Coach-Athlete Q&A

A look at some coach-replies to common questions by topic.

Hey Brent.....

The 404's are awesome.....not cheap, but awesome wheels. Essentially the best of both worlds regarding weight and aerodynamics.

But..... I'd DEFINANTLY hold out for **tubular** wheels.....especially if you're a big guy.

Here's why:

1---More durable--Tubular rims have ***no rim bead*** to "grip" the clincher tire bead. THey don't have to because the tubular tire is "sewn inside" the tire. (Also why they're called sew-ups".) When a rider, especially a big guy, hits a hole, r-tracks, or object in the road.....it's this aluminum rim bead that bends or dents. Also, because they're bonding aluminum to carbon.....disimilar materials.....the bond is weaker than a carbon to carbon bond.

2---Fewer Flats--80% of all flats are NOT punctures. 80% of all flats are "pinch-flats".....also called 'snake-bike' flats.....where the **clincher** rim bead is compressed against the tube and pinches 2 small holes in it. Because a tubular rim doesn't rely on a rim-bead to hold the tire on.....there IS no rim-bead.....and, hence, no pinch flats. Also, tubular tires hold more air-pressure.....175 to 215psi. This means less compression that causes the "pinch" in the 1st place.

Another instance where tubulars have less flats is when you're not even on the bike. It's the morning of a triathlon, you air your tires in the transition-area.....and while everyone's making their way to the swim start, ..."BOOM" someone's clincher tire explodes because they aired it up too much and now the day is heating up as well. This never happens, unless you leave them fully aired in a hot car of 200+ degrees, w/ tubulars because the psi-rating is almost 50-80psi higher than clinchers..... and that 50psi is well above what you'd want to ever ride them at.....unlike clinchers which may rate @ 115psi. So you put 115 in.....and the heat causes them to expand up to 150psi as the day warms. Now, you're taking a risk.

3---Lighter--Not only are the actual tires lighter.....some new tubulars (like Tufo) don't even have inner-tubes....or the weight of them. But also, because of the lack of that alum-rim-bead, the RIM is lighter too. A Zipp 404 clincher pair can be like 200 grams (!!) heavier than a Zipp 404-tubular pair.

4---More comfortable--carbon rim vs. aluminum rim..... enough said

5---Able to change flats faster *(despite the comon misconception that it takes longer or is harder*)--Just as little as 2 years ago, this was the big knock against tubulars.....they they were hard to initially mount & change. Alas, technology has saved us again. Because, today, you no longer need to be mechanically inclined to GLUE the tires on the rim....because several companies make a "gluing tape" that SO easy to apply. You simply unrole it on the rim, pull the tape off to leave the adhesive, and mount a pre-stretched tire on it. You're done in FASTER time than you can mount a clincher.

Too, everyone used to be afraid that, if they flated in a race, that they couldn't re-mount a tubular tire w/o glue. NOW, w/ the sealants that they have.....if you flat, you whip out your sealant, squirt it in the tubular tire, air it and GO.....you never even had to take the tire off of the bike.....unlike a clincher (where you must change the tube & make sure it's seated inside the tire properly....risking a 2nd flat.).

-6--MORE cost effective--sure tubular tires may cost $10-$20 more.....but there's no inner-TUBE to purchase.....and w/ fewer flats, you'll save $10-$20 in just inner-tubes over the life of the tire. The biggest cost difference is having them initialy mounted. But w/ the new rim-tapes, you can now easily do it yourself.

7---Safer--If you puncture, you want the air to leak as SLOWLY as possible....[especially if you're on a fast decent!!] Clinchers tend to BLOWout.....tubulars tend to slow leak when, all of the sudden, it feels mushy.

So there you have it, Brent.....7 reasons why a race-wheel investment should on tubular wheels/tires. And I agree that going w/ a Clydesdale version would even be MORE durable for you since you're over 200.

And just so you know.....w/ the link that Randy forwarded you.....if you purchase Zipp-404's they retail @ like $1550 to $1650+. So what we did this year was to partner w/ a CUSTOM wheel-builder, for our team-members, who uses Zipp rims, same spokes Zipp uses, and swap out the very expensive Zipp hubs w/ Shimano hubs.....and can get the wheelset (w/ Ultegra hubs) down to around under $1250.....so you save $300 to $400.....and don't have to adjust your rear-derailer each time you exchange training wheelset to put your race wheels on.

Hope this helps.

Sonni Dyer