



# Pedal Press

www.angelfire.com/mi/kbc

The Newsletter of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club, Inc., June, 2001

## President's Letter

Happy Summer! Finally the weather is getting nicer to ride in. And what better way to start the new season than with a brand new bike! I just bought a fire engine red bike with some black accents. She sure is pretty. She sits pretty low to the ground and the saddle is soft and cushy. Peppy little thing too. The one thing I like most about this bike is that it operates with a key and you get to rest your legs instead of pedaling them to get around town. I just bought my first Harley Davidson motorcycle. I am a Honda Girl converted to a Harley Momma. I will have fun with it during Flowerfest that is for sure.

Well, the club rides are up and going. Looks like we have a few kinks to work out with the large numbers, but we seem to be getting them under control, breaking them up into smaller groups. Thanks to the group leaders for getting this under control. You guys (gals) are awesome. Next time you see your group leader, thank them for a great job and let them know you appreciate them!

I have one more week of working evenings at the fitness center and then I am free to join you all on a ride or two at night. I am so much looking forward to getting a chance to meet everyone. We have a great club and I understand it just keeps getting better. KBC is a "Team Club", everyone working together to promote fun, healthy lifestyles, and safety. KBC is awesome!

As you read this newsletter, I have probably just gotten back from competing in an Ironman in California. I left May 16 and should return May 22. I have not done a spring Ironman before, so this will prove to be very interesting. I will see if my winter spinning paid off.

Can you believe that someone can actually spin for a few hundred miles a week on an indoor spin bike all winter long??? I truly enjoy riding indoors during the winter. Good tunes and good friends, life is good.

Have a wonderful month of riding and ride safe. Enjoy our great city, and countryside. Hope to see some new faces at our June meeting.

Karen Sue/Ironmom

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## KBC's Wish List

1) **Volunteers** to work a shift at Flowerfest on Sunday, July 21—Call David Newman at 375-8105.

## Two New Rides

KBC is offering two new weekday rides. Actually, one is just being changes, the other is another group added to the Monday Night Ride.

Doug Kirk, who thinks he knows what he's doing in a paceline, is offering a Paceline Riding Skills ride, which meets with all the other Monday night riders at Texas Drive Park, but leaves a few minutes afterwards. The riders spend a few minutes talking about paceline riding techniques, then head out to practice. The group may stop once or twice during the ride to talk and answer questions. Pace is in the 16 - 20 mph range, starting out slowly and gradually picking up the pace as the group becomes well-oiled.

Kathy Barrett and her women's group has decided to open the group up to men also, so the ride is now called the Co-ed ride. It still leaves Texas Drive Park at 6:15 pm on Thursdays. Kathy needs alternate ride leaders, so call her if you can help out at 388-5045.

This group rides about 20 miles at about 16 mph, depending on who's there. It's a friendly ride, with lots of tailing and no hammering.

## Pass the Remote

As this issue goes to the printer, you can find your faithful Editor in front of the TV each night at 9:00 glued to Outdoor Live Network (OLN) watching the DAILY coverage of the Giro, Italy's version of the Tour de France. (OLN is part of the new cable package in Kalamazoo, and also is on Direct TV.) The Giro is the second largest bike race in the world, after the Tour de France, and is the same 3 week stage format as the Tour. It ends about June 15th. Most of the big teams (but not Lance and the Posties) are there, beating each other up in sprints, time trials, and mountain stages every day.

The coverage is superb, with Phil Liggett (simply the best bike race announcer, period), along with Paul Sherwen and American racing icon—and very cool dude—Bob Roll, who has quite a flair for this stuff too. There are also hours of daily LIVE coverage, which is while I'm at work, but every night they have 90 minutes of coverage of the day's stage, starting at 9:00. It's great. Even better, they are doing the same thing for the Tour de France, which starts at the end of June, and also the Vuelta, which is Spain's version of a 3 week stage race, in September.

