

TECHNICAL SUPPORT MOTORCYCLE

Another type of motorcycle in the caravan is the neutral technical support motorcycle. These small and highly maneuverable support vehicles fill the void created by a single rider, or small groups of riders, trying to escape and stay away from the main peloton. Team managers do not want to commit all their technical resources to one rider and leave the rest of the team unsupported in the peloton. In this situation the chief commissaire will send the neutral technical support motorcycle to cover the riders in the break.

During active racing the support resources are limited and must be utilized wisely. A single rider does not require a full complement of equipment, mechanics, and manager. A technical support motorcycle can meet the single rider's needs as far as wheels and technical assistance.

The technical support motorcycle typically carries the driver and mechanic, two sets of wheels, and the basic tools the mechanic needs to make simple adjustments and repairs. If repairs cannot be made by the technical support motorcycle, a request will be made to have the team car or neutral support car come to the rider's assistance.

A radio keeps the technical support motorcycle in contact with the chief

commissaire or head of the neutral technical support team. Instructions from the chief commissaire or head of neutral support are radioed to the mechanic on the neutral technical support motorcycle. The mechanic tells the neutral technical support motorcycle driver where they need to be.

In ideal situations, both driver and mechanic are a team employed by the neutral technical support company. The team works all over the country and becomes well known to riders and their managers. As a result, team managers have confidence in the neutral technical support personnel and their technical expertise.

Usually, motorcycle drivers and neutral technical support mechanics are paired up at the start of an event. The promoter must make a careful check into the credentials of both drivers and mechanics. Putting inexperienced personnel into a position as important as neutral technical support is creating the potential for serious problems. Poor neutral support can give an otherwise excellent event a bad reputation and cost a rider a victory.

POSITIONING THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT MOTORCYCLE

The technical support motorcycle usually

starts the race positioned in front of the peloton. Occasionally the neutral technical support motorcycle will be directly behind the chief commissaire's car. The neutral technical support motorcycle will stay in its position until directed to a new position determined by race developments.

When there is a break away that gains a lead of thirty seconds or more over the peloton, the neutral technical support motorcycle may be dispatched to cover the lead rider, or riders, in the break away. When in position, the neutral technical support motorcycle is under the control of the official with the lead riders. The neutral technical support motorcycle does nothing without permission from the officials. If the motorcycle driver or mechanic sees something that the official misses, he makes the official aware of the problem and asks for permission to respond to the rider's needs.

As long as there is a break away, team cars may come up to their riders, talk tactics, and give hand ups. At those times the technical support motorcycle driver will drop back out of the way. If there have been problems, the technical support motorcycle mechanic will update the team manager as to what has been done.

DRIVING TECHNIQUES

The technical support motorcycle driver must watch his mirrors as much as he watches the riders in front of him. There will be times when riders bridge up to the leaders and the technical support motor-

cycle driver must be prepared to get out of the way. The same holds true for when the team support cars come up to the leaders. The neutral technical support motorcycle driver must be driving his line and driving predictably.

The neutral technical support motorcycle driver does not need a great deal of race experience. Most of his time is spent in front of the race, dropping in behind riders as they attack off the front of the peloton. Some times, the chief commissaire will have the neutral technical support motorcycle driver stay directly behind his car. Both positions are easy to work in. The passenger, a licensed professional mechanic with years of experience in neutral technical support, will assist the inexperienced motorcycle driver in performing his duties.

When there is a breakaway, the chief commissaire will have the neutral technical support motorcycle positioned behind the leading riders. The motorcycle driver must not devote all his attention to the riders directly in front of him. He must keep checking his rear view mirrors and be aware of any riders bridging up to the break.

If a rider does succeed in bridging up to the leaders, the neutral technical support motorcycle driver must make sure the bridging rider is not helped or hindered in his efforts to make contact. If possible, the neutral technical support motorcycle driver should get out of the way in plenty of time to let the chasing rider catch. The

neutral technical support motorcycle driver may move ahead of the riders, or pull off the side of the road and stop.

Sometimes the neutral technical support motorcycle driver is "asleep" on the job and is not aware a rider is bridging until the rider is only a few meters away. Motion in the rear view mirror brings the motorcycle driver back to reality. In this case, the neutral technical support motorcycle driver must make certain he drives a straight line, not moving to one side of the road or the other.

Overtaking riders will take tactical advantage of the technical support motorcycle, drafting and echeloning up to the leaders. When caught in this situation, the driver must operate the motorcycle in a predictable manner until the catching riders have gone by. The driver of the neutral technical support motorcycle must not endanger riders by rapid decelerations or unpredictable sideways maneuvers.

It cannot be said enough: the neutral technical support motorcycle must stay aware of what is happening around him, and especially behind him. He must be alert, watch his mirrors, be predictable, and anticipate the unexpected. He is there to provide service for the riders and cannot be a problem during the race.

PROVIDING TECHNICAL SUPPORT

When technical support is required and the neutral technical support motorcycle

is in a position to provide the service, the same rules apply as if the motorcycle were a team car. All support is given from the right. It is the responsibility of the neutral technical support motorcycle driver to deliver the mechanic directly behind the rider needing support and to park the support motorcycle as close to the right side of the road as possible. The entire service lane and as much of the right lane must be kept open for caravan traffic. If this simple maneuver cannot be performed, the neutral technical support motorcycle driver will soon find himself out of a job.

