

Expert advice

Q&A

YOUR TECHNICAL, LEGAL, AND HEALTH QUESTIONS ANSWERED. **THIS ISSUE:** CYCLING OFFENCES, ONE-BY GEARING, BOLT-ON BATTERY LIGHTS, AND MORE

MEET THE EXPERTS



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Cycling offences don't incur points

Left: Steven May / Alamy

Legal

POINTS ON LICENCE?

Q I picked up a leaflet from a stall manned by officers from Police Scotland at the Edinburgh Festival. It states that one's driving licence is vulnerable to offences committed on a bike. I have previously been told that this was a myth. What is the case now? And what offences might attract such a penalty?
Bill Coppock

A As a solicitor who works under the jurisdiction of England and Wales, one has to be careful when commenting on issues north of the border, although I suspect our approaches would be broadly similar.

Cyclists can be penalised by a fixed-penalty notice pursuant to sections 28 to 30 of the Road Traffic Act (RTA) 1988. The range

of such punishments will depend on the type of offence (such as cycling on the pavement/ pedestrianised streets, jumping a red light, etc) and the geographical location where the offence has been committed. However, such punishment would not be in the form of penalty points on your driving licence but rather a fine. The maximum penalty for dangerous cycling is £2,500 and the maximum penalty for careless cycling is £1,000. Most fines involve more trivial offences and are substantially less.

The courts do have a general power, under the Criminal Courts Sentencing Act section 146(1), to disqualify a person from driving a car for any offence, possibly including offences committed on a bicycle. The courts would need to have a 'sufficient reason' for the disqualification, but if you commit a

traffic offence on a bicycle this might suffice. Whilst the court does have such powers, it seems unlikely they would resort to such an approach when there may be more appropriate sanctions available – such as a fine or, in extreme cases, a prison sentence. The latter occurred in the unusual and recent case of R v Charles Alliston, widely covered in the press, where a cyclist who killed a pedestrian received an 18-month prison sentence in a Young Offender Institution for the offence of wanton or furious cycling.

Ultimately, my advice would always be to follow the Highway Code and relevant legislation when out and about on your bicycle. In doing so, you will no doubt stay safer on the road and be able to avoid any potential legal issues.

Richard Gaffney



Technical THE ONE RING

Q Boardman has introduced a new range of hybrid bikes with 1x10 and 1x11 gears. What are the pros and cons of a single front gear and 10 or 11 rear gears?

Christopher Deane

A It's not just Boardman; one-by drivetrains are becoming more common, especially on mountain bikes. The pro is that there's no front derailleur and, of course, there's just the one chainring. This reduces complexity and weight and obviates the possibility of a poor front shift or lost chain. One-by chain retention relies on specially-designed chainring teeth, limiting chainring choice.

The downside, as the AquaBlue pro racing team found, is a narrower overall range of gears than is possible with a double chainring set up, since this depends on the cassette, and greater gaps between ratios since there are fewer of them. The latter is particularly important for racers, who like to keep close to a preferred pedalling cadence, but touring and leisure cyclists also benefit from closer ratios.

Also, to get a decent rear range with a 40t largest rear sprocket, a one-by cassette may have a smallest sprocket as small as 9t, which is relatively inefficient because the chain links must articulate through a large angle when wrapping around it.

Richard Hallett

Technical SLACK IN THE SYSTEM?

Q My Ridgeback Panorama Deluxe, which I built up from the frameset, has Sora shifters and derailleurs, 48-38-28 chainrings and an 11-34 cassette (giving 22-118in). It's generally fine, but a couple of times I thought: 'If this hill were any longer, or I had any weight on, I wouldn't make it.'



9-speed MTB/
road compatibility
is good

One ring:
good for some
applications;
doesn't rule
them all



The Sora rear derailleur has a capacity of 43t. But I've seen there's a Shimano XT (I think), that has a capacity of 45t. So I was thinking of changing and putting 48-36-26 or 44-34-24 on the front. Will there be any drawbacks with a wider capacity rear derailleur? Will it be harder to set up? Mikeymo, via the Cycling UK forum

A If you fit a 9-speed XT rear mech, which will happily index with the Sora shifters, you should find no perceptible difference in performance on your cassette provided it is set up correctly. The XT mech is designed to work with the cone angle of a wide ratio cassette and shifting precision may suffer if it is used with, say, a 12-27t road cassette.

One potential drawback, unless your frame's down tube has indexing adjuster screws for the shift cable outers, is the lack of an indexing adjuster on the mech; it does not have one since mountain bike shifters incorporate the adjuster. If your frame lacks suitable fittings, an in-line cable adjuster will let you fine-tune the indexing.

In practice, the Sora mech's 2t smaller capacity won't be an issue with either proposed chainring combo, unless you like to use the inner chainring with the smallest sprockets.

Richard Hallett

Health RASH DECISION

Q I'm new to cycling distances, and have developed a rash on the inside top of my thigh. I've had it now for couple of months. What should I put on it? It takes me two months to see my doctor. Markymark, via the forum

A First, can you find a different surgery? Waiting times are getting worse but a

couple months is well off the scale.