Generally, they show all of the last 25 - 40 miles of each day's stage. You can learn lots watching and listening. It's amazing how smooth these guys are. And take a good look at their position on the bike. Ever wonder just how strong these guys are? Bob Roll said that when Marco Pantani won the climb up L'Alp d'Huez last summer, he did the climb in a 53 x 17 gear (big chainring, middle cog). Imagine climbing 6th St. hill—but 15 or 20 times longer—with twenty-one extra steep 180 degree hairpin turns, in the middle of a three week, 2400 mile race in a gear like that.

I strongly recommend watching these DAILY shows. If you're pressed for time, watch the last half-hour, which will include the end of the stage. OLN also devotes Thursday nights to bike racing. Even when these big races aren't going on, they show other racing (big mountain bike races like the Sea Otter and the European Spring Classics) between 8:00 and 11:00 pm every Thursday.

## Smooth & Straight

12th St. just got new pavement between Parkview and Milham, and a lovely new shoulder separated from the traffic lane by a nice, thick white stripe. The polyester paint is so thick that you can actually feel your tire rise up when you go across it. The polyester has a really low coefficient of friction, and if you can keep yourself on the stripe, you will feel your ride get smoother, and even a bit faster. Try it yourself and see if you don't agree. You have to be smooth to stay on the stripe, and it's good practice to do so anyway. Use a gear that you have to spin, not hammer, and look way down the road. Even if you look 10 or 20 yards ahead, it's much harder than if you look at least a hundred yards up. I guarantee the smoothest ride around is on that stripe on 12 St., but practicing staying on one of these stripes any place is excellent for your skills.

## Congratulations

A tip of the helmet to **Pete Skellenger** and **Ken Fouts**, each of whom just rode their first century, and in four hours and forty minutes—including stops. Well done!!

## June Birthdays

Phil Caruso  
 Rosanne Degen  
 Clara DiJulio  
 Nicole Grevenstuk  
 Alec Hapman  
 Anjanette Jonas  
 Justin Merkling  
 Richard Neumann  
 Sally Niermann  
 Joan Orman  
 Anne Pancella  
 Bob Schuler  
 Sally Van Buren  
 Carolyn Vonderfecht  
 Teena Webster

## New Members

Shawn Busby  
 Jen Fouts  
 Ken Fouts  
 Maddie Fouts  
 Rachel Fouts  
 Brad Hackman  
 Kirsten Hemmy  
 John Howsen  
 Kevin Kavanaugh  
 Helen Lukan-Kavanaugh  
 John Schwab  
 Peter Skellenger

## Classified Ad

**Trek 930 Mountain Bike** with Rock Shock Jett fork. Frame size 15", good for someone in the 5'4" range. SunTour components, Matrix wheels, good condition. Asking \$130.  
 Call John Thome @ 353-5812

## Expiring Memberships

*(The Editor is given to understand that sometimes people's names appear in this list even though they might have recently sent in their dues. This problem is due to the time gap created between the mail being picked up at the Post Office, then delivered to the Database Manager, then entered into the computer. Just to add even more delay, the information is sent to the Editor on the 15th each month, and two more weeks pass before the PedalPress is written, printed, folded, labeled, and mailed. We apologize to those folks who pay up only to find themselves listed here.)*

Lee Anderson  
 Kara Linne Barone  
 David Bishop  
 Diane Bishop  
 Ann DiJulio  
 Clara DiJulio  
 Doug DiJulio  
 Mark DiJulio  
 Bill Duggan  
 Brad Fry  
 Sherry Gordon  
 Ruth Grevenstuk  
 Douglas Grevenstuk  
 Matthew Grevenstuk  
 Nicole Grevenstuk  
 Abby Guimond  
 Sherry Higgins  
 Mike Higgins  
 Julie Lawford  
 Greg Lawford  
 Justin Merkling  
 Dan Meyer  
 Nathan Meyer  
 Carol Meyer-Niedzwiecki  
 Dan Nash  
 Sally Niermann  
 Carol Stafford  
 Richard Walter  
 Teena Webster  
 Aaron Webster  
 Jeff Webster

## Seeking Committed Bicyclist

The League of Michigan Bicyclists seeks a part time Programs Assistant for administrative and program duties. The work schedule is 1-2 days a week with flexible hours and pays \$7-\$9 an hour depending on qualifications. No benefits. Casual dress is appropriate and bicycle commuting highly desirable. Non-smoking building. Worksite is in downtown Lansing, MI on the River-trail.

