



PROTECT



YES, THE FACE MASK IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND VEXING PIECES OF GEAR THIS YEAR

► When we ride, we're constantly making an intricate series of near-instantaneous mental calculations. As we dive into that turn or approach that log, our minds perform the calculus that will carry us over, around, or through whatever obstacle we happen to be approaching. Our preride preparation is no less complex. Before heading out, we analyze a series of potential scenarios in order to arrive at the perfect synthesis of wardrobe, nutrition, equipment, and tire pressure.

Now we've got to frame all of the above in the context of a pandemic and figure out how to approach the accessory that has come to symbolize this fraught era: the face covering. Like arm warmers, face coverings are just bits of fabric; but like helmets, they're pieces of protective equipment that have become the subject of much debate.

We live in the social media age, where almost

anything can become politically charged. Face coverings are no exception—they bring out our tendency to point fingers and grossly oversimplify. Deciding whether or not to mask up while riding has felt like choosing between personal comfort and public safety: asphyxiate yourself with a *schmatta*, or else ride around blithely spreading fomites like Johnny Appleseed. It's a lot to think about before a ride, and ever-shifting guidelines only enhance the anxiety.

Of course, life does not offer one-size-fits-all solutions, even during a pandemic. An all-masks-all-the-time approach to cycling becomes untenable as soon as you start climbing. Most recommendations suggest that going maskless outside is okay, as long as you maintain six feet of separation. Given this, most of us will attempt to be mindful of our local ordinances and sensibilities while still maintaining our personal comfort and ability to breathe.

When it comes to masks, the balance each of us strikes will depend on who we are, where we live, and how we ride. It's unlikely we'll ever all agree on precisely when and how to cover up when riding, but I'm sure we can all agree that staying off the bike should never be on the table. With millions out of work and good health an eternal concern, the mental and physical benefits of cycling are more important than ever, and more people on bikes makes the world a better place.—Eben Weiss

3 MASKS MADE FOR CYCLING

WITH ANTIVIRAL TREATMENTS AND INSERTS, THESE MASKS CAN PROVIDE EXTRA PROTECTION AGAINST THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.

28 | GIORDANA MASK

\$8

Giordana's mask is cut from one piece of light and stretchy material with a bit of contour stitching at the nose and chin to help keep it in place. A moldable metal plate at the nose lets you customize fit. It's not filter-compatible, but Giordana claims the material is treated to help ward off bacteria and viruses.

29 | CHAMPION SYSTEM REUSABLE FACE MASK

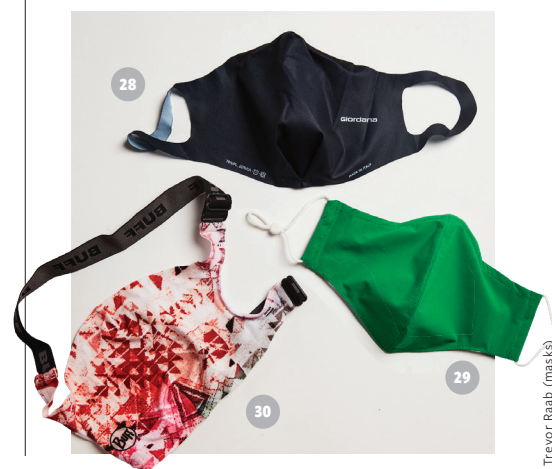
\$20

This double-layer mask is built from a woven-nylon, four-way stretch fabric, with a polyester lining. Small elastic cords make comfortable ear loops, and a bendable nose wire provides a customized fit. Without a filter, the mask breathes well, so it's pleasant to wear when exercising. For more protection, add Champion System's five-layer PM2.5 Filter (\$13 for 10).

30 | BUFF FILTER MASK

\$29

When the CDC informed us that face coverings can reduce the spread of COVID-19, orders of Buff's gaiter-style coverings soared. But for many, the new Filter Mask is a superior option. Its stretchy material and adjustable straps ensure a comfortable, tight fit. It's quick-drying, with UPF 50+ sun protection, is easier to breathe through than the original, and the replaceable filter blocks 98 percent of airborne particles.



Trevor Raab (masks)