

## CHARLIE'S BITS & PIECES

7/19/2010

This is a collection of my thoughts on subjects relative to bicycling. I don't pretend to be an expert but I have given most of these subjects a lot of thought in the last ten years and have arrived at these conclusions and opinions that seem to be relevant to me. I cannot guarantee that they are relevant to the reader. This is a work in progress and I will expand and correct it as my opinions and experiences change. I would encourage anyone to contact me with their thoughts and opinions to help make this more useful.

**Hydration.** You already know that hydration is paramount. If you lose too much, it may be difficult to recover overnight. The trick is to develop your own way of achieving this. Some folks like insulated bottles of ice water. I personally find fancy bottles hard to get much fluid out of in a brief period. I use Gatorade 24oz with the twist open tops or ordinary bottled water bottles with the pop up top. They have a large opening and you can squeeze a lot of fluid out quickly. If you lose it or give one away, you are not out \$5 or more.

I don't care for ice water. It is refreshing but this is about replenishing. I prefer 50% Gatorade at ambient temperature for the sheer volume of it that I can drink and my stomachs tolerance to it.. It is easier for me to drink in abundance than plain water.

**Hydration packs.** On long rides where support is unknown, or winds, or hills, I use a Camelbak Rogue. It holds 70oz of fluid and allows sipping away at fluids whether you are down into the wind or climbing a hill. It also allows you to get a drink without taking your eyes off the road. Of course they aren't "cool", but neither is suffering cramps during or after a ride. If it is a multi-day event, dehydration can trash the next day for sure. A challenging ride on a hot day can cause a lot of fluid loss and along with that electrolytes. That is a fancy word for salts. Salts are essential to water absorption.

You need to determine your own fluid loss by weighing yourself before and after a ride. .Recently I did two 60 mile rides on near 90 degree days. I had 4 pounds weight loss even after taking in 5 pounds of Gatorade. That is 9 pounds of fluid loss and my kidneys didn't contribute much to that. I thought that I was drinking plenty and was never thirsty. I felt kind of crappy after both days. A few days later I rode the same 60 mile route on an 85 degree day, Drank 7 pints (almost 5 water bottles) of 50% Gatorade and had no weight loss. Those two extra pints and a few degrees cooler were significant. You have to force fluids on hot days.

Full strength Gatorade will completely replace the amount of water and salt that are lost in an equivalent amount of sweat. I drink 50% Gatorade and get the rest of the salts from food.

**Food.** If you are doing a long ride, it is important to load up on carbs for a few days prior. You need to load up your muscles with glycogen. Forget weight loss, this is about completing the event. During the ride eat what sets well with your stomach. It is better to eat a little often rather load up at a stop. That way you always have room for fluids. I carry PowerBar Harvest Toffee Chocolate Chip. (Krogers). They have 42g of carbs, 10g. Protein, and salts and they work for me. Most supported rides have bananas. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are good if your stomach agrees. Don't know anything about the gel shots. You are better off eating complex carbs over than sugar-bases stuff.

**On the bike.** On social rides, be social. On long rides, pay attention to your body and bike. I have a checklist tie wrapped to my aerobar to remind me of;

- Fluids
- Food
- Seat
- Advil
- Tums
- Bike
- Stretch.

It is very important to anticipate and prevent problems. Be proactive. All kinds of things can start hurting. Neck, shoulders, forearms, hands, lower back, hips, knees, feet, and of course the butt. Continually scan for developing problems. Joint tenderness can be affected by riding position. Adjustments of body position, saddle, and bars may help with that. I carry Advil for arthritic pains and inflammations.

As mentioned before, seat position is critical. Some things may not become apparent until you are on a long event. Take the time to tweak the seat. It can improve your day. Of course that means that you carry the tools.

I cannot stress enough taking care of issues as soon as they become apparent. What will happen if the issue persists, it will distract you from taking care of other important things, like hydration, or food, etc. You have the idea.

**Items to carry.**

Drink mix if you are not sure of support.

Food, the same.

Spare tube. Two on a really long ride. You will likely have the opportunity to give one away to someone who didn't think it "cool" to carry stuff.

Air pump. I prefer a common pump over the CO2 cartridges.

Tire patch and tire tools

Enough tools to adjust seat, handlebars, and tighten cable ends.

**Tires.** There is no need to have frequent flat tires. It is not a badge of courage. It affects your fellow riders. Tires that are puncture resistant cost more initially

but last much longer so may be cheaper in the long run. I use Continental Ultra Gatorskins 28mm at 80psi. The rear was replaced at 5,000mi. and never had a flat. The front is over 7,000mi and has had one puncture from a thorn. These have a Kevlar barrier and are available from several manufacturers. They tend to weigh more so are not popular with road rockets and wannabe road rockets. Cheap insurance for the rest of us. Always carry a spare tube. You may not need it but someone else will.