**Qualifications:** Mastery of Microsoft Office software and Internet; Strong verbal and writing skills; comfort with public contact on phone, by email and in person. Knowledge of transportation planning, environmental issues, alternative modes, bicycle safety education, land use, public policy or related disciplines. Four-year college degree in a related field preferred; if currently in a Degree Program, Junior, Senior or Graduate Student preferred. **Requirements:** Daily access to Internet, commitment to promoting alternative modes; must be frequent bicycle rider and agree to use a helmet when commuting or on LMB business. Must be able to lift and move boxes weighing 35-40 lbs.

The League of Michigan Bicyclists (LMB) is a non-profit membership organization, which promotes and defends the rights of cyclists in Michigan. Our 14 member Board of Directors and dozens of volunteers and one full-time staff person work on a variety of projects all over Michigan to advance bicycling for both residents and visitors.

The LMB works to improve conditions for cyclists statewide in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation and other agencies. We also collaborate with bike shops and clubs around the state on many projects. We promote cycle tourism in Michigan, distribute general cycling information, educate children and adults on safe cycling and represent the interests of cyclists to policy makers and at public hearings. LMB projects include: the quarterly Michigan Bicyclist magazine, annual Poster Calendar listing most Michigan invitational tours and rides, three on-road, week-long and fully supported Shoreline bicycle tours, and a multi-day off-road, fully supported mountain bike tour, Bicycle Safety Literature Program: Service organization and classroom, visits and free safety education material distribution program, "The Law's For All" video and brochure educating law enforcement officers on bicyclists' rights and responsibilities; Public Service, announcement videos showing safe cyclist and motorist behavior, and encouraging helmet use.

EMAIL or MAIL a letter of interest and a resume, including three personal references (with phone numbers). More details available by email, NO PHONE CALLS PLEASE!

Lucinda J. Means, Executive Director  
 League of Michigan Bicyclists  
 P.O. Box 16201, Lansing, MI 48901-6201  
 Email: [LMBike@voyager.net](mailto:LMBike@voyager.net)  
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## KBC Meeting Minutes for May 8, 2001

Kalamazoo Bike Club Meeting Minutes, May 8, 2001. Location: Chuck Jaqua Realtor office building, 414 West Milham Road, Portage. Time: 7:00 PM. Present: Zolton Cohen, Doug Kirk, Karen Sue Oulette, Randy Putt, Kathy Barrett, Tom Keizer, Greg Bouwman, Steve Secondi.

This meeting started out with the announcement that the *PedalPress* Newsletters were not mailed according to the mailing schedule, and that Gerry Blohm, the newsletter distributor, has resigned. Kathy Barrett offered to arrange to get the newsletter mailing labels from the database manager, and to coordinate mailing the newsletters out this month while the search commences for a new newsletter distributor.

Doug Kirk will add to the Wish List an opening for the position of KBC Treasurer, as Paul Stevens has announced his plans to rotate off the Board in the fall.

There was discussion about the problems associated with automobiles and large groups of bike riders on the road. The Board decided that, after having broken the club rides up into more manageable groups, usually based on projected riding speed, this has largely become a non-issue. The general feeling is that smaller groups of riders will be easier for impatient car drivers to pass, and that this might make it somewhat safer for the bikers involved in the club rides.

Karen Sue reported that the KBC association with the Borgess Run for the Health of It went well, and that the Club members who volunteered to man the aid station during the run did a good job. KBC had the opportunity to pass out many of the new Club membership application brochures the night before and the day of the event.

Karen Sue received a contact from the US Post Office in Kalamazoo asking if KBC would be interested in participating in a USPS Bicycling Team "flag raising" ceremony. Kathy Barrett will get in touch with the USPS in order to get more information about this event.

John Johnson has provided Randy Putt with a number of excellent bike route maps. Randy would like to create a "route book" and archive of these maps, and would also like to make them available to Club members on the website and also in printed form.

