



Tips for riding longer distances and preparation for ‘Penny 2 Paris’

Whether just wanting to do longer rides, or preparing for P2P – the tips below will hopefully help.

The P2P Charity Ride seems a long way off (33 weeks from 20/11) but to give yourself a chance of really enjoying it, you need to be start preparing now.

It’s important to get cycling if you can, but if this not possible during winter, do other general fitness activity (swimming, walking the dog, indoor cycling, jogging etc)

There is some great day-time winter cycling to be had and getting time in the saddle before the spring comes will pay big dividends!!! And with the right gear, it’s really enjoyable.

GETTING OUT ON THE BIKE BETWEEN NOW AND THE SPRING (cold weather gear tips) :

Cycling cap – under helmet to keep head warm and rain off face

Layer up with - Base layer, Warm long-sleeved cycling jersey and Cycling ‘Shell’ Jacket

Padded leggings or cycling shorts over running tights

Neoprene shoe covers or winter cycling boots (recommend DAB Extreme 3.5mm Neoprene covers)

Winter Cycling gloves (merino inner gloves will help keep hands real warm)

Don’t forget you still need to drink plenty of water on the bike - even in the winter!!!

Try and use easy gears (mostly small front chainring) as large muscle groups (thighs) will struggle in colder weather.

Have some high viz clothing and lights for poor daytime light.

TIPS FOR STARTING TO RIDE LONGER DISTANCES

YOUR APPROACH

Time in the Saddle is key - Little and often rides are more likely to happen, and of more use than infrequent long rides

Try and get kit organised, so that you can jump on the bike – even just for half an hour.

We have some great short local-loops on our doorstep; ideal for your ‘little and often’ rides (Barnt Green/Alvechurch/Blackwell). This means you can stay local without worry of being stranded miles from home (and build the number of loops you do)



YOUR BIKE

Try not to have too much 'stuff' (e.g. heavy padlocks, bags, numerous lights etc) on the bike. Longer distance riding is about weight management 😊

Make sure your tyres are pumped up before each ride – it makes it easier (get a track pump).

YOUR HYDRATION AND NUTRITION

This is a key discipline – so get into the habit of sorting water bottle and energy supplements.

It doesn't matter how fit you are – your body only has finite reserves of energy, so will need to top up energy on longer rides. If you don't get your hydration and energy right – you will Bonk!! You only do this once and hopefully not on P2P!!!!

Before your longer rides

Ensure you are well hydrated – try and start hydrating the night before. Otherwise you will feel tired and start your ride on the 'back-foot'.

Have the right food/fuel before you ride – so that you can ride longer before relying on energy supplements. Try and eat 'slower energy release' food (low Glycaemic Index) a couple of hours before you ride. A Chocolate bar is as much use as a Chocolate Tea Pot before you ride (high GI) and will be released and used within a very short time. Whereas a bowl of e.g. Bran Flakes (low GI) will release available energy slower and for longer. You should then be able to do 1>1.5 hours before needing energy supplements.

<https://www.bikeradar.com/advice/nutrition/the-best-carbs-for-cycling-what-to-eat-and-when/>

During the Ride

Make sure you keep topped up with water on the bike and stay hydrated.

Have some form of energy supplement – Energy drinks, gels and bars. (there are many on the market – ask for advice) But research has found that equivalent types of supplement deliver very similar benefits.

Recent research indicatesthe form in which carbohydrates ingested does not really matter for the oxidation of the carbohydrate. In other words, as an athlete, you can mix and match and you can use gels, bars or a sports drink or whatever you prefer to get your carbohydrate. In terms of fluid delivery, which was not tested in this study, one would expect that with solid food fluid delivery is slightly impaired compared to liquid. So, athletes can mix-and-match and use whatever source fits best with their preferences.

Remember, most energy supplements whether drink, gels or food bars – require you to be well hydrated for them to work properly. For longer low intensity rides (such as P2P) a normal balanced



diet, topped up with energy supplements should be sufficient. Most energy supplements provide carbohydrates along with other key nutrients. But for longer rides in the heat, or riding at higher intensity – electrolytes may be needed to compensate loss of salt and other nutrients lost through sweating.

