

## Advantages of Rollers for track cyclists:

While a little practice is required to balance on rollers - the advantages of improving pedaling technique and bike handling skills are very beneficial and are worth your attempt to learn. Rollers have a natural pedaling and riding feel that allows biofeedback for better balance and pedaling 'souplesse'. This is often done with minimal resistance, unlike stationary trainers. These aspects make rollers ideal for track cyclists and how they use them.

Rollers can be easy to mount and dismount (with practice). There is not any effort required to clamp down the bike or wheels to the rollers. If they are adjusted to the correct spacing for your bike - just hop on and ride. This means an athlete can spend just that minute longer pedaling to saty warmed up before having to stop, and then quickly taking the track for their next race.

Without much resistance on the rear wheel, delicate track tires can last longer than they would otherwise under the higher friction often found on stationary trainers. This is another benefit for the track rider.

Rollers allow a warm up routine to be achieved in a tight spaces, which is often the case on velodrome infields. Also once racing has started for a velodrome session, the warm up time on the track may be quite a while before your heat may be up in the schedule. Maintaining your state of readiness can be done on rollers with precision and ease. Additionally when other delays do not allow time on the track to warm up but racing will soon start/restart, having rollers will allow you to get your groove back and be ready to go. (i.e. after a rain delay, but the track is drying off... you cannot get on the wet, slippery track, but you will need to be ready to race as soon as it is dry. Rollers are an ideal solution!)

Some riders not only use rollers to warm up, but also to cool down. Especially in spring, when temperatures are quite low, it is mush better to spin your legs indoors, at room temperature, when you come back from a training ride on the road.



Gran Prix warm up



Old time roller races. Large wooden drums turned a hand on the clock behind.



Keirin racers warm up in Japan.

## Getting started with Rollers:

**1.** Practice riding at home first before jumping on them at a race. Rollers take concentration and can be a little unnerving on your first attempt.

**2.** It is best to start in a door way frame or next to a table or chair so that you can help to brace yourself upright. This also allows you a way catch yourself if you get off balance. Make sure you are away from sharp or dangerous objects, if you were to tip over.

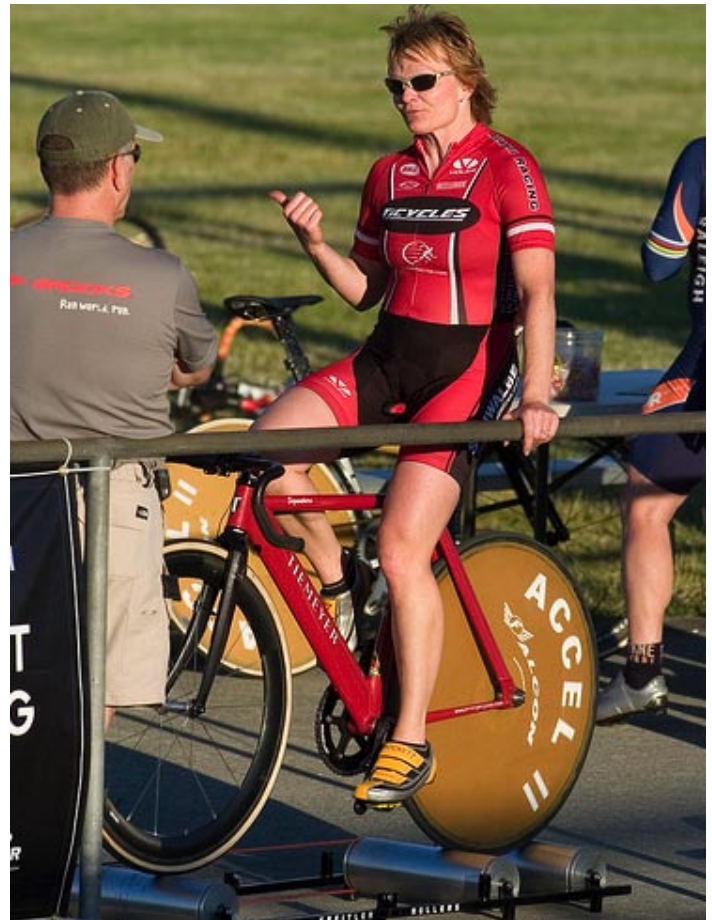
- a. You start by placing the bike in the center of the rollers.
- b. Often you can stand [depending upon the brand] on the rails to get yourself over and into the saddle.
- c. While braced, clip in both feet to pedals.
- d. Many find it easier to ride one handed as they get the pedaling action up to speed. After this increase in tempo carefully get both hands on the bars.

