

# SWIM. BIKE. RUN.



## BORN TO RIDE ANOTHER DAY: HOW TO BOUNCE BACK AFTER A BIKE CRASH

By Fraser Rubens

It's a horrible feeling, and one that most of us will have experienced at one point or another throughout our triathlon careers. Perhaps it's a rainy day, and you've taken a corner too quickly, or you're out on a ride, drafting off a cyclist in front of you and they make an unexpected manoeuvre which causes you to panic and swerve. All of a sudden, that all-too-familiar sensation comes over you, and time seems to slow down; you feel your wheels start to slip out from under you; the constant forward motion you were experiencing just seconds before drops to zero; you put your arms or your shoulders or your elbows (or, sometimes, your face) out in front of you to cushion the landing, and you hope to the triathlon gods that you're not going to be rammed by another cyclist right behind you. Yep, we're talking about nothing other than bike crashes, and while it's a part of our sport that's tough to avoid, there are ways to bounce back and get your head back in the game after it happens. Keep reading to see how we suggest getting your eye in after you've had an accident on your bike.

### Cause 1: Group ride debacle

If you're anything like me, the thought of riding in a Tour de France-esque race, surrounded on all four sides by dozens upon dozens of other cyclists moving like a hive mind causes your chest to tighten and your eyes to go blurry. A lot of us out there use our weekends to go on a long morning ride with our mates, and sometimes, they don't go to plan; you don't need to be riding in the Tour de France to be knocked off your bike in a pack ride. One of your friends can go down in front of you, and the small pack means you can't get away from the carnage and you can wind up taking a tumble. This kind of crash can cause you to feel apprehensive at the thought of getting back in the saddle, or you might find yourself opting instead to stay at home on a Saturday morning instead of tearing it up with your team.

### Solution: Start small

There's no need to hop straight back into it with a huge group if you're feeling nervous after a crash. Forego your club's early morning pack ride, and choose instead for a low-key cycle with a couple of friends or a smaller group. It's important to re-learn how to be comfortable when surrounded by other cyclists, because come race day, it's unlikely that you'll be all on your lonesome out on the road. If all of your friends are tied up in the same pack ride and you don't fancy going it alone, try riding with the slower group; if you're normally at the front of the pack and tearing it up with the professionals,



consider taking it at a more social pace with a more casual team of riders. Your pace will be slower, it's unlikely that people will be jockeying to overtake you, and it'll help you get your eye back in if and when you want to move back up to the lead pack.



## Cause 2: dodgy wheels

While less nerve-wracking than being bumped off your bike by another rider, having your wheels slip out from under you can be a harrowing experience for any cyclist, beginner or experienced. If your tyres lack the traction they need to grip the road, you might find yourself going down in any weather, on any surface, at any speed. It's part and parcel of riding a bike, but it's still no fun, and it can still shake your confidence the next time you find yourself ready to jump on the bike.

## Solution: Check your gear

While we can't guarantee that a proper bike fit and service will reduce your chances of taking a fall to zero, it can't hurt. Letting a professional check out your rig could prevent you from making mistakes that you might have been making without even realising it. Have you been putting too much air in your tyres? Are you riding with your handlebars and seat in the right position to ensure your centre of gravity is in the right spot? Are your brakes too sensitive, or not sensitive enough? These are all questions that can be answered by heading to your local bike shop and getting a proper bike fit. If your bike setup is fine, there are still ways you can get your head ready to ride again. Instead of heading straight back into a severe mountain ride or pack training session, try taking a slow ride around the neighbourhood or in

an empty carpark. Instead of focusing on speed and intensity, concentrate on the essentials, like taking corners and your overall technique. Don't be afraid to talk to yourself; you're you forever, so the relationship you have with yourself is the most important one you'll ever cultivate. Remind yourself to relax when you're on the bike, take it slow, and rediscover why you love getting back in the saddle time and time again.



## Cause 3: Dangerous driver

New laws and safety rules have made it easier for cyclists and motorists to coexist on the road, but there was and still is a long and tense history between the two. We're all guilty of cussing out a car while we're on our bikes and they drive by us recklessly, just as we've all probably driven too fast and too close past a cyclist who is hogging the road. While probably the least common out of the three listed incidents, colliding with a car can be the hardest to bounce back from, both physically and mentally. It comes with the highest risk of injury compared to coming off your bike with no one around, and it can be a really frightening experience to get back up and start riding again. No matter how quiet the road

you're riding on, even the sound of a passing car can cause you to tense up and freak out. Every intersection becomes a minefield to avoid and a way to open yourself up to injury. Unless you stick to windtrainer sessions for the rest of your cycling days, you'll need to relearn how to feel comfortable out on the road.

### Solution: Be hard to miss

You might not be able to stop cars from speeding when you're riding as close to the shoulder of the road as possible, but you can make yourself impossible to avoid and therefore less likely to be sideswiped off your bike. Consider investing in a high-quality set of front and rear flashing LED lights. The brighter the better, and if they have a flashing setting, you'll be even harder to miss. If you're not made uncomfortable by riding in our group like we discussed earlier in this article, this is also a great way to make sure you're visible to cars as they pass by. Sure, groups of cyclists may also be taken down by a single car, but this is nowhere near as frequent or likely as a solitary cyclist having a collision with a motorist. Groups of bikes are easily noticeable, and cars are more likely to give a wider berth to groups than a single cyclist. Finally, consider avoiding roads with heavy traffic flow and narrow shoulders. The quieter the better, so if you find yourself riding down a major thoroughfare and you don't feel comfortable with the amount of traffic speeding past, explore the road less travelled and find a new route with less cars and more space.

Regaining the confidence to get back on the bike after a crash or a fall is a process that's different for everyone. Some will get back up, brush themselves off, and keep riding that very day. Others may take a little bit of time returning to the saddle, and some may never come back at all. We're all different, and we all process scary situations in our own way, but no matter how you choose to process your crash, there's always ways to keep yourself safe the next time you jump on board. Have you had a crash and need to talk to someone about it? Our friends at Maurice Blackburn offer a free consultation and telephone advice to assess whether you have a claim. As for a referral to Maurice Blackburn so you can ride with confidence.