**Rouge Roubaix Preparation**

* **BEFORE THE RACE**
  + **EQUIPMENT PREPERATION**
    - It’s called preparation for a reason.
    - DO NOT change your tubes the night before a race. Countless people get pinch flats or blowouts within the first couple miles.
    - If you’re going to put new tubes in, do it a couple days before and ride a couple times so you know they are seated right.
    - Putting baby powder on your tubes helps prevent pinch flats.
    - If you’re going to put on new tires, I’d recommend doing it at least a week before the Rouge and go on a couple rides so you scuff them up. New tires are waxy and shiny and get really slick if it gets wet.
    - What kind of tire do I buy? NOT race tires. Race tires have really soft rubber. Buy a high mileage tough tire. I personally like the Continental Ultra Gatorskin. Although they are pricy, they last a good 4,000-5,000 miles.
    - PSI- I’d recommend a lower than usual PSI. Higher PSI means less rolling resistance and less rubber on the ground, but in the gravel, that makes it easier for rocks to punch through. I’d say no more than 100 PSI.
    - Make sure your bike is in good running condition. Don’t wait until the night before to check your bike.
    - If you’re going to put on a new chain, or cables, or anything new for that matter do it a week before. That way if something isn’t put together right, you’ll be able to fix it.
    - LUBE YOUR CHAIN; wipe off the excess oil with a rag.
    - Gravel makes dust, dust clogs chains, chain breaks.
    - Even though your bike is going to get trashed and dirty, wash it. The Italians say, a clean bike is a fast bike.
    - Wheels- high spoke, tough wheels. Don’t bring your super light expensive wheels unless you don’t care about beating them up. Deep dish are a no no also. No tubulars – clinchers recommended. Would you rather be changing a tubular or a clincher on the course?
    - Brakes – be sure your brake pads aren’t set too high. In other words, make sure they do not come in contact with your tire when the lever is pressed. Also, you don’t want your brakes set too tight – if your rim becomes slightly un-true, you don’t want them to be rubbing. Always practice centering of your brakes before every ride and race.
    - Make sure everything is secure; check all of your allen bolts, bottle cage screws – EVERYTHING – they will rattle loose. Bike computer; tape it down with scotch tape if you have to….this is survival of the fittest – and not just the person, equipment too. Tighten the piss out of your skewers.
    - SECURE WATER BOTTLES, they will fly out in the gravel sections. You can put a rubber band around the bottle then the cage or even use a hair thingy.
    - Headset; make sure your headset has no play in it!
    - If you are riding a fancy carbon frame – the gravel will possibly chip your frame. Put some cellophane or clear packaging tape on the underside of your down tube.
    - Lube your crotch – put a whole handful of chamois butter or something to keep things from catching fire down there. It will be a long miserable ride if you start chaffing.
    - Sunscreen – if it’s going to be hot and sunny – protect your exposed parts.
  + **CLOTHING**
    - If you are comfortable before you take off, you will sweating your azz off later in the day.
    - If you can cope, try just a base layer under your top and arm warmers if real cold. I’m not too fond of knee warmers because it’s almost impossible to remove once you are rolling. Just tough it out for an hour then the other 4 will be un-regrettable.
* **During the Ride**
  + HYDRATION
    - 32 low 50 high -- 3-4 bottles
    - 40 low 60 high -- 4 bottles
    - 50 low 70 high -- 4-5 bottles
    - 60 low 70 high – 5 bottles
    - 70 low 80 high – 5-6 bottles
    - Know your body. Know how much you usually drink and bring more.
    - Remember, it’s in St. Francisville, it’s hilly, and you’re racing and pushing harder than you are in a training ride.
    - It’s always better to overcompensate and bring more than you need than to run out and get dehydrated.
    - You could also crush up some thermotabs in your bottles as well or put a pinch of salt in each bottle.
  + COMFORT / SAFETY IN THE PACK
    - If you are in the cat 5 race, I guess there is no real safety in the pack, but you can reduce the chances of getting taken out just by where you position yourself.
    - Obviously, if you hang out in the back, you are fairly safe there, but it also safe to say, you won’t make the break if one does materialize.
    - I like to ride the yellow line if in an inexperienced pack. If something does happen in front of you, you have a whole lane to your left to take refuge, just be sure you have no oncoming traffic. When you are on the right side near the shoulder, your options are much more limited.
  + THE DREADED PEE BREAK
    - If it’s cold you might need to take a wiz sooner or later. Common sense, you’re not sweating but taking in water, you’ll have to go sometime.
    - Last year something happened that surprised me, there was a little gentlemen’s break where the whole peloton stopped for a pee break. Even if you don’t have to go, try anyways. Squeeze out whatever you can. It might prevent you from having to stop again later.
    - Now if this doesn’t happen you’ll have to stop. Try and time it when the peloton really isn’t going that fast, maybe at the top of a hill, or if the peloton slows down for a little while after one of the gravel sections.
    - It’s always good to find someone else who has to go to stop with you. It’s easier to catch back to the peloton if you have someone with you to share the work.
