

Stay Safe, Cyclists

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[USA Pro Cycling Challenge: Stay Safe, Cyclists](#)

Story by Joe Silva

If there's one thing we've learned in the past few weeks with regards to cycling it's that no one is immune to the dangers of riding out on the roads. Several recent high-profile wrecks have once again brought home the reality that even the most capable and experienced bike riders are subject to the hazards of traffic. In early November Team Sky rider Bradley Wiggins was toppled by a van during a training ride. The Olympic champ and 2012 Tour de France champion was described by witnesses at the scene to be in severe pain as he waited for an ambulance to whisk him off to a hospital. Not long after the team's coach Shane Sutton was also the victim of a run in with a motorist that was far more serious. Wiggins suffered a rib fracture and a dislocated finger, but Sutton was treated for bleeding on the brain and memory loss. And proving the axiom that bad things come in threes, Wiggins former teammate Mark Cavendish "slammed" into the back of a car that hit its brakes suddenly while the Manx speedster was out training. Luckily, Cav sustained only a bruised arm in the incident.

"Lucky" is the key term in that last sentence. Virtually everyone who follows or is in one way or another involved in the sport of cycling has known someone who's been involved in a "serious" bike incident – if not in one themselves. "If you ride, you'll wreck" goes the saying, and while millions of people have gone relatively unscathed while cycling, being prepared (especially during a time of year when fewer bikes are seen out on the roads...) is essential.

"Be aware of your surroundings, taking notice of hazards such as cars, potholes and intersections, and be prepared to make sudden stops." says [Bob Mionske](#), a Doctor of Law and the author of "[Bicycling & The Law](#)" (VeloPress). (Try and) ride a straight and predictable line (within reason, you may have to alter your path to avoid road hazards). Avoid making sudden changes in direction. If you have to avoid a road hazard, try to make a gradual, rather than sudden, change in your straight line."

"I've been hit from the side. I've been hit from behind. I've gone through the back of a car." said Craig Lewis to PeopleforBikes.org. Lewis who rode for HTC-Highroad with Cavendish and now rides for the UCI Pro Continental squad Champion Systems "The cars always win. They can still drive away and a body can't do much damage to a car."

Which is what Levi Leipheimer found out when a run in with a car resulted in a broken fibula early on in 2012, thus placing the remainder of his entire season in doubt. Despite being a seasoned rider who had had his share of wrecks, the winner of the inaugural USA Pro Challenge at that moment feared for his life more than his career.

Of course there will be times when no matter how many precautions you take, outside circumstances will simply prevail and you will c. In those instances Mionske is clear about a cyclist should do.

“Do not attempt to negotiate with the driver. Get their name, license plate, driver’s license number, and insurance information. Do not let the driver leave without showing you this information.”

If the driver does attempt to leave, you should call the police immediately says Mionske. And even if you’re not the victim of a hit and run, it’s important that make sure that the police are called and ask that they make an accident report.

In Wiggins’, Sutton’s, and Cavendish’s cases all three riders were fortunate that they didn’t sustain any greater injury - Sutton’s helmet - in particular may have in fact saved his life. But the right equipment isn’t always enough. A combination of the right gear, precautionary measures, savvy bike handling, and a respect for the rules of the road is the key to get the most out of your ride exercise- and safety-wise.