

# **Unorthodox Frame Designs and Road Racing Council (RRC) / Road Time Trials Council (RTTC) Rules**

Classic Rendevous listserver commentary, 1999 - 2020

## **Chuck Schmidt (15 April 1999):**

Hilary Stone wrote a paper for the '93 International Cycle History Conference about the development of "Unorthodox Frames" in England. He contends that [claims that unorthodox frames circumvented rules] is not accurate. Some interesting points from the paper:

Fred Hellens offered his Hellenic seatstay design in 1923.

Granby and Selbach offered tapered main tubes in 1926.

The RTTC (Road Time Trials Council) in Feb. 1938 passed the requirement: "...neither shall the racer have the name of his machine or maker so prominently displayed that it appears in photographs in the press." They reasoned that if a top amateur was photographed riding a named frame, his amateur status was in doubt since the maker clearly stood to benefit from his efforts.

Most of the unorthodox designs debuted before 1938: Hetchins Vibrant rear triangle, Moorson Twin Tube, Grubb Twinlite, Bates Cantiflex/Diadrant frames.

No new unorthodox frames appeared during the time the ban was in effect (1938-1945). It was not until after the ban ceased to have meaning, with the post war resumption of a full calendar of time trials, that many more unorthodox frames appeared (Thanet, Ray Clarke, Alpex, Success, and Waller).

## **Hilary Stone (1 November 2000):**

I don't really know how many times it has to be said that Britain's RTTC ban in 1938 (which lasted effectively just two years) on maker's names being clearly shown in photographs had no effect on frame design in the UK. Most of the funnies (Hetchins, Bates, Baines, Sun Manx, Saxon SWB, Moorson, etc., etc.) had already been designed and built prior to this and the ones that came after were not aimed at time triallists (Paris Galibier, Sun Manxman TT - road racers, Thanet Silverlight - tourists). It is a myth that needs to be killed once and for all.

## **Hilary Stone (2 January 2006):**

I don't think the evidence stands up for this suggestion I am afraid. The RTTC ruling was only enacted in 1938; almost all the non-standard frame designs - Hetchins, Bates, Baines were well in production by then. The main exceptions are Thanet (which were not primarily designed for

competition), Paris (whose main interest was mass start racing) the rule does not really apply to. And in any case the rule seems to have generally fallen into disuse post WWII.

**Hilary Stone (13 December 2012):**

At the inaugural meeting of the RTTC in February 1938 the infamous new rule concerning makers transfers was enacted; it stated that “neither shall he have the name of his machine or maker so prominently displayed that it appears in photographs in the press”. Although the previous ruling body for time trialling, the RRC (Road Racing Council) attempted to keep the sport amateur it had never gone to these extremes. So the appearance of unorthodox frames such as the Hetchins Vibrant rear triangle, Moorson Twin Tube, Grubb Twinlite, Bates Cantiflex/Diadrant frames which had all appeared prior to this ban cannot be accounted for by this desire to prevent riders' frames from being inadvertently advertised.

**Peter Brown (18 November 2009):**

... the RTTC rules (actually recommendations to be incorporated in club rules) were adopted by the RTTC in 1938. However, those rules were simply copied from the rules of the previous organisation, the Road Racing Council.

You can see copies of both sets of rules ... [see below]

The double page is from a 1933 Cyclists Diary ... and shows the RRC rules, and the 2 single pages are from a 1938 edition of a diary, and shows the very similar RTTC rules.

So the RRC rules predate the introduction of such frames as the Bates with diadrant forks and Hetchins with Curly stays. There has been much discussion ... as to how much such introductions were to circumvent the rules or for sound engineering principles, and I don't believe there is any conclusive proof to support either option.

## THE ROAD RACING COUNCIL.

*Hon. Secretary.*—A. Shillito, 9, Cedar Road, Tottenham, N.17.

