

TRAINING TIPS from Carmichael Training Systems (Week 12 of 12)



12 Tips for staying safe and having fun at the Tour de Cure! By Carmichael Training Systems

Your event is here! You have put the miles in, tuned up your riding skills, and prepared your equipment and your body, now it's time to enjoy the ride. There are going to be a lot of other cyclists out there on the road with you, so it's important to be aware of those around you and stay focused on your ride. To have a great time during your event and arrive at the finish line safely, keep the following tips in mind:

1. **Keep your head up:** It is easy to get in the habit of looking directly at the back wheel of the person in front of you, but you need to look further forward so you can anticipate turns or slowing riders. This is especially important toward the end of a long ride, as you'll tend to drop your gaze or lock in on the wheel in front of you as you get more tired.
2. **Look before you move left or right:** Just like in a car, it's important to look left or right before you "change lanes". A quick glance over your shoulder or even down under your arm will let you know if you have room to move, and a flick of your hand is a good idea to communicate your intention to riders behind you.
3. **Use both brakes at the same time:** Using both brakes at the same time spreads the force of braking across both wheels, which reduces the chances that either one will lock up and skid. It also means you have more power to stop more quickly. And if you have to stop abruptly, shift your weight back as you hit the brakes to put more weight over the rear wheel.
4. **Keep your bike upright through sand, dirt, or water:** If you encounter sand, dirt, or water, the safest route through it is a straight line. If you encounter these conditions in a turn, slow down before you reach the corner and keep your bike more upright instead of leaning into it like you would on dry, clean pavement.
5. **Keep your upper body relaxed:** The more rigid your upper body (shoulders, elbows, and wrists), the less stable you are on the bike. You'll find the steering skittish and harder to control, which typically makes you tighten up even more, and leads to even more problems. Bend your elbows, drop your shoulders, and maintain a firm but gentle grip on the handlebars. The bike will ride more smoothly and your steering will be less effected by small bumps in the road or from a rider next to you.
6. **Communicate:** Speak up when you're overtaking riders. You don't have to yell at them; a simple "How's it going?" or "On your left." will let them know you're coming by. And try not to startle the person you're passing, or they're likely to swerve and may move into your path. If you're the one being passed, stay on your line and ride predictably.
7. **Don't overlap wheels:** Riding behind another cyclist is a great way to reduce wind resistance and save energy, but be careful to leave enough space so your front wheel doesn't overlap the rear wheel of the person in front of you. If the rider ahead of you moves left or right, you don't want them to rub your front wheel.
8. **Pace Yourself.** If you start your ride at a hard pace, you may find yourself struggling in the final miles. We'd rather see athletes go a little slower in the first half of a training ride or event so they have more gas in the tank for the second half. When it comes time for your event, your experience will be much more positive if you ride a more manageable pace and arrive at the finish feeling great!

9. **Watch your breathing.** As you work harder your breathing rate increases. At a certain point, your breathing will go from controlled to panting. This is a signal that you have exceeded your maximum sustainable intensity. You will exhaust yourself very quickly if you continue at that pace. Reduce your effort to bring your breathing back under control. It's OK for your breathing to be labored, but you want it to be in control rather than uncontrollable panting.
10. **Keep eating and drinking:** Most people think of eating and drinking in terms of performance on the bike, but it's even more important for safety. When your blood sugar is low and/or you're dehydrated, your reaction times are much slower and your ability to make decisions is diminished. Drink at least one bottle of fluid per hour and consume 30-60 grams of carbohydrate (1-2 Gels, and/or a bottle of Electrolyte Brew for example) each hour in order to keep your energy levels up and stay alert.
11. **Keep your hands near the brakes on down hills:** Never mind the super-aerodynamic tucks you see Tour de France riders use on down hills. With a lot of riders on the roads with you, it's important to keep your hands near your brakes when you're going faster down a hill. Keep your eyes looking forward, too, because it takes more time to slow down from higher speeds if you have to hit the brakes.
12. **Adjust your helmet correctly:** Your helmet can save your life, but it has to be worn properly to do so. It should be snug to your head, but not uncomfortably tight. The straps should be adjusted so you can't lift the helmet off your head when buckled, but again not overly tight. And the front of the helmet needs to protect your forehead, so the bottom edge of the front of the helmet should be about 1-2 inches above your eyebrows, not rotated back toward the top of your head. If you're uncertain about the fit of your helmet, visit your local bike shop before your ride.

Good luck and have fun!

Carmichael Training Systems Founder and Head Coach Chris Carmichael is the 2012 National Spokesperson for the American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure. This article is part of a series of articles prepared by Chris and the coaches at CTS to help you prepare for your Tour de Cure event. For more information on CTS and to sign up for our free newsletter and a chance to win a signed copy of "The Time-Crunched Cyclist" book, visit www.trainright.com/register.