

## **Triathlon Team Safety Guide**

### **Cycling**

**Helmet.** Everyone who does any team ride MUST be wearing a certified (CPSC or ASTM) cycling helmet. The helmet should be properly fitted. Rule of thumb for a good helmet fit: if you stand on your hands, the helmet shouldn't fall off (even if the strap is undone). Also, the strap should be tight enough so that you can't fit your hand through it under your chin. It should be symmetric left to right, and about an inch of forehead should be showing.

**Bike tune-ups.** Before your first ride with the team, you should get a bike tune-up at any reputable bike shop. They will make sure that the bike is safe and working properly when it leaves the store. You should also get a tune-up once a year regardless.

**Bike maintenance.** Everyone must keep their bike in good working order. If your bike has a mechanical problem, you should get it fixed immediately so it does not become a safety issue. Even something small like a loose bottle cage can cause a wreck if it falls into the spokes, for example. You should take problems to a reputable bike shop or to one of the senior members of the team. Also, every team member should clean their bike approximately once every 100 miles or about once a week. For a guide to most bike repairs, check out [www.parktool.com](http://www.parktool.com).

**Quick releases.** One of the most common safety issues we see on the team is quick release skewers which are not properly closed. The skewer should be closed tightly by the lever so that the lever is either flush with the frame or facing towards the back of the bike.

**Bike fit.** Your bike should be properly fitted for you either by a reputable bike shop employee or by one of the senior members of the team. A poorly fitted bike can cause overuse injuries, and potentially become a safety hazard while riding.

**Riding on the paths.** If you are riding on one of the designated (Class I) bike paths in Santa Barbara County, the key is to be respectful of others using the path. The path is intended to be for cyclists, but many pedestrians, roller-skaters, and the like use the path as well. Always pass people on the left, and announce your presence while passing with a friendly, "On your left!" Be especially careful around children and dogs because they are particularly unpredictable, and their arms and legs can get stuck in your spokes. Always be courteous to other people on the path, especially when you are wearing a UCSB cycling kit.

**Riding on the roads.** Most of the roads we ride on in California have a designated bike path. Whether or not you are on such a street, make sure your tires are at least one foot clear of the edge of the pavement (usually more). This will give you room to avoid obstacles if necessary and will keep you clear of the debris that tends to accumulate on the very edge of the pavement. As a cyclist, you legally must follow all of the same laws that cars do, including stopping at all stop signs. Signal all turns and lane changes with hand signals. Whenever it becomes unsafe to ride in the bike lane, you have the legal right to occupy the driving lane, but be careful when entering the lane. In addition to having the general alertness you must possess while driving, you should also be aware of the road surface and avoid gravel, debris, cracks, and bumps in the road that could either cause you to lose

control of the bike or get a flat tire.

**Riding in groups.** The key here is communication. When riding with others, be sure to announce to the group your intention to change speed or direction before doing so. Typical announcements might be “Left turn!”, “Slowing!”, “Stopping!”, etc. In large groups, the first person in the group should make the announcement, and each person down the line should echo the announcement to make sure everyone hears it. Also, you should announce hazards in the road clearly, loudly, and succinctly. For example, “Pole!”, “Glass!”, “Car back!”, “Walker up!”. Also, you should point to any hazards in the road for the person behind you and do so early; for example, point on the ground to your left if there is a rock coming up on the left. Use discretion about when to ride two abreast. In small groups, this is okay to do on the bike paths, but in larger groups it becomes a hazard. On the road, riding two abreast is usually okay if there is a bike lane or on a road with little traffic, but on busy roads and roads with no bike lane, go single-file. When riding two abreast, riders should be directly alongside one another; do not “overlap wheels” by riding diagonally behind or diagonally in front of someone. Also, never ride in your aero bars while riding with a group. A few pieces of jargon you should know:

“\_\_\_\_\_ up” means that \_\_\_\_\_ is ahead

“\_\_\_\_\_ back” means that \_\_\_\_\_ is coming up behind you

“clear” means that an intersection is clear; this should be repeated by each person as they cross and make sure it is clear for the next

“car left” means a car is approaching from the left in an intersection; the person announcing this may not necessarily stop, but it alerts the next person

“flat” means you got a flat

“single it” means go single-file

[spirit fingers towards the ground] means glass or gravel on the road

[hand parallel to the ground] means bump

[one finger pointed to the ground] means some other obstacle on the road

**Clothing while riding.** Most cyclists wear padded cycling shorts, and in order to prevent a variety of maladies in the bathing suit area, this is highly recommended. Lycra and other synthetic materials are usually used for cycling specific clothing because they dry quickly, but a proper cycling jersey isn’t strictly necessary. Most importantly, you should dress for the weather while cycling. A good rule of thumb is to start wearing cold weather gear if it is under 65 degrees. This may include knee warmers, arm warmers, a vest, gloves, a beanie, leg warmers, an extra base layer, and a jacket (in approximately that order, depending on your preference). Also, be aware that temperatures and weather can change quickly, so be prepared to put on or take off and carry extra layers of clothing. Also important is wearing eye protection (usually a pair of sunglasses). Not only will this help keep you from squinting, but it will prevent insects and debris from flying into your eyes---especially important on descents. Cycling gloves are also a safety precaution because even in a very minor fall, your hands are liable to get badly scraped. Also, keeping your jersey zipped up on descents can prevent bees from flying in and stinging you.

