

When setting out on an October Century ride in Maine there are a few things to consider. There are two words in that first sentence that give an indication of the thing that should be first on your mind....Maine and October. The old adage that says "If you don't like the weather just wait a minute." Is an extremely accurate description of what to expect here at that time of year. It could be 80 degrees or it could be 20 and usually is both in the same day. It could be raining, snowing, or something in between. Early October in Maine is famous for cool crisp mornings and blistering hot afternoons. As cyclists in the Pine Tree State we have to follow the Boy Scout creed "Always be prepared". Bring every piece of winter riding apparel you own and be prepared to shed most of it as the ride progresses. As one of my riding buddies so eloquently put it "I'd rather be lookin' at it than lookin' for it!" 5-6 hours in the saddle is very difficult for the average cyclist and can be down right impossible without the proper clothing. To that end I've created a list of clothing that I have used on more than a few October Centuries.

Here are the things you should have in your bag before the ride starts to assure you'll have everything you might need. Let's start from the bottom and work our way up. You should have some insulated booties. Cold feet have ruined many a ride. Next you'll need some insulated tights; I recommend something with wind stopper. I also bring along legwarmers and knee warmers for varying degrees of warmth. The next level is bike shorts.....be very sure the shorts fit well and you've ridden long rides in them before. Never try out a new pair of shorts on a century unless you really like pain. Next you'll need a base layer shirt of some kind either short or long sleeve depending on the temperature. I recommend something that's moisture wicking from Craft or Under Armor. You should have a choice of long or short sleeve cycling jersey and I have two vests, one wind stopper and one insulated. You may also want some type of cycling specific jacket. There are many on the market by Pearl Isumi, Craft, Sugoi, and others. Arm warmers can also come in handy if the temperature is a bit chilly but not enough for long sleeves all day. I carry three types of gloves in my bag. The first being my regular fingerless biking gloves. The second is a pair of full fingered gloves from Pearl Isumi with that beloved wind stopper. The third is a pair of Lobster Gloves by Pearl Isumi that are insulated and very warm down to about 20 degrees. Also in your bag should be a neck warmer, a balaclava, a headband, and a fleece hat. Do yourself a favor and Google Buff.com. They make an item that can be all off the last group I mentioned in one. Often keeping your head and neck warm makes the rest of your body stay warmer. Last but not least, make sure you have dry clothes in your bag for when you get back. There is nothing worse than standing around in cold wet clothes waiting for your friend to finish.

One other thing to think about when looking at that many hours of constant exercise is nutrition. What will I eat and when do I eat it are the two big questions to be answered. The first thing to learn is good nutrition takes practice. By this I mean as you train throughout the summer and start to increase your mileage you also increase the amount of time you're on your bike. This is the time to start training your body to eat on the move. These rides are when you can start to figure out what works for you. Some folks like energy bars, some like gels, and still others like a good old peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Every person is different and their bodies tolerate things differently than the next guy. There is one constant however, we all need to fuel our bodies if we want to continue to ask them to perform. I have found over the years that I prefer gels to bars and

will take a serving of gel with water about every 20 minutes throughout the duration of a long ride. I have also used nutritional supplements mixed in with water from companies like Hammer Nutrition. These tend to help replace electrolytes lost through sweat and also replace burned calories in the form of protein. I tend to tolerate these well without any gastrointestinal issues however I know more than a few people who have trouble digesting these supplements. That just reinforces my earlier statement that you have to practice to get nutrition right. I would suggest you check out this website www.hammernutrition.com . They have a lot of great products and also some informative articles that will explain the how and why of their products and exercise based nutrition as a whole.

Lastly let's talk about training. Preparing for a century is a grand undertaking not dissimilar to training for a marathon. Everyone thinks "Hey I ride my bike for an hour with my kids three times a week. It can't be that hard". I'm here to tell you that this kind of ride is a completely different animal. In order to have a good experience with this ride you need to gradually build up your mileage over the summer. Riding once a week will not cut it. I would suggest doing a Google search for century training programs or hiring a coach to help with scheduling workouts. Short of that, here is some advice from one who has been riding bicycles for near to 20 years and has completed a few centuries along with the afore mentioned marathon. First and foremost get yourself a decent bicycle from a reputable dealer. Have the salesman make sure your new bike fits your body and riding style. Start by committing to ride at least 3 times a week. Two days a week should be 1.5 -2 hour rides in the 20-30 mile range. I know, this sounds like a lot but once you get going it will become an easy ride. At least one day of the weekend you should be doing your long ride. The first few weeks should be pretty much the same as what you're doing during the week, 20-30 miles. But as the weeks pass you need to add mileage to these rides. You should be adding 5-10 miles per week to your long ride. Don't forget what we talked about above. This is a great time to start practicing your nutrition plan.

MCC will be hosting monthly bike rides throughout the summer designed to aid in preparation for the Dempsey Challenge. The intent is for the schedule of Sunday rides to increase mileage as the summer progresses. These rides will be at a moderate pace with limited stops in an effort to reach the ultimate goal of completing the Dempsey Challenge century ride in October. All abilities are encouraged to attend these "training rides"; however, completing a century is an ambitious goal which will require a significant commitment to training. For example, a relatively fast average speed of 20mph means you'll be in the saddle for five hours. Most average cyclists will take more like 6 hours plus to complete this ride. MCC will provide a ride leader and sweeper for each of these rides and if necessary the rides will be split into different groups to accommodate diverse ability levels. The ride leader and sweeper will have some knowledge of training methods and amounts to help you get ready for the event. It should be noted that one must ride more than just these once a month rides in order to be properly prepared for the Dempsey Challenge. MCC also offers club sanctioned weekday evening rides for all abilities. We strongly encourage anyone wishing to ride the Dempsey Challenge to consult our website ride schedule and join an appropriate level ride on a regular basis. Remember, you don't have to be a MCC member to ride with us but we'd love it if you were!