

AMERICAN RANDONNEUR



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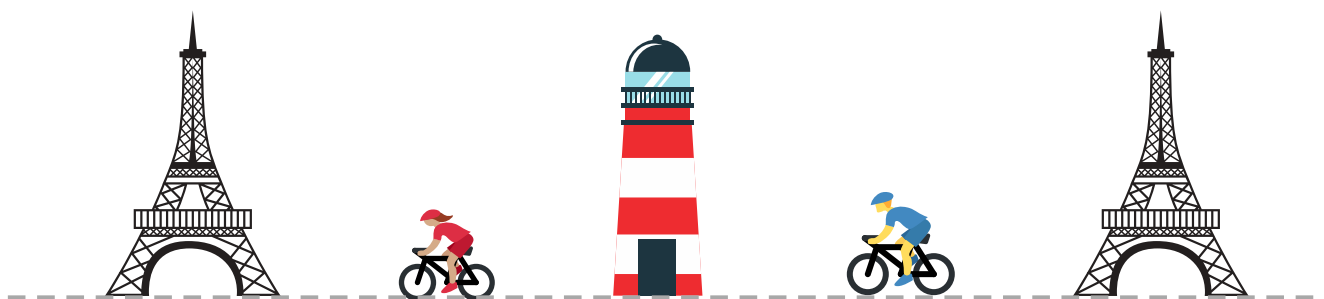
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COVER—Robert Kingsley, Dawn Piech and
Marj Oneschuk: the lanternes rouge (the final
finishers) on the 2018 Coulee Challenge 1200k.

PHOTO DEB FORD

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President's Message

What to do in a PBP Year?

We're embarking on a quadrennial Paris-Brest-Paris year. It's a unique grand randonn e and a special event overall. PBP has many enduring themes large and small, from that roadside stand near Foug eres with the cute children offering you small cakes and beverages (postcards from PBP riders past mounted on the refreshment stand), to the throngs of randonneurs from many nations you find yourself riding with, to the army of volunteers who greet you with a smile throughout the entire 90 hours of 6,000 riders.

Yet each edition is different, too, from the rain-soaked 1987 and 2007, dodging plants and animals washed onto the roadway, to toastier years such as 2003, in the wake of a punishing and deadly heat wave for France and the Continent. And at each PBP, there may be different family members in front of farmhouses offering you small cakes and liquid refreshment.

If you have ridden your PBP and moved on to new challenges, that's fine. If you are still working up to a PBP in

Mike Turek, John Mangin, and John Lee.

—PHOTO DEB FORD



Rainy riding during the Coulee Challenge.

—PHOTO DEB FORD

your future, or are an inveterate PBP aficionado, or if PBP has never been on your radar, that's all good, too.

When I rode my first PBP, I wondered if I would like it very much, with all those riders. I had just come off a different event—with a few dozen riders, personal support vehicles, and the possible chance to see one rider or another every day or so (or maybe just the van in which they were taking a brief sleep break). PBP would be a shock by contrast.

But I did like PBP. I recommend PBP either as a one-time great experience ... or as a habit. It's up to you!

So this year, if you are a PBP aspirant, things to do include riding your SR qualifying series, of course. And imbibing as many items of advice as you can! (Well, seriously, you may want to ration your advice intake, including mine, since it's in such abundance.)

Some folks believe riding a 1000km brevet is a good education and warm-up. I think it's a good idea though not essential—you should feel comfortable with a well-executed 600km. But a 1000km could help ... as long as the event itself is one you want to ride. (It's the energy you bring to this and any event; it shouldn't feel like an assignment.)

There are all kinds of training and prep you can do. I would just say make it engaging and fun. Make your big prep rides goals in themselves if you can.

Finally, think about helping others in their training. It's great to train together, and you can benefit from each other's experience.

In 2015, roughly 22% of active RUSA members—those who'd ridden a RUSA event or permanent that year—rode PBP.

That leaves a lot of other members!

If you're not headed to Paris, there are all manner of high-season goals for you. As I write, it looks like there will be a Sunshine 1200 in Florida in May, a Carolina Spring 1200 in April, and the brand new Hound Dog 1200 in September in Texas. Also quite a few 1000km events. In 2018, there were 19 of them. 1000km's can be evocative and fit neatly into three days.

