It Was Just One Of Those Things

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"I didn't see him."

It's the most common excuse negligent drivers make after colliding with a cyclist. And it makes no difference whether the cyclist is wearing bright colors or "lit up like a Christmas tree"—negligent drivers will still utter these four words after hitting the cyclist. Except, of course, in the Netherlands, where the presumption of liability encourages drivers to be more careful about seeing cyclists.

In a recent case in the United Kingdom, a driver accused in the death of a cyclist offered "I didn't see him" as her defense. "He came out of nowhere,"19 year-old Katie Hart explained.

On May 3 of 2009, Hart was driving on the A1 carriageway. A 25 mile time trial was underway that day; British Army Major Gareth Rhys-Evans was riding in the time trial, when Hart hit him from behind. Upon impact, Rhys-Evans was thrown up over and behind Hart's car. Despite the best efforts of his fellow competitors and paramedics, Rhys-Evans died at the scene of he crash. 38 years old, Rhys-Evans left behind a wife and two young children.

Another cyclist, Clare Lee, who had been passed by Hart moments before, described what happened:

> "[Hart's car] passed so close to me that it took my breath away, about a foot away."

Lee said that her "heart sank" shortly afterward, when she arrived at the crash scene and realized that the same car that had brushed so closely by her had just hit a cyclist.

At trial, Hart had no recollection of passing Lee, and told the Crown Court that she did not see Rhys-Evans until after the impact, when she looked in her rear-view mirror and saw that she had hit a cyclist.

In the immediate aftermath, Hart was described by witnesses as "hysterical."

"It was just one of those things," she explained to police at the scene.

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On January 27, 2010, Hart was found guilty of causing death by dangerous driving, and will be sentenced on February 15.