course is. The races are held on open roads and competitors must obey the law of the land relating to road travel before, during and after a race. Competitors must be responsible for their own safety and also avoid creating situations which are unsafe for other road users.

There are a number of points which will help the beginner, and others to enjoy safer racing: -

(i) A cyclist is less likely to be seen than a car or lorry by drivers of vehicles. You need to remember this when approaching any road junction. To improve visibility from the rear (as well as identifying the rider) all riders are required to wear a bright fluorescent number on their rear. This needs to be positioned on the rider's shorts from the waistband downwards, or as near to that position as possible since an overhanging jersey would cover it in that position. The number should not be positioned high on the back like a runner's numbers are.

(ii) U-turns in the road are another hazard as drivers of vehicles are not normally expecting another road user to make this manoeuvre. It is RTTC national policy to eliminate U-turns from courses and to reduce their use where they cannot be avoided. They are also a hazardous manoeuvre both before the race whilst riders are warming up or circling in the road prior to starting and after the race when riders return to the result board or to their cars.

(iii) Head down riding is another major hazard as the rider will not see an obstacle on the road. Even on a Clearway cars may stop at the side of the road due to breakdown or to consult a map or for some other reason and it is no good saying "The car should not have been there". The answer to that is "You should have seen it". This type of accident is one of the types covered by the Regulation about Dangerous Riding and if the rider is found to have contravened this regulation then a suspension from competition for six months of the racing season is normal.

(iv) Any road junction or roundabout can constitute a hazard in a race. Competitors are travelling much faster than motorists are used to seeing cyclists moving and may make an error of judgement. Be ready for it. Slip roads joining and leaving dual carriageways and other major roads are places where care is particularly necessary due to the long distance where a cyclist can be between two lanes of merging traffic or vehicles leaving the main carriageway at high speed.

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