Or a foreign grand randonn e—there could be a good selection next year on the Randonneurs Mondiaux website.

Or a "Super 600" (an ACP Super Randonneur 600km perm), 10,000 meters of climbing in under 60 hours, in remote territory with just you, maybe a friend or two, and wildlife.

Or tacking on more states in your American Explorer quest. That could lead you into exotic terrain.

So many possibilities! For 2019, I wish you a bright year whatever riding it contains.

—John Lee Ellis

RUSA President

president@rusa.org

From the Editor

Welcome to a blockbuster issue of *AR*. In these pages you will find stories of big adventures, the final words on RUSA's twentieth anniversary, thoughts on PBP 2019, and more. Read on....

Concluding our focus on RUSA's twentieth anniversary, Deb Banks looks at the growth of randonneuring in terms of regional expansion over the last two decades. And Alan Johnson, celebrating his 20th anniversary of organizing RUSA events in North Carolina, is interviewed by Mike Dayton. Alan has been a part of RUSA since its inception! That's volunteerism.

Speaking of volunteering, Betty Jean Jordan explains how she transformed the support of an overnight 200km ride into an adventure. Next year, many regions will host extra events to help riders prepare for PBP. Have you volunteered yet to help support a ride?

The vital nature of volunteers' efforts is also made clear in two additional reports. Michele Brougher describes the inaugural Mac and Cheese 1200km from the organizer's perspective, while rider and columnist Chris Newman offers the rider's view of this fantastic adventure and logistical challenge. Additionally, in a review of the hot, hilly, and humid New Jersey 600km, Joe Kratovil describes event logistics, while Katie Raschdorf writes about the challenges of riding it.

Long rides are the focus of other articles, too. Organizer Rob Welsh and several co-authors describe the inaugural Coulee Challenge 1200km, an event that presented more climbing than some riders expected. Check out the story by John and Ann Jarczynski;

they had an interesting adventure in the coulees! Stacy Kline's narrative about the 2017 LEL makes it clear that this is an epic event. I love her attitude, however; when husband Greg suggests a big cycling adventure, she simply says 'yes' because she is "never disappointed in [their] journeys." While she did not quite complete LEL, she looks forward to another attempt in 2021!

The Rocky Mountain Cycling Club and John Lee Ellis put on a different kind of big event this year. Stephen Zavestoski writes about Haute Randonnee Six-Pack, six days of riding 200km per day so riders experience the beauty of the terrain virtually all during daylight. Georgi Stoychev's ride report on the Sliven-Varna-(Sofia)-Sliven 1200km also includes historical and geographical information about the areas through which the challenging route passes.

PBP is on the minds of many, and Martin Gruebele and Ryan Linne provide a preview of PBP with their memories of the 2015 edition. Columnist Paul Johnson continues his effort to guide PBP aspirants; see his column in this issue as well as in the last few issues in which he has specific-

ly addressed PBP-related questions. Options for PBP training are offered in Rob Welsh's "Build Your Own Brevet Week" as well as in Paul Rozelle's preview of some early season qualifying brevets in Central Florida.

George Swain reviews *Fast After Fifty* by Joe Friel and makes the book sound both interesting and useful. As George emphasizes, randonneuring is not about being fast, but being able to go a bit faster allows more time for sleeping and eating, and ultimately, allows one to have a more enjoyable ride.

Finally, it is good to remember to encourage new riders. Oliver Severino describes his first 200km ride with San Diego Randonneurs, his concerns and the sense of achievement felt upon completion of the ride. It is important to remember how the randonneuring adventure starts.

May you enjoy a happy and healthy holiday season while dreaming dreams of next year's adventures.

Be safe out there..

—Janice Chernekoff
Editor, *American Randonneur*
editor@rusa.org

Taking a thunderstorm break.

—PHOTO CHRIS NEWMAN



Three Americans in Paris

BY MARTIN GRUEBELE AND RYAN LINNE

A group of three RUSA members from Illinois attempted this grande randonnée in 2015 with very different strategies—all led to finishes well within the time limit.

For Jay Yost, the 2015 edition of PBP was going to be a very personal journey. He and his uncle had finished in 2011, but the last rider in their trio, Jay's dad James Yost, had abandoned one hundred miles from the finish. Jay had planned to do the ride again with his dad in 2015, but a tragic parachute accident took James away a year before PBP. Jay decided to recruit two riders and complete PBP again in honor of his dad. He soon found us, Martin

Gruebele and Ryan Linne, and we agreed to train with him and embark on the adventure.

