



Jul-Aug 2005

Ann Arbor Bicycle Touring Society ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●



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Rolling Along with Danny Reeves

By Lynda Collins

It may have already occurred or one day soon on a country road, you will be passed or drafted by a guy on rollerblades.... That fellow is Danny Reeves, a twenty-nine year old U of M graduate student, who joined AABTS last summer. Danny rides sometimes on a bicycle like the rest of us, but sometimes he uses his rollerblades.

Recently he completed a ride of eighty-four miles from Wheeler Park to Munith and back on his blades.

He usually rides or blades Huron River Drive and also in Plymouth. However, he has completed the Blue Water Ramble on blades for 110 miles, adding ten miles due to getting lost. Weekly he rollerblades in Gallup Park on the Ann Arbor Friday Night Skate, a beginner-friendly event which he initiated. Danny has also competed in bike races and rollerblade events.

He started biking and blading over ten years ago in high school in Illinois. Then in the past couple years he added speed skates and has been participating in race events. In his last race, 87 miles from Athens to Atlanta, GA and in the rain, he completed the event in 5 hours 28 minutes for an average speed of 25 km/h or 16 mph. On his last AABTS ride he was moving along at 17.5 mph. On downhills he's gone over 40 mph and thinks maybe in a sprint he could reach 30 mph. Yet he suffers on the uphill climbs (don't we all).

Essentially he's never fallen and is particularly careful when blading with cyclists as he worries about damaging the reputation of bladers who want to participate in bike rides. He wears just the same equipment as a biker — gloves and the essential helmet, so luckily he has been undamaged. Danny says, "The people on AABTS rides are just wonderful, and incredibly kind and welcoming to me. And it's the best possible training for skating races. Keeping up is brutally difficult so every ride is an exciting challenge."

Like bikers Danny follows all of the traffic laws but has found that many motorists in Michigan are anti-bike so he prefers whether skating or biking to be with a group. However, possibly because a rollerblader is so unusual on the road, the comments from motorists tend to be more encouraging and cheerful, especially when he's trying to stay with a group of cyclists. Though he has biked and raced bikes, he now prefers rollerblading. "On a bike, it's you and this machine you're piloting. On skates, it's just you. ... Also, I'm a skier (all kinds ... downhill, cross country, back country) and skating feels like skiing."

Right now, Danny has essentially grounded himself but after he finishes his PhD thesis (just in time for Dalmac) he will rejoin us on the roads, either on two wheels or eight.



PACE-LINE TECHNIQUE

By: Jim Datsko

There has been an ongoing recognition in bicycle clubs that safer group-riding procedures would make club rides more enjoyable, and reduce the number of crashes that have occurred when riders bump wheels. This article will be my contribution to that safety effort.

It was during the try-outs for the US Olympic Cycling team in the 1970's that I first experienced the awesome power of a true pace-line. My younger brother had been invited, along with about 80 other American cyclists to Lake Luzerne in beautiful, mountainous, upstate New York for this event. The weeklong try-outs consisted of a series of criteriums, road races, and time trials during which the coaches evaluated each cyclist's performance and ability for possible selection for the team.

I had been too busy with my US Army duties during the turbulent Viet Nam era to realize how bicycling was catching on in this country and poised to become a major boom in just a few years. My backwards thinking was that the only way to go really fast on two wheels was to own a Honda 305 Scrambler, as I did in those days. To say that my two-wheeled "world view" was forever changed at Lake Luzerne would be a big understatement.

