

Bike stuff: "A stitch in time saves nine"

Advice from fellow competitor and multisport/adventure racer, Steve Gurney.

Grandma's advice usually works. A few bucks spent on your bike maintenance will pay dividends in the race.

As riders, we've invested quite heavily in the Pioneer. There are the months of training, the entry fee, giving up social events to go training and of course, some have given up beer!

Relative to this investment, a few dollars spent on getting your bike up to max reliability is a rather obvious, common sense thing to do...

Failure to do this is effectively self-sabotage. (not to mention a waste of the beer you've sacrificed)

A/

Get your bike booked into your bike shop for a service. Make sure you've done it soon so you can take it for a decent test ride before the race. (You could bribe them to jump up the queue with that beer you didn't drink.)

B/

Put on brand new tyres (can't risk embedded thorns or glass, or invisible damage to the sidewall), and if you're using tubes, don't risk previously repaired/patched tubes... go new.

On the topic of tyres, I'm picking that punctures could be one of the biggest challenges of the Pioneer. (Nah.. the hills are nothing). Much of the high-country we will ride has Speargrass (Golden Spaniard) prickles that pierce tyres extremely easily due to the tough, hypodermic nature of those darn pricks.

Tubeless tyres with Stans, self-sealing liquid would definitely be the best tyre choice if you can. The self-sealing liquid heals the puncture beautifully. Make sure you refresh your Stans liquid before the race, it tends to dry out a bit in summer.

Speargrass also pierces humans, I crashed full-body into a Speargrass bush last week, whilst I didn't heal beautifully, like Stans, blood clotting works to stop the red leaks.

If you don't have the luxury of tubeless, you'll simply need to take a bit more care where you ride, avoiding Speargrass as best you can. Putting on tougher tyres will help a little, and carry at least 2 tubes... and of course a puncture repair kit in case you get more than 2 flatties. When repairing a puncture it will be really important to remove the Speargrass thorn to prevent a repeat flattie. (you might need to pack a small pocket knife or pliers)

C/ Chain tool.

We're going to be really remote for most of the Pioneer riding. Getting caught out with a broken chain will make for a particularly long walk and a very frustrated team-mate.

Make sure you have a chain tool that works, and that you know how to use it, (practice on old chain before the race). Using a "quick link" might save a couple of minutes and will give you a more reliable repair. Just make sure your quick-link is 9, 10, or 11-speed to match your chain size. Quick-links can be a bit tricky to use, so practice before the race.

Make sure your chain is in good nick, check for wear, and for bent links. If in doubt replace it, (often need to replace the cassette and chain rings together with the chain).

Best to put on new brake pads, we've got some awesomely long descents! If you're using rim brakes, check your rims aren't worn too thin... I've had worn rims blow apart before, it was a long walk...

There's nothing like a crisp, accurate and quick index gear change. Put on new gear cables and get your rear derailleur hanger checked for straight.

I can't tolerate stiff bearings, knowing that I'm expending more energy than I need, so check your bearings, bottom bracket, wheels, pedals and rear derailleur jockey wheels for smooth running.

Is your suspension pumped to the right pressure?

Bike helmet, check it thoroughly for cracks. I expect that they will be checking helmets at registration bike-check, and a cracked helmet won't pass.... Besides your noggin is worth protecting properly!! The idea of the polystyrene inner of a helmet is to crack and shatter in a crash, thereby absorbing some of the energy that otherwise would've rattled your brain. If it's already cracked, more likely you'll hurt your brain more than necessary!

If you are using a couple of bottle cages as your main fluid source, I would highly recommend you still take a hydration system on your back. If we get a 30deg+ day out there you will go through a LOT of fluid, and 2 bottles will not be enough between aid stations.

Finally, I like to give my bike a toothbrush clean so I can check for damage, and check if screws have come loose, such as drink bottle cages etc.

Don't try anything new on race day, you'll need to give a test of at least one rigorous ride first.

I can't wait for the start!