

Mountain bike brake failures

1999

Issue A (1996)

On some designs of off-road bikes the front reflector bracket stops the brake mechanism entangling in the front wheel if the cable snaps. Without the reflector bracket the wheel jams instantly and the rider is catapulted over the handlebars. Many operators remove these on the grounds that they don't cycle at night, whilst others don't replace them if they get broken.

Outcome

Always keep the brackets on.

Issue B (1999)

Even adjusting brakes (if you aren't thoroughly conversant) can land you in trouble as a school boy discovered when his brakes failed shortly after a road-side adjustment (or mis-adjustment) and he hit a tree, full on, at speed.

Outcome

Make sure anyone adjusting off-road bikes knows what they are doing. This could be achieved by ensuring that all leaders hold one of the off-road cycling awards which include maintenance. It could also be achieved by organising in-house training on the makes and models actually used.