In that scenic resort-lake and Italian-restaurant studded region of New York I, first witnessed poetry-in-motion rapidly approach from the distance, and the sensory input neared overload. The brightly colored jerseys, shiny silver-spoked wheels audibly whirring in their own wind, well-waxed Italian and English paint jobs were accompanied only by the melodic subdued ratcheting of a freewheel almost in synch with the rapidly spinning jockey wheel and high rpm pedals-strokes. Just as quickly as the tight echelon of four riders shot by, they were immediately a bright speck down the other direction of the country road. No problem though, because the next team would be arriving right on schedule just a minute or two later - an express train comprised solely of powerful locomotives working together as a single unit, like a well-oiled machine. Think the soundtrack from "Chariots of Fire," or "Rocky" and you can imagine the emotional impact of seeing the high-speed possibilities of human-powered locomotion. Not only was the legendary John Howard there, soon to be the fastest bicyclist alive with a motor-paced speed record of 152 mph at the Bonneville Salt Flats, but the champions from each state of the union were present.

Nothing would ever be the same for me again. As an elementary school student I had earlier taught my younger brother how to ride my balloon-tired Montgomery Wards bicycle, and even had an extra seat welded on the top tube in front of mine to create a poor-kid's tandem for him to ride with me. Now it was time for a little payback, as I asked Rob if he could teach me how to ride a ten-speed; which he was eager to do. He soon signed me up with the Wolverine Sports Club in Detroit where we all learned volumes from the legendary Mike Walden of Florida training camp and Olympic cycling star fame. After a few years of Midwestern racing I realized that it was really the team time-trial event that I preferred where the riders would all work together for a common goal, instead of fighting each other during the event.

About that time we were forming the Ann Arbor Bicycle Touring Society, and I was more than glad to impart much of what I had learned about team riding to make our informal club pace-lines not only a faster experience, but a vastly safer ride. Our founding club was soon priding itself on taking the willing new members under our wing who had trouble riding the six miles out to the Delhi Rapids rest stop. By fall these same riders were working together to ride their first century. They also did it in a very respectable time by applying the efficiency of the team time-trialing techniques. A popular series of pace-line seminars were held on the road during our weekly Saturday morning breakfast ride. From the organized tours I was doing all around the country, I soon saw that our club had group riding skills and etiquette unmatched by any other "touring" club. The results were a remarkable safety record on all of our large group rides, often with well over 100 riders at a time.

As one of the original instructors of these pace-line clinics, my opinion was that close group riding could be either the most dangerous place in the world to be, or the safest place in the cycling world to be. It all depended upon the knowledge and skill level of the participants. I analogized it to the Navy's flight demonstration team: The Blue Angels.

So what are the rules to participate in the unparalleled efficiency offered by team time-trialing? One of the most important points is to recognize that you are operating as a team. Contrary to road-racing and criteriums, you are not competing against each other. Whatever competition there may be is solely against the clock as a form of "personal best," or possibly against another team that will not be drafting with you. The primary benefit is the exhilaration achieved once you've mastered this skill, and are able to cruise at speeds you once dreamed of, or are able to use the efficiency to stretch your tours into the scenery of neighboring counties where you formerly couldn't handle the distance riding by yourself.

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It's an excellent demonstration of the "whole is greater than the sum of the parts." Whether it involves racers or tourists, the same results hold true: working perfectly together they will cover ground far more efficiently and rapidly than they could by themselves, or than the same group of racers could do using ordinary "crit" or road-racing tactics. Since wind drag increases exponentially with speed, following the rules precisely is absolutely necessary at higher cycling speeds. Cycling publications use the figure that over 80% of a cyclist's effort at racing speeds comes from wind resistance, even at touring speeds it can be 50-60%. With these kind of gains, the value of teamwork is obvious.

The importance of following the rules often has to be literally screamed into riders who violate them and endanger the nearby riders in their group. This extreme chastisement usually isn't necessary where the rider takes the training seriously and follows the established procedures. The individual skill of the rider often isn't a factor, rather his willingness to subordinate his ego for the common good of the group is what really matters. This was well demonstrated during Lance Armstrong's record setting 2004 Tour de France race. Watching the team time-trial events showcased how precisely U.S. Postal followed the rules, and how poorly most of the other teams followed the established team time-trial technique, with inflated egos and poor discipline getting in the way.

