

# True Cycling

**By: Steve Ward**

I suppose it wouldn't make much sense to the casual observer - the fact that I true my own wheels in such a fashion that after truing them three or four times I need to take them into the shop and have them trued. Perhaps it's a result of not having a truing stand of my own and that the method I employ is less than professional.

My method is to put my bike up on my repair stand, adjust the brakes so that one brake pad rides real close to the wheel and then give it a slow spin. The wheel will stop turning when a high spot on the wheel rubs on the brake pad. At that point I make small adjustments to the appropriate and offsetting spokes using my spoke wrench. The truth is I don't really know that much about the science/art of truing wheels; the process usually takes me about thirty minutes and when I've completed the task, often times I can't really tell whether the wheel is more, or less, true than when I began.

When I take the wheel into the shop to have a professional do it I like to stand by and watch. He takes 5 minutes, and as a benefit, the wheel is actually true. Nice. I tip the guy because I appreciate his craftsmanship.

Someday, due to trial and error, and perhaps the acquisition of a real truing stand, I may yet become proficient at truing wheels. Until that time, I am pleased to continue in my current ways because it brings me pleasure to tinker with mechanical things. I also believe that the more I practice the better I'll get, and it is my objective to get better.

The same is true of my fitness level and bike handling skills. I train year round and am generally in pretty good shape. I learn a lot from others and value the relationships I've developed with the cycling community that are very useful toward helping me achieve my goals.

But my fitness and skill levels, like the wheel, get out of true on a regular basis. I am learning that as my fitness level improves and I'm able to ride farther, climb higher and descend faster, my body's requirements for sustaining the energy to do those rides changes. What used to work in terms of nutrition, both on and off the road, changes in relation to my training regimen.

As I begin to feel the fatigue set in on the harder riding days, and then carry over into my off-the-bike life, I know I need to reevaluate my nutrition, rest, and recovery plans. Again, I tinker. Sometimes it pays off, but mostly not. So I seek out the advice of other cyclists within my network, especially those who are riding at a higher level than myself, and they are able to make suggestions that bring my training and my fitness back to true. By tinkering, I learn. I learn to appreciate the intricacies of the issue and a few of the probabilities which make me better able to communicate them to someone who can help.

Someday, I'll be able to true my own wheels expertly. Someday, I'll gain the enough knowledge to diagnose my nutritional needs and modify my diet to meet my body's demands. But I'm not in so much of a hurry that I would trade the journey through the countryside for the express commuter train. After all, it's all about the journey isn't it?