    - If you don’t want to stop, there is the option of peeing on the bike. I DO NOT, repeat DO NOT recommend this unless you have practiced it multiple times before. And if you’re practicing it sometime within the next few weeks make sure you’re by yourself so you don’t cause a wreck.
  + FOOD/BARS/GELS
    - You can burn up to 1,500 calories an hour during a race.
    - Try to eat AT LEAST 500 calories an hour, 1,000 ideally.
    - Each water bottle has about 24 ounces, that’s about 300-400 calories.
    - A Clif bar has about 250 calories.
    - A gel has about 100 calories.
    - So if you drink one bottle, one Clif Bar, and one gel each hour, that’s 650-750 calories.
    - This is my eating schedule for a typical 5 hour/100 mile ride.
      * 1:00 Clif Bar
      * 2:00 Gel
      * 2:30 Clif Bar
      * 3:00 Gel
      * 3:30 Gel
      * 4:00 Gel
      * 4:30 Gel
    - Gels get into your system faster, but Clif Bars last longer so eat your Clif Bars early and use your gels as a little boost every once in a while.
    - It’s better to eat early than late. You don’t want to bonk so don’t wait until you’re tired to eat. It’s like hydration, if you’re thirsty, it’s too late, if you’re hungry, it’s too late.
    - A quick tip for Clif bars: cut the top off before the race. That way you can pull it out of your pocket, pop it out of the wrapper, and munch away.
  + FLAT REPLACEMENT
    - Carry at least 2 tubes and 3-4 CO2’s. CO2’s fail sometimes, so have more CO2’s than tubes. They also make really small hand pumps that you can by as well.
    - Spare tires in the wheel truck are great. But the wheel truck stays with the peleton so if you get dropped, or are in a breakaway, you need your own stuff to change a flat.
    - Once again, you might want to use baby powder your tubes before you put them in your bag, it could help prevent a pinch flat.
  + EYEWEAR
    - Wear glasses.
    - It gets dusty and glasses keep some of the dust out of your eyes.
    - Also, rocks fly and shoot out from your tires and I’d rather not have a rock in my eye.
  + GLOVES
    - I’d recommend long finger gloves no matter what the temperature is.  
      o If you wreck, it could help your fingers from getting torn up by the gravel.
  + GRAVEL SECTIONS
    - If you’re feeling good and strong, get towards the front of the pack before the gravel sections. You don’t want to get stuck behind a slow, nervous person.
    - If you’re nervous or don’t think you can handle the gravel at the speed of the pack, stay towards the back. You don’t want to screw over the people who can keep up.
    - Try to find the tire tracks of the cars. There’s less gravel and you’ll get better traction.
    - I rode the course last weekend and the gravel sections are looking pretty good.
    - There’s not too much gravel and it nice and packed. However, a couple years ago the promoters pulled a little trick and they dumped new gravel the day before the race so be prepared.
    - Remember, you don’t get a lot of traction in the gravel.
    - Don’t make sharp turns or quick moves.
    - Stay sitting down on the climbs. You take the pressure off your back wheel when you stand up and will lose traction. However, if there not too much gravel, you can stand up.
    - The best way to maintain control in the gravel sections is to put as much weight as you can over the rear tire and your front tire will just semi guide you over where you want to go. Try experimenting with a big gear while doing this….it works for Tom Boonen over the cobbles.
    - Try to drink and eat before the gravel sections. It’s going to be hard to eat or drink while speeding down a gravel road over 20mph in a pack of riders. Two hands on the handlebars are better than one.
  + FEEDS
    - It’s kind of hard to carry 5-6 water bottles with you, so depending on the temperature, you might need a feed.
    - Arrange for someone to drive out to one of the feed zones.
    - If you’re going to need more than one bottle at the feed, have your feed person hold out a bag.
    - I recommend practicing grabbing your bag and switching water bottle a couple times in your neighborhood so you don’t cause a wreck or anything.
    - If you don’t feel comfortable, slow down. You don’t need to fly through the feed zone. Get your stuff and catch back to the pack.
    - There is an unwritten rule about not attacking in a feed zone so don’t worry about losing the pack.
    - If you miss your feed, don’t slam on your brakes. Slow down and if you need, turn around. I’d much rather lose the pack than miss my feed and end up in an ambulance getting an I.V.
    - If you’re not taking a feed, get to the left side of the road. Make it easier for other people.
    - It’s kind of hard to carry 5-6 water bottles with you, so depending on the temperature, you might need a feed.
  + MISCELLANEOUS
    - Most of you probably haven’t ever ridden 100 miles, much less 100 miles in St. Francisville with 20 miles of gravel.
    - Be confident but know your limits. Like I said in the gravel section, don’t screw other people over if you know you can’t handle it.
    - Print out a map in case you get dropped. Even though the course is marked, a map is a nice security to have – or go by the Garmin file and follow the course.
    - If you get dropped, don’t give up. Last year I got separated on the first gravel section due to bad placement. The only reason I caught the peloton was because of the gentleman’s pee break I was telling you about. Don’t give up.
    - If you get dropped, it’s not the end of the world. Try to catch the pack, but if you’ve been chasing for 30 minutes and still can’t see the peloton, settle into a nice pace and find some people to ride with.