Here are the ten main pace-line factors that must be learned and obediently followed for expert team time-trialing, whether during a race, or just to tour more efficiently:

- 1. Ride a straight line.** This is very important, and many of the other rules exist primarily to back-up this primary rule. No weaving or wobbling allowed. If you can't keep your bike tire in a four inch width, such as riding down the white "fog line" on the edge of the lane, then practice and work at your balance, sighting further down the road, until riding this straight line becomes second nature.
- 2. The leader must lead.** When in the front position, you are the leader. As leader, you are protective of those riders behind you who are dutifully following your wheel. They expect you to be the forward eyes and ears of the group. Call out braking, slowing, stopping, gravel, etc.
- 3. The leader must safely steer the entire group.** If you spot a pothole or other road hazard ahead, you will slowly initiate a ½ degree gradual course change to steer the entire group safely alongside the hazard, keeping in mind which direction they will be echeloned "off your bike" given the prevailing wind direction. If you fail to spot the hazard in time, you will not do a last minute dangerous "swerve or jink maneuver" to avoid it, rather to maintain the straight-line stability of the pace-line you will ride through it yourself while pointing out the hazard so the others may avoid it. Minor areas of rough-patch, or small bumps or twigs are ignored and simply ridden through if they present no hazard to the riders or their equipment (wheels.)
- 4. Maintain constant speed.** The leader will be setting pace. Everyone else in the line will maintain that exact speed. If you should creep up a couple of inches on the rider in front of you, skip a pedal stroke or two, or lightly tap your brakes as necessary to adjust your speed to that of the leader. This requires that you are always guarding at least one brake lever with your hand ready for immediate braking. Otherwise the pace-line will deteriorate into the "yo-yo" effect of a beginner's "pace-line." Keep in mind Rule #1, and remember you can't swerve off to the side if you are gaining on the rider in front of you, rather you can only gently bleed off that extra speed. When going downhill, the leader may not quit pedaling, or the following riders will bunch up and possibly start bumping wheels. Rather the leader will shift up a gear or two and gradually build up the gravity-assisted speed so the riders drafting behind him will not be forced to ride their brakes while "free-wheeling."
- 5. Swing-off before becoming exhausted.** As leader it is your responsibility to hold the precise pace. As you become tired you will slow down, become wobbly, and less attentive to road conditions ahead. In summary you will become an incompetent leader, so you always want to "swing-off" from the pace-line before deteriorating to that level. Plus you'll need enough energy to tack yourself back onto the rear position of your group as they all pull through, or you will be promptly dropped. For really fast pace-line work, such as during the "Big Mac Attack," we limited ourselves to "50 pedal-strokes and off." We would then be approaching exhaustion at those speeds. The length of your stay at front is directly related to the group speed.
- 6. Swing-off properly.** There are many factors in executing a good "swing-off." If you are riding on ideal cycling roads, you will have the full width of the lane to ride a true echelon, angled away from the wind direction. If so, the leader always swings off into the wind direction, so he continues to shield the group from the effects of the wind as he drifts back to take up the rear position. In today's congested road conditions, the ability to ride a true echelon is more the exception than the rule, so instead you will probably always be swinging left. All riders in your group will be aware of this, and none of them will be overlapping your wheel to the left. So the swing-off is signaled by a brief acceleration and brisk change of direction to the left, which the following cyclist will interpret to be a swing-off, and he will not attempt to follow your unusually brisk change of direction. Unless riding with novices, there is no need to take a hand off your handlebars to point, or tap your butt, or any other beginner's method of signaling. Once off the line, drift directly rearward quickly, and then accelerate to rejoin at the rear.

