

## MAXXIS CrossMark Tires: Get a Grip

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When IPMBA Industry Liaison Ron Burkitt recently asked me to test some tires for Maxxis, I thought, how much of a difference do tires really make? So I got in contact with Ben Burgess at Maxxis Tires and we discussed what tire would be most appropriate for public safety bikes. We agreed on the Maxxis CrossMark as they are designed for cross-country racing. Ben sent a set of the CrossMarks and I quickly swapped out my tires and began to explore what makes these tires so special.

It didn't take very long for me to realize that my previous notion that tires don't make much of a difference was false. The first thing that stood out on these tires is the tread pattern. Most of us ride with tires that are perfectly smooth in the center. Our bikes require reduced rolling resistance for speed. The smooth tires also reduce noise and provide more contact with the pavement for safety. The tread pattern on the CrossMark is not smooth, which might make one steer clear of this tire. But look again!

Although the tread pattern is not smooth, the center ridges provide a continuous pattern, which in fact is almost smooth. These tires were quiet and stuck like glue to the pavement. I ran my bike through the basic police cone courses and found that these tires actually made many, if not all, of the technical maneuvers much easier. It actually felt as if my bike was fastened to a track. I had minimal rolling resistance, but the tires stuck to the pavement.

I decided to see what these tires would do in adverse conditions. You cannot control where you might have to go. We are not always going to be on the pavement. So off the pavement and onto the grass I went.

Because the tires are not flat and smooth (there are ridges which are spaced to create a seemingly smooth surface), the ridges dug in and provided effortless pedaling. In fact, I couldn't make these tires spin out. I rode across the grass as if I was still on pavement. But what about those who work in areas with even more varied riding conditions?

I found a park in my area that has a mulch walking trail. I had a particular grudge against this trail because it has a switchback that handed me a piece of humble pie a few months ago. While riding with my old tires on this loose mulch, I dumped my bike while attempting to maneuver through the switchback. So I headed for this particular area and expected to find myself once again picking mulch off my uniform. As I turned onto the switchback, I almost fell off my bike. No fault of the tires, mind you. I was in shock because the CrossMarks didn't spin at all! The tires dug in and I pedaled through the switchback as if I was going straight on pavement. Now I'm really beginning to be impressed and looking to find something that these tires cannot conquer.

Next, I found an outdoor volleyball court. What are they made of? SAND!!! I know, you shouldn't ride through sand. Rule #1 of obstacle avoidance is to stay away from things that could cause you to lose control. Sand is one of these things. But I just couldn't help myself; I had to see what these flytraps on my rims would do in the sand. I headed into the volleyball pit and braced myself for the spin out. Once again, the CrossMarks dug in. That's right, I rode right through this sand pit and never spun a tire! I was in awe and still determined to prove that these tires could not possibly handle everything. After several passes straight through the sand with no spinning, I decided to bump this test up a notch by making a 90-degree turn in the middle of the sand. Once again, I couldn't believe the results. I made the turn with only about a teaspoon of sand being spun out from the tires. I pedaled out of the volleyball court looking for yet another obstacle.

One night a misting rain left water-covered challenges for me. The tires were still stuck to the pavement. When I spotted a very steep grassy hill, I smiled as I thought, "these tires can't possibly get me up that." I rode up the grassy hill at a parallel angle in an attempt to get my bike to slide out from in under me. I was just asking to be punished for this, but instead, I was rewarded. Once again, the raised side knobs dug in and I never spun a wheel. A friend of mine who witnessed this asked, "Did you just ride up that wet hill??" As I nodded, he asked me to do it again. I hit it straight this time to see if the slightly spaced center ridges would grip...and they did.

The end result: I am now a believer that tires DO make a major difference in your ability to handle a bike in varying conditions. I am also a believer that the Maxxis CrossMark tires are one of the most appropriate tires for public safety cycling. The slightly spaced ridges on the top of the tire are quiet and smooth yet grab when things get loose. The raised knobs on the sides keep you in control when the going gets really tough. One tire, all conditions, what more can be said?

The Maxxis CrossMark is available through any Maxxis dealer with an MSRP of \$37 per tire, but are available at 50% off through the IPMBA PPP. Can you put a price tag on safely doing your job? I cannot recommend this tire enough. For more information on the CrossMark, go to [www.maxxis.com](http://www.maxxis.com).

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