The crux of our final training months in 2015 was the Quad Cities Randonneurs' Brevet Week. Concocted by Mike Fox, who runs the QCR brevet series in Iowa, it features a full series in this order: 300km, 200km, 400km and 600km, all in five days. We had already done a 300km, so we showed up in West Union, IA, on a Monday in April

to do the remaining 1200km in four days. We were interested in doing PBP fairly fast, so we zipped through the brevets at our aerobic threshold, finishing the 600km in thirty hours with two hours of sleep.

Jay and Martin had very different strategies for PBP. Jay is a spur-of-the-moment rider, sleeping only when he can't ride anymore, and eating and riding by feel. He planned on riding PBP "as it happens." Martin, a scientist by profession, is the opposite: estimated arrival times and sleep locations were planned, as well as contingencies, all based on power output, terrain, and heart rate profiles. One thing both in this 'odd couple' agree on: don't overload your bike if you want to finish fast.





Our trio of randonneurs enjoying French hospitality two nights before the start.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN WAITER

If your wheels are well-tested, chances are the extra spokes are just the straw that will break the camel's back. So we had lightweight multitools (with a miniature chain tool), a few zip-ties and ultralight night/cold/rain clothing, all of which fit into a large saddle bag and an under-the-top-tube bag. This included two super-light lithium battery packs for thirty-six hours of light, more than enough for two nights of riding, and a few gels and waffles in a bento box for between controls. We never needed anything else on our eighteen-pound bikes during the ride.

Feeling well-prepared, we got to Paris a couple of days before the 18th edition of PBP. Jay and Ryan stayed at the Cheval Rouge near Versailles, in a nice restaurant district. Martin was practical as usual and picked the Alliance Hotel closest to the finish, so he could walk the bike home five hundred meters after the ride. On Friday night we met at a little restaurant-bar that Jay and Ryan had found, and the

Three Americans in Paris, left to right: Jay, Martin and Ryan after their bike-check. In the background is the field next to the National Velodrome, where the start of PBP is staged.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN RIDER

French food was great. On Saturday, we met at registration and bike inspection, and put our bike numbers on the front and top tube. Given that six thousand riders were being hosted by PBP organizers at the National Velodrome in St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, it was surprisingly not an all-day affair of long lines. We had picked the earliest

ushered us through to the front so we could try to catch Martin's wave.

Once started, it was a surreal ride through the Paris suburbs with thousands of cheering spectators. They lined all the roads and traffic circles for miles. Ryan expected the enthusiasm of the crowd to peter out after the initial departure, but not so. Throughout the entire ride to Brest and the return to Paris, regardless of the time of day, there would be clusters of French fans cheering us on while offering food, coffee, and water. As we started, we stayed near the front of our wave, because as anyone in a group ride knows, riding near the rear you suffer the "slinky phenomenon." At approximately fifteen miles in, someone lost a water

Throughout the entire ride to Brest and the return to Paris, regardless of the time of day, there would be clusters of French fans cheering us on while offering food, coffee, and water.

eighty-hour start, and were allotted start group D at 16:45 on Sunday, August 16. This would allow us to draft with other fast riders.

Ryan and Jay's randonné

At some point the start time was lost in translation, and we were late by fifteen minutes for our start wave. Martin had already left, thinking that we were perhaps at the very front of the two hundred-strong wave. The staff

bottle. One rider, against common sense, braked without alerting the group, causing a crash. Jay was unfortunately caught up in the crash and put into a ditch, squishing the bananas in his pocket: better the bananas than Jay's back. Jay was fortunately not injured and attributes this to his military parachutist training, during which he performed countless Proper Landing Falls (PLFs). The rest of the ride to the first control was fairly uneventful.



At the first control at Villaines-la-Juhel, it was time to gear up for the first night of riding. At some point in the night we became separated. The short distance to Tinténiac was welcome because fatigue had started to set in and a Coca-Cola recharge was needed. At the Loudéac control, on his way out, Ryan passed Jay as he was coming in to get stamped. On the way to the next control in Carhaix-Plouguer, the terrain changed from short, rolling

together for the first time during PBP, making the journey to the halfway point more enjoyable. Late in the afternoon the three of us arrived in Brest, ate a quick meal of spaghetti, chicken and sauce, and began the return trip to Paris.