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- 7. Overlapped wheels can be dangerous.** Experts at time-trialing will routinely be overlapping wheels to achieve the perfect echelon given the wind direction from a side angle. In fact, all four riders on a four-man team often will be riding literally touching their elbow to the hip of the forward rider. Just like the Blue Angels, this requires great skill and training, it's not for beginning pace-lines at all. Until you build up to that level of skill, you are better off not overlapping wheels at all, rather leave a foot or two safety gap.
- 8. Keep an eye out for safety.** Though the temporary leader is the official eyes and ears of the group, you can help him out. Call out if there is a "car back" or side traffic which he may not see. The rearward riders, like the leader look some distance down the road. You don't stare at the wheel in front of you, rather you sense it while you are looking further down the road for potential hazards. At intersections, stop signs are obeyed, and you re-group once through the intersection. Each rider personally looks and confirms that he is "clear" to safely cross.
- 9. Limit Group Size.** The optimum size is four or five riders in the pace-line. This provides the necessary benefits of a long enough rest period between your turns pulling, keeping the group down to a manageable size for potential echelon work, providing some view down the road for most riders, and minimizing the "yo-yo" effect that creeps in with larger groups. In today's congested environment it also allows cars to pass the small cluster of cyclists. Olympic teams are four-man, other races may allow five-man, and time the fourth one across the finish line, so at some point the weakest rider will be expended. One method often used to reduce the group size, especially where some of questionable pace-line etiquette have joined your line, is to ever so gradually build up the speed. Once the shaky or excess riders have been "spit out the back," the team may then resume a more normal pace-line speed. This is one of the few exceptions to the constant speed rule, and is never necessary during a true team time-trial event. There is no efficiency benefit to the "double pace-line," nor do racers in a team time-trial ever engage in the "rolling pace-line;" both are simply too inefficient to have any value.
- 10. Hold Your Position.** Remember that you are a member of a team. There's no glory in sprinting from your position as third or fourth rider in the group to take over as leader of the group. To the contrary, all that you have done is violate most of the established pace-line rules. Rather, if you feel that the leader's speed is beginning to sag, encourage him to "swing-off," to allow the group to smoothly all pull through so he may rest on the rear until his next turn up front.

These skills come from team time-trials in the racing world. They are equally applicable to riders that for whatever reason chose to ride safely in close proximity to each other, especially if they are riding at a somewhat higher than purely "sociable" riding speed. It helps to know the riders in your group; however, at the Olympic try-outs most in each team had never ridden together before. It was their knowledge of the established procedures that made it an elegant and safe operation. It's much like the Captain and Co-pilot who have never met each other before, but are now safely flying your airline trip using an established choreography of busy, but well orchestrated company procedures. For presenting these safety rules in a touring club newsletter, I have "de-tuned" them slightly from what we used in team time-trial races. The general principals apply across the entire spectrum from racing to touring.

As in most endeavors, we desire to look accomplished. A beginner at team time-trialing or riding pace-lines will usually exhibit the following characteristics not to be emulated:

- Pulling way too long - Novices may pull for miles before those suffering behind him finally violate all the rules by swerving around him to pass him, as the poor novice then fades off into the distance from a "hard drop."
- Wobbling all over the lane - This is just as big a problem with strong cyclists, as it is with weak cyclists, perhaps even more so. Particularly, with tri-athletes who are strong and used to having the entire lane width to weave as much as they please. Tri-bars have no place in a pace-line since the riders are lacking the necessary immediate control and responsiveness of drop-bars necessary for safety in tight quarters.
- Crossing wheels - with the cyclist in front, not infrequently combining this with his wobbling problem immediately resulting in an unrecoverable hard crash.
- Leading the group into potholes - rather than the extremely gradual sweeping adjustment of direction around hazards.
- Causing crashes - The strength of the rider is immaterial. A strong rider who violates the established procedures is every bit as likely as a weaker rider, and due to his ability to maintain the group speed, even more likely to cause a crash in the group.

The *Cascade Courier*, the publication of the largest bicycle club in America, located in Seattle, has had several good articles on pace-lines in their newsletter during the past couple of years. It's available on the web at www.cascade.org. Another club has an article at www.tarheels.org/pacelinev92.pdf. Possibly the AABTS could pull some of it's "Big Mac Attack" veterans out of retirement and restart pace-line training sessions if there is enough interest.

