



Photo by Hansi Johnson

RUBBER SIDE RAD

Nov/Dec 2015 // Winter Riding // Tech Tips & Info

Traction is a topic that we've covered before in *Call Up*, but no time is more important than during the winter months. Cold temps and snowy conditions can turn roads into skating rinks and make trails appear to be unrideable. With a few key pointers and the right gear however, proper traction in winter can easily be achieved. Here's everything you need to know about staying upright on two very wide wheels this winter.

Drop it Low

As people transition to fat bikes from other types of bikes, many are hesitant to drop their tire pressure enough for a fat tire to actually show its effectiveness. While it's common to see people riding between 15 and 20 psi, the real sweet spot is 4-8 psi. This all depends on rider weight and surface conditions of course. Smaller riders can safely go much lower than larger riders but will also experience the effects that too-high pressure can have as well.

A Match Made in Winter

Ensuring that you're combining the correct tire width with its proper rim width counterpart will help you make strides toward staying upright this winter. For example, if you have a Surly 3.8 Knard on a 100mm wide rim, you're in for slip city. The tire will be so stretched out, the knobs that should be providing cornering traction will be on the top of the tire, and the bare sidewall will be all that separates you from the ground (which you will likely hit with this rim and tire combo). Conversely, if you have a five-inch-wide tire on a 65mm rim, you'll create a "light bulb effect" whereby you round everything out a bit too much and decrease the tire's contact patch with the ground.

As a general rule, 3.8 tires go great with 65mm rims, 4.0-4.6 tires work well with an 80mm rim, and 4.6-5.0 tires are best with 100mm rims.

What a Stud

It's become a common misconception that studded tires mean a slow and sluggish ride. While that may have been the case with some early studded models, today's studs are lighter. For instance, the studs in a 45NORTH Dillinger 5 tire weigh about the same as a 45NORTH Greazy cap.

Another common studded tire myth is that you need to replace your studded tires every year. While this may be the case if you're riding primarily on pavement, modern studs use modern materials like carbide to ensure they wear slower and last longer.

You Know What Would Go Great With That?

While there's nothing wrong with going out and ripping your local groomed singletrack with your fat bike as-is, there are a number of accessories that will make the ride a little more enjoyable.

Low Pressure Gauge

The majority of floor pump gauges don't actually start registering pressure until at least 15 psi. This poses a huge problem for trying to dial in that perfect four pounds of pressure. Picking up a low pressure gauge will ensure that you're riding right in the sweet spot.

High Volume Pump

Anyone who's pumped up a fat bike tire knows it takes a lot of effort with a standard floor pump. Luckily, there are high-volume pumps that are hitting the market to make inflating fat tire a much less arduous process.

Thicker Sealant

As more tubeless fat bike tires and rims hit the market, people have begun to realize that different sealants react differently in cold temperatures. The best bet is to go with a sealant of the thicker variety, as it will stay more viscous for longer in colder temps.

Fat's Little Brother

There are many parts of the country that might not receive enough snowfall to necessitate a full-on fat tire, but never fear. We haven't forgotten about you. In plenty of regions with slightly milder winters, a plus-sized tire will provide enough traction for any elements you might encounter. For more information on plus-sized tires and the benefits they carry with them, see our on "On the Plus Side" article from September's issue of Call Up.

Geek Out About Rubber

Winter-specific rubber, as geeky as it might sound, is now a thing when it comes to fat bike tires. Many rubber compounds harden at cold temperatures, rendering them all but useless at doing their job of providing traction. Winter compounds, however, remain soft at cold temperatures, and tires made from them offer a much more supple and comfortable ride.

Pressure Shrinkage

It should come as no surprise that the air pressure in your tires will drop as soon as you get out into the cold, but by how much? According to science, more than you might think—anywhere from 1-4 whole psi. That might not sound like a lot, but consider this: If you inflate your tires to 8 psi indoors where it's 70 degrees, and then bring your bike outside where it's -10 degrees, that 8 psi will turn to 4 psi in a hurry. Depending on your weight, that could spell disaster as soon as you hit the trails.