After being awake for more than thirty-six hours Ryan decided that he needed to sleep. However, Martin and Jay convinced him to push through and make it back to Carhaix before

Left to right: Martin, Jay and Ryan on the bridge leading into Brest, halfway through their PBP effort.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN RIDER

control without some rest. Martin and Jay trudged on as Ryan caught a couple hours of sleep. A nap in a cot with a light sleeping bag and a pillow still warm from the previous guest felt like sleeping in a five-star hotel. Awakened after his short and luxurious nap, Ryan set off in the wee hours towards Loudéac, knowing that with every kilometer there would be less and less elevation change. Checked and stamped at Loudéac, Ryan needed some proper nutrition. Eggs and macaroni noodles with a cup of coffee were on the menu.

Leaving the cafeteria feeling rested and full, Ryan noticed Jay's bike was next to his on the bike stand. Ryan tracked him down in the control and learned that he had peeled off from Martin around 2:00am in dire need of his own rest. Ryan and Jay left together and rode towards Tinténiac and then Fougères. Riding with your friend and teammate after five hundred miles really helps the mental attitude.

With time, the hills became less demanding. By 9:00pm Ryan and Jay

PBP is an amazing experience. The French are real cycling enthusiasts, they treat the sport more like we treat basketball in the States.

climbs to longer and more arduous climbs. The terrain change combined with continuous fatigue and lack of sleep made the next four hundred kilometers to the coast and back the most difficult stretch for Ryan. About seventy kilometers to the coastal town of Brest, we all met up and rode

resting. We arrived in Carhaix at 11:45 pm. After a quick water bottle refill and another "only a few more miles" pep talk from Martin, the three of us set off for Loudéac. Roughly seventeen miles after leaving Carhaix we ran into a "secret" control. At this point Ryan knew he wasn't going to make the next

were back in Villaines-la-Juhel ready for more night riding. In this section, in the middle of the night, we came across a pub filled with Britons. Hearing English was an added relief when ordering a coffee and some snacks to make it through the rest of the night. Before reaching the next control in Mortagne-au-Perche, we decided that we needed to lie down briefly for some more sleep. After a short rest, we continued on towards Dreux, the last control before Paris. It was mid-morning when we reached Dreux, and leaving this control, a final 'second wind' propelled us towards the finish and that well-earned, cold pint. The last twenty kilometers felt like the end of a group ride. We sprinted through the city and parks until we could see the top of the Vélodrome. Done! All in all, including riding through the controls, the total trip was close to 770 miles. The finishing time was 68 hours and 12 minutes. Ryan's sister and brother-in-law had made it to the finish just in time and ferried the weary randonneurs back to the hotel for a real shower.

Martin's randonnée

I burned almost 29,000 kcal during PBP, but long rides are as much mental as physical. Based on my sustainable heart rate at two-man RAAM in 2013 and the elevation profile of PBP, I estimated that I could finish in about fifty-five hours with favorable weather. The plan was to execute it like RAAM solo, for which I was signed up in 2016: ride three hundred miles, sleep a couple of hours in Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem during the day to avoid the heat; ride another three hundred miles, sleep another couple of hours in Fougères; and ride one hundred and sixty-five miles to the finish.

In order to ride well at night, I strictly maintained my jetlag. That way I would wake up in the afternoon just before the start and ride through the night without getting tired. I slept until 14:00 Paris time, got into my kit, and headed over to the start at 16:00, where I watched group A take off. Then I got in line with group D for the start corral.

I passed riders until I was riding with the front group, but there was no sign of Jay and Ryan, so I joined

randonneurs doing my target speed on the flats, twenty mph. A group of about twenty soon formed and rode to the first food stop through hilly woods outside Paris. At Fougères, I headed out alone but picked up a few people, and soon there was a big group, drafting one another and working the hills at an average of sixteen mph. This pattern would repeat during a quiet night ride, interspersed with chatting and occasional pulls at the front.

Between Loudéac and Carhaix I took my planned daytime sleep break in Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem, knowing that Jay and Ryan would pass me there because Jay was going to ride until he could not go on. I got up refreshed and set off, mostly climbing alone. Eventually I found Jay working up a climb, and the team began to link up. Now the trio was working together over the long climbs and descents between Carhaix and Brest. The Atlantic Ocean came into view!

