

What's in Your Race Bag?



What Should be in Your Race Bag?

by Lowell Kellogg (written 2006)

I've been the lead coach at the USAC Midwest Regional Junior Development Road Camp held every June in LaCrosse, Wisconsin for a few years now and camp manager, Larry Martin always requests that I go over the "Race Bag." There's

really nothing for the presentation other than bringing my race bag to the camp's evening classroom session & discussing what's in my race bag as I pull items out of it. I've been racing for over twenty five years, and my race bag

has evolved over the years and is a reflection of my racing and travel experiences. I am hesitant at times going

over the contents of my race bag for I learned quite quickly that riders and staff that have heard my race bag presentation hunt me down at race events they know I'll have they need. So if I disclose please take it upon yourself to create our own and not to be reliant on others.

Organization is an important component to the sport of cycling since there's always the potential of things going horribly wrong at the worst time, and if you're not prepared, poor performance or lack of performance may be the result. Since becoming a certified USAC coach, I've come across several pre-race check lists, so what I have to share with you may be easily available elsewhere. However, I always find my race bag to be



more comprehensive since it is based on my own personal riding/racing experiences.

When I used to travel & be away for several weeks or months racing, my race bag was much larger & consisted of street cloths and leisure wear along with my race kit. My current race bag is more reflective of local racing where I usually compete in a one day event, returning home the same day. However, if I do travel to cycling events that require lodging for a night or more, I now pack a separate travel bag for toiletries, street clothes and leisure wear in order to keep my race bag intact. I find if I leave my race bag in the car & only bring in my travel bag to the motel or host housing, I am less likely to forget important cycling gear & clothing behind. If you are just starting to race and/or plan to race only local events such as the WCA Cup series, my race bag that I am going to share with you will be more than enough. Due to the cold weather associated with spring races in Wisconsin, I have both cold & warm weather race bags. I usually remove winter racing gear when the track season begins at the end of May & add my skinsuits and spare jerseys for the Madison event.

Here are the items in my race bag:

GLOVES: You should always train and race in gloves. Obviously, you need winter gloves in the early spring races and riding gloves when the weather warms. If you crash, your instinct is to put out your hands and without gloves, you can remove the skin from the palm of your hands. Ever try riding a bike without skin on your palms? I usually have thin long-finger gloves in my race bag for cool riding days throughout the season.

HELMET: You must have a helmet to race, so I always attach my helmet to my race bag handle so I will not leave home without it, and I know I have it, for I can see it attached to my bag.

Standard **USAC ENTRY & RELEASE FORMS:** You can download and print these forms off the USAC website at: www.usacycling.org. I always travel with several standard USAC entry and release forms that I have filled out all the information except for event name, date, and entry fee. Usually I fill out one form & photo copy it so all I have to do is fill in race information at registration. Most races can have long lines, wind, & rain which are not conditions favorable for filling out paper forms.

RULE BOOK: The rule book used to be mailed out to all the USAC membership, but with the rule book being available on-line, I believe only licensed officials receive a hard copy of the rule book. I always carry my rule book in my race bag along with an officials patch in case there's a need for an additional official at a race event.

BASIC TOOLS for track & road: I travel with my tool box but in my race bag I carry a multi-tool, spare inner tube, tire levers, and handle bar tape and for the track a Campy peanut butter wrench and disk valve stem adapter for my track wheels. How many times do you see a rider with electrical tape patching their handle bar tape and/or missing bar ends? That's why I take handle bar tape with me in my race bag.



Lowell (left) & team at Le Tour de l'Abitibi 2004

SHOES, SPARE CLEATS, STRAPS, & BUCKLES:

My current race bag has a mesh see through compartment to allow my shoes to breath and for me to see if I have my shoes in my bag. I also carry spare cleats, straps, and buckles. I am prepared to change any cleat, buckle, or strap that might break prior to the start of my race. It would be a shame to drive a far distance to a race and break a cleat or strap with no means to fix it.

JERSEYS & SHORTS: You should always travel with a minimum of two compete team kits consisting of a jersey and short each, especially if you plan to do more than one race per event or race two or more races over a weekend. I've seen riders with bikes worth several thousand dollars

yet when they crash they don't have a spare team kit. You are required to start each race in a clean kit. If you do more than one race per event, a fresh kit feels good and allows you to get out of your cold wet kit and into a clean dry one.

