

TRAINING TIPS from Carmichael Training Systems (Week 4 of 12)



Riding in a group with confidence

By Carmichael Training Systems

A lot of cyclists spend the majority of their time riding alone, but at the Tour de Cure you're going to be riding with a lot of other people! Since you will be riding around other cyclists, if not in a large group during your event, it's important that you are comfortable and confident riding with other cyclists.

Riding with a group can be intimidating, but it's also a great way to be social and improve your skills at the same time. There are some things you need to know, however, in order to make the experience worthwhile and safe.

- Stay close to the rear wheel of the person in front of you. Drafting will allow you to conserve energy and go farther, faster. This is a little unnerving at first, so keep a little bit of room until you feel comfortable.
- Pay attention to riders far ahead of you. Don't just look at the back wheel right in front of you because you need to anticipate changes in speed (like corners, stop signs, etc.) well in advance. By the time the person right in front of you hits the brakes, you'll have to slam on your brakes to slow down fast enough to avoid a collision. Look further ahead to keep yourself – and the people behind you – safer.
- Don't overlap wheels. Don't let your front wheel come alongside the wheel of the rider in front of you. If that rider needs to move suddenly, she could take both of you down to the pavement.
- Avoid braking suddenly. Just as you will be following closely behind someone, someone else may be following you. You don't want them to run into you from behind.
- Take your turn at the front. The person at the front of the group has a lot of work to do, so the best way to make the whole group go faster is for each rider to take a turn up there. So, the rider in front will ride for a period of time (say, a minute), and then she will pull off to the side to let the rider behind her go to the front. The rider that just pulled off will then slow just enough to let the whole group go by, then pull in behind the last rider.
- When it's your turn at the front of the group, the important thing is to maintain the group's speed. If that means you have to take a very short pull, that's fine. What you don't want to do is get to the front and slow down, because then everyone behind you starts to accordion into the riders ahead of them.
- Point out obstacles in the road. The rider behind you probably won't be able to see potholes, glass, or debris in the road, so use your hands to point out objects so they can plan for a slight change in direction.

Besides getting comfortable riding around other people, it's also important to learn how to conserve energy by positioning yourself well in a group.

- Look for cues to determine which direction the wind is coming from. You can look for flags on buildings, which way the grass or leaves are bending, etc. This can help

- you find the best place to be so you're in another rider's slipstream. Riding in the draft can reduce your workload by up to 40%!
- If you're riding into a headwind, you want to position yourself directly behind another rider. But when the wind is coming in from the side, you want to position yourself diagonally behind that rider on the side opposite the wind. So, if the wind is coming in from the right, the best position for drafting is on the left side of the rider ahead of you, with your handlebars about even with his/her hips.
 - If you're riding in a group and there's a tailwind, you may have trouble staying behind the rider in front of you without hitting the brakes. If you constantly have to brake to avoid getting too close to that rider, you can move out to the side a bit so you're drafting *less*. Essentially use wind resistance as an air-brake so you don't have to ride your brakes so much.

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.