

## Change apparel, bike choice for winter

I cycle in the winter but my choice of bicycles changes. My cyclocross bike is designed for working in the elements. Cross racing occurs in the late fall/early winter where one can expect rain, snow, mud etc. There is more clearance in the brake/fork area.

Cross bikes also can take wider tires without rubbing on the fork or chain stays. Most road bikes use 23c tires. A cross bike works just fine with a 32-35c tire with more tread.

If I want more control, I use snow chains/studded tires on my mountain bike, which has 2.1-inch tires. I look for the road less traveled to avoid motorists.

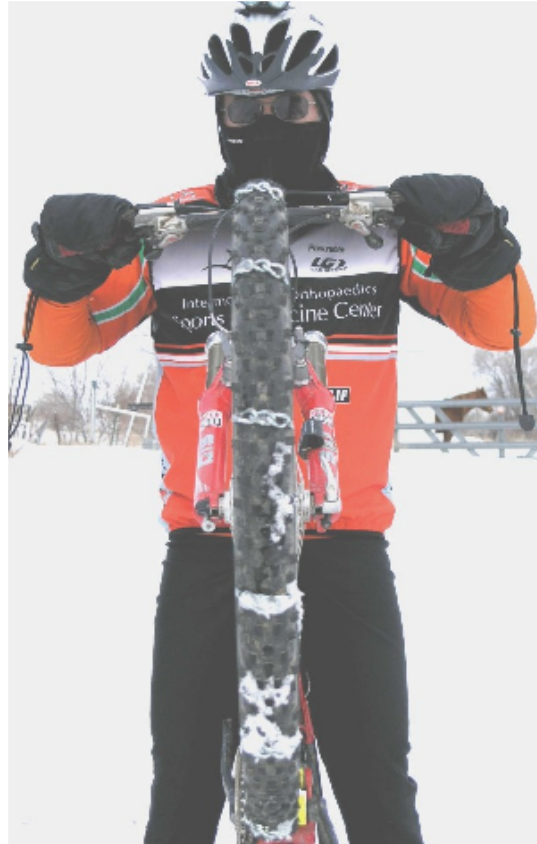
Proper clothing is paramount. My apparel is made from moisture-wicking material. The key is to keep the body's "core" warm. If the core is not kept warm, the body's reaction is to protect the core at the expense of cold hands/feet.

Layering allows one to adjust to conditions. If the temperature is near zero, I start my ride with a short-sleeve jersey, long-sleeve jersey, insulated wind breaker and vest, jacket and arm warmers. I cover my hands with warm mittens inside thin gloves inside bigger gloves. I use a thin pair of socks inside thermal socks inside winter cycling boots.

I find that it takes about 4-5 miles to get my "engine" warmed up. At that point, the arm warmers and vest are peeled off. After about 10 miles, the insulated wind breaker is no longer needed.

Due to baldness, I've lost one of nature's best heaters/air conditioners – hair. In winter, one potentially can lose a significant amount of heat from a bald head. In the summer, wet hair cools off the head. I have several head covers. At approximately 35 degrees or higher, I have a skull cap that fits under my helmet and covers my scalp/ears. Below 35, I wear a balaclava head covering with openings for my eyes and a slit for my nostrils.

Many cyclists use neoprene shoe covers to provide a wind barrier for their feet. Winter cycling boots are more expensive but are more effective and eliminate the hassle of putting covers on/taking them off. Since I ride 12 months a year, the boot investment paid off years ago.



The question is often asked: “Why don’t you use a trainer or a gym to avoid winter’s elements?” The answer: I want to be OUTDOORS!