

Bike repair recommended

Expert offers fix-up tips

United Press International

CINCINNATI — Before the nice weather entices you to start pedaling the old bike around, there are some steps you should take to make sure it's in proper working order.

Andy Callahan, owner of Oakley Cycles in Cincinnati, says anyone can take several simple steps to get a cycle ready for riding season, and several not-as-simple steps for the truly ambitious.

"The first thing you should

do is pump up the tires," said Callahan.

A little less obvious: once you have air in them, you should listen for leaks and keep an eye out for cuts in the tires or any other potential sources of blowouts.

Callahan said you also should take a good look at the rims.

"You should look for blips or bent spots and fix them up," he said. Blips are another potential source of blowouts.

Callahan also suggested that inexperienced riders never attempt spoke adjustment.

"If you start turning and twisting those spokes, you can knock the whole wheel out of balance," he said. "You're just asking for trouble."

Next, the chain should be cleaned. Wiping it down with a

solvent, such as WD-40, or kerosene does the trick. If you're particularly ambitious, you can remove the chain from the bike with a device known as a chain tool that costs about three or four dollars, and soak it in the solvent. Once the chain is clean, it should be coated with a light oil that won't pick up dust or one of the synthetic lubricants that are widely available.

If your bike has hand brakes, Callahan said you should check them over for frayed cables. Give them a squeeze, and if the brake handle travels a long way, it means the cable needs adjustment to ensure safe stopping. You should also check the brake shoes to see if they are worn and need replacement.

If you're looking for a good smooth ride, you might also consider repacking the bearings in your wheel hubs. This involves buying a couple of inexpensive specialty tools known as cone wrenches and wheel grease. Steady fingers will ensure that you don't wind up with ball bearings rolling all over the room.

Directions for repacking wheels and any number of other maintenance procedures can be found in several excellent books, Callahan said. Among the best, and most readable, is Eugene Sloane's "Complete Book of Bicycling" (Simon & Schuster, \$12.95).



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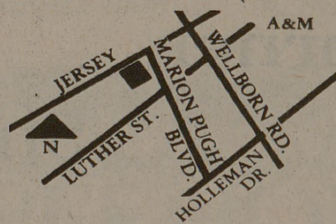
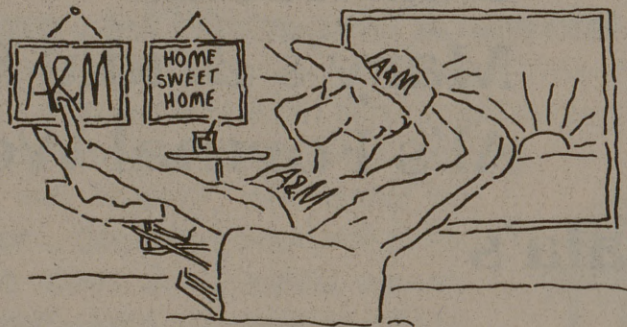
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