Zolton announced that the graphic designer who has designed the poster for the last several Flowerfest Tours

had agreed to do it again this year. Zolton will get in touch with the Flowerfest committee in order to get information pertaining to changes on the poster.

There was discussion about the possibility of merging the July "Ride to South Haven" with the proposed KBC Family Picnic. Karen Sue and Randy Putt will contact Larry Kissinger about the possibility and logistics of mounting such an event.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Zolton B. Cohen, KBC Secretary.

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## *PedalPress* To Begin Coverage Of Area Races

As the focus of KBC has turned from racing to club rides and tours the past few years, the *PedalPress* has slowly lost any coverage of the local racing scene.

Last month, we asked for a volunteer to serve as a liason between the *PedalPress* and area races and racers so we can include more information of interest to our members.

While it is true that your Editor never was much of a racer, many of us fancy bike racing generally, and your Editor views racing as the lifeblood of the sport. KBC ought to promote racing as much as we can, and this starts with decent coverage and exposure. There are some mighty fast people around here, and even faster people who WERE here, and have gone on to race professionally.

Thankfully, Chris Barnes, a KBC member and ex-racer of some note (who has dozens of good stories,) has answered the call, and will be gleaning results and names from various events, which we plan to include here.

So hey, we may not be *Velonews* here, but you can still get your name in print for your efforts. All racers are encouraged to contact Chris with information and results at 327-8972.

- Doug Kirk

## June Ride Calendar

### ALL WEEKDAY RIDES START AT 6:15 PM IN JUNE

The Monday Ride at Texas Drive Park consists of six ride groups in June which provide a pace to suit riders of all abilities:

- 15-20 mile group at 10-12 mph need leaders,
- 15-20 mile group at 12-15 mph led by Mike & Sherri Higgins, and Cliff Muller,
- 25-30 mile group at 16-18 mph led by Terry O'Connor and Fred James,
- 25-30 mile group at 19-20 mph led by Larry Kissinger, Rick Whaley, Tom Cross, and Greg Bouwman.
- 25-30 mile group at 20+ mph, no leader yet.
- **The newest ride is the Paceline Skills Ride**, led by Doug Kirk. This ride is to learn/practice proper paceline bike handling and drafting technique at a recovery ride pace (starting out east and slowly working up to 20 mph or so). Rider response has been very positive so far.

The turnout on Mondays and Wednesdays has been tremendous. Several riders from each group are typically present with as many as 50 riders all together. I've been told that there is a die hard group who even rides when it is raining. The 10-15 miles groups will generally ride the same route and are recommended for new riders. For more experienced riders who are new to the club the 16-18 mph groups is recommended. The faster groups ride the same route. We need additional ride leaders for all the ride groups. The more volunteers the better. The ride leaders make every attempt at keeping each group together although the 20+ mph group may fragment.

The Tuesday Ride starts at Breakaway Bicycles on Romence Road in Portage. The ride is led by Paul Wells and consists of one group that rides 25-30 miles at 16-18 mph. Check this ride out. It is a friendly group.

The Wednesday ride meets at the Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot. KBC plans to offer three ride groups:

- 10-15 mile fitness group at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail (need leaders),
- 25-35 mile group at 16-18 mph led by Bill Strome,
- 25-35 mile group at 20+ mph led by Zolton Cohen. Zolton's group has been starting 10 - 15 minutes after the Hammerfest recently due to the enormous size of the pack when both groups left together. So far, this is working very well.

### by Ride Captain Randy Putt

The Wednesday night Hammerfest starts at Kal-Haven Trail Parking lot at 6 PM. The pace of the ride is typically greater than 20+ mph and the route goes to Bloomingdale and back (about 46 miles). Since the route is well known to most of the regular riders, no maps are available for this ride. This group is typically large (more than 15 riders) and consists of racers and other experienced riders. There is no designated ride leader. The group typically fragments into smaller groups and the riders often times do not finish together. This ride is hard and is not suitable for inexperienced riders. Some riders can be expected to be dropped from the main group.

Try out the fitness ride at 10-15 mph on the Kal-Haven Trail. There is no ride leader yet. Come on out anyway and start the group on the trail. This ride needs ride leaders to make it a go. We need additional ride leaders to substitute for the regular riders from time to time for the other 2 rides also.

