

Cycling answers

Your technical, legal and health questions answered by CTC's experts

THE EXPERTS



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Butterfly bars are rare in the UK but provide a range of hand positions



■ TECHNICAL BUTTERFLIES IGNORED

Q I noticed that all three world cyclists' bikes (Going the Distance, Cycle June-July 2010) were fitted with butterfly-shaped handlebars like ours. Saddles were compared in the report, but not handlebars. Why? People in the street often remark on our unusual handlebars, yet they are common in other countries. In most German and Dutch cycle shops probably one third of the cycles on sale will be fitted with butterfly handlebars. Is there any simple explanation as to why Butterflies are ignored in this country?

Ted Prangnell

A I agree. We really should have remarked that all three long-distance racers dropped the usual drops (usual for any racer or long-distance tourist) in favour of a shape of handlebar that is almost unknown in their home country! Clearly the comfort advantages of combining a more upright posture with a variety of hand positions outweigh any

aerodynamic loss, even when the whole purpose of the journey is to eat miles. How much more sense must that make when you're riding for pleasure? This is also a change that anyone could make add to their own bike – if only it were easier to find a handlebar like that in the shops.

As for why butterflies are such a rare species in Britain: it's because the easiest way to sell a bike in a non-cycling country is by reference to cycle sport – and you never see butterfly bars in any kind of race. Except this race!

Chris Juden

■ HEALTH KNEE REPLACEMENT

Q Following pain and discomfort in walking, I am on a waiting list for a left knee replacement. The surgeon has informed me this will considerably reduce the knee articulation, being a purely mechanical joint.

I can understand this but will it affect my ability to cycle? I am now 81 years old.

E Taylor, Eaton Bray, Beds.

A Don't worry: cycling is usually possible after a knee replacement and is in fact an excellent low impact exercise to build up the muscle strength post-operatively.

A total knee replacement is an increasingly common operation whereby all the articular surfaces of the knee are replaced, usually because of damage to the cartilage from arthritis. Over the last few decades they have improved significantly, taking into account much more the physiology and function of the normal knee. Knee replacement is usually considered if pain and loss of function are having a significant impact on quality of life, and other non-surgical options such as painkillers and physiotherapy are no longer effective.

After surgery, over a matter of weeks, the amount you can bend the knee should improve and while you will not achieve the full range of movement of a normal knee, it is usually perfectly adequate for walking and cycling. Follow the advice of your physiotherapist and surgeon.

Start gently on an exercise bike and after a while you should be able to think about resuming some road cycling (not usually within the first two months), taking it easy at first and gradually building up. Flat pedals would be sensible as you don't want to have to twist your knee to unclip in a hurry. It is not uncommon for further



improvements in knee function to continue for up to a year post-op.

Dr Matt Brooks

Chris Juden adds: It may be worth trying an adjustable swing-crank from Highpath (pictured) or Unicam. These have been found to be most beneficial in achieving the full potential post-operative articulation of artificial knee joints – as well as getting people mobile on a bicycle at the earliest opportunity. I've had excellent feedback from members I've advised accordingly.

The unique benefit of a swing-crank is that it allows the knee to extend fully, which it normally can do very soon after the operation, but does not require it to flex (i.e. bend) any more than whatever the patient can tolerate, meanwhile allowing the other leg to pedal normally.

It is found that time spent pedalling within the pain-free range nevertheless results in an increase in the flexibility of the tissues surrounding the joint that has been operated upon, increasing its pain-free range of movement. So that sooner rather than later, the swing-crank can be re-adjusted to rotate in a larger circle.

Thus, bit by bit, the full range of movement (as permitted by the prosthesis) may often be achieved. In that case the original crank may be restored to the bike. But if full movement cannot be achieved, the Highpath swing-crank may be used indefinitely.

For more details on either, see <http://www.highpath.co.uk/highpath/cycles/swingcrank.html> and <http://www.uni-cam.com/products/default.htm>

LEGAL HIT & RUN DRIVER

Q I was rammed by a hit and run driver whilst cycling in December 2008. I was uninjured but my bike was a write off. The Police treated the incident as an assault and criminal damage but were unable to discover the identity of the driver and would not reveal to me the details of the insurance policy of the car involved. How can



TECHNICAL GREATER YEARS, SMALLER GEARS

Q Having reached the senior ranks of cyclists I would like to obtain larger sprockets with a definite bias towards low gears. I am not having any success with this and am wondering if you can offer any advice?

Tom Gurrie, Dublin

A Now that one can buy ready-made 9-speed cassettes with up to 36 teeth and triple chainsets with as few as 22, there isn't much need for anything customised. Problems arise for those trying to adapt a venerable bicycle with components (e.g. a screw-on freewheel) that are no longer supported by the trade in a better than rudimentary manner. In that case, contact Chris Bell at www.highpath.co.uk.