BASE LAYERS: Base layers are just as important as your team kit for they offer extra protection if you have a crash. Base layers may also aid in cooling in hot weather and warming in cool weather. I always have a variety of base layers in my race bag to choose from based on the weather conditions.

LONG-SLEEVED JERSEY: You should always travel with at least one long-sleeved jersey even if you believe the weather will be warm. When you travel to a race the weather can change and if it's early in the morning or late in the afternoon the temperature can be much cooler to what you may have predicted. Long-sleeved jerseys are also good to warm up and cool down in and a clean long-sleeved jersey looks professional when you stand on a podium for your award.

RIDING JACKET, VEST, RAIN GEAR, TIGHTS, ARM WARMERS, LEG WARMERS, & BOOTIES:

Always take cold weather clothing with you so you can dress according to the race conditions when you arrive to the start and not be caught off guard to race conditions you did not foresee. I always take more cold weather clothing than I need so I have several options to choose from. When the track season begins towards the end of May, I remove a lot of my cold weather clothing in my race bag and add my skin suits and additional jerseys to

loan my Madison (team race) partner. However, I always leave at least one long-sleeve jersey, riding jacket, and arm warmers for sometimes both tracks [Kenosha & Northbrook velodromes] can become really cold at night being so close to Lake Michigan.

TOWEL & RUBBING ALCOHOL: I take along a small towel & rubbing alcohol with me to clean up after a race. Most race venues do not provide shower facilities, so I always rub down with a towel dampened with rubbing alcohol. Don't take a beach or a bathing towel, for they will take up too much space. I use simple, white towels I got from the United States Marine Corps, that have my name stenciled on them. I usually have two of them in my race bag. Finding a similar towel should not be a hard task. The alcohol I use, I buy at a grocery store, drug store, or

discount store & come in bottles that can be easily carried in my bag. If you travel with others, please have the courtesy to clean up after a race. This is especially true, if you're going to be confined in a car, for an extended amount of time on the way home. If I use a balm or some type of ointment on my legs, I use the towel & alcohol to remove it from my hands after applying it to my legs so I don't have slippery hands when I grasp the handle bars.

SEWING KIT: People always laugh when I show them my sewing kit in my race bag. Yet, people that know I have it have seek me out to use it!? I got my sewing kit during a stay in a luxury hotel. You can purchase a sewing kit for cheap at most drug/discount stores. I have a tendency for zippers to rip out near my belly for some reason, so I like the added security knowing I can make minor clothing repairs on the spot.

TOILET PAPER: How many times have you been to a race venue only to find out there's toilets but no toilet paper? I keep a roll of toilet paper in a zip lock baggie in my race bag & another in my car. Now that you know this, get your own and don't ask me at the races if I have any.

CHECK BOOK & RACE LICENSE: I keep my race license in my check book for I need both of them to register for a race. I always pay my entry fees by check for several reasons. Sometimes checks don't get cashed. If you pay with cash, the money is gone. If the check isn't cashed the money is still yours. I've won races (not recently) where the race promoter doesn't cash my check as a courtesy. At the end of the season, I look through my check book to determine the number of races I competed in & tally up my total spent on entry fees for the year. Prior to being married, I was doing 65 to 70 races a year consisting of road events on weekends & track during the week.

SOCKS: I always bring socks for racing, so if it rains I have clean, dry and warm socks to wear afterward.

PLASTIC BAGS: Plastic bags from the grocery store are easily stored in my race bag & are used to put my used race kit & towel in after my race. This separates dirty from clean items in my race bag. Then when I get home, everything remains in the car except the items in my plastic bag which I take in the house to laundry. Once laundered & dry, I immediately return the clothing items to my car, so I don't forget to take them to the next race. You should always remove your race number immediately after taking off your jersey for if you don't, the safety pins used to attach your race number can rust & stain your jersey.