Kathy Barrett and the regulars in the Thursday Women's Ride have decided to open the ride to both genders. **The new, co-ed Thursday Ride** will be more laid back than most KBC rides, more social and relaxed. The ride will be about 20 miles, at 15 - 16 mph. Members are encouraged to bring spouses or significant others to ride at this pace. The ride still leaves Texas Drive Park at 6:15 pm. Kathy needs alternate ride leaders, so please contact her if you can help.

The Friday Tour de Gull meets at Billy's Bike Shop in Galesburg for a ride around Gull Lake (27 miles). We have three ride groups this year.

- 15-16 mph group led by Beth Davis, Ed Wilson, and Cliff Muller
- 17-19 mph group (need ride leaders)
- 20+ mph group led by Randy Putt, Rick Whaley, with a host of others filling in as needed. All groups follow the same route. The route for this ride is well established so the ride leader job is easy. Give it a try. If you are interested, please contact me.

Meet at the KVCC parking lot on Saturdays at 9 AM and 12 PM, and Sundays at 9 AM and 12 PM for 30-60 mile rides. There will be no designated ride leaders. Those riders who show up will determine the route, distance, and pace. Come on out to ride with old friends and meet new friends.

# June

ALL WEEKDAY RIDES START AT 6:15. Note that Saturday and Sunday we now have TWO ride times—9:00 am and noon.

2001

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
<b>27</b> KVCC-1:00  Riders present decide pace and distance.	<b>28</b> Recovery Ride Texas Drive Park  6:00 10-15 mph 6:00 16-18 mph 6:00 20+ mph Paceline Practice	<b>29</b> Breakaway Ride Breakaway Bicycles  6:15 17-19mph	<b>30</b> Wed Night Ride Kal-Haven Trail-head  6:15 10-15 mph 6:15 16-18 mph 6:15 20++ mph	<b>31</b> Co-ed Ride Texas Drive Park  6:15 pm 20 miles at 15 - 16 mph	<b>1</b> Tour de Gull Lake Billy's Bike Shop  6:15 15-16 mph 6:15 17-19 mph 6:15 18-21 mph	<b>2</b> KVCC  9:00 am AND ALSO NOON Riders present determine pace and distance.
<b>3</b> KVCC  9:00 am AND ALSO NOON Riders present decide pace and distance.	<b>4</b> Recovery Ride Texas Drive Park  6:15 10-12 mph 6:15 10-15 mph 6:15 16-18 mph 6:15 20+ mph Paceline Practice	<b>5</b> Breakaway Ride Breakaway Bicycles  6:15 17-19 mph	<b>6</b> Wed Night Ride Kal-Haven Trail-head  6:15 10-15 mph 6:15 16-18 mph 6:15 20++ mph	<b>7</b> Co-ed Ride Texas Drive Park  6:15 pm 20 miles at 15 - 16 mph	<b>8</b> Tour de Gull Lake Billy's Bike Shop  6:15 15-16 mph 6:15 17-19 mph 6:15 18-21 mph	<b>9</b> KVCC  9:00 am AND ALSO NOON Riders present determine pace and distance.
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<b>24</b> KVCC  9:00 am AND ALSO NOON Riders present decide pace and distance.	<b>25</b> Recovery Ride Texas Drive Park 6:15 10-12 mph 6:15 10-15 mph 6:15 16-18 mph 6:15 20+ mph Paceline Practice	<b>26</b> Breakaway Ride Breakaway Bicycles  6:15 17-19 mph	<b>27</b> Wed Night Ride Kal-Haven Trail-head  6:15 10-15 mph 6:15 16-18 mph 6:15 20++ mph	<b>28</b> Co-ed Ride Texas Drive Park  6:15 pm 20 miles at 15 - 16 mph	<b>29</b> Tour de Gull Lake Billy's Bike Shop  6:15 15-16 mph 6:15 17-19 mph 6:15 18-21 mph	<b>30</b> KVCC  9:00 am AND also noon Riders present determine pace and distance.