However, the easiest thing – and often the cheapest thing – is to update the bike, with a new freehub, gear mechs and shifters from one of Shimano's mountain bike groupsets. You'll probably also need to have the rear ends cold set to 135mm apart, and switch to flat bars if currently still using drops. An old frame is probably steel which makes the first alteration a safe and simple job, and the second brings the side benefit of a more upright position – which is generally also necessary with advancing years.

Chris Juden

I go about claiming compensation for the damage to my bicycle? My bicycle wasn't insured and have only third party insurance.

Jake Voelcker

A Where a collision has been caused by a motorist who is either uninsured or drives off without being identified it is possible to pursue a claim with the Motor Insurers Bureau (MIB).

The MIB have two agreements: the Uninsured Drivers Agreement, which compensates victims of uninsured motorists, and the

(Above) Mountain bike groupsets offer very low gears – and can readily be used on other bikes

(Left) Swing-cranks are a good solution for cyclists with limited knee flexibility

Untraced Drivers Agreement, which compensates victims of untraced motorists.

If the identify of the motorist is known then they can be sued in their own name (the damages are met by the vehicle insurers), under the Uninsured drivers agreement. The vehicle insurers will have to deal with the claim even though the driver might have breached the terms of the policy e.g. using the vehicle as a weapon. If the vehicle was stolen and the motorist causes an accident then the vehicle insurers will still have to deal with

the claim.

If the driver was not identified then the relevant course is the Untraced Drivers Agreement. It is a pre-condition to making a claim under that agreement that the incident is reported to the Police quickly (within 14 days for cases involving injury or five days for property damage only claims).

If the claim is only for property damage then the Motor Insurers Bureau will also require the registration number of the offending vehicle. If this is not available then a claim cannot be pursued.

Under both MIB agreements there is an excess in relation to property damage in the sum of £300 (i.e the first £300 of property damage is not recoverable).

In the example, I would advise that Mr Voelcker submit a written request to the Police Station requesting the details of the offending vehicle e.g. the make, model and registration number of the vehicle. Once this information is available then an application can be submitted to the Motor Insurers Bureau under the Untraced Driver's Agreement. An application form can be downloaded from their website: www.mib.org.uk.

Paul Kitson

THE BELLS!

Q What are the regulations regarding the fitting and use of bells on bicycles? The last bit of legislation that I could find related only to the compulsory fitting of bells to new cycles (May 2004).

Jeff Harvey

A Nothing has changed since that 2004 legislation, which applies only to retailers. Provided you ride only in Great



A bell has to be fitted at point of sale, but in Britain it's optional whether you keep it on

Britain, you are free to remove (or never fit) the bell which comes with every new bike sold since then. But Northern Ireland has its own version of the Road Traffic Acts, with odd little differences, one of which, I believe, requires bells on bikes.

I reckon it's more useful to have two efficient brakes on a bike than one bell, but the International Convention on Road Traffic doesn't. This Convention specifies the minimum equipment each type of vehicle needs in order to travel pretty much anywhere. Chapter V calls for 'an efficient brake, front lamp, rear lamp and reflector, and a bell capable of being heard at a sufficient distance, and no other audible warning device'. So although you need two brakes, foreign visitors can get away with one. Yet when you visit a country that requires a bell, you must fit one.

Since quite a few European countries require them (the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany... and Northern Ireland) it's probably just as well to keep the bell that came on that new bike!

Chris Juden

CONTACTING THE EXPERTS

Send health and legal questions to the Editor (details on p88). We regret that Cycle magazine cannot answer unpublished health and legal queries. Technical and general enquiries, however, are a CTC membership service. Contact the CTC Information Office, tel: 0844 736 8450, cycling@ctc.org.uk (general enquiries) or Chris Juden, technical@ctc.org.uk (technical enquiries). You can also write to: CTC, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, GU2 7JX. And don't forget that CTC operates a free-to-members advice line for personal injury claims, tel: 0844 736 8452.

NOT TO BE SNEEZED AT



Hay fever is an annoyance to any sufferer, and running eyes and nose can affect a cyclist's vision and concentration.

Pollen counts peak between 9am and 12pm. Then they lower until about 5pm when they rise until about 7pm. Try to avoid being outside during these periods. Start each day with a bath or shower to remove any pollen that may have settled on your body during the night.

Eat a good breakfast including fresh fruit, rich in vitamin C. A healthy breakfast will help the body's natural immune system to fight the effects. Similarly at lunchtime, eat healthily, plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, avoid junk foods like chips and burgers. When returning from a venture outdoors, changing your clothes and washing will help remove any pollen you have picked up during a bike ride.

By around 8pm most of the pollen will have settled on the ground, and this is often the most comfortable time of the day for hay fever sufferers. If you still feel a bit stuffy, try a face sauna. Fill a bowl with hot water, put a towel over your head, then hold your face over the steam and breathe. If you are tired the symptoms can become worse, so get a regular amount of sleep each night.

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