

Training Log 10: Training Camp Summary

For those of you who couldn't make the camp, here are a list of random notes of things that we learned over those four days:

Importance of teamwork and pack riding

Our Saturday ride in the Valley wasn't one for the history books. Besides it being a blazingly hot day, we were a group that had very disparate abilities and expectations. Some were slower in pace and unfamiliar with the route, long rides, and there wasn't clear communication about the nature and style of the ride itself. The end result was that people were scattered in ones and twos all over the route, uncertain of what was happening, and everybody was frustrated and annoyed by the end.

But every obstacle and challenge can be turned into a learning opportunity, and that's what we set out to do. Such a day reinforced the importance of teamwork and communication. The focus of the GTL ride isn't to race as individuals down to Texas, but to work together as a team to get each team to the end of each day's riding together, in good spirits, and as efficiently as possible. The way to do this is to make sure everyone on that team is clear and in agreement about the route and the style of that ride. Everybody should be familiar with the course for each of their relay legs, and have a map on their handlebars or in their jersey pockets to prepare for any contingency. At the same time, the group should decide on the general pace of the ride, the next planned stopping point, all the little things that are hard to communicate upon during the course of riding itself.

I'm happy to report that, after the relative disaster of a ride on Saturday, we had a simply tremendous group ride on Sunday out around the beautiful Aspotogan peninsula. We talked together as a large group about the route, the idea for the ride, then we split up into groups of 4-5, with the focus of riding together as a group. End result was that we had an amazing ride, where everybody got to practice riding in a pack, nobody got dropped, and we still averaged a decent pace. Another bonus was swapping up the groups partway through so that we could all get to know each other better.

September Milestone

One discussion led to my recommendation that, by mid-September, you should be comfortable doing back-to-back solo rides of 100-120 km at a pace of approximately 25 km/h. Such a target incorporates both the ability to sustain a decent solo training pace, keeping in mind that a group will be able to ride faster. In addition, there's the ability to recover and perform such a ride on consecutive days. You don't need to be able to do a week of such rides in training for the relay ride, but being able to comfortably achieve this goal, and possibly doing three consecutive days by the end of September, will give you the aerobic ability and the confidence to tackle the GTL relay.

Bike maintenance basics

To complement the riding, I also ran a bike maintenance session, where we ran through the basics of keeping your bike properly tuned up and running smooth. While there will be emergency support with each group, each rider should expect to be fairly self-sufficient when it

comes to keeping the bike tuned up and ready to roll each day during the relay ride. Some of the things that each rider should be comfortable with include:

1. Checking and keeping the tires inflated to proper pressure. You don't need to pump the tires each day, but every other day is probably good to have a check with a pressure gauge.
2. Taking the wheels on and off to pack the bike into a vehicle.
3. Adjusting the brakes. Note: when cleaning your bike or after riding in the rain, it's a good idea to take your wheels off and check the brake pads. Sometimes, you'll end up with little bits of debris in the pads that can really affect braking and wear down your wheels. You can pick out the debris with a sharp screwdriver.
4. Adjusting the shifting of the gears.
5. Fixing a flat tire! In your saddlebag, there should always be a spare inner tube, tire levers, and a pump or air cartridge unit. You should be comfortable with fixing the flat yourself and not relying on your teammates. So do not wait until it happens out on the road (flats have a way of happening when you're already late for an appointment, or when it's raining, cold, and/or dark!), but practice it at home until it becomes second nature.
6. It's also a great idea to have a bike-specific mini-tool in your saddle bag, including allen keys, screwdrivers, etc. There are some really small and versatile models available at bike stores.

Emergency ID

During training and the ride itself, it's essential that you have ID with you. That's for the worst-case situation that you get into an accident and vital information is required fast. I would estimate that, for 90% of my rides, I leave the house with zero ID on me, which eventually led me to wonder what would happen if paramedics came across me and had no clue who I am or what my medical info was. Having your health card or cell phone with you is fine on one level, but emergency personnel will face a delay in rummaging through your pockets, saddlebag, and then wonder which phone number on your cell they should be calling.

The best solution I have come across is the RoadID (www.roadid.com). They specialize in emergency ID tags, including dogtags, wrist or ankle bracelets, and shoe tags. These are the places that emergency personnel are trained to look for, especially as that's where people wearing Medic Alert tags would be wearing them. On my set of dogtags, I have my name, phone numbers for my wife and brother, drug allergies, blood type and organ donor. Along with my helmet, I feel absolutely naked now if I hop on the bike without my RoadID.

Other riding tips

Here are a random list of tips that we shared during the camp:

1. On hot days, be really wary of the black seam sealers that road crews use to patch up cracks in the roads. The sealer gets extremely soft, and can unexpectedly grab the wheels and cause a crash.
2. Speaking of crashes, be really, really careful of railway tracks! That's true both when dry and especially in the rain, and two GTL riders recently wiped out on train tracks. It's almost always better to slow down completely to cross the tracks, and also to cross them at a 90 degree angle.

Ride strong and have fun!
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