The R.R.C. is a consultative and advisory committee formed, on the basis of one representative per club, from the clubs interested in the promotion of open competitions on the road. In order to obtain uniformity of practice in the conduct of such events, the following recommendations have been adopted by the adherent clubs:—

(1) **Definition of Unpaced Riding.** Competitors in unpaced events must ride entirely alone and unassisted. They must not take shelter from any other rider or from any vehicle on the road. If one competitor overtake another he must pass as widely as possible, and no shelter must be given or received. Food and drink or other necessities may be handed up only by persons on foot. Competitors when dismounted must wheel or carry their machines without assistance whilst covering any portion of the course.

(2) **Anti-Advertising Regulation.** The Committee (of the promoting club) reserves the right to withhold the prize in the case of a prize-winner, and refuse the entry on all future occasions, of any competitor who allows his machine or equipment to be advertised, or who gives a testimonial of the bicycle, tyres, accessories, etc., which he is using.

(3) **Avoidance of Undue Publicity.** Preliminary notice specifying the intended date, time, or starting-place of any event should not be made public. Subsequent reports of races should not disclose precise details of the course.

Adherent clubs have agreed to withhold their support from open events not conducted in conformity with R.R.C. recommendations.

Invitations and programmes should announce that the competition is to be conducted in conformity with R.R.C. recommendations.

A competitor may enter and ride in the name of one club only.

A competitor may not accept more than one invitation for simultaneous competitions.

(4) **Suitable Costume.** Competitors must be completely clothed from neck to feet. The costume should be inconspicuous, and must include a jacket of which the sleeves must not be turned back above the elbow. Headgear, if worn, must be inconspicuous also. Competitors' numbers should not be displayed.

(5) **Limitation of Entries.** A limit of 100 competitors is recommended for all races from 25 miles to 100 miles inclusive. It is left to each Club to decide on the method of limitation, whether by standard time, or priority of entry, or nomination from entering clubs, or otherwise. In the opinion of the Council, the most satisfactory method of reducing excess entries is to select the best men on current form.

For the guidance of clubs limiting team races to first-claim members of clubs, the following definition has been adopted:—

A first-claim member is one who, at the time of his election, was a member of no other cycling club, the C.T.C. excepted, or who has since the date of his election resigned membership of the club of which he was a member at the time of his election.

(6) **Interval between Starters.** To be not less than one minute.

(7) **Starting at the Appointed Time.** Competitors to start at the time allotted to them, or lose the time they are late.

(8) **Restarts.** A competitor having once started shall not be allowed a second start.

(9) **Minimum Distance.** The minimum distance for open events shall be 25 miles.

## RRC rules from 1933 Cyclists Diary

## THE ROAD TIME TRIALS [COUNCIL.

The R.T.T.C. is an advisory body formed by the clubs promoting open road time-trial racing. Membership is limited to clubs promoting open events at a distance of not less than 25 miles, and each of these clubs may be directly represented at Council meetings. In order to obtain as great a measure as possible of uniformity in the conduct of open events, the Council has issued a list of recommendations, which affiliated clubs have agreed to observe, and which are now almost universally adopted as the basis for the rules that each club lays down when promoting an open event.

### RECOMMENDATIONS.

- (1) **Definition of Unpaced Riding.**—Competitors in unpaced events must ride entirely alone and unassisted. They must not take shelter from any other rider or from any vehicle on the road. If one competitor overtake another he must pass as widely as possible, and no shelter must be given or received. Food and drink or other necessities may be handed up only by persons on foot. Competitors when dismounted must wheel or carry their machines without assistance whilst covering any portion of the course.
- (2) **Anti-Advertising Regulation.**—The Committee (of the promoting club) reserves the right to withhold the prize in the case of a prize-winner, and refuse the entry on all future occasions, of any competitor who allows his machine or equipment to be advertised, or who gives a testimonial of the bicycle, tyres, accessories, etc., which he is using.
- (3) Where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Council that a club has adopted the name of a bicycle (or any part of, or accessory to a bicycle) in its title, with the object of advertising such bicycle (or accessory), adherent clubs shall refuse entries submitted in the name of such club.
- (4) **Avoidance of Undue Publicity.**—Preliminary notice specifying the intended date, time, or starting place of any event should not be made public. Subsequent reports of races should not disclose precise details of the course.