## Flowerfest Preparations

The May 2001 Flowerfest Meeting was held at the Portage Public Library Thursday May 17, 2001

1. Greg Bouwman reported that prior to the June 21 meeting he would have contacted MacKenzies, Gordon Water and Subway to confirm all last minute details.
2. Zolton Cohen reported that he has a person assisting with preparation of a Flowerfest Poster. Zolton will have 150 produced and distributed locally.
3. Tom Keizer reported that Saturn had confirmed a rider and cash donations are being received to support our July 22 Flowerfest event. Also Vic Van Fleet will be contacted to assist with registration since he volunteered last year. Pastor Dale Krueger is questionable since he may have Boston, MA commitments.
4. Cliff Muller reported the t-shirts were being printed during July and he would order the 300 water bottles required for pre registration gifts.
5. David Neuman is off in Hawaii, but has distributed Flowerfest brochures across the state and CABDA. Plus, he has the digital phones on order.
6. Rick Whaley has Tuesday July 17 reserved for route marking and Thursday July 19 as a back-up rain date.
7. Pre registrations are arriving. Jinny will keep the committee informed with exact numbers as we countdown.

Our final Flowerfest Meeting will be June 21 at 7:00 pm at the Portage Public Library.

**If you can volunteer to help with the event—either on the day of the event (help out early and ride later, OR visa-versa) PLEASE contact Dave Newman at 375-8105.**

- Terry O'Connor

## New PedalPress Distributor

With this issue, we welcome KBC member Amy Lehman as the new Distributor of the newsletter, replacing Gerry Blohm. If the editorial wheels turn smoothly, her presence will be almost invisible. If you need to contact her, Amy's phone number is on the back page. Thanks, Amy.

- Doug Kirk

## Upcoming Bike Tours

The 2nd annual Old Car Festival Ride (about 60 miles) starts at Vicksburg High School (just East of Vicksburg on W Ave) on June 10 at 9 AM led by Randy Putt. Maps will be provided. The route goes through Colon, Centreville and will cross the beautiful Covered Bridge over the St. Joseph River north of Centreville.

The terrain is mostly flat and the roads are good. The pace will be steady at 17-19 mph. Riders of all abilities are welcome. Bring your own food and water. The group will stop in Colon and Centreville at convenience stores for refueling. After the ride, stop by the Old Car Festival in downtown Vicksburg and check out the cool old cars.

Mark your long range calendars for special weekend rides in July and August. Two more rides are planned for the summer months and there's room for more.

Larry Kissinger's out-and-back Ride to South Haven for lunch and some time at the beach (100 miles) is scheduled for July 7 at 8 AM starting at KVCC. There are rumors of a KBC picnic in South Haven starting about 11 AM on the day of the ride. Stay tuned.

The Ride Around Kalamazoo County (100 miles) is likely to take place on August 11 or 18 at 8 AM and will likely start at KVCC. Mark your calendars. If you have comments about these rides or have suggestions for other rides, contact Randy Putt by phone at 649-1814 or e-mail at [SRBike@aol.com](mailto:SRBike@aol.com).

Check the KBC web page [www.angelfire.com/mi/kbc](http://www.angelfire.com/mi/kbc) for the ride calendar and for any last minute changes.

On June 23 Bike to Build will be held once again in Centerville starting at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds (east of town on M-86). This ride offers routes of 12, 30, 56, and 70 miles. Proceeds from this ride support Habitat for Humanity. Pledges are also welcome. It is a nice ride on lightly traveled roads in St. Joe County. If you are interested in making this ride a century, plan to meet at 8 AM at Vicksburg HS on Highway St. (W Ave.) in the SE corner of Vicksburg. We will ride the 15+ miles to Centreville to join the ride.

