

# Clothes save wear and tear on biker's body

By **Connie L. Sheehan**  
Senior Editor

With eight years of biking experience under his belt, Mark Anderson knows how to choose the right clothes to survive biking in Nebraska.

"I follow a few general rules for myself — temperature rules basically," said Anderson, manager of Cycle Works, 720 N. 27th St.

Below 60 degrees, a rider has to have tights and below 50, a rider has to have shoe covers, he said. If it's below 30, it's not advisable to ride a road bike out for any amount of time, he said.

"Some days it's just too cold to ride," Anderson said. "People have a hard time facing that."

Feet are a major problem when it's cold out, he said. If the cyclist doesn't add extra protection, feet will freeze in about an hour.

Shoe covers, usually made of neoprene, fit over the road racing shoe that is designed for warmer weather with mesh sides and vents.

When it comes to pants, people doing road training use a plain Lycra tight, which generally will cover them down to 30 degrees.

Black is a good color because if there's any sun at all, it helps to keep riders a little warmer. Black also is the traditional color of bike tights and shorts.

Some people are put off by tight-fitting clothing, he said, so companies are beginning to offer other materials that hang like regular

fabric.

These materials are usually a little heavier and warmer than Lycra, and some are rain repellent, he said.

Anderson said many people will pull their tights over their shorts so that if the weather improves, the cyclist can peel down to biking shorts.

Biking shorts vary on the quality of the construction, he said. The inexpensive shorts are constructed from two panels while the more expensive shorts can be constructed from four to eight panels of fabric.

"This four-panel short has a more anatomical fit," he said, showing how more panels allow the fabric to follow the curves of the body.

Riders should check the quality of the chamois, the pad sewn into the crotch of the biking shorts, he said. The better pad should have more body and be thicker, while the lower quality chamois has a dead, spongy feel.

Manufacturers are beginning to design baggy biking shorts too, Anderson said, pointing to the fluorescent orange shorts made by TrekWear.

Moving over to the jersey rack, Anderson pointed out the variety of fabrics available — CoolMax, Lycra, 50/50 blends and other synthetic materials, Anderson said.

"Each company, each year, comes out with their new fabric,"

he said. It does make a difference in how well a fabric breathes, especially in the coat.

Quality coats should have a double zipper that zips from the top and the bottom, he said, and the backs will be vented or made from breathable material.

"Your front is what needs protected, because you're taking in wind," Anderson explained. The major protection occurs up front in the jacket while vented sleeves and backs open up for drying off quickly.

Jackets always will have back pockets for storage, he said, and a good jacket should have cuffs on the sleeve and around the waist.

During the cold weather, the cyclist should have full-fingered gloves that come in all types of synthetic materials.

"One of the things that's sort of unique to cycling gloves, is the terry cloth thumb or back," Anderson explained. This allows for wiping the nose or sweat from the face.

Once the weather warms, the

big gloves become cumbersome and the rider can change over to cotton gloves, he said.

Anderson said in the spring, wet-weather gloves with bumps on the glove's palm provide better gripping.

Road bikers use padded gloves because extreme pressure is put on the palms from leaning forward on the handlebars.

"With the road bikers, a lot of people complain about nerve problems like fingers falling asleep," he said.

Spenco made one of the first gel touring gloves, Anderson said. The palm is filled with squishy gel that doesn't go flat like regular cloth padding.

One of the most important pieces of clothing is the helmet, Anderson said, even though helmets are not required by Nebraska state law.

Most helmets consist of a foam-injected core that may be coated with a shiny microshell or thin plastic coating, he said.

Anderson said a good helmet

will have the approval of both the American National Standards Institute and Snell, private product testing laboratories.

"People are more apt to wear helmets now that they don't weigh much," Anderson said, estimating that the average helmet now weighs about eight ounces.

Helmets range in cost from \$29 to \$89, with the Giro helmet worn by Greg LeMond topping the price list, he said.

Finally, Anderson said, many people don't think about glasses or goggles as something they should wear when biking.

"If you've seen a rock bounce off of your glasses — you're probably going 30 mph and the rock's going 20 mph — it makes you happy that you've worn your glasses that day," Anderson said.

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