

WE KEEP A CHECK ON CAM'S CYCLING SKILLS

EXCLUSIVE

By JULIE MCCAFFREY

I F I didn't know better, I'd think David Cameron was trying to lose me as he pedals off into the distance.

Maybe the Tory leader isn't accustomed to being asked about his pants or his strong thighs as he cycles from his home to the House of Commons.

So whenever he wants to dodge a question, he cranks up his pace and takes off at full pelt.

"I thought I'd shaken you off there," he says, looking a mite miffed as I loom up alongside him for the tenth time despite his frantic pedalling.

But David should be happy I'm here. He said he was glad the Daily Mirror was keeping an eye on him by highlighting his unfortunate departures from the Highway Code as he cycled to Parliament recently.

And if he's annoyed when I turn up on his doorstep to join him on his morning ride, he doesn't show it.

"Of course you can cycle with me. But this is going to be the most PC bike ride you've ever had," he says, oozing bonhomie.

"Can I check your brakes before we start? I checked mine last night. Safety is paramount, you know."

And we're off, meeting up with David's parliamentary private secretary Desmond Swayne at

God help me, but he's got a rather nice bum

the end of his street in London's Notting Hill. "Des and I cycle in every Wednesday because it gives us half an hour of peace to rehearse what I'll say in Prime Minister's Questions," says David. "So you've put me off my stride."

I tell Des he's rather inappropriately dressed for the chilly winter ride in his dark shorts and T-shirt. "I like the minimalist look," he huffs.

On the other hand, safety watchdogs would score David top marks for his reflective yellow jacket - which natively matches the yellow flashes in his trainers.

As we trundle over cobblestones, fly over footbridges and weave through traffic, I take the opportunity to get to know the Tory leader better.

What's in the bag by his back wheel? "Er... my pants and socks," he says as he stands on his pedals to shift into a sprinting pace. "I always have clean shirts in the office."

Doesn't the helmet ruin his hair? "No, because I have a shower as soon as I get there, so it's fine."

Has cycling given him firm thighs? "Ah. Well, I would say I'm rather fit. Cycling's the only exercise I do though. Other than tennis... I hate gyms."

We cycle on and - God help me, I'm appalled that I'm thinking of the Conservative leader this way - but I note that he has a rather nice bum.

But I'm a Labour voter and David will have to offer far more to impress me. Can he do any tricks on his bike? Perhaps a wheelie? Or no hands? At first he vehemently refuses, as if the



GOTCHA:
The day David Cameron went the wrong way



TYRED OUT: Cameron keeps to the right of our Julie

very idea is preposterous. But minutes later he sits back in his saddle, takes both hands off his handlebar and cycles for a good 100 yards. It's safe though - we're in car-free Hyde Park.

Other than that, David is on his best biking behaviour. His wheels stay strictly within the cycle

paths, he brakes at each red light and even on quiet residential roads, he obediently sticks his arms out to signal his next turn.

His blue and silver bike is fitted with a bell and mudguards - very wussy among the cycling fraternity - but he swears he doesn't care. "It's all about safety, you see. I've learned that

I was sure that wasn't one way...

recently. That's why I've changed my route - although my old one was a lot quicker."

He looks wistfully across the road. "I was sure that wasn't a one-way street," he says, referring to the moment when we nabbed him wickedly ignoring the huge no-entry signs.

"I've been going down there for years. But not any more! I've learned my lesson."

As we approach Admiralty Arch he cycles off faster than ever without a backwards glance to see

me lagging 400 metres behind. But I catch up at Parliament Square when he's snarled up in traffic.

"I'm here again!" I wheeze as I lurch up beside him, my face now as pink as my jacket. David is crestfallen. "Your bike's much smaller than mine so your legs have to work harder."

"And my legs are as short as Jimmy Krankie's," I joke - but my quip goes right over his head, he has obviously never heard of the wee Scot.

My present, however, will

surely make him smile - a shiny new copy of the Highway Code. "No bloody way!" he says, cycling around a car to escape me.

And with that, Big Ben chimes nine and David shoots across the road, whizzing past the police officers standing guard, and disappears into the Houses of Parliament.

It's taken us 35 minutes - just 13 minutes longer than last week's more dangerous route.

A nice, safe, conservative bit of cycling, Mr Cameron...

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