RTTC rules from 1938 Cyclists Diary

(5) Adherent clubs have agreed to withhold their support from open events not conducted in conformity with R.T.T.C. recommendations.

(6) Invitations and programmes should announce that the competition is to be conducted in conformity with R.T.T.C. recommendations.

(7) A competitor may enter and ride in the name of one club only.

(8) A competitor may not accept more than one invitation for simultaneous competitions.

(9) Suitable Costume.—Competitors must be completely clothed from neck to feet. The costume should be inconspicuous and must include a jacket, of which the sleeves must not be turned back above the elbow. Headgear, if worn, must be inconspicuous also. Competitors' numbers should not be displayed.

(10) Competitors must have an efficient brake and bell fixed to the machine.

(11) Limitation of Entries.—A limit of 100 competitors is recommended for all races. It is left to each club to decide on the method of limitation, whether by standard time, or priority of entry, or nomination from entering clubs, or otherwise.

(12) No promoting club receiving more than 100 entries for its event shall duplicate the race on the advertised date, on the same course or any part thereof.

(13) Substitution and Addition of Riders.—That only riders whose names appear upon the starting card for a road event shall be allowed to compete therein.

(14) Interval between Starters.—To be not less than one minute.

(15) Starting at the Appointed Time.—Competitors to start at the time allotted to them, or lose the time they are late.

(16) In the event of a rider arriving late at the start of a road time-trial event, his time of reporting to the timekeeper shall be recorded, and his lateness shall constitute his penalty; he shall then be despatched at the discretion of the timekeeper.

(17) Restarts.—A competitor having once started shall not be allowed a second start.

*A new constitution is now before the R.T.T.C. If accepted, the above may become regulations.*

However, some of the old timers racing at the time tell me that they never regarded any of the "funnies" as an attempt to get round the rules, but there was always discussions about whether or not a particular frame rode better, and opinions were personal and varied and not usually based on any engineering principles. There was certainly no requirement for riders to remove or cover badges or transfers, and if a photograph of a name did appear in a publication no blame was attached to the rider, unless of course it could be interpreted that he was promoting a particular brand. The rule was not binding on publishers either, and the quality of reproduction in those days was such that transfers were rarely legible.

The rules on clothing were much more strictly enforced and observed by the riders. There was one incident when my brother, riding in a 12 hour event in the late 40s, sewed a strip of sequins on to his sleeve so that his feeders could pick him out at a distance and be ready for him, and there was some discussion as to whether or not he should be allowed to start. He did start, and when he won in record time there were further discussions as to whether the record should stand. In the end common sense prevailed and his record stood until the next year, when he won again, still wearing his sequins. ...

#### **Ray Green (22 January 2006):**

... I recall that Charly McCoy a British TT champion and Olympic team pursuiter got a years ban in 1961 because you could read "Eddie Soens" in a photo published in Cycling Weekly. It was a bit provocative as Eddie, always a rebel, had put the name in big block capitals right along the down tube. They repealed the rule shortly after. ...

#### **Mick Butler (23 January 2006):**

Regarding the rules of the Road Time Trials Council these were still being strictly enforced well into the 1960's. Many fell foul of their rulings, photographs in "Cycling" with visible makers transfer shown, etc. One poor bastard even got done for wearing a trade hat sitting on a float in a carnival parade! Don't believe me ask George Arnot North Road CC, RTTC Council and RRA course measurer (BY BICYCLE). They saw the picture in a local newspaper of this guy in the hat, and reported it to the RTTC. They referred it to the local council of which George was a committee member and they duly fined and banned him as per rule. I am sure they didn't want to do this, but it was written in tablets of stone back then. Hilary is 100% correct in saying that the funny frames were about, but where he is getting totally confused is on the ruling of showing manufacturer's names, that's where the funny frames came into their own, no visible maker's transfer to fall foul of the rules, but you know instantly what the cracks are riding. Hetchins even supplied the predominately Jewish Allondon RC with bare metal Curlys (Vibrant stays) for the Bath Road events. No maker's names on machines or clothing and bonk bags.

