



Making your ride more pleasant! Special Topic note #7

Usually, we don't dive too much into bike mechanics, making the focus of our special topics on passing safely, group communication, bike fit and so on. But, we have noticed a few things about this season that we want to mention.

For example, tomorrow expect the roads to be damp in the morning from the past two days of rain. Be careful about gravel in these conditions. Also, be sure you get enough rest the night before and that you hydrate properly. Since a tired rider is not a focused rider.

This season we have observed a few individual riders have some rather serious mishaps on the ride. Here is what I think we can all learn from that. These mishaps were single rider incidents. Just remember that a momentary lack of focus or distraction or not adjusting speed going around corners can cause a cyclist to lose control. Being new to riding on country roads, adjusting to changing road conditions is a new experience.. We just want you all to be safe while having fun.

We also want you to be comfortable on your bike. Not sure how comfortable the

guy is in the picture above, but you have to give him credit for creativity. I saw this photo years ago and thought you all would enjoy it.

Lets cover two specific topics in this note tied to bicycle comfort.

As we approach the MS-150 ride coming up, we all need to look at the tires on our bikes. There is a picture below showing some old tires that do not have much tread wear, yet they are badly dry rotted. Tires that are over 4 years old even if they do not have many miles will be prone to tire failure.

Most newer tires now have some sort of wear indicators built in them much like your car tires. To sum up, if there is little visible tread, the rubber will be very thin and can flatten with the small rock chips on our great chip seal roads. This usually takes over 6000-7000 miles.

The second part about tires is that we mostly ride on rough surfaces. A lot of the bikes that I see have relatively narrow tires, usually 23 mm width. We have been told in the past that this gives us a lower rolling resistance. That is true on smooth surfaces like concrete. But that's something we don't see much of, if any at all. The fact is that a wider tire with less pressure will have a lower rolling resistance on rough surfaces. The added benefit is that less vibration is transmitted to you through the bike this way, also. Modern bikes that have disk brakes can handle tires with a 36 mm width. Older bikes with caliper brakes may be limited to 32 mm due to the tire not fitting through the brakes even when the release is opened. Some bikes will not have room for any tire wider than 23 mm at the bottom bracket so that would be another limiting factor.

The point here is that you need to have good condition tires and you may want to get wider tires, so lower air pressure can be used to make your ride more enjoyable. Wider tires also let you navigate good gravel roads as well.

The second topic is about what I have been observing while on the road. Many people are still pedaling slow and straining to go up hills. We covered that topic of shifting earlier. It's on our website if you want to go back to it or in your email.

Even with good shifting technique, I am observing that many people run out of gear, i.e., they will be in the biggest cogs and smallest chain ring and still struggle.

Many bikes were sold with mostly flat riding in mind. In doing so the companies put on average gearing for flat roads. The front chain ring is harder to change since sizing can depend on the crank set but the rear cogs are relatively easy to change and not expensive. If you had the average bike with a Shimano road bike shifter you can go up to 36 teeth on the cogs. This could be as much as a 25% increase in gearing ability over what you have. That would make hills much easier for you to climb. Mountain bikes usually have larger cogs in the rear and smaller chain rings in the front already which is great for climbing but not so good on lesser hills. A good bike shop can install this for you.

These are two thoughts about how to make your ride more pleasant. Below is the picture of the tire with decent tread but these tiny cracks indicate the rubber is dry rotted. These tires are not good for the MS-150 or any kind of road biking.



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