**3.** Relax! Do not grip the handlebars too tight. Have more of your weight be over the saddle for better stability. Once going, you'll try to keep in the center and use your seat as much as your handlebars to steer. Only SLIGHT movements are needed to steer.

**4.** Generally you want the front roller drum to be slightly ahead of your front hub axle. Most rollers have the ability to move the front roller to account for your bike's wheelbase. Being too far off will make getting started more difficult.



**5.** Make sure your tires are in good condition and have firm pressure before starting. Roller drums compress tires differently than on the track or road, so if pressure is too low it may make riding more difficult than you need it to be.



**6.** Once you're on & pedaling, **do not stop suddenly** (or apply the brakes if you are on a road bike)! The low resistance from the rollers combined with normal stopping technique will bring things to a halt unexpectedly quick and you may tip over. In other words, you do not have momentum like you have on the road or track. A sudden stop will not send you flying forward - but just flopping over sideways. To quit riding, slow your pedaling gradually and grab your point of stability (door frame or chair) allowing you to stop. Then unclip from pedals and put a foot down. Keeping the bike as verticle as possible helps greatly for getting on or off.

**7.** Keep your head up and forward facing as much as possible. You'll develop reference points to help you keep your line.

**8.** Sprinting on the rollers is not recommended until you have ridden a few times and gotten more comfortable. Stay in the saddle. No out of the saddle sprints.

**9.** Pedal quickly - the faster speed will help the feeling of uneasiness. Slower speeds require better balance.

**10.** Since rollers take concentration, limit distractions or things that could cause you to not ride facing forward.

**11.** Just like your first few times on the track, riding rollers will become easier the more you do it. You'll be able to go 'no handed' before too long.

### **Other considerations:**

**Folding capabilities.** Rollers that fold up are often easier to transport in the car to the track than models that do not fold. Folding options may also be helpful for storage when rollers are not in use at home.

**Light weight.** Rollers that are smaller in width and that do not have a great deal of extra attachments will help keep weight down, which is important if you have to cart your rollers from a far off parking lot position to the infield of the velodrome. Weight is also a consideration when taking your bike and equipment by plane. On the downside, lighter rollers may be less sturdy, so a rider over 190lbs wanting to sprint may find some light weight models only good for travel and for workouts a heavier, non folding model may be a better choice.

**Construction & Durability.** Rollers are hopefully a once in a lifetime investment for you and the materials should reflect that. Treated with care, most may only need nominal replacement parts like the drive belts or the rubber feet that wear out over time.

**Aluminum vs. Plastic.** Most have good roller drums that are made of hard plastic (polypropylene material) or aluminum. Without abuse, they should last for as long as you need them. Some people may worry about plastic roller drums if left in a hot car. Not sure how often this could occur, but there are a few US tracks where this is a consideration? Others may contend that plastic provides better contact with rubber tires than aluminum. You'll need to decide what works best for your situations.

**Adjustability.** Most roller models and brands allow for a good majority of road and track bikes to fit. Some

smaller track bikes with tight wheelbases may not fit all models. It is worth measuring your bike's wheelbase to make sure the rollers you want will work.

**Safety.** There are brands of rollers made that allow for another degree of safety when riding. They have built in stops/guides that keep your bike on the rollers. (you cannot ride off them -- not that you cannot tip over) Other brands offer an optional step that allows you to unclip from pedals and put a foot down, allowing riding without being in a doorway or next to a hand hold like a chair.



A homemade step stand to allow for riding in the middle of the garage.

**Resistance.** The size of roller drums changes resistance. Larger drums keeps tires at a lower pressure point and less resistance. Smaller drums focus the contact with the tire and have increased resistance. Some models allow for add-ons like a fan or a fly wheel to increase resistance. The "feel" of riding may be different for these different options.

**Price.** New rollers can be had for a couple hundred bucks to \$900+ for the ultimate home models. There are times when rollers come up online at sites like craigslist or e-bay. These are often good deals, so if you have the time to look and search for a good find, this can be an option to get what you need.