

THE MENNONITE RIDER - Revisited



The following articles are an update from the story entitled, "[The Mennonite Rider](#)," first published on this web site in November, 2002. Floyd Landis of Lancaster, PA, details his struggle from injury to recuperation to his return to the USPS cycling team.

courtesy of [Cycling News](#)

Crashing Into The New Year

January 28, 2003

This was supposed to be the first year in my cycling career when I could start a season with no stress and focus only on what I have to do to win races. I have the support and confidence of the world's best cycling team and a mentor who has won four Tour de France titles. But two weeks ago, while taking an easy ride after a gym workout, I found a way to add some stress to the situation.

On a road I have ridden many times and on which I have never broken a hip before, I managed to crash and do so! I guess you learn something every day, and sure enough, the thought of a broken hip was the farthest thing from my mind when it happened. I came to the bottom of a steep downhill and attempted to navigate a right turn. Anyone who rides a bike will know that this is a common skill; I add this because several people have already asked me if I was screwing around or doing a wheelie or something dangerous.

As I turned, I hit some sand, which was not visible at all and not there previously. Before I had time to react, I was down on the ground and unable to twist my foot to unclip.

Luckily I was alone, because I take pride in my ability to stay on my bike and anyone witnessing my crash would certainly think otherwise. On the other hand, I have no witnesses to confirm the fact that I was just riding along like a normal cyclist would have. Well, just in case any of you reading this ever find yourself in that position, meaning you're just laying there in the road, unable to move but not wanting any cars to come along and finish you off...well, you're in luck, because I am going to share a few simple tips with you which may or may not be obvious in this

dilemma.

First, just reach down with both hands and grab the useless foot, which is still clipped in, and twist it out of the pedal. Just ignore the throbbing and narrow field of vision; this is just due to the sharp, shooting pain in your hip and is nothing compared to the X-ray positions you are soon to be expected to hold at the hospital.

Second, I have to give some credit here to a squirrel I once saw, which had gotten his ass run over and could only use his front legs to get across the road. Sorry, I just put that in for shock value, but that gives you a good idea how I got off the road.

You might think, since you weren't there that I should just stand up on one foot and hop off the road, but trust me, that was not an option. Well, now that you are off the road, hopefully, like for me, there will be no place to sit and lots of sharp weeds on the only flat part of the shoulder and you will just go back and sit on the road that you just left.

Next, take out your handy dandy cell phone and call your wife, remembering to speak to her in a tone that implies that it is her fault, since this will get her to show up in a much more sympathetic mood. Now that you know help is on the way, prepare for some of the cars passing by to stop and ask if you are ok. When this happens, just look at them as if you are afraid that they are going to kill you and yell "please don't hit me again", then roll down off the bank beside the road. If you do this, please let me know what happens. So when your wife or whoever you called finally arrives, you will have probably worked enough courage to get up on your good leg and throw yourself in the car.

Now comes the explaining and I can't help you with that, because what I did didn't work. I can tell you that you'll probably yell at whoever's driving about every single thing they do, like don't drive so slow; don't go so fast around turns, it hurts; don't stop so fast, it hurts, and of course, drive faster we have to get to the 'emergency' room.

Well I think that that is quite enough sarcasm for today. I really am doing just fine now, and will be riding my stationary bike in a few weeks and will not lose too much fitness. I was lucky at the hospital; a friend of mine, Brent Kay, who is a doctor and fellow cyclist, came along and oversaw my operation. If not for his being there, I would have had to wait until the next morning for my operation, but Brent explained the urgency of the situation and so the orthopedic surgeon started on me right away.

I have no room to complain, but it has been two weeks now since my crash and every day is a beautiful, sunny, and warm Southern California day. I really don't know if I can make it through six weeks before I can ride outside again. We will just have to wait and see.

Just Giving Thanks For What I've Got

February 21, 2003

It appears as though patience can only be learned the hard way. Things have been moving slowly here, my broken bone is healing fine, but it is just that time has slowed to a crawl for me. I am not a patient person by nature, things always need to get done now and this waiting around does not normally fit into the plan. However, for five weeks now I have been forced to accept that some things take time and no amount of will power or work can speed the healing process. The good thing is that it is almost over, I am now riding longer on my trainer and I am allowed to put some effort into it. But once again, I am reminded of the patience lesson, because after five weeks of not using my right leg, it fatigues and hurts more than at any time that I can remember. Also along with my strength and fitness, my sense of humour is almost gone and the day I can go for a six-hour ride (I don't care if it is snowing) cannot come too soon for me.

Along with patience, I learned something else that I would never have realized had this not happened. I have had much time to sit here and think about what it would be like if this were permanent, and I began to wonder if other things that make my life a happy one are also taken for granted. For example, the peaceful country I live in, when all I have to do is turn on the news and see what reality is like for some people. Or the fact that I have spent the last 10 years of my life doing something that I love to do. And most importantly, my wife and daughter, who are happy and healthy and support my career, even though it takes me away from them quite often.

Before this experience, I never paid much attention to people with crutches, wheelchairs, or permanent disabilities. I mean, I helped them if it appeared that they were having a hard time with a door or stairs or something like that, but I really had no idea how difficult things like stairs can be. I guess what I am saying is, when I can finally hang these crutches up, it will be in a place where I can see them to remind me of all the things I've mentioned. Furthermore, while I will still be a frustrated cyclist for a little while longer, hopefully I will be a more grateful person forever.

Stage 7 - Perfect progression

Saturday July 12, 2003

The last couple of days have gone perfectly for me and for the team. Everybody's happy... in fact, we couldn't ask for a better situation. As the mountain stages begin in the Alps, Lance has 30" on Beloki and 40" on Ullrich. We've been very fortunate that the rest of the riders didn't make us work since Fassa Bortolo has been pretty confident supporting their sprinter Petacchi. We decided not waste the energy to defend Victor's Yellow Jersey; there was really no point because we're here for Lance.

I'm feeling good and my hip is fine, so with the hard days in the Alps the next few days, me and all the guys in the team are happy and excited. Things have been just about perfect so far. I haven't thought much about winning the Team Time Trial stage the other day but eventually it will sink in. This year at the Tour, I'm accustomed to doing more - like more pasta, all the time! We eat really good food, but it's just a lot of the same thing.

My job today was work for Lance. Eki, George and I were doing a lot of work to start with today. There was a lot of racing in the first 35km before the break went, so the beginning was hard. We were riding pretty hard tempo all day with the break out front to keep things together, just waiting to see what happened on the last climb. My job was over when we got to the Cat 1 climb of the Col de la Ramaz so I just rolled in. It was a long day in the hot sun today and everything went according to plan.

Since we have to wear helmets all the time, the team got a new Giro helmet when the Tour started. I've always have liked Giro helmets and this one is really light and has great ventilation. (That's enough of a plug, thanks Floyd! - Ed.) I haven't heard many Americans this year along the road because we've been going so fast and I'm so focused.

Tonight we are staying at a decent place that has pretty good food in Morzine. We've stayed here a few times so we know them and they know us. It's not super-deluxe but the rooms have balconies.

Virenque was really strong today; we didn't chase hard after him since he's not a GC threat to Lance. I wouldn't want to be him tommorow!

I talked to my Mom back in Ephrata, PA just before the Tour. She wished me luck and told me she would watch me on TV. Amber and Ryan are at our apartment in Girona; today the stage was on all day on Eurosport so they got to see me.