At Brest, we all had a real meal, and started the return ride to Paris. We quietly alternated pulls on the steep hills out of Brest through the night. Eventually, Ryan was too tired to carry on safely and went to sleep at a secret control. Jay soon followed in Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem, around 2:00am. This was Ryan's and Jay's first sleep. I was well-rested and it was day time for my jet-lagged brain, so I rode on. Now came the roughest part of the whole ride: the hills between Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem and Tinténiac were dark, ice-cold and foggy, with no fast riders in sight. It was slow progress, and I lost two hours from my ride plan between Carhaix and Tinténiac.

Jay and Ryan at the control right after their road-side sleep on a space blanket.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN RIDER





Night riding is critical for PBP. In Martin's jet-lagged time zone, it was still early afternoon, so he had a smile on his face the whole night.

—PHOTO MAINDRU

At Tinténiac, the tide turned in my favor when I met up with a really strong German rider. After Fougères I again rode alone for a while but then a group passed me at the right speed; in it were Jens Balchen from Norway (who had done RAAM) and Annemiek Stegehuis from Holland. This group worked together well, everyone taking turns pulling, and chatting to get to know one another. We even stopped for a cup of soup at some place Annemiek knew, not because we needed food, but just to chat. We zipped through Villaines and Mortagne, to Dreux.

At Dreux, I let Jens and Annemiek go; the group was in a hurry, and I really needed to stretch his back for ten minutes. I started the final stage alone until three riders caught me after which I picked up the pace and stayed with them. The big hills before Élancourt are really a sadistic addition to PBP: climb after climb up to 3500' after one has already ridden 750 miles.

The finish of such an enormous undertaking as PBP is an anticlimax because one gets so tired: a beep on a timing mat at 57 hours and 50 minutes, and a few clapping spectators waiting for friends around 2:00am. I turned in

The National Vélodrome in St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, where hot food awaits the weary randonneurs finishing PBP.

—PHOTO MARTIN GRUEBELE

my stamped brevet booklet as proof that I had done the course. I didn't feel the elation of completing PBP until I woke up the next afternoon and watched the finish line when the seventy-hour finishers were coming in, incredibly tired and excited all at the same time.

PBP is an amazing experience. The French are real cycling enthusiasts, they treat the sport more like we treat basketball in the States. We must have said "merci" one thousand times to cheering spectators on the side of the road. We rode with old friends and made new friends. PBP is all about the camaraderie. We learned an important riding lesson: what we used to think of as tired legs after a few hundred miles is purely psychological. With a fast group of comrades as a motivator, we were able to ride almost as strong at the end as at the beginning. 🚲

RUSA: The Lay of Our Land

BY DEB BANKS

As we celebrated RUSA's 20th anniversary, I became increasingly interested in how we had evolved into the organization that we are. To begin with, in 1998, twenty-eight RBA's in twenty-two states affiliated with International Randonneurs signed a letter of intent to launch RUSA. Regions then and now are in geographical areas that make accessing brevets easier for riders, and randonneuring events are typically organized by a cycling club where brevets are just one piece of a larger set of cycling activities. As our sport has blossomed, new regions have been added; now, thirty-two states plus Puerto Rico offer randonneuring activities.

Given that I'm a visual person, I graphed the rise of regions across a map of the US. It is one thing to look at a list of the initial regions that jumpstarted RUSA, but when you look across the map of blue, it shows just how many organizers have been interested in growing our sport. Two of the original RBA's are still on board: John Lee Ellis from Colorado, and Dan Driscoll from Texas. That's commitment! We added six more states by 2005 and another eight states plus Puerto Rico by 2010. Growth has slowed since then with an additional three states being added. A few regions have also become inactive, so if you add the inactive regions with those states that never had a region, we have a total of eighteen states without an active region: about 35% of the nation.