Erzen Tandem Arrives

By Mark Erzen

While we originally expected twins in late June, we were surprised by the early arrival of Alexander and Thomas Erzen on May 5, 2005 at 15:05 and 15:07. Alexander was born 4-lbs. 6 oz and Thomas was 3 lbs. 13 oz. The twins were born with a clever association with the number 5. Their birth date was 5/5/05; we started our day in delivery room 5; Thomas is the 5th member of our family, and doctors tell us that the boys were delivered in the 5th c-section of the day.

Thomas and Alexander spent 3 weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital and responded very well to the extra care they received. They arrived home on May 26th, just in time for Memorial Day Weekend. They boys have been gaining weight very rapidly and keeping us busy. Deb has been a real trooper throughout a difficult month and has been recovering from her surgery very well. Older brother Adam (now 20 months old) is doing well and is adjusting to sharing his parents in the now smaller household. Thanks to the club for the flowers and to everyone who has given the boys a gift and helped us get settled with the twins.



AABTS life member Reuben Chapman's reply about the start of The Taco Ride

My reliability as historian is very questionable. My memory (backed by Mary Ann) is that Les and I were on either an unplanned ride or a Tecumseh club ride. We were riding alone and it was a very hot day.

When we got to Ridgeway and the Lopez fruit stand we dove into the watermelon. Then we got talking about what Ken recounts.

I also remember riding with Jeff Donahey to the stand and eating watermelon and talking at length. But I cannot put it together with the other events.

Good work, Ken. I know he will miss this ride more than most.

Reuben

WANTED

ONE 2004 HELLUVA RIDE JERSEY (SIZE SMALL)

WILLING TO PAY FULL PRICE OF A NEW ONE.

I'M MOVING TO NORTH CAROLINA AND WANT TO

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Contact Pat Patrick at
Patleep@aol.com or 734-662-9612

WINNING WEATHER EQUALS A HORSEY HIT

by Vickie Smith

This year's Horsey Hundred invitational in Georgetown, Kentucky was one for the record books. A club favorite for some 20 years, in recent years the weekend has been plagued by at least one day of rain. Originally AABTS started scheduling an additional club ride day on Fridays to stretch out the enjoyment of riding in one of the nicest cycling areas in the U.S. Lately, however, it has been necessary so we could increase our chances of two out of three days' riding without bad weather.

The Friday pre-Horsey ride went to Paris, Kentucky—not to be confused with any other Paris you might be aware of—as it has the past three years. I was the supposed captain for the ride, but I quickly handed over the reins of power when I saw Dan Harrison's excellent map and heard his description of both the route and points of interest along the way. Twenty-four AABTSers rode along with our usual contingent of Canadian friends, including club members Sheligh and Jay Fillion. Rita Straith and John Bain cut the ride short to do some specialized sightseeing peculiar to Bourbon County. That evening a group of 30 met for dinner at Bincke's Restaurant in nearby Cynthiana

Although there was a rain scare overnight, the pavements were dry by the time most of us started riding on Saturday morning. Aside from Don Evich having an up close and personal contact with a ditch, the group of 28 AABTS members were injury free. Many rode a century (which I figure is equivalent to at least a double metric century in relatively flat SE Michigan), including new member Lloyd Strong. Lloyd claimed never to have encountered such a hilly century route, and after dinner that evening he had to take several rest breaks walking across campus to his dorm. We got unofficial SAG service from Allen Patrick, who also took a great many photos. Our Jack Russel, Buster, had a lot of fun barking at the large number of horses, cows and fellow canines.

We were all amazed when Sunday dawned sunny and warm, but most rallied to and set out for another enjoyable ride through the horse country and tobacco farms of central Kentucky. The weekend was just what a biking weekend should be—great roads, sunny but not too hot weather, beautiful scenery, and, as usual good cycling company. Once more, The Horsey lived up to its reputation as one of AABTS's favorite invitationals,

Pictures by Allen Patrick



AABTSmembers and guests at dinner at Biancke's in Cynthiana Friday night



Two friends with Pat Patrick, Buster and Frank Lamitola at Georgetown



A group of horsey riders starting out from Georgetown College



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sometimes it works!