**Cornering.** People take corners at different speeds and angles depending on their proficiency on the bike, but a few considerations hold in general. Take corners extra slow

in wet conditions, and be especially careful in the presence of uneven or cracked pavement. Avoid gravel and debris while cornering because these are sure to make you slide. If you have low tire pressure for some reason, take corners extremely slow.

**Nutrition.** Be sure to bring enough fuel, fluids, and electrolytes with you on every ride. You should bring about one bottle of water or sports drink per hour of riding (unless you know you will have an opportunity to refill). Try to actually drink this much while riding; it amounts to taking a sip about once every five minutes. On rides longer than an hour, you should have some kind of fuel with you. This means either using a sports drink instead of water, or bringing food. A general rule of thumb is 150-300 calories of fuel per hour--- more for longer rides.

**Other items to bring.** The most important thing to bring with you when cycling is your cell phone. In any emergency situation, or if you have any mechanical problem you can't fix, using your cell phone is the best way to get in touch with someone and get help. Secondly, you should bring some form of identification, and a few dollars for emergencies and mid-ride espresso stops. Thirdly, you should bring what you need to fix a flat. This means you need a spare tube (or a patch kit), tire levers, a hand pump (or a CO2 cartridge and a discharger). You should also know how to use all of these items. Finally, it's a good idea to bring a set of Allen keys in case you need to adjust your bike in the middle of the ride. Again, [www.parktools.com](http://www.parktools.com) has information about how to fix a flat.

### Open Water Swimming

**Temperature.** Because the water temperature can be quite low in Santa Barbara, we are not always able to do open water swims. As a general guideline, 50 degrees is too cold for almost everyone even with a wetsuit. Even at 55 degrees, many people will be quite uncomfortable even with a wetsuit. At 60 degrees, almost everyone will be able to swim with a wetsuit, and a few people will be able to swim without one. At 70 degrees, a wetsuit is not necessary, but some people may prefer to use one. The air temperature and wind also play a role in how comfortable and safe it is to swim at a given water temperature. Given these very general guidelines, it makes sense for the team to do most of its open water swimming in the warmer months of the year so that everyone will be able to participate. No one should be made to swim in water that they feel unsafe in because of temperature, but it is possible to train yourself to swim in colder waters. Common signs of hypothermia are early onset of muscular fatigue, shivering, numbness in the extremities, slurred speech, and general loopiness.

**Staying together.** Whenever we go for open water swims, people should stay together in groups of at least two. Usually we group ourselves by speed. Each group should never be spread out more than about 25 yards between the farthest two people. If people who are swimming together are of different speeds, the faster people must either stop and wait for the others or loop back every so often.

**Where to swim.** Most of the beaches in Santa Barbara County have buoys designating the swim area. It is important to stay inside of these to avoid boat traffic and to keep from getting too far from shore. The beaches we train at most often are Goleta Beach, Ledbetter

Beach, East Beach, and Butterfly Beach.

**Water quality.** The water quality at particular beaches depends on a number of factors including current and recent rainfall. If the water quality is poor, it becomes a safety issue because of pathogens in the water, and a pool swim becomes a better option.

**Preventing chafing.** Every time you use a wetsuit, you should put Body Glide or some other anti-chafing cream all over your neck or you will get a nasty rash.

### Injury Treatment and Prevention

**Club sports trainer.** For most minor injuries, the first place you should go is to the club sports trainer in Rob Gym. Rob Wang is currently the head trainer there, and he has a staff of undergraduates. They have lots of equipment including ultrasound machines and an ice bath. Ice baths are recommended after any hard workout to prevent soreness even if there is no acute injury.

**Elite Performance.** For major and long term injuries, athletes should talk to Mateo about seeing Geoff Gray at Elite Performance and Rehab. Mateo and Geoff will decide if your case warrants a visit with Geoff, who may decide to see you free of charge. Elite has an office in Magnolia Plaza on Hollister Ave. with all of the best equipment available.

**Prevention.** There are several ways to help prevent injury in triathlon. Acute trauma injuries generally result from cycling crashes, and the above safety guide gives tips for preventing wrecks. Overuse injuries are more common, and usually result from poor mechanics and/or overtraining.

**Poor mechanics.** In each of the three disciplines, imperfections in an athlete's form can result in injury. Beginners should take care to achieve proper form and mechanics before building up training volume. For experience athletes, poor mechanics are often the result of muscular imbalances or a lack of flexibility. A coach, athletic trainer, or physical therapist can help you work on improving your form and identify strength or flexibility issues that are preventing you from achieving good form.

**Overtraining.** Overtraining is defined as training more than the body can safely handle. For athletes of different experience levels, this can mean different things. For example, while 35 miles of running per week may be fine for an experienced athlete training for an Olympic distance triathlon, it would be far too much for an athlete new to competitive run training. Athletes should consult a coach, trainer, or physical therapist for guidelines on how much training volume is too much. Signs of overtraining include fatigue, trouble falling asleep, loss of appetite, and sickness.