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Use your head, wear a helmet when cycling

GET OUT!
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Here's a little cycling secret: Every once in awhile, you're going to kiss the pavement.

And when you do, you need some protection.

You can hit a rock and go down, though that's never happened to me.

You can turn too sharply on a wet street and skid out, though I haven't done that either.

You can also — God forbid — get hit by a car and go down for a long time. (I'm knocking on wood here.)

No, what I do is break crank arms (the metal arms attached to your pedals.) I've done it three times now, and I wish I would cut it out.

The first time, I was in maybe sixth grade. I broke the part and went down while riding up Rick Kimmel's driveway in Washington Twp. This was long before anybody was wearing bike helmets, but I escaped the low-speed mishap with nothing more than skinned elbows and knees.

The second time was about 10 years ago, climbing a hill just outside San Luis Obispo, Calif. I was wearing a helmet by then, but I don't remember much about hitting the asphalt except that I went down hard and deposited several layers of epidermis.

The last time I broke a crank was on a beautiful spring morning a month ago on my way to work. I was waiting at a light on Clys Road in Centerville to turn left onto Alexandersville-Bellbrook Road. The light turned green, I stood on the pedals, accelerated into the intersection — and suddenly found myself looking at the world sideways.

I went down and the side of my head smacked the pavement. If I hadn't been wearing a helmet, there's no doubt that one of those drivers sitting in their cars waiting for me to limp out of the intersection would have instead been dialing 911.