

Tubular Gluing the Belgian Way

by CyclocrossWorld's Stuart Thorne

Before we begin let me just say that there are lots and lots of methods for gluing tubs. This is my method that I learned way back when from Bart Wellens father along with a bunch of tweaks that I have incorporated over the years. This is by no means the gospel of gluing, but it works for me and has worked for years. The one time I changed it up, disaster struck. So, take this bit of info and do what you want with it. It's a great way to glue tubs but it is not the only way.

1. Prepare to Glue!! Before you begin gluing tubs it's a good idea to be as prepared as possible. Your work area should be clean and warm. Clean for obvious reasons, warm because I find that everything works better when it's warm – the glue is easier to spread around and glue dries faster. I use a truing stand for applying glue to a wheel, so if you have access to one, use it. It will make the job much easier.

2. Have everything you need at the ready – glue, brushes, rags, apron and air. I use Vittoria Mastik One from a can. I am always surprised when we sell someone two new tubbies and two TUBES of glue. There is no way that a new tub will stay on rim with this much glue!! Get the can so you don't run out half way through the gluing process. The can is also easier to work out of. Acid brushes work really well for applying the glue. They are readily available at most hardware stores and cost about twenty cents each. I buy them by the dozens so I don't have to think about not having any around when I need them. I use a shop apron to keep the mess to a minimum. You'll need an air supply to inflate tires as you will see in the following steps. A floor pump works perfectly well – a compressor works even better. One more thing – have a pair of scissors around to cut the Belgie Tape.

3. Mount the new tub onto the rim without glue and inflate to approximately 80psi. This will allow the tire to stretch and also this is the best time to inspect the tire for bloms or leaks. Once the tire has been glued, there isn't a shop or manufacturer around that will take the tire back. If you glue it and it leaks, you own it. So check the tire before you glue it. I usually let the mounted tire sit for anywhere from 12-24 hours which is usually sufficient enough to stretch a tub. And if it is flat when you come back to it- don't glue it. Now bear in mind that some of the nicer tubs out there have latex tubes inside and they will bleed air over time, but if you pumped it up to 80psi and came back 12 hours later and the tire is completely flat, then you have a problem. If it's just a bit softer, it's likely ok.

4. Time to Glue. Now I do all these next steps in succession. I don't allow anything to dry more than the time it takes to do each step. One right after the other. I start with the tire first. Inflate the tire so that it inverts itself or rolls outward. I grab the tire in the middle pulling it together to make a figure eight. This allows me to handle the tire better while gluing. Using an acid brush apply a thin coat of glue to the entire base tape area. Make sure to get full coverage from one edge of the base tape to the other. A new tire soaks up lots of glue – hence the can. I apply the glue in sections about 6-8 inches of the tire at a time. Apply the glue evenly in all steps of this process. Once you have the glue applied, I deflate the tire and move to the next step. The reason for deflating the tire is that a new tire soaks up a lot of glue

and when it dries it can “shrink” the tire making harder to install when you get to that final step.

5. Make sure that the rim is clean. Wipe it down with alcohol or acetone to remove any residue. Apply a thin layer of glue to the rim starting at the valve hole with an acid brush. Be sure to get good coverage from one side of the rim to the other. Set it aside.

6. Inflate the tire again to give it shape and apply a second layer of glue to the tire. Once again make sure that you get complete coverage of the base tape. When done gluing deflate the tire and move on.

7. Apply the second layer of glue to the rim. Starting at the valve hole and working your way around. As soon as you are done take your roll of Belgian Tubular tape and apply it to the rim right on top of the tacky glue that you just laid down. Start at the valve hole and press the tape into the glue. Go all the way around and cut the tape when you get back to the valve hole. I use the back of my fingernail to “squeegee” the tape into the rim/glue. Peel of the paper backing of the tape.

8. Inflate the tire and apply a third and final layer thinly to the base tape of the tire. Leave the tire inflated at this time.

9. Apply the final, thin coat of glue right on top of the tubular tape. Edge to edge just like before.

10. Put the wheel on a clean section of floor – not the living room carpet or onto the shop floor with a bunch of dust bunnies around – use a clean section. Lean the wheel against your legs with the valve hole upwards, facing you. With the tire still inflated, insert the valve stem into the valve hole of the rim. This is the tricky part as it is what keeps the glue from being messy. I push the tire into the rim and get the first six inches on both sides of the valve hole pretty well stuck. Then deflate the tire a bit so that you can grab it with your hands. How much to deflate it? I don't have any exact PSI readings on this, but generally I do my best to keep the glued tire from hitting the sidewalls of the rim. Grabbing the tire with both hands, push/stretch the tire evenly in a downward motion and onto the rim. Do this in small increments – about 2-3 inches of rim at a time. Work your way down until there is about a quarter of the tire left to mount onto the rim. Take the wheel, hold it in your lap and reach across the wheel and pull the tire outwards and up onto the rim. It's almost like having some standing opposite you pulling the tire onto the rim. If you try to roll the tire onto the rim at this point you will have glue everywhere.

11. Inflate the tire to about 60psi and straighten the tire onto the rim. Make sure that the tire isn't rolled over to one side or the other. Center the whole tire on the rim. You will only have a few minutes to do this so you have to act pretty quickly.

12. Let the tubular sit for at least 24 hours before you ride it.