

# ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

## 'I'm worried about riding with a group of faster riders. What can I do?'

**Q** I'VE RECENTLY JOINED a local bike club and a few of the guys have invited me to join them on a ride-out. I have to admit I'm a bit nervous and have ducked out so far because I'm worried I'll be tempted to ride too fast for my own good.

**A** FIRSTLY, YOU'RE RIGHT to have a few nerves because group riding can be dodgy – it adds a layer of complexity to a ride and, if you don't manage that sensibly, it can end in tears. However, there's nothing inherently dangerous about group riding

providing everyone knows what they're doing, and it can be fantastic fun.

Tip number one is don't ride with loads of people you don't know. You don't say how many bikes will be on the ride but, if it's more than half a dozen, be wary – the potential for mayhem increases with numbers. Also, trust your instincts. If the guys you've met seem sensible, that's a good start. Some clubs offer different levels of ride-out – novice, fast etc – so it's worth asking about that.

Another good sign is if one of the group sets some ground rules before the ride, because problems often arise when it's a free-for-all. If people are desperately trying to keep up and riders are overtaking each other all over the place, it's a recipe for disaster.

The first thing you can do to reduce your risks is to take responsibility for knowing where you're going. That way there's no pressure to keep up – you'll just turn up a couple of minutes after the others (who probably won't even notice, to be honest).

The second thing to do is ask what the rules are for overtaking each other. You're looking for a system to be in place – either no overtaking while riding or only via invitation (eg, you wave someone by). Anything else can be risky. Having intercoms can be a laugh but never use them to get advice on overtakes – always make your own call



Having spent seven years as a surveillance rider with the National Crime Agency, Ryan Decarteret is one of Britain's most-skilled, safest and most qualified road riders

based on what you can see for yourself.

With most groups, it's generally the person at the back who has to travel fastest because they'll inevitably miss an overtake and then have to catch up. It's these people who are most likely to crash, not Mr Speedy out in front. So if you're at the back, be prepared to let the group go and enjoy your ride. On national speed limit roads, it's worth leaving a decent gap anyway to make sure you ride the road rather than just follow the rider ahead. Once you get into 30 limits, close up and ride staggered so there's more chance of you all getting through traffic lights in one go.

The last tip is to always keep the bloke behind you in your mirrors. And if you can't see him, don't turn off until he's in sight – just wait at the junction until he appears. That way, none of the group gets lost and people don't feel pressured to ride too fast. We use this on Rapid's courses and we've never lost anyone. It's very easy.

And finally, it's useful to approach group riding with the right mindset. Consider it a social event rather than a thrash, with more stops, more chatting and far lower average speeds. Do that, and remember to always ride your own ride, and you'll have a ball. Enjoy! **R**

▼ Group rides can be great fun with a few key tips



The Rapid team includes TT racers, a BSB squad, and police and surveillance riders. They are the most highly qualified professionals in the business and their unique, no-nonsense courses are designed to help riders be the best they can be. **More info at [www.rapidtraining.co.uk](http://www.rapidtraining.co.uk)**