Swallowfield Draft

Chain Gang

The Swallowfield Draft is a club ride designed to improve the participant’s speed, fitness, endurance, technique and ability to ride in groups in the safe and energy efficient manner. The Chain Gang for the purpose of the activity will be called so, but in other clubs will go by the name of “Chain Gang Ride”, “Pace Group”or “Power Hour”.

* The Swallowfield Draft is:
  + NOT a race
  + NOT a Time Trial
  + NOT a competition
  + NOT timed and there are no positioning or results

Aim

To create an organised group ride for cyclist (subject to having third party personal cycling cover) allowing them to ride with likewise minded people in a chain gang style group setting during a weekday evening.

Objectives

* To improve participants overall fitness and endurance
* To improve participants average cycling speed
* Improve participants abilities in the techniques required to ride safely and effectively in tight formation groups
* Help participants learn the dynamics of group cycling and its benefits
* Help Participants learn the different formations of group cycling

The Course

The Swallowfield Draft will take place on the following course that is made up of single carriageway (A) and (B) roads on the Hampshire, Berkshire border. It can be found here:

Eligibility

* All members of Cycling or Triathlon clubs are welcome to attend the ride
* Non members are welcome to attend the ride if they hold one of the following:-
  + Hold a RIDE or SILVER British Cycling membership Card
  + Hold a form of Third Party Insurance for cyclists

Method

The Swallowfield Draft will run every Thursday during the period of British Summer Time (BST).

The ride will start and finish at the Following location:

Spencers Wood Library

Basingstoke Road,  
Spencers Wood  
Reading  
Berkshire

RG7 1AJ

The start time for the circuit will be the following:

Slower Groups:- From 18.45

Fast Group:- 19.00

**If participants wish to have a choice of which group they ride in, they should aim to arrive before 18.45.**

The number of groups that ride will be dictated by the number of riders on the day and their ability

Method

* Riders will leave the start location in their selected group with the aim to ride continuously around the course at a speed dictated to by the group of riders on the day with the aim of meeting the above objectives.
* This ride is meant to test the aerobic capability of the rider and thus should exert the rider to their limit meeting the objectives if the ride is repeated each week.
* At times it may be possible that riders within the group may drop off the back of their selected group. If this happens it is down to the group on the day whether they reduce the group speed so the rider can rejoin the group, or continue without that rider. If this does happen, the rider dropped should continue around the circuit as they may catch up the group they have lost, or join another group that passes them. If they wish, the rider can leave the circuit all together.

Risk Assessment

* **ALL RIDERS MUST OBEY ALL TRAFFIC LAWS AT ALL TIMES.** This includes the highway code that allows riders of bicycles to ride on the road in pairs (<https://www.gov.uk/rules-for-cyclists-59-to-82>)
* Riders must be aware of the sign language of cyclists and use it to assist other riders in their group to hazards of the road. <http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/insightzone/features/article/izn20121221-group-ride-0>
* Riders must be aware that the road surfaces in the area are never perfect and always be aware of the following hazards:-
  + POT HOLES
  + RASIED AND SUNK DRIAN COVERS
  + PARKED CARS
  + LOOSE STONES OR GRAVEL
  + FALLEN TREES
  + OIL ON THE ROAD
  + OTHER ROAD DEBRIS
* All riders will prior to each circuit, sign in with the ride leader, recording their NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER and BIKE
* If a rider should be unfortunate enough to come off their bicycle the following emergency procedure should be followed:-
  + If in a group, THAT GROUP MUST STOP AND ASSIST THE RIDER
  + If alone, The first two riders to find them must stop and assist that rider
* It is suggested that all riders carry the following:-
  + Full puncture repair kit
  + Two inner tubes
  + Mobile Phone

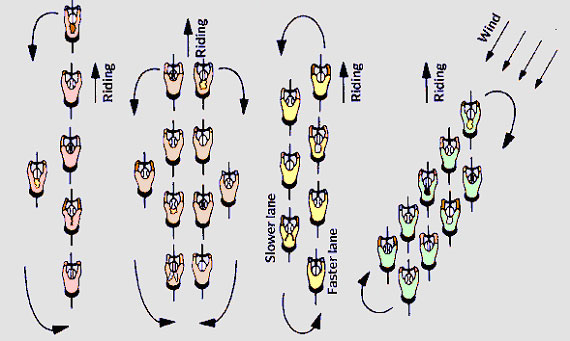
Useful tips on how to ride in the group

The essence of group riding is riding the paceline. It allows cyclists to travel faster with less effort and provides a better social experience. (It is also a foundation of racing.) Pacelines do have some inherent danger and require communication among the riders. But a good paceline is a wonderful thing.

The basic **SINGLE** paceline is simple. The riders align behind one another to take maximum advantage of the "drag" effect of the cyclists to the front. The cyclist in the front will set the group's pace, when the lead rider decides it is time to change, that rider pulls off to one side and drifts back to the end of the paceline.

The new lead cyclist increases effort SLIGHTLY (just increases the amount of pressure on his pedals) to *maintain* the group pace. A good paceline is smooth. A good paceline is built on trust. The riders have to be confident that the others in the group will communicate well and ride safely.

**TYPES OF PACELINES**



Which direction should the lead rider pull off? The single paceline picture above shows the rider pulling off to the left. But there are various reason to pull off either direction. If there is a cross wind the lead rider will pull off whichever direction the wind is coming from. This is because the riders in the single paceline will naturally line up as shown in the "echelon" picture to hide themselves from the wind. Some believe that the rider coming off the front and going backwards should not be in the lane of car traffic and should, as a general rule, pull off to the right. Basically, whichever direction the group is using, all riders should do the same thing.

The **DOUBLE** paceline is a minor modification of the single paceline. In this setting there are just two single pacelines side by side. The riders on the front of each paceline pull off in opposite directions. As a general rules, the pacelines are far smoother if the two front riders agree and pull off simultaneously. Otherwise, one of the lines has to surge to get the front riders side by side.

A **ROTATING** paceline requires more focus and greater skills but is very satisfying to be part of. In a rotating paceline there is an advancing (faster) line of riders and a retreating (slower) line of riders.

The retreating line is on whichever side the wind is coming from. If it is a headwind a tailwind or no wind, usually the retreating line will be on the right side and the advancing line will be on the left. (The opposite of the picture above).

The key to a rotating paceline is that when the rider at the front of the advancing line clears the rider who is on the front of the retreating line, the advancing rider moves into the retreating line and softens up his pace. The rider who was behind him continues the pace of the advancing line until that rider switches over. The rider in the advancing line should NEVER surge. The idea is that you *ride to the front* and float to the back in a constant rotation. You change your speed by "soft-pedaling" as you switch to the retreating line and increasing your pedal pressure as you switch from the retreating line to the advancing line.

Smooth switches, and keeping the distance between the riders in the paceline as small as possible will keep the paceline smooth.

An **ECHELON** is a paceline ridden in a crosswind. The riders will naturally find cover at an angle as shown above. An Echelon can refer to either a single paceline or a rotating paceline. In either case, the lead rider will pull off INTO the wind.