

Hospital offers expertise in fitting riders with complex issues

By Matt Wiebe

NEW YORK — Cyclists with knee and hip replacements — and non-cyclists with knee and hip replacements — all have been helped by the bike fit program at The Leon Root, M.D., Motion Analysis Laboratory, a part of the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) in New York.

The HSS specializes in orthopedics and rheumatology, and has a long history of joint replacement design and rehabilitation as well as treatment of other muscular and skeletal issues.

Bicycle fitting is one of the rehabilitation options offered by the Motion Analysis Laboratory to recovering patients or people searching for pain-free movement, whether they are players on the Giants, Mets or Knicks, dancers at Ballet New York, Olympic athletes or weekend warriors.

"Many fitters work to adjust the bike to a specific rider's need. Here at our program we work as much on adapting the body to ride a bike — strengthening underused muscle groups so the body has the support it needs for good breathing and riding position," said Happy Freedman, the bike fitter on staff at the Motion Analysis Laboratory.

The lab's experience with physical issues of accident trauma, joint surgery or replacement, skeletal abnormalities on professional athletes, dancers and everyday patients gives the facility a slightly different take on bike fit.

Prior to a bike fit consultation, riders are given a detailed muscular and skeletal workup and recommended exercises are provided to correct issues. The hospital charges \$250 an hour for Freedman's fit services and

around \$150 for the initial muscular/skeletal exam. Freedman says his fitting usually takes between 90 minutes and three hours.

"Some shops see what I offer as competition, threatening to take a good fit customer from them. But I don't sell product; I just provide the fit. They still have to buy bars, stems and cranks somewhere," Freedman said.

"Other shops understand that given my resources here I can help a difficult fit customer ride comfortably again, and by recommending a rider to us they gain a thankful customer in return. I want to offer a lab fit as a resource for shops if they need it, not to replace what they are doing," he added.

In addition to his more than 12 years at HSS, Freedman is also on the advisory committee for the International Bike Fitting Institute and is a founding faculty member of the Medicine of Cycling Conference held annually at USA Cycling in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Freedman was formerly on the faculty at the Bike Fit School, established by Ben Serotta, and he coached Columbia University's D1 cycling team for 10 years. He continues to coach and fit a variety of professional cyclists.

Freedman notes there are very experienced bike fitters that also work with local physical therapists and have experience getting injured or difficult-to-fit riders back onto the saddle. But for shops that are finding a particular fit difficult to achieve,

he and the staff at the lab welcome those clients.

"A rider's height can change as much as 2 inches over the course of a day as the spine compresses. Some riders gain substantial flexibility as they warm up. Some do not. Professional riders are moving around on the bike all the time. Fit is dynamic and not a set of numbers written in stone," Freedman said.

Bike riders as well as non-cyclists have been fit at the lab. Freedman continues to fit elite road,

triathlon and mountain riders as well as fit non-riders who are prescribed bike riding as part of their recovery program.

"I'm passionate about cyclists whether they are elite professionals or riders that squeeze in long weekend rides around family responsibilities. I'm just as dedicated in fitting both riders — getting them breathing freer, allowing more powerful riding and giving them a fit that allows them to comfortably move on the bike," he said. **BRAIN**



Bike fitter Happy Freedman works with triathlete Cecilia Davis-Hayes on her form at the Hospital for Special Surgery's Motion Analysis Laboratory in New York.

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