- Randy Putt

## NPR Rides

by Steve Cox

*(Regular readers will recall Steve's thoughtful and technical articles a few months ago about pedaling technique. Steve is a very smart fellow, not to mention a scientist of bicycling. As this article shows, he has some interesting ideas to keep one's head fresh and one's legs strong. -Ed.)*

Houston Petersen and I have been scouting roads for an NPR ride we're hoping to organize later this year. Although one of us frequently listens to National Public Radio, the ride won't be a fundraiser for WMUK. NPR is our acronym for "no painted roads" and our goal is to have as many miles of the ride as possible on dirt roads. One potential 80 mile loop has at least 40 miles of dirt roads. With luck, we'll manage to get a bit more dirt mileage on the final circuit. Although some people might prefer to do the ride on fat tires (i.e. mountain bike or cyclo-cross tires), we'll stay on our standard road or track bikes. I admit that riding a skinny tired track bike on the dirt may seem bit eccentric, but please don't let it dissuade you from coming on our ride.

We've been doing a lot of dirt riding on skinny tires during the past two years, and it is surprisingly fun. The rides have gradually evolved, with the initial rides having only brief interludes on dirt. These first dirt excursions generally occurred because it was more convenient to reach our destination by briefly riding on dirt than by going miles out of our way on pavement. The dirt mileage has gradually increased, however, and now we search for interesting dirt roads. Our weekend road rides typically include 10-30 miles of dirt roads. We prefer to use our road bikes on these rides because less than half of our mileage is on dirt, and the road bikes are much faster on pavement than fat tired bikes. Also, the dirt portions of our rides are typically only ridden in brief 1-5 mile sections, which are separated by miles of pavement. We usually don't have prolonged sections on really soft dirt that could grind down a rider if fat tires are not used. The separated dirt sections tends to lead to fartlek workouts, with relatively high intensity on the dirt and recovery on the pavement. These rides might be interesting to mountain bikers who've gotten bored with going around in circles at Al Sabo, TK Lawless, Fort Custer, etc. The rest of this article describes some things we've learned from our rides on dirt roads, and we hope it will convince you to join us on a ride. *(Details for next month, Steve? -Ed.)*

By not taking detours to avoid dirt roads, we've found that our available network of roads has greatly expanded. Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties all have some wonderfully scenic dirt roads. By including

some of these roads in our rides, our cycling circuits have become more varied, less boring, and more fun. The dirt roads usually carry little traffic, and the few motorists who have seen us have been courteous and passed relatively slowly. Because of the light traffic, night riding on dirt roads may be relatively safe with a decent lighting system. The bikes have held up surprisingly well on these rides, with much less dust on the componentry that might be expected. Most of the roads have little gravel, so we have not had problems with prematurely worn tires, pinch flats, or chipped paint.

Riding skinny tired bikes on dirt roads can provide excellent training benefits. A higher intensity/effort is generally required on dirt to go the same speed as on pavement, and turning a big gear on the dirt for several miles into a headwind with skinny tires can effectively mimic the sustained effort of mountain climbing. Riding over chatter bumps becomes more bearable as speed increases, so that bikes can be ridden relatively smoothly along the tops of the bumps as speed increases to 25+ mph. Another advantage of going fast on the dirt is that bike handling generally improves as speed increases. To go fast comfortably for prolonged time periods on the dirt requires strength and pedaling economy. Intervals on the dirt will help make you strong.

Riding on the dirt can also be a good tool for evaluating your pedal stroke and form on the bike. For maximum economy, a rider should have a relaxed upper body and a relatively light grip on the handlebars. If a rider has tense hands and arms, he/she will be fighting the bike and wasting energy as the bike slides around on the dirt/gravel. The bike will be less squirrely on the dirt if the rider has a smooth pedal stroke and is able to apply nearly continuous, steady pressure on the pedals through 360 degrees of crank rotation. A rider who just pushes down on the pedals will be much more likely to have an unpleasant, extra-wobbly dirt ride.

These rides have instilled in us a better appreciation of the demands of Paris-Roubaix. The "Queen of the Classics" is easiest when the course is dry so that the racers can stay off of the pave (i.e. cobblestones) and ride in the dirt alongside the pave. The race is almost 170 miles long, with approximately 30 miles of pave. I went on several 80 mile rides this spring that included 30 miles of soft dirt roads, and these rides made me feel as if I had ridden at least another 20 miles. I can't imagine how difficult it must be to race in the rain over the pave.



