

FLAT TYRES:



Ask any Cyclist the one thing that annoys them most about their sport and the answer will invariably be FLAT TYRES. Bad enough on a solo ride but worse when you are with a group as the more riders, the more chance of a multiple punctures holding up the ride.

Some of it is pure bad luck - but you can reduce the number of hold-ups with more vigilance, particularly if the front riders are switched on. Often the glass and debris calls are far too late, not audible or are not relayed. On many occasions the front riders are able to find a narrow path through the hazard. With limited forward vision, the pack won't have that luxury and someone will follow on and inevitably puncture.

When you are taking your turn to lead you have the responsibility to be vigilant, aim for an early call and if safe, the rider in the clear (outside or inside) should move over to allow the riders at risk to follow their line to avoid the hazards. Good Tyre maintenance will also prevent stoppages. Aiming for that extra 500km out of old worn tyres is not safe or cost effective as tubes can be 25% of the cost of a new tyre - so if they are worn, buy new ones, keep them inflated to the recommended pressure and if you do experience a bad cut or damage – “bad luck to you” and back to the bike shop for another.

Another good habit is to regularly check your tyres before the rides, it takes only a few minutes. Purchase a probe from the Chemist (a double ended device used to remove splinters) and regularly check for sharps. Often the glass is already embedded in your tyres. The probe has a fine hook like needle that will remove glass without damage to your tyre. A small cut in the tyre is often a clue, carefully follow the line of the cut with the probe and you may find the object.

Remember a road bike tyre rotates almost 12,000 times every 25 kilometres. If an object is there it will eventually work through to the tube, sometimes days later. When someone in the group punctures, and etiquette – (as it should), dictates you wait, immediately cast an eye over your own tyres, you may have picked up some sharps yourself, worst still – and believe me it is common, often the group are chatting on the roadside while some one changes a tube and when time comes to resume the ride, some Noddy suddenly realises his tyre is flat also.

If you are a racer, do you really want to expose expensive performance tyres on Training Rides? Maybe an extra set of wheels with durable tyres is the go. And lastly – if you ride a solo Training circuit as many of us do, you can save others grief by removing rocks or debris from the road or if warranted, report the hazard to the local Authority for attention.

Case Scholtes (*The Fox*).

Wynnum Redlands Cycling Club.