**Peter Jourdain (13 December 2012):**

... here is the rule as it existed in 1954: "NAME OF MACHINE The National Committee has interpreted that an offence against Regulation 16 is committed when the name of the maker of a bicycle appears in a photograph reproduced in the Press, and it is therefore the rider's [emphasis in original] business to ensure that the name does not so appear. In the opinion of the Committee covering the name by using an opaque material is sufficient, but a rider is entitled to utilise any means to attain the object."

**Mick Butler (13 December 2012):**

... It was enforced vigorously well into the 1960's. Alf Engers even got done for wearing a trade hat on a carnival float!!! Take it from someone who raced during this era. ... Jack Denny told me as a kid that the vibrant triangle was designed for a smoother ride over cobble sets, tar blocks and tram lines when using cane sprint rims and tubs....

**John Purser (25 July 2013):**

... The comment in the earlier thread about the RTTC objecting to the advertising effect of the makers name when the rider's photo appeared in the Press did go on into the 60s. I remember an article in Cycling (probably Alan Gayfer, a wonderful guy for 'stirring a pot' when confronted by the sincere but often way out of date Committee men) on why it didn't really matter (accompanied by loads of photos!) Many good riders were 'helped' by bike makers large and small....

**Peter Jourdain (6 November 2015):**

... Regarding such unorthodox British frame designs as a purposeful means of circumventing R.T.T.C. and other rules against advertising in amateur athletics, what is being argued ... is the difference between *design with advertising aims aforethought* vs., shall we say, *a fortuitous outcome resulting from* a machine's novel physical profile. The latter -- which had the effect of circumventing R.T.T.C. rules, was something which even important lightweight manufacturers and retailers back in the day were aware, as the quote below, from Cycling (22 April 1942) shows: *"Yet what is the attitude of the game's rulers to the trade? They refuse to allow recognizable transfers on a rider's machine, although unable to deal with the problem of freak designs which are more readily attributed to their makers than the largest transfer."* --- Russell Woodward  
So while the unorthodox designs may not have been created for the purposes of circumventing advertising bans amongst amateurs, they certainly had that effect. Anyone who has perused the pages of the old magazines knows this. In terms of Raleigh, while it is true that they had no unorthodox lightweight frame designs during the time trialing days under discussion, their circular-tube style fork crown makes the marque one of the few easily discernible in a poorly-reproduced cycling photograph. They are the one orthodox machine which I consistently pick out in the blotchy photos of Cycling. Again, this is not to show cynical commercial intention as to design, but simply -- for the manufacturer -- a fortunate result. But I should also add this: Even though the radical

frame designs may not have been concocted to thwart advertising bans, I doubt very much if during those days builders such as Hetchins or Bates, even if they were to have received data that their Vibrant rear stays or Diadrant front forks were of no practical effect, would have been motivated to scrap their unorthodox designs. Retooling issues aside, in terms of marketing, the primary reason would have been because of the already established notoriety in the marketplace which the designs had created for their makers. But I do think the R.T.T.C. ban on advertising would also have helped stay their hand. Why spoil a good thing?...

**John Crump (4 May 2020):**

I will add to this all about riding in ALL BLACK. When I started racing in 1948 1949 age 16, I did wear all black kit. Tights, long sleeves etc., but then they all changed, and by the late 1949-1950s, we did start racing in black short sleeve jerseys and shorts. No club kits allowed. We never covered up the name of the frame and forks we used that I can remember.