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Mountain Bikers Are Cautioned to Ride with Care - Major Injuries Do Happen

Thousand Oaks, CA, USA (January 5, 2006) – Mountain biking is considered a relatively safe sport, as accidents typically result in minor injuries. However, over the past 25 years, the sport has grown from a pastime to an Olympic sport, and major injuries are becoming more prevalent. In an article from *The American Journal of Sports Medicine* published by SAGE Publications, three mountain biking injury cases that resulted in acute cervical spine injuries resulting in tetraplegia, commonly called quadriplegia, are reported. Previously published research on this subject have commonly only noted serious neck injuries, and no detailed reports have been made on cervical spinal cord injuries in English literature.

In each of the three cases, male mountain bikers, ranging in age from 38 to 53 years old, were severely injured. In all the three cases, the bikers reportedly fell over the handlebars, and the helmet was the first to receive the impact of the fall. In the first case, the biker's front wheel came off during a downhill ride, and in the second case, there was a lack of hazard warnings on the trail—both potentially preventable causes. The severe impact of the accidents resulted in damage to the helmets (in one case, the impact of the fall caused the biker's helmet to split into two pieces). All three mountain bikers lost the ability to move their limbs. Although a CT or MRI scan ultimately showed the severe cervical spine injuries, in one case the diagnosis was initially overlooked. This was possibly due to the incoherent state of the injured biker that resulted from a head injury. The authors reported that as cerebral concussions are not uncommon in mountain biking injuries, a spinal injury must be assumed in an injured biker with abnormal mental status until proven otherwise.

The authors conclude that preventable causes of mountain biking accidents can result in serious cervical spine injuries. It is essential that medical teams attending to the injuries are aware of this and take proper precautionary steps to diagnose these injuries. When no injuries are found on radiographs, a CT and/or MRI scan may be useful in further diagnosis.

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The article "Acute Cervical Spine Injuries in Mountain Biking" (AJSM PreView, October 6, 2005) can be found on *The American Journal of Sports Medicine's* website at www.ajsm.org. Media may receive a free copy of the article by contacting Judy Erickson of SAGE Publications at media.inquiries@sagepub.com.

About *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*:

The American Journal of Sports Medicine is a peer-reviewed scientific journal, first published in 1974. It is the official publication of the [American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine \(AOSSM\)](http://www.aossm.org), and is ranked 4th out of 71 Sports Sciences Journals in the 2004 Thomson Scientific Journal Citation Reports®, with an Impact Factor of 2.402. Visit the journal's homepage at www.ajsm.org for more information.

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