A few tried and tested Energy Supplements – SIS-Science in Sport (British Cycling Team - nutritional supplier), High 5 and Gatorade. Available on-line at Wiggle, Chain Reaction Cycles etc.

Some more experienced riders top up their supplements with a normal food 'treat' to look forward to when gels and energy drinks etc are losing their appeal. Fig rolls, Jaffa cakes, peanut butter & jam sandwiches are some of the favourites.

Keep drinking and grazing on the bike – and don't leave it until you are thirsty or hungry – as probably too late!!!! So fuel ahead and if you get the opportunity – always top up water bottles.

The London To Paris rides, usually have top-up supply of water and ready-mixed energy drinks, at the drink stops and on the 'follow-up Van'. But think of this as a back-up and don't rely on it, as it may not be an energy drink that you like. Even more reason to find out what you prefer now!

After the ride

Lots of expensive post-activity supplements on the market – but Milk (a half or pint within 20 mins of finish of your ride) is still a great post-ride recovery drink.

Research suggests that milk is 'nature's sports drink' and has benefits in muscle recovery and hydration after exercise. Studies show that milk can be just as effective as commercially available sports drinks when it comes to helping athletes recover from sport. Extract from Dairy UK – providing dairy, nutrition and health

<https://www.milk.co.uk/blog/2017/02/03/milk-natures-sports-drink/>

RIDING TECHNIQUES FOR LONGER RIDES

Make sure you are comfortable on the bike (as someone to check out the set-up of your bike)

- Too much weight forward on the arms can cause arm, shoulder and neck ache.
- Too much weight back on the saddle can cause back-ache and groin problems.

NB – there are chamois creams that can prevent soreness in the 'nether regions'!!! There are also now women specific saddles that can make longer rides much more comfortable.

Use your gears – save energy

Maintain a regular tempo (easier on the heart), by using gears effectively over different terrains, and always opt for easier, rather than harder gear. It will enable you to ride further and enjoy your



ride. (opt for small front ring when you can) anticipate when need to change gears – i.e. before a hill, rather than halfway up it!!

Don't let hills spook you – everyone finds hills difficult. Start hills in a really easy gear and at a very steady pace – and you will probably overtake folk who have 'gone for glory' too early.

Get the benefit of riding in a group

The P2P rides will prob split into differing speed groups. Make sure you get the benefit of 'drafting' (riding behind someone). Only seems a slight benefit – but huge over 4 days avg 75 miles per day!!!!

Gradually increasing your distance

More chance of increasing your distance between now and P2P, if doing 'little and often', interspersed with gradually longer rides. And you will be less likely to suffer the uncomfortable after-effects of very occasional long rides (sore legs and nether regions)

You – with your Chaingang buddies – can sort your 'little and often rides' and hopefully there will be a calendar of longer rides in advance of P2P.

TIPS FOR MULTI-DAY RIDE CHALLENGES

We rarely ride on consecutive days. But you will be doing 4 days of approx. 70 miles per day.

Don't think of each ride as one Mega Ride. Break each one down into bite sized chunks, broken up by drink breaks and lunch stop (never much more than 20 miles).

Riding on consecutive days will mean you need to pay more attention to your post and pre ride state. So, after your ride, have your post ride milk (some chance!!!), and have a stretch. Make sure you are well hydrated overnight and have appropriate food/fuel the morning before you ride.

Will be good to get in some 'consecutive day' rides - within your 'little and often rides'. Then you can progress to longer 'on the bounce rides' which will hopefully be in the P2P prep programme.

Finally – you don't have to 'train like mad' for P2P!, just start getting time in the saddle, riding regularly and introduce longer rides as spring comes along. Also get used to sorting your water and energy supplements – but most of all ensure you are riding efficiently.

Enjoy !!!!!!!

Mike Dickenson – Nov 2019