



**Grouptest**

# Four-season road tyres

Year-round riding demands road bike tyres that are tougher, grippier and perhaps wider than summer-only rubber. **Dan Joyce** tests four pairs



**DAN JOYCE**

Faster-rolling tyres are how Dan keeps up with fitter riders on club runs

**W**inter means wetter, slipperier roads with more puncture-causing debris, and more potholes due to frost cracking. A set of tougher tyres will make shivering at the roadside with a flat less likely.

How tough? It's a trade off. You can buy Schwalbe's bombproof Marathon Plus in the same 28-622 size as the tyres featured here but it's 750g. That's not a problem for commuting but the weight, drag and ride feel will suck the joy from club runs, training rides or audax events.

The tyres tested here are lighter and faster rolling. They're all designed for use with innertubes. Four-season tubeless road tyres do exist, and we'll be testing some soon, but the benefit of sealant isn't as pronounced as it is with fragile race rubber because tougher tyres don't get as many holes poked in them in the first place. It's also generally easier to get non-tubeless tyres on and off non-tubeless rims than if the rims, tyres or both are tubeless – something you may appreciate with cold hands.

I tested 28mm versions of all these tyres, fitting them to 17mm-wide Kinlin XC-279 rims. They're the wheels of a Spa Audax Mono I'm reviewing for next issue, which meant a lot of out-of-the-saddle climbing on wet roads. I also did repeated roll-down tests.

## Details

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

#### 1 Width

Wider tyres can be run at lower pressures, which means more comfort on bad roads and more grip on wet ones. If your bike has sufficient clearance, embrace the fact that you can now buy proper 28mm (or even 32mm) road tyres.

#### 2 Tread

Tread patterns aren't required for road bike tyres except as a visual wear gauge. Rubber can't dig into tarmac and bicycle tyres won't aquaplane in the wet. Compound is what counts. Dual-compound tyres have softer rubber on the 'shoulders' of the tyre for cornering, harder in the centre for longevity and efficient rolling.

#### 3 Casing

A higher TPI number (threads per inch) means thinner thread, which gives a

more supple casing and a nicer (and usually faster) ride. A lower TPI means a stiffer casing made from thicker threads that don't cut as easily. All tyres tested have lighter folding beads rather than wire.

#### 4 Puncture resistance

While a thicker tread will also improve puncture resistance, road bike tyres primarily use one or more synthetic anti-puncture layers under the tread, such as Kevlar. Some have similar protection for the sidewalls.

#### 5 Rolling performance

These may not be race tyres but rolling performance is still important in most road bike situations. Lighter, more supple tyres generally roll best but usually have less puncture resistance.



Right: conti-tyres.co.uk

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