INDEX CARDS: I have several 3" x 5" index cards in my race bag that I use to put my name, team, event, and race number on and attach to my spare wheels if the race has a wheel pit. If I put wheels in the pit, I also write, "Wheels!" on a folded over index card and place it on my car's steering column directly in front of the dash so I will be reminded to pick up my wheels out of the pit prior to leaving the race site.

HAT: Carry a team hat in your race bag so if you have podium finish, you can cover up your "helmet head" hair. Many times newspapers crop your picture so sponsors on your jersey may not get in your picture but it is hard to crop a head shot with your sponsor on your hat.

SANDALS: Prior to a race & after, I may need to walk around, so I carry sandals with me to wear so I am not straining my Achilles tendon walking in my cycling shoes as well as damaging my cycling shoe cleats.

ENERGY BARS, GELS, POP TARTS: Sometimes you need something during a race or between events to eat. A few packaged energy food items do not take up too much space in your race bag & usually keep for the season unlike a banana, orange, or an apple would.

SAFETY PINS: After a race, I save my safety pins so I will have some for the next race or give to someone looking for pins. If you do a lot of races, there's no excuse for not having pins. The tracks issue cloth numbers to be used for the track season. I always leave my track numbers in my race bag so I will always know where they are located.

PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR: If you use protective eyewear, make sure you have several lenses to use that best fit the weather conditions. Dark lenses may look cool but will do you little good when the light / visibility is poor.

I have a lot of items in my race bag but I can get them all to fit as long as I do the following: When packing my bag it is important that all the items are clean & dry. I also fold each item so I will be able to pack more in to my race bag. The items I know I will be using such as my shorts and jersey, I place towards the top in the race bag. I pack my protective eyewear towards the top of the bag, so I know it will not get crushed. Items I rarely use but take along just in case I may need them, I have towards the bottom of the bag. I always place my race socks and cycling gloves in my shoes so I can always find them right away. All my cycling clothing, hat, toilet paper, and towel go into the main compartment of my race

bag. My shoes, gloves, socks, are placed in the mesh compartment on one end of the bag. On the other end of the bag, I place my alcohol, balms, tools, spare cleats, straps, & buckles. Along the side of the bag I have a compartment for my check book, standard entry & release forms, index cards, race flyers, safety pins, track race numbers, writing pens, officials patch, rule book, and a current Wisconsin road map, that I picked up for free from a Wisconsin rest area!

Please take responsibility for your own race bag & its contents. Do not blame a parent or someone else for not bringing or packing something for you. Keep everything organized & clean in your race bag & you will be able to focus all your attention on racing & not trying to find items that you have forgotten to bring to the race event.

You now know the contents of my race bag but now it's your turn to make your own. Good Luck.

See you at the races,

- Lowell Kellogg

SPECIAL ITEMS at the Group Health Velodrome?

There are a few things that are worth the effort to bring to the track, not touched on by Lowell, in his text above. With the track this is true as you generally get to race a few times per race night. Unlike road races or criteriums (except for Masters who can often do more than one race if things are scheduled right.) where you only have one event.



photo by Stephen Rusk

Camper Chair:

There is not a lot of seating space on the bleachers, and the geese often leave the grass too messy to sit down. A good fold out one that you keep in your car for the season will perfect. Mark it with your name somewhere, just in case more than two look alike.

photo by Stephen Rusk

Rollers: If you can find space on the infield to set up, they are great to have between races to keep warm, or afterward to cool down. Rollers can take concentration, so only use them if you have practice before race nites.



Road Bike: It's easy to get on your road bike in the warm up circle to cool down. You can have a water bottle within easy reach and you do not have to bother changing gears as often on your track bike.



Bike Stand: The coolsters do not like to lay their bike down in the grass, and bikes are not allowed on the inside railing once racing starts. What do you do? Get a bike stand - found

mine on the internet - to keep your bike clean & taking up less space laying around on the ground.



Gear Bag: Having extra gears is the way to go. I have Extra chain rings 1 tooth larger and smaller and 3 different cogs on the back to give me a range of gearing for the weather, the varying events and the competition. The tools to change all of my equipment and items that are special to me and my bikes are what I bring. Search the internet for a "Keirin Tote" or "Gear Bag" on the fixie websites.

Mark your stuff, so you know what's yours!