Last year on one Spring Unfolding ride, 2 women came from out of town specifically to join this ride. They had no helmets. We welcomed them, were friendly, strongly recommended they get helmets for their future safety. This year they came back—WITH helmets!

Enough said
Anne Ormond

COMPLETE KNEE REPLACEMENT

My surgeon has since informed me that he is pleased with his work, which was the complete replacement of my knee, . “I lucked out—I got it straight!”, was his comment when we looked at the x- rays of my new knee which was done on April 26. The Physical Therapy folks have attacked in earnest (three times a week for four weeks) - have to strengthen those muscles. I can put weight on my new knee, with a walker handy to keep me steady. Shirley and I are convinced that the bike riding on the Pinellas Trail in Florida in February and March was a big help.

I received a thoughtful gift from AABTS - a generous arrangement of carnations, daisies, kalanchoe, spikes and decorative leaves, all nestled in an attractive basket. Thank you all for this cheerful bouquet, and the cards, phone calls and visits. They all help a great deal.

Dick Ceely

ADDENDUM

...Shirley reports he is walking with acane...great progress.

Words of Appreciation

Dave Patria and Barb Underwood wish to thank the many club members who expressed their sympathy and support upon news of the death of Dave's youngest son, Joshua. We especially are grateful to those who made the generous contributions to worthy causes in remembrance of Joshua. Having so many caring friends brings a measure of consolation and support in a time of sorrow.

Dave and Barb

A Great Ride Leader and Then Some

That's Ann Hunt! She led a ride I did on Mother's Day (the 58 mile). About five miles before the end of the ride returning on Huron River Drive, I hit the upheaved cement on the last bridge just before Wagner road.

I jammed my front wheel and was thrown onto the middle of the bridge, landing on my chin and face. Ann, bringing up the end of the ride, came to me, moved my bike off the road, rode to Wheeler Park to retrieve my car, drove it to my home (where she'd never been before) to get my insurance cards, and came to the UMMC emergency room where she stayed with me until I was discharged; nearly four and one half hours. She then drove me home where her husband Tom came to pick her up.

But wait—still not finished! She took my prescription, filled it and brought it to me later that evening. Now that's a great ride leader and a whole lot more

Thanks Ann
Mary Hensel



NOTES FROM THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS NEWSLETTER

Ann Arbor was one of 16 cities cited as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. This is the first time Ann Arbor is on the list at the bronze level..."They (these communities) are making the streets safer for bicycling, educating bicyclists and motorists to share the road, promoting a wide range of bicycling activities and even stepping up enforcement of traffic laws to protect bicyclists," said Andy Clarke, executive director.

"Share the Road license plates are now in five states, and work is being done to double that number soon. These plates are currently in Florida, Ohio, Texas, Virginia and Washington State. There is progress being made towards creating plates in Iowa, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and elsewhere.

The beauty of the Share the Road plate is that it's a great way to support cycling when you are driving. Not only does this promote an important message to other drivers, but the revenue generated from these plates goes toward funding safety and education programs for cyclists."

**Club Hotline:
(734) 913-9851
WWW.AABTS.ORG**

The Hotline has information about current rides, corrections to the Ride Calendar, dates of potlucks and the like. If you have questions about rides, the Hotline is a good place to look for answers.

Deadline
for Next
Newsletter
Thursday
August 18



The Three Graces will see you on One Helluva Ride

Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition

Meets on the first Thursday of every month, 7:00 p.m., Ecology Center, 117 North Division (just north of Huron) in Ann Arbor. Visit the WBWC web page at www.wbwc.org for news and updates about this organization dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of bicycling and walking opportunities in Washtenaw County through advocacy and education.