



Race Safety – Hamilton Pine Rivers Wheelers

Cycle racing is personally challenging and we all do it for our own reasons and rewards but don't kid yourself, it, like many other sporting activities, it has inherent dangers.

Racing conducted by HPRW is primarily amateur at the club grade level. The licence you have from Cycling Australia that allows you to compete is a financial and administrative transaction only, not a skills and knowledge qualification. You can immediately race, regardless of your experience.

Unfortunately, cycling crashes in race conditions are quite common, and even more unfortunately, many are avoidable; an unexpected move, a small lapse in concentration, a degree of fatigue, a gap that was not really there, a miniscule touch of a wheel; can each cause an unnecessary end to the day. Is this enjoyable? Well cycle racing is. Hitting the asphalt at 40kph+ is NOT.

Daniel Coyle in his book, *Lance Armstrong, Tour De Force* notes that in a professional cycling season there are about 5 serious crashes a week. Think about it...each of the 400 professional riders in a six month season have a 1 in 4 chance of logging hospital time. That's a LOT of accidents and a risk ratio we all want to avoid in club racing.

Cycle racing at club level is a social competition. We're not racing in "Le Tour" or racing for Olympic glory. Sure it's a challenge – against ourselves, the clock or the other competitors and we get to compete on beautiful machinery (well, some of us). In the end though, if we have a good race and maybe some pleasing results along the way, have a chat with mates after it's all over – that's a good day.

Cycling competition has rules & regulations but in reality, each individual has a responsibility to participate fairly, safely and sanely. The majority of competitors have jobs they need to keep and families to support. Time away from work or your family due to a racing incident is not a good result. So let's compete hard, have fun and stay safe. Now some tips:

Before you race...

- Riding and training in a bunch on the road is a good preparation for racing, but it does not fully prepare you for the real racing experience and consequent risks and dangers.
- Ask advice from the old salts at the track. There are lots of folks with decades of experience happy to impart their knowledge to you on race days.
- Inform the race management on the day if you are relatively inexperienced.

When you're racing...

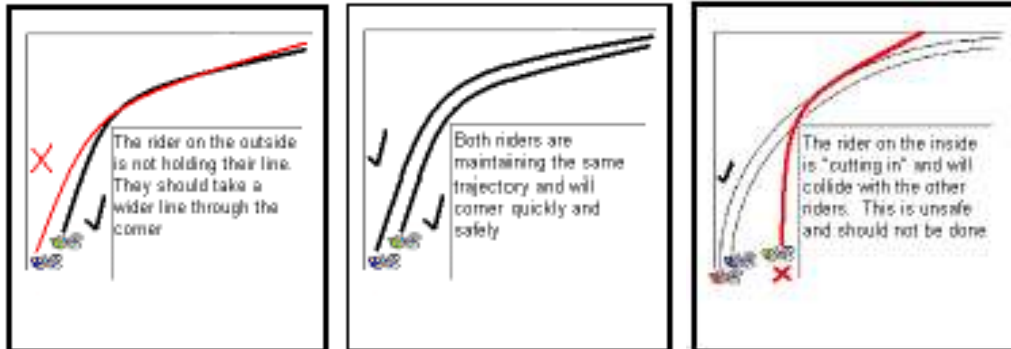


Celebrate! Allan Davis (QuickStep) wins the fifth stage off the Tour Down Under.

- Always think first about the safety of your fellow competitors, not your ego. Courtesy and care won't cost you the race. An accident will.
- Listen to the race briefing by the officials and be sure you understand the particular conditions which pertain to the race on that day.
- Keep both hands on the handlebars (don't wave at the family). Look at Alan Davis on the left... don't do this when you finish! Leave that to the Pro's.
- Keep your eyes open. Scan - on your wheel, further ahead and peripherally. Know what's going on.



- Hold your line through the corners



*Diagrams compliments of the Canberra Cycling Club

- Good riders are smooth, predictable, keep some space and never alter course erratically.
- Don't stick your front wheel into every gap. They don't all have to be filled.
- You don't need to sit just a few centimetres off a wheel to get a good tow. Allow a margin of error. Don't overlap wheels.



Good ☺



Bad ☹

- Never change course erratically or violently, especially in the final laps. Be aware that most crashes occur in the final laps.
- Be patient, wait for a safe opportunity if you want to pass or make position. In a criterium, you have 30 to 60 minutes of race time to get that opportunity.
- Racing is about tactics, patience, strength, stamina, technique and (believe it or not) – luck. Sometime things open up, sometimes they don't. Don't expect to win or place every week.
- If you're fit enough why not to do some work sometimes and lead out? You might not win if you expend too much energy "out front" but sucking wheels week-in and week-out is not good etiquette. Besides, spending time "in the wind" will make you fitter!
- During a race, call potential dangers and bad or unsafe behaviour (not abuse, just inform them quickly, if required). For example, calling out "**Slowing!**" as the pace drops unexpectedly or you're braking is good etiquette – and a safe practice.
- If you are not in the top 5 or 10 for the final sprint, be realistic about your chances. In most cases you're pretty much out of the running. Sprinting hard from the middle of the pack exposes you and the other riders to sizable risk for almost zero reward.

To finish up, a quote from Chris Carmichael, Lance Armstrong's renowned trainer; *"Remember there is another day. One of the most important parts of sprinting is to hold your line; otherwise the result can be disastrous for the bunch. Many riders get line fever or envelop fever (the prize money). I always contest a sprint when I can, although safety and being able to walk away from the race is my first priority."*