Diagnosis is not always obvious from simple inspection, and doctors often use response to treatment as a diagnostic test. Symptoms can help: pain suggests bacterial infection; itchiness suggests allergy or eczema; fungal rashes and psoriasis usually cause neither much itchiness nor pain. Blistering could be cold sores or shingles. Rash elsewhere, or nail changes, suggest a generalised rather than a local problem.

Prevention first: try a bland, greasy cream, applied before a ride. Experienced cyclists have their favourites; I like Sudocrem, which is persistent and mildly antiseptic. When washing, avoid using soap on the area, or anything else that could irritate inflamed skin. Warm water rinsing is fine. Is clothing or the saddle rubbing? Is the saddle off-centre? Is there a prominent seam in your shorts?

Whilst waiting for an appointment, the next thing to try would be an antifungal such as Clotrimazole (Canesten) or Terbinafine (Lamisil) for presumed fungal infection. These will be slow to work, two to three weeks perhaps, and need to be used for a while after the rash has apparently cleared to prevent recurrence.

No better? Try a steroid, hydrocortisone ointment, or one with added antifungal as Canesten HC.

If it's still no better, it really does need looking at by someone who has seen a lot of rashes, preferably an experienced GP – or even a dermatologist if you are able and willing to pay privately. You may need antibiotics or stronger steroids, which would require a prescription.

It may even require a simple skin biopsy to diagnose. The result can sometimes surprise even the experts.

Doug Salmon

Technical
BOLT-ON BATTERY LIGHTS

Q Do such things exist? Lots of battery lights make a thing about their tool-free fitting. This is the opposite of what I want! I want them to stay firmly on the bike all the time. This bike is for city commuting. I'm not especially keen on a dynamo, for weight and cost reasons. I could recharge lights in situ when bike is in the garage.
kwijibo, via the forum

A Such lights generally look much like their manufacturers' dynamo-powered offerings. There are plenty available, including Busch & Müller's IQ Eyro, various models from Spanninga, and Axa's Sprint Battery.

There's a review of four rack-fitting rear lights on the Cycling UK website. See cyclinguk.org/rack-fitting-rear-lights.

Richard Hallett



Fork-mounting
Busch & Müller
IQ Eyro

Technical
UPSIDE DOWN DYNO LAMP

Q I'm going on a tour in two weeks and I want to use a bar bag. Unfortunately I have my Edelux light mounted to the fork crown. As the bag hangs in front of the light, I need an alternative position for the light. I have heard of these lights being mounted upside down. I have a front rack but I don't want to attach it just for the light.
Antonish, via the forum

Antonish, via the forum

A SON offers an Edelux model specifically made for upside down mounting, with the attachment bracket on the top and electrical connectors designed to keep out water. Mounting a standard

Edelux upside down risks water ingress unless you can find a way to seal it. If your front rack is easily attached, it might well be the simplest solution.

Richard Hallett

Technical
CROSSOVER TANDEM CHAINSETS

Q Are the cranks on a crossover chainset any different from standard cranks? I have a tandem with a pair of lovely TA chainsets. I am tempted to rob them for my road bikes as they are probably worth more than the rest of the tandem, which I'm too big for.
landsurfer, via the forum

A Three of the four cranks are different, and the reason is pedal thread direction, which uses the action of 'precession' to keep the pedal axle secure in the crank as it rotates. A solo cycle's righthand crank has a righthand thread and vice-versa. In a tandem crossover drive, the rear righthand crank has a chainring spider and a righthand thread and can therefore be used on a solo.

The other three cranks have the 'wrong' thread for solo use (the pedal will loosen thanks to precession): the front righthand crank has no spider and is of no use on the driveside of a solo but can't be used on the non-drive, while the two lefthand cranks do have spiders but can't be used on a solo's driveside.

If your tandem has TA Carmina-type cranks with a detachable spider, then you could put the two lefthand cranks to solo use minus their spiders, giving you one and a half usable cranksets. Given the price of such crossover chainsets, you might be better off selling it/them and putting the funds towards new solo chainsets.

Richard Hallett

Technical
SLOPPY DISC MOUNT

Q I have Shimano hydraulic disc brakes. The front disc has always rubbed a bit, despite me adjusting the pads repeatedly. So I've swapped the front and rear brakes. What was the rear brake now rubs; it didn't on the back. I have also bought and fitted a new disc-compatible front dynamo wheel. It doesn't rub either. The previous wheel is a standard Fulcrum wheel and the new wheel is handbuilt. They are both Centrelock, but use different lockrings. Could my problem have been the wheel? And if so, what was the problem?
martinn, via the forum

A The common feature, when the disc rubbed, would appear to be the original front hub, suggesting that its Centerlock interface may not have been machined to be entirely concentric with the bearings, giving the disc some run-out and making it rub no matter how carefully adjusted.

Richard Hallett



Only the rear
RH crank is
like a solo's

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