AT THE FINISH

When a solo rider is able to stay away to the end of the race, the neutral technical support motorcycle driver and mechanic must not draw attention to themselves as the rider crosses the line. Celebrating is for the winner. The neutral technical support motorcycle should follow the rider across the line at a discreet distance and continue to roll as far forward as possible. Room must be available in the finish area for all the other vehicles that will accompany the field when the race ends.

Again, the neutral technical support motorcycle driver and mechanic should not engage in celebrating with the rider. This action detracts from the rider and a mechanic standing on the pegs of the motorcycle, waiving wheels overhead, blocks the shots of photographers who may have been waiting hours for the finish. This type of celebrating does not exemplify professional behavior. It would be better

if the neutral technical support motorcycle is pulled prior to the line in a special pullout lane set up by the promoter.

The neutral technical support motorcycle is in the race caravan to provide support for the racers. Its job begins prior to the start of the race and ends when the last rider crosses the line. Good neutral technical support motorcycle drivers and mechanics do their jobs quietly and efficiently. They do not draw attention away from the riders.

THE ONE KILOMETER RULE

Stage racing has a one kilometer rule. It states that if a rider suffers a mishap within the last kilometer to the finish, the rider will be credited with the time he would have gotten if the mishap had not occurred. In the event of a mishap the neutral technical support motorcycle mechanic will get the rider going as quickly as possible.

The rider who has stayed away on a long breakaway wants to finish in front of the field, even if there is a mishap. In the event of a mishap the rider will be on an uncontrollable adrenaline rush, making repairs difficult. The rider will be very appreciative if the neutral technical support mechanic can get him across the finish line before the arrival of a hard charging peloton.

There will be an exciting finish while the neutral technical support motorcycle driver and mechanic drive quietly across

the finish line, avoiding drawing any attention to themselves and distracting spectators from the racer. The reward for the neutral technical support motorcycle team will be the satisfaction gained from a job well done.

MEDICAL SUPPORT MOTORCYCLE

Another motorcycle found in the caravan is the medical support motorcycle. The medical support motorcycle carries a race staff EMT/Paramedic, at the very least, and a race doctor, if possible. The medical support motorcycle is an extension of the medical services and provides the riders with a highly mobile platform from which to obtain minimal medical assistance.

It is desirable to have a medical support motorcycle driver with a medical background, or at least advanced first aid training. A motorcycle driver with this kind of background will compliment the skills of the medical doctor carried on the motorcycle. The medical support motorcycle driver should also have a basic understanding of bicycle racing. But at the very least the driver must have some concept of caravan driving.

POSITION OF THE MEDICAL MOTORCYCLE

Until the break develops, the medical support motorcycle is always positioned behind the peloton. This position is ideal in the event of a mishap causing injuries. The medical personnel can be on the site of the crash and render medical assistance immediately. If the medical support motorcycle team's assessment of injuries calls for more advanced medical attention, the

medical team can radio for additional help. Information can also be relayed to the team manager of the injured rider.

When the break develops, the medical support motorcycle is sent up to a position just behind the leaders. In this way the leaders can receive medical coverage with a minimum amount of resources being devoted to them. While with the leaders, the medical support motorcycle driver will be under the control of the official in that location. If there is no official present, the medical support motorcycle driver will be responsible for making sure the medical support motorcycle does not interfere with the race.

MEDICAL MOTORCYCLE AND RIDER ASSISTANCE

A crash is not the only situation the medical support motorcycle team deals with. The position of the medical support motorcycle allows riders to receive first aid at the back of the peloton. Riders will not have to drop back through the caravan to find a race doctor. If the medical support motorcycle lacks what the rider needs, the motorcycle can quickly get the items and bring them back to the rider.

The medical support motorcycle can also relay information from the rider to the

medical car or to the rider's support car. Either way, the rider can get the assistance he needs without having to drop back into the caravan and then expend a lot of energy trying to get back up to the field.

While observing the riders in the peloton or break, the driver or passenger on the medical support motorcycle may notice a rider beginning to display symptoms of a problem. In this case, the rider can receive immediate medical attention and prevent the problem from getting worse. The medical support motorcycle may assist the rider themselves. The medical support motorcycle may have a message relayed to the team car that a rider is showing signs of distress and the team car can take care of the problem.

DIRECTING THE MEDICAL MOTORCYCLE

The driver of the medical support motorcycle gets his instructions from the chief commissaire or the person given the responsibility of directing medical support. The medical support motorcycle driver, his passenger, or the race doctor may ask to have the medical support motorcycle moved. It is up to the person in charge of directing the motorcycles to make the final decision to have the medical support motorcycle moved and where it is moved to.

ASSISTING A RIDER

When rendering medical assistance that requires the medical support motorcycle

to stop, the driver must pull as far to the right side of the road as possible. The service lane and as much of the right lane must be left open for caravan use. It is important the race be allowed to proceed without risk of collision with stationary race vehicles.

DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY

The medical support motorcycle is an integral part of the race caravan and will be present at the start of the race, in the caravan during the race, and in the run out area following the conclusion of the event. It is a very low profile job, requiring a minimal amount of motorcycle driver skill.

The driver of the medical support motorcycle is responsible for staying alert. He must check his rear view mirrors regularly to look for bridging riders, press vehicles, and team cars. The medical support motorcycle driver must not allow himself to become fully engrossed in the racing and "fall asleep at the wheel".

The medical support motorcycle driver must maintain a straight line. He must be predictable in his driving. Other drivers and riders must know they will not be unexpectedly run off the road if they try to pass the medical support motorcycle.