Where Are You Riding Today?

Knowing what kinds of conditions you're about to ride in will play a key part in maintaining proper traction. If you'll be riding over a lot of icy spots, studded tires should do the trick. Groomed singletrack or loose snow? Something with a nice open tread pattern that easily sheds snow and avoids buildup will be perfect.

With all this knowledge of proper winter traction, you should be armed with everything you need to shred the white stuff all winter and carve through freshly groomed corduroy at your local trailhead. No go forth and get rad.

EXPLORE CALL UP

QBP ADVOCACY

BY CATEGORY

BMX
Back to School
Best of Fall
Bikepacking/Touring
Business Building
Commuter
Cyclocross
Family
Gravel
Internship
Mountain
Multisport/Triathlon
Road
Service & Repair
Winter Riding

BY ARTICLE TYPE

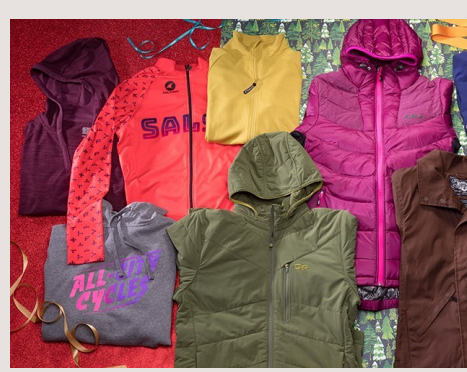
BY ISSUE

Share this article



Related Articles

TECH TIPS & INFO



NOVEMBER 2017

Holiday Gift Guide

Experts at QBP picked out top-selling and trendiest products to create this year's gift guides.

TECH TIPS & INFO

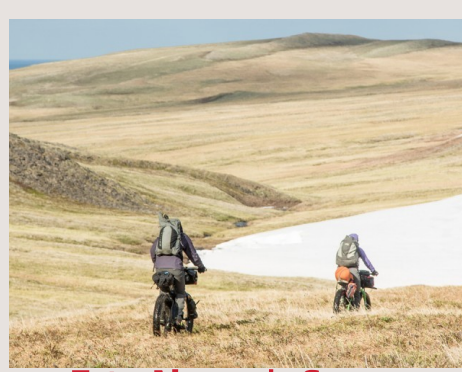


NOVEMBER 2017

No Winter Slump

Two shops talk about how to successfully host indoor training classes.

TECH TIPS & INFO



Fat - Always in Season

In the past, the true capabilities of fat bikes got buried in sand and snow when it came to marketing. We think the modern fat bike deserves another look.

This Month in Call Up

EXPLORING THE INDUSTRY

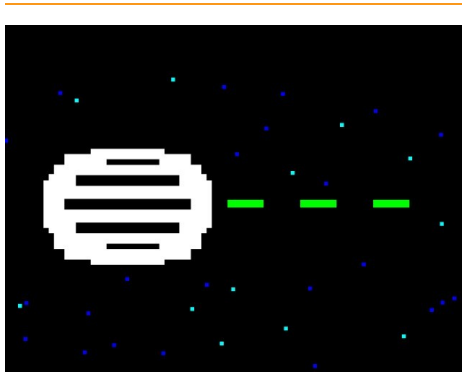


JULY 2018

By the Numbers: Dirty Kanza Women's Field

Here's what we learned about the 200-mile women's field at Dirty Kanza.

TECH TIPS & INFO



JULY 2018

Playing Defense: Advancing Helmet Technology

Helmet companies are inventing new ways to protect your brain.

FEATURED BRANDS

EXPLORE CALL UP

QBP ADVOCACY

BY CATEGORY

BMX
Back to School
Best of Fall
Bikepacking/Touring
Business Building
Commuter
Cyclocross
Family
Gravel
Internship
Mountain
Multisport/Triathlon
Road
Service & Repair
Winter Riding

BY ARTICLE TYPE

BY ISSUE