

Musing McKinney

My Baggy Manifesto

By: Scott McKinney

It was really wet riding to work today. Now, I'm trying to dry out my duds because putting on wet britches, gloves, socks and shoes to ride home really sucks. I'm currently toasting my gloves on top of my computer monitor. Next, I think I'll microwave them... Ok, that just made my gloves hot *and* wet. If I wring them really hard, maybe I can make tea.

I have found I can usually assault rain rides with plastic grocery bags over my shoes. By tucking the bags neatly inside my long riding pants and covering the getup with shoe covers, I can maximize protection, eliminate flapping and minimize the grief bestowed on my by my skeptical friends. This choice of function over fashion has virtually ensured dry feet on many a sloppy ride.

Over the years, however, I have suffered no end of derision, badgering, ribbing, joshing, mischief and ridicule about my practical-yet-unsightly choice in foot protection. I am deeply scarred over the cumulative effect of many sources and types of communication -- spoken, email, and the time one friend wrote "foot baggies suck" in the snow. I may need to several years of therapy to recover.

This year, I went pro with "waterproof" booties -- a gift for my birthday and a nod to fitting in with the masses. As I learned this morning, said booties are not even remotely water resistant in a downpour when it matters most. In fact, the opening around the ankle serves as an effective funnel thus ensuring that my shoes are 100% soaked. This really pissed me off because a constant rain spray in the face wasn't quite enough to complete the job.

My shoes are currently perched atop my monitor. It's their turn to dry out.

On my way, home, I will put vanity aside and don plastic grocery bags once again -- albeit covered by my "waterproof" booties. The rest of my attire will just get wet.

As I am almost alone in my choice of foot covering, I understand that I will be scorned at first from all sides -- as were all the great pioneers, inventors, and prophets. But like Columbus, Magellan, Amerigo Vespucci, and the Dixie Chicks, I am not bound by conventional thinking -- following the crowd in a lemming-like rush towards normal. I know that one committed leader can change the world. Thus, this manifesto.

Until someone proves another item to be more effective, plastic bags remain my vapor barrier of choice. Here are eight reasons you should use them too:

1. Bags are water proof, not merely water resistant.
2. They are cheap. In fact they are essentially free. And who really wants to pay the man for another piece of cycling equipment if you don't have to.

3. Bags provide an almost perfect seal because, unlike my \$40 neoprene booties, they seal between the cleat and the pedal.
4. They are disposable -- requiring neither maintenance nor washing.
5. Bags ensure dry feet and comfort when other methods fail.
6. Dry shoes lead to greater shoe life thereby lowering the long-range capital cost of cycling.
7. Reusing this valuable resource is responsible environmentalism.
8. Dry feet at the end of the ride make me happy. They will make you happy too if you only believe.

Frankly, I have bag religion. I will not rest until the world accepts shoe bags as legitimate, performance-enhancing cycling apparel. I see a time when pro tour riders wear foot baggies through summer showers. Bags will make terrorists happier people by keeping sand out of their socks. Bags will stop AIDS in its tracks. Cure cancer. And unite the world in peace. There will be songs by U2 and Sting. And a memorial bridge or trail or pothole or something.

Rain Riders Unite. This is going to be huge, man. Huge.