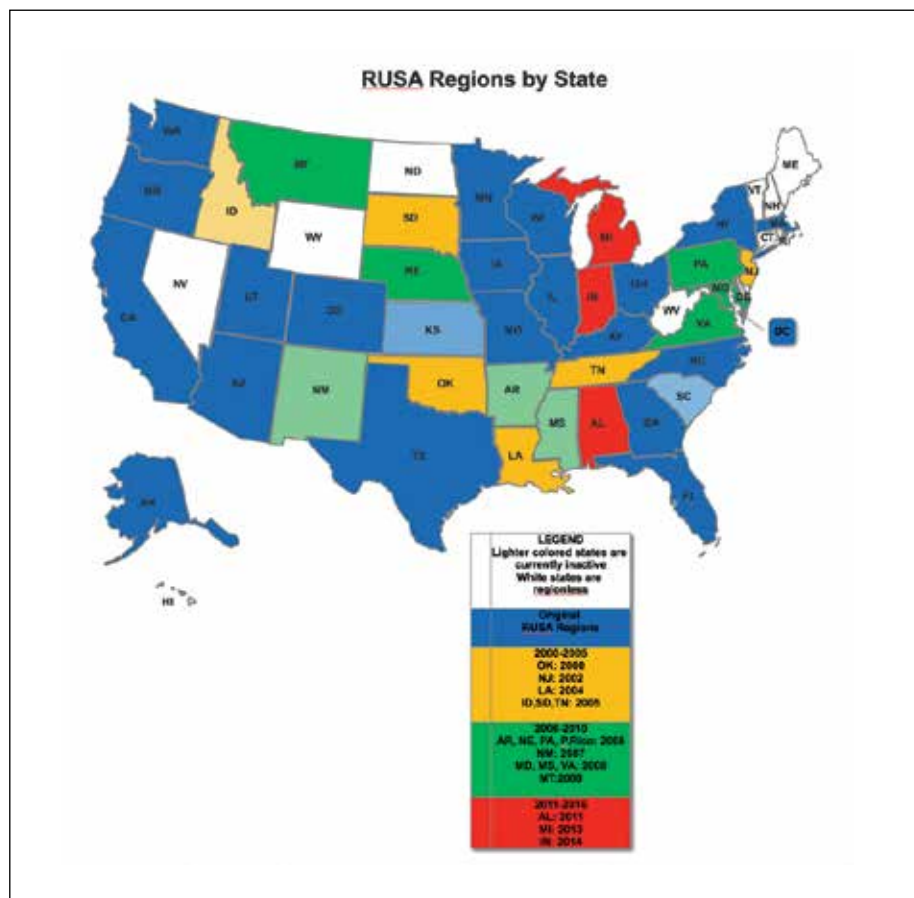
Also of interest to me was the hand-off of regions to successive RBA's. In some cases, like Davis, CA, the club has remained the same, but I am now the fourth RBA. In other cases, different clubs have held the RBA-ship.

Take Alaska: Michael Rohacek was the Alaska RBA. In 2003 Robert Voris of the Arctic Bicycle Club took over RUSA duties. In 2008, Kevin Turinsky of Alaska Randonneurs took the helm, handing duties over to Burnley Willis of Denali Randonneurs in 2015. There are myriad reasons why these changes occur, but I am struck by the tenacity of RBAs in keeping our sport alive and providing options for riders.

Finally, when I think about growth in our sport, besides the creation of more 1200km events, the addition of the permanent program has been a gamechanger. There are permanent in all fifty states, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands (thank you, Greg

Olmstead!). What a fun and challenging way to ride around the country and earn the American Explorer award. Close to 51,000 permanent have been ridden and, while there are many people who ride the same permanent frequently, you can't deny the impressiveness of 51,000 ride completions.

Put it all together and we are strong. We have a plethora of rides, we have a group of dedicated RBA's (and the volunteers who help them!) and a large group of permanent owners. When RUSA turns thirty, it will be interesting to see what changes have taken place, but I bet it will be equally as strong because of the people that make it all possible for us to ride our bikes. 🚲



Looking at the title of this book, you may be asking yourself, why is it so important to go fast? This is randonneuring after all, not racing. As long as one rides fast enough to make the control cutoffs, what's the point in going any faster? That is a legitimate position, for sure, but as any seasoned randonneur will tell you, the faster you ride, the more time you have to sleep, eat, relax and enjoy the adventure, not to mention getting home earlier to take on life's other demands. These qualities increasingly form the basis of my interest in speed.

