

## Paceline Riding Tips

*Emerald Coast Cyclists*

- Be smooth and predictable. The main thing that keeps riders from bumping into each other is to not do anything unexpected such as excessive braking, swerving, slowing down too quickly, or making any unusual movement without alerting other riders.
- Pedal steadily and continuously. Avoid pausing, even for a few seconds as it makes the person behind you react and can cause a whiplash effect in the back of the paceline.
- Ride directly behind the bike in front of you.
- Stay 18" or more inches behind the rider ahead of you – drafting saves you 15-30% of your energy. But this distance should be no closer than you are comfortable with.
  - If you don't know the rider ahead of you, give them more space.
  - If you are going fast or going downhill, open the gap a little if you feel uncomfortable.
- Look for inexperienced riders. Give them assistance as much as you can. Also give them plenty of room. 18" behind their wheel is not enough.
- Do not look at the wheel ahead of you. Instead, look well ahead of you at eye level.
- Do not use your aerobars in a group ride. Exception--we allow use of aerobars if you are in front of the paceline only, and then only if you can still safely point out road hazards. (The big problem with aerobars is you cannot easily brake, and maneuvering is harder.)
- Use the brakes sparingly. Always try to stop pedaling instead of breaking. It saves energy and doesn't affect riders behind you as much. Brakes are dangerous in a paceline.
- If a gap opens ahead of you, don't make things worse by accelerating too hard to catch up. Close the gap smoothly and do not use your brakes if possible as the gap closes.

- If you decide to fall off and not close the gap, quickly gesture to others to pass you so they don't have to bridge a large gap. Move to the left, out of the flow of riders, so that those behind you do not have to move around you.
- Don't take a drink if you see others in front of you doing the same thing. Wait till they are done—it's safer.
  - Work to get comfortable drinking from your water bottle or camelback without slowing or swerving. This takes practice.
  - Keep pedaling when you drink.
- On hills, if you stand, make sure that you do not slow momentarily.
  - Verbalize "standing" to the rider behind you before you stand up.
  - Upshift before standing.
- If you shift from the big ring to the small ring, upshift several gears (move to a smaller cog) on your rear cassette first to avoid "spinning out".
- In crosswinds, ride in an echelon formation into the wind if possible. E.g., if wind is from the left, stay behind but slightly to the right of the rider ahead of you.
- Never overlap your front wheel with the rear wheel ahead of you. If your wheels touch, the rider in the back usually crashes.
- Do not ride too close to the white line when on the shoulder of a road. Also, do not ride too close to the edge of the pavement. Generally stay as far right as possible to avoid cars.
- If you have a flat in the paceline, yell out that you have a flat so people can stay clear, but do not brake till people are clear of you.
- If you are in an area with dogs, ride single file. Keep your speed up. Move over to their side of the road so you have room to swerve away from them as they approach. Do not brake as dogs approach. Spray them with water if necessary. Yell at them if necessary.
- What happens if you cannot keep up with the speed of the group? Let the riders behind you know if you are going to drop

off. Don't delay your decision because the gap will widen. Then move to the left to get out of the traffic flow so those behind you can move straight ahead.

- If you are on the back of the paceline, listen for cars and announce "car back" to alert riders not to move into the traffic lane.
- Use no iPods or other devices that have ear buds. Hearing other riders and hearing approaching cars is critical.
- If you have to give guidance or a suggestion to another rider, be polite!
- At intersections, stop signs, etc, never make a car have to stop or alter their course just to make it easier on you. If they have the right of way, then always stop or yield to them.
- If a car stops at an intersection for you or does you a favor, be sure and give them and wave and say thanks!

#### On the front of the Paceline

- Don't accelerate when it's your turn at the front. Stay steady.
- Do not use your brakes. If you must, announce it first—clearly say "slowing" or "braking".
- If someone behind you yells out for any reason, do not automatically start slowing down. Quickly slowing causes accidents.
- Expect to go faster downhill and slower uphill. A good rule of thumb is to increase your power output 10-25% going up a hill and decrease your power output by 50-75% going down a hill.
- Always continue pedaling when going downhill so that others behind you do not have to apply their brakes.
- Do not swerve at the last minute to avoid something. Others cannot react that fast. Move to a safe line well in advance.

- If there is a stop light ahead, let people know ahead of time that you are slowing and may have to stop. Say “slowing” or “stopping” in a loud voice before you slow or stop.
- If there are stop signs, slow before reaching them and be prepared to stop if cars are in the intersection.
- Rolling stops at stop signs—be careful if you do this. Do not do it at the expense of a driver having to wait on you. Also, be very careful that your entire group can make it through the intersection safely.
- Always assume that a car will not stop. Always assume that a driver does not see you. Be vigilant at all intersections. Make eye contact with other drivers so that you know that they see you.
- If your paceline passes other bike riders, call out “on your left” as you approach them.
- If your paceline passes parked cars, give them a wide berth in case someone opens their door.
- When you point out road debris, make it so the 5<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> rider back can see your gesture, not just the person behind you.
  - Use a good hand gesture
  - Verbalize “glass” if you see it
- If you are going to turn at an intersection, use an arm signal. (It is OK to use your right arm if turning right.)
- Don’t stay up front longer than the average for the group, typically 2-5 minutes. If you are getting tired, do not slow down—get off the front instead.
- Before you pull off the front, check and make sure the coast is clear—no cars. Then give an “elbow wave” or tap your hip.
- After you pull off, soft pedal to get to the back of the line quickly. Start accelerating when you get abeam the last riders.
  - If you are last in line, let the person coming back know that you are the last person.