## The Hammerhead Diary

by Axel Kleat

I suffered like a dog for years before I found enough strength, savvy and moxie to hang with the Hammerheads on Kalamazoo's infamous Wednesday Night Hammerfest. Even now, if I'm not sure my legs are spinning on all the cylinders and my tank's full of premium, I'd better ride with the next slower group, or risk ending up wishing I had. Group rides tend to grow their own personalities, and this mean older brother to other club rides suffers so questionable a reputation that the club disowned it a few years ago, when the one Board member fast enough to partake was outvoted.

Hammerfesters, who come from all over southwest Michigan, are mostly racers of one sort or another. Mountain bike racers, road racers, triathletes, endurance and marathon racers, ex-racers of all kinds, and other fast riders generally known among themselves as The Usual Suspects. The 46 mile route, essentially unchanged for 10 years or so, was concocted by a very gifted endurance cyclist now living in Grand Rapids, Roberta Fischer. Except for one or two bumps along the way, all the hard hills are at the end, where they hurt the most. Though many people think the Hammerfest name comes from the hard heads of the participants, in fact the Hammerheads got their name from Roberta, who long ago was dubbed "The Hammer," a name she despised and was no doubt happy to lose.

Riders inexperienced in fast pack riding find the psychology of a really hard race/ride like this just as daunting as the generally disorganized paceline, high speed, sudden accelerations and poor decision-making around stop signs. Here's a primer how it all works, or doesn't work, depending on your point of view.

Milling around in the parking lot at the start is good, and whining that one's legs feel like cement because of a) too much riding or b) not enough riding is expected. If you arrive at the last minute, expect no help to speed things up, and the group might just start rolling out before you're quite ready. It will be impossible to discern just who got tired of waiting. Riding one's bike to the start scores definite style points.

Forget about discussing the pace, route, food or pee breaks, or anything else about the ride either before

leaving, or as the group straggles slowly out of the parking lot with no concern whatsoever for traffic. Everyone knows most of the people, nobody knows all the people, and what possible good could it do to befriend some new guy? This is almost a race, right? Make him prove he belongs! Oh, and no reason to talk about the route. Maps? Surely you jest! Everyone knows the route. If you don't, just stay with the group and you'll be fine. If you get dropped, you're on your own, unless someone else gets spit out around the same time. Flat tire? Maybe someone will ask if you've got what you need. Ride leader? There is no leader, and for good reason—no one to foist the blame on for whatever might happen. Hey, if you're going to be a wimp, you don't belong here anyway.

Expect to ride really slowly for the first mile or two. Things are neutralized, just like in real road races. Gotta get the old legs loosened up, and nobody except Al Muldoon is crazy enough to go off the front of the group this early. But at the big downhill after the stop sign, look out. And if a tandem or two's along, the folks in back better be alert because the pack stretches way, way out when the tandems streak right to forty mph. These aren't exactly the sort of folks likely hit the brakes just so you can catch. Better make sure you've got a good wheel to follow.

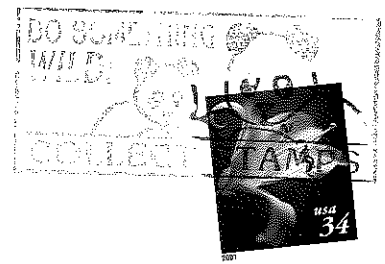
After a short rise, it's a right turn and more downhill. This one usually has a wicked crosswind that strings the group out across the road in a riotous eighth-mile echelon sailing at 35 mph completely lacking organization. At the bottom there's a 2 mile false flat that just gets harder and harder because this is the first time the strong men begin to flex their muscles. Could these guys possibly maintain this effort the entire ride?

As it turns out, they can't—or don't. Praise the Lord and pass the Cytomax. The idea here is just to maintain contact with the group—any group—since it generally splinters. They'll relax for a while after the stop sign at the top, and you'll catch if you aren't too far back. This is a good time to assess things like your heart rate and breathing. If you are conscious and can still read the jersey in front of you, cardiac arrest is not eminent and you may want to continue. Also, try to remember to enlist enough operative brain cells to see if any cars are coming at the stop sign.

*(If Axel's heart rate drops enough that he can focus on the keys and form coherent sentences, we'll continue his Diary next month. - Ed.)*



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