



Wipeout Wear

Smart athletic gear protects your body on impact

You don't have to be a kamikaze mountain biker to appreciate the injury-saving technology built into Spyder's new d3o armored cycling crew and shorts. The gear is fitted with strategically placed pads made from "intelligent" molecules, which in raw form resemble a bright-orange Silly Putty-like goop. During normal conditions, the pads are soft and flexible, but if you smack a branch—or the ground—at high speed, the molecules instantly lock together to absorb the shock. Immediately after impact, the material becomes pliable again and ready for more abuse. Spyder first used this technology in gloves for downhill ski racing, but the protective fabric lends itself to all sorts of applications, from shin guards and wool beanies to ballet slippers and running shoes. Sounds unbelievable, and although I didn't purposely launch myself off a mountain bike and into the trees for testing's sake, my two sons (and my wife, for that matter) had a field day whacking me with a bamboo pole. Cathartic for them, pain-free for me. These pads totally work. Top \$350, shorts \$270, spyder.com. MARK ANDERS