**Helmet. YES.** Get one that fits and feels good then pick the color. Forget about design. None will enhance your looks.

**Mirror. YES.** Many folks don't like mirrors. They aren't cool and it is hard to find one that works well for you. Some folks use helmet mounted. I never found one that mounted well to my helmet so have no clue if I would like it anyway. Road bikes are the worst mounting. I have one that I like that mounts to the bar just below the brake lever. It is perfect except that it vibrates a lot on tar and chip roads. You can still see well enough to see a car.

#### **Gloves.**

I mainly wear gloves to overcome sweaty handlebars and potentially falling. Most are designed with an area over the thumb for absorbing a lot of snot. Sorry. I found that a lot of padding in the palm area actually made numbness worse. I have circulation issues and had assumed that the numbness was a loss of circulation. It was actually nerve damage that took months to recover. All of these problems were on mountain or hybrid type handlebars. The road bike bars have not caused me any grief in the 7 years that I have been riding it. I think that the problem on straight bars is the pressure that they present to the area of the palm between the little finger and the wrist.

**Shoes.** Shoes made for biking are best because they have a hard and inflexible sole area. This distributes the pressure from the pedal over a large foot area and relieves pressure points such as you have from sneakers. I personally wear mountain bike shoes because I like real heels and SPD clips..Since I use a combination clip/no-clip pedal (Shimano 324), I make sure my tread on the shoe is soft and rubbery so they hold on the pedal side when not clipped to it. I use Shimano M086. They are available in road style as R086.

For SPD clips I use SH-55. These allow you to disengage by just jerking your foot free rather than a specific twist.

With the use of any clips it is important to practice disengaging so that it will be second nature. Since I use combo pedals, I disengage anytime I am approaching an intersection or getting in traffic.

**Shorts.** If you are buying for short rides, buy whatever. If you are preparing for a long event, you shouldn't buy shorts without trying them on and wearing them often on training rides prior to the event.. For me, I can't wear shorts with a lot of padding in the crotch. Vital parts go to sleep. I still like some padding in the sit

bone area. So the choice of shorts/chamois and the saddle is a systems problem.

**Butt Butter.** This is important to help avoid chaffing of important body parts in the shorts/saddle interface area and reduce the probability of saddle sores. There are products sold by bike shops including Chamois Butt and Assos Chamois Cream. Other product that may work just as well are Udderly Smooth and Queen Helene's Cocoa Butter Creme which are available at Walmart. I have read that Noxema Original Cream may be even better since it contains the chemicals found in Assos..

I have found that I need to carry some along on long rides to reapply when irritation raises its ugly head.

**Saddle Sores.** I saw an article recently in Bicycle Magazine which I cannot now find. I will keep searching.

In lieu of, try; <http://bandlbicycles.com/articles/how-to-solve-saddle-sores-pg171.htm>

**Saddle.** As mentioned above the saddle and shorts combine to interface your butt to the bicycle. VERY IMPORTANT. The tendency is to go for a softer saddle. This is nice for the sit bones but other areas may suffer. When properly adjusted, the saddle will likely be fairly parallel to the road surface. Get the nose too high and you tend to have a lot of pressure in the crotch area. Get the nose tilted down and you tend to scoot forward. This puts tissue in shear which will cause bruising and soreness. If you find yourself having to raise up and reposition on the seat, the seat tilt is wrong.

While riding in your normal position try concentrating on pressure in the sit bone area. Then push slightly with your arms to move your butt back. Then the same forward. You will find a neutral place where there is the least trauma to the sit bones. If your arms aren't relaxed at this point, the seat tilt is wrong.

The nose of the saddle should be narrow enough that it doesn't mess with the groin muscle tendons and also cause chaffing of the inside of the thighs. This hurts and causes trauma to tissue in the area. Saddle position is affected by riding position. If you are up on the bars, one adjustment may be best, if you are down in the drops, another would be better. Make small adjustments and watch for maybe improving one problem but causing another. So much to learn.

**Odometer.** The most valuable function of the bike computer for me is the odometer. It is a perk to realize the accumulation of mileage. It can inspire you to go that extra mile just to see it rollover to 100, or 1,000, or 10,000. Whatever,

**Heart Rate Monitor.** Since I started exercising over 10 years ago, I have used a heart monitor. This is your best measure of your power level without spending thousands of dollars on a power meter. For me it is important to know the maximum HR that I can sustain for hours on end without overdoing it. I also

need to know the maximum that I must stay under on a climb. Exceeding these numbers can ruin the rest of the day and maybe the next. Everyone has their “zone”. That level where you make good time but don't overdo it. Everyone in a group ride has a different zone. There is a tendency to overextend oneself trying to keep up with and not slow down the group. Your HR monitor helps keep you under control and on plan.

