

THE ULTIMATE SPORTIVE RIDING SURVIVAL GUIDE

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1. Training

If you are planning on participating in any sort of event, make sure to thoroughly prepare your body for hours in the saddle. Learn your course and train for all aspects of the event – aim to train for at least three quarters of your event completion time, in all kinds of weather. Try to match the terrain on your training routes to the course of your chosen sportive – if you will be participating in an event on a hilly route, training on flat ground won't cut it!

2. Maintenance

Don't leave thorough checks until the night before the race – the sooner you notice a potentially threatening problem, the more time you will have to fix it. You should clean and check each of the following areas for wear, cracks, stiffness, misalignment, or damage:

- Drivetrain
- Bike Frame
- Wheels and Tires
- Brakes
- Bike Shoes

Replace components where needed, and make sure that all your bolts are tightened to spec. You should also perform a test ride to ensure that steering, braking, and gears perform properly, both up and down hill. Listen for unusual noises, and investigate any changes that you notice, no matter how small.

3. Group Riding

Don't let the day of the event be your first exposure to group riding. In the weeks leading up to the event research where your local club meets and ensure you learn the basics of group riding. The group ride should enhance your cycling experience. In a group you can cover greater distances than you would on your own but it's important to understand and be comfortable vocalizing common safety signals (car up, car down etc). Safety is the primary concern while riding in a group. Head up, accidents down!

4. Dress for the Weather

You should be aware of the weather going in to the event and dress appropriately. Keep your eye on the weather forecast in the week leading up to the event. Pack a kit to allow for any unexpected weather conditions, such as rain, heat, or cold weather, so that you will be ready to change your attire for any situation. Utilize the rear pockets of your jersey; in Ireland we are always likely to encounter a heavy shower. Have your rain cape folded neatly in your rear pocket so you can access it when needed.

5. Nutrition and Hydration

A good basic rule is to consume one gram of carbohydrates for every two pounds of bodyweight per hour of the ride. You should eat small amounts of food often and focus on foods that will give you nutrition as well as energy, such as bananas, bread, dates and peanut butter.

As for hydration, remember that it is hard to drink too much water, but you will suffer both immediately and in the long run if you don't properly hydrate. Most professionals recommend a bottle of water and a bottle of sports drink for every hour of normal riding, or more in hot weather or high-stress situations.

6. Recovery

After your event, the key to recovery is rest and restoration of lost nutrients. What is truly important in the 30 minutes following the event is to replenish your glycogen stores with carbohydrate- and protein-heavy snacks, which will help your body restore muscle. Chocolate milk or tuna sandwich make for a perfect recovery snack. Look to have a well balanced meal no more than three hours following the event.

“At A1 Coaching we are specialists in preparing riders for Sportive events. Your bike doesn't come with an instruction book. Let us be that instruction book. We've previously made all the mistakes you are making, we've been in your shoes, let us navigate you around the common pit falls and ease your transition into what is a magical sport.”