



PROPER CLOTHING FOR COLD AND WET TRAINING DAYS

There are three areas that feel the chill most when riding on cold, wet days; feet, hands and head. The first place to start is with the head. As most heat escapes through the top of your head it is wise to wear a wind blocking beanie under your helmet. Most bike stores will carry these items all year long. Another option, to wear in conjunction with your little beanie, is a water proof helmet cover. This will prevent almost all rain from touching your head thus preventing any wet from wicking away heat from the body.

The second place, and probably the most painful, is the hands. This can be prevented in three ways. First, buy a pair of Gore-Tex lined winter riding gloves. They tend to be a little bulky, but, hey, who cares, you'll be warm. Some even wear surgical gloves under the riding glove to retain even more of the body heat. The second is a pair of insulated fall riding gloves with a water proof shell on top. These shells can be purchased at most outdoor stores. A third option, and although it's probably the warmest, it's the most difficult to switch gears on a road bike, is the use of lobster claw gloves. These are almost like mittens with two of the fingers separated from the others in a separate compartment of the glove. The glove retains more heat because, much like a mitten, there is less surface area on the glove where heat can dissipate. Mittens are always warmer than gloves.

The third area that will feel the cold is your feet. If you are wearing clip in shoes, as most cyclists do, the most common method is a water proof shoe cover. They sell these in both insulated winter weight and regular fall and spring weight. The latter is not insulated, just a rubber coating. In most circumstances your feet will get wet anyway, but at least you will stop air from carrying heat away from your feet. You'll find that no matter how snug the shoe cover water will always seep in through the bottom where there is a hole for the shoe clip. If it's just cold then some of the thick insulated covers do fairly well. The only problem with these is that eventually cold will seep in through the bottom of the shoe where there is no insulation. Some people put plastic bags over their feet. This method tends to be quite effective as well. The most expensive, yet most effective, way to keep your feet warm and dry is a waterproof riding boot. Nothing gets past these puppies. They are made to keep the water out from all directions. If you live in a cold, wet environment an investment in a second pair of riding shoes/boots may be very much worth your while.

As for the body, it's important to protect the core. Your first piece of clothing should be a snug fitting base layer. They have some great materials that wick moisture away from the body keeping the fabric next to the skin warm and dry. Your jersey, arm warmer combination comes next. Arm warmers come in insulated and non-insulated varieties. On top of that a winter riding jacket if it's cold followed by a rain coat on top if it's raining. Most riding jackets are not water proof and insulated at the same time. It's usually either or. If it's just cold then an insulated riding jacket with a wind proof membrane on the front of the body should suffice.

As for the legs, most cyclists will use a combination of their chamois and either full leg warmers or shorter knee warmers depending on conditions. Full leg warmers also come in wind proof versions where a membrane, such as Gore-Tex, is pressed between the layers keeping wind from getting through. You can also buy full winter riding bibs where the legs will be insulated and in some cases have built in wind proof protection on the front of the leg. These are for cold conditions that will stay cold throughout the day. There is no taking off leg warmers when wearing full bibs. Another options is winter weight over tights or wind/water proof pants. The winter weight over tights work the same way as full bibs, with insulation and usually some type of wind blocking technology. On top of these, if you require another layer, is the wind/water proof pant. Personally, I just use the full winter riding bib. They stay in one spot, they are warm and there is less shifting of layers in the crotch area while cycling. Sometimes less is more.

In most circumstances when cycling in the rain you are going to get wet, either from the outside in or the inside out. Cold, on the other hand, is a little easier to deal with. That being said, you must prevent wind from wicking away heat from your body when cycling in any of these conditions. You can still cycle wet and feel quite comfortable as long as the wind doesn't dissipate your body heat. If you feel too warm with all your layers you can always remove some of them and stuff them in the your jacket pockets. Layers are the key word here. Think of your clothing as a jigsaw puzzle; it comes in pieces. These pieces can be removed or added to suit your riding conditions.