**Aerobars.** I originally put on aerobars for my first Calvin's Challenge. They have never come off. For me, they don't really help that much with speed but offer additional hand and body positions. This can be a welcome relief on a long ride. Over time I realized that I utilize them on long climbs. Sitting is more efficient than standing and being down on the aerobars, I believe, allows me to put more energy into the pedals.

**Cheat Sheet.** I have a piece of lid from a cottage cheese container tie wrapped to my handlebars. I wrote the following reminders with a Sharpie.

**Fluids.** Am I drinking enough?

**Food.** Do I need to eat?

**Seat.** Anything hurting. Move around. Stop pedaling and raise up your butt for a few seconds. Raise up briefly when slowing down.

**Advil.** For me, neck and shoulder pain.

**Tums.** Any cramping starting? Take a couple of Tums. This really works for me. Once that I start with the Tums, I keep taking them periodically. On multi-day events, I take them at bedtime to avoid cramps.

**Sunblock.** Waterproof.

**Bike.** Is everything working OK. Fix it now or at the next stop.

**Stretch.** As a ride progresses, I like to stretch at every stop. It's an investment.

Of course the trick is to remember to check your cheat sheet frequently. But then, what else do you have to do.

**Bumps.** When faced with an obstacle, it may be the best idea to hit it straight on rather than to do an evasive maneuver. Lots of reasons both ways. If the decision is to ride it out, do this.

- 1 Use what little time you have left to align your bike square with the obstacle with your front wheel straight and the bike straight up.
- 2 Raise up out of the saddle with your feet at the 3 and 6 o'clock position with your knees slightly bent.
- 3 Move your body as far back on the bike as you can.
- 4 This extends your arms and holds the handlebars straight.
- 5 Relax and enjoy the experience. That isn't meant to be funny

This position allows your arms to take the hit when the front wheel hits the obstruction. With your body off the seat your legs will absorb the hit from the

rear wheel. This avoids you getting catapulted forward off the bike like in the movies, helps you maintain control after the obstacle, and my save you from a pinch flat. Of course you need to practice this because you won't have the time to read this mindless dissertation if presented with this situation.

**IDENTIFICATION.** I have always carried identification. Usually in my trunk or Camelbak. Just to make conversation one day, I asked a life squat EMT about patient identification. In a nutshell he said "If it is visible on the person, we can use it. If it requires searching, they must wait for a law enforcement person." Cannot even open a billfold. This was an awakening.

There are a number of identification schemes. Most utilize a bracelet or necklace. They range from velcro straps to engraved metal pieces. About the most these can carry are 5-10 lines of information. Depending on how much information that you want the rescue folks to have, 5-10 lines could not be enough. Some bracelets, such as Road ID, have basic information plus a phone number, website, and personal ID number that makes as much information available as you want the rescue folks to have via telephone and the internet.

I.C.E. (In Case of Emergency). This is a recent identification idea that got started by an ambulance person and seems to be catching on.. Since almost everybody carries a cell phone, create an entry in your address book called ICE Enter the number that you would want called for an emergency. Depending on the phone, you may be able to enter more information such as blood type, allergies, drugs, special needs, etc.

**Cool Down.** I have never bothered to cool down. Not that there is anything wrong with that, I just didn't do it. Most of my rides that finish at home finish with fairly high level of effort due to the terrain. I will put the bike away and sit on the back porch to "cool down". I have noticed that I seem to shut down and feel rather lazy and lackadaisical. One day I took my blood pressure and found it to be 72/40. Started taking my BP during and after riding and realized this was common for my BP to fall into this range for maybe 20-30 minutes before climbing to normal. Did a little surfing and found that after stopping the exercise, the blood may pool in the legs. The blood vessels are still in a dilated state so the BP drops robbing vital body parts of blood. This is more significant in us folks with cardio-vascular disease. Not a good scenario. I started walking around for 10 minutes after the ride and, while my BP still dropped, it didn't drop as far and quickly started moving back up to normal. I now do cool down.

**Notes.** An important thing to remember in selecting bicycling stuff is what works for you. Completing long rides is about comfort and equipment reliability and not speed and appearance. Your body and mind are included in the equipment.

“The only assumption you can make is you can't make any assumptions.”