My competitive "how fast can I finish this" days are behind me, but it is clear to me that by increasing my overall speed I will have more time to rest and enjoy myself on long rides. Finishing strong rather than finishing fast has become a priority, and the word "strong" in Friel's subtitle provides a clue to his other major point, which is that while all of us lose strength as we age, there are concrete steps we can take to slow or reverse the process. With 62% of current

RUSA members in the over-50 category, a basic understanding of the phenomenon of aging and cycling performance should be pretty helpful to many.

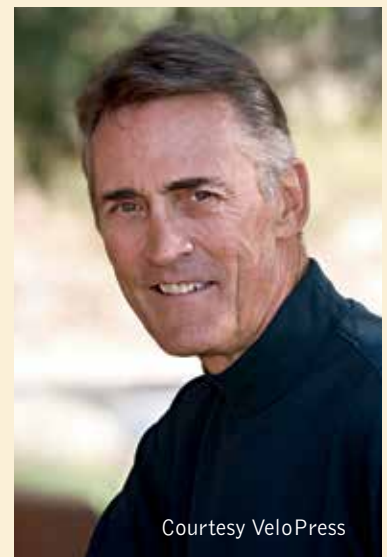
Joe Friel may not be a household name, but he has garnered much success and recognition in the endurance training world, having authored the bestselling *Cyclist's Training Bible*, a fifth edition of which was released in April 2018. An early champion of "periodization," Friel has been designing training plans for years that include the classic phases of base, build, peak, race, etc., breaking the training season down into different segments that work together to increase overall performance. Don't worry if you're not a spreadsheet kind of person; there are still quite a few takeaways from this book that will help frame your preparations for many cycling seasons to come.

Friel is not writing exclusively for cyclists, but rather for endurance athletes of all stripes, and his approach is both general and specific. We are treated to a survey of recent scientific research into aging and sport and provided with

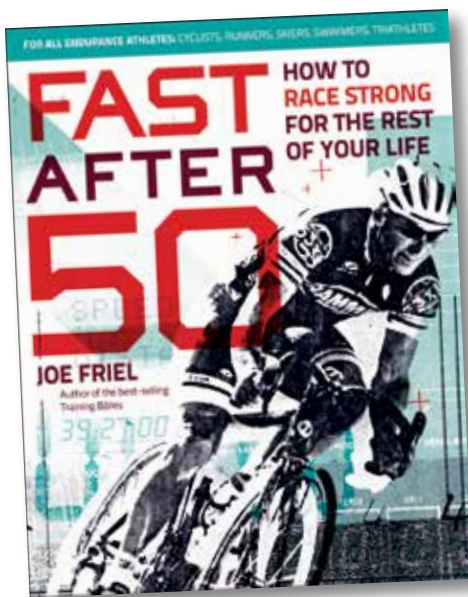
Fast After 50: How to Race Strong for the Rest of your Life

BY JOE FRIEL

2015, 328 PAGES, VELOPRESS



Courtesy VeloPress



a primer on the important terms and concepts related to training basics. He breaks down the three building blocks of training: frequency, duration, and intensity, in a way that not only makes sense, but which will be understandable to average mortals. Technical terms like lactate threshold, aerobic capacity, VO_2 max, and others are defined and used in ways that most will find clear and practical. To achieve success, Friel coaches readers to identify personal "limiters," those factors that keep us from attaining our full potential, in order to design individual training plans to compensate and improve. Finally, he discusses the three factors that

typically affect performance with age (decreasing aerobic capacity, increasing body fat and shrinking muscles) and suggests what riders can do to reverse these trends.

A major takeaway from *Fast After Fifty* is that the addition of high intensity interval training and heavy-load strength work should yield significant results and make most riders faster and stronger on the bike. As randonneurs, it's quite easy to focus on ride duration and frequency and not pay adequate attention to intensity. Friel explains why LSD (long slow distance) training without periodic intensity makes us slower and slower each year. As he says, "Intensity is the key to maintaining performance with aging." What non-racing readers may find comforting is that intensity is not an end in itself but rather something to throw into several rides each week and at certain key points of the season. In addition, he reminds us that muscle

strength declines as we age, making strength training itself increasingly valuable not only to *gain* but more importantly to *maintain* muscle mass critical to performance on the road.

Sometimes it takes a kick in the pants to follow through on something we've been putting off, and in my case the combination of a pending total hip replacement (to repair a problem that stems from a 2010 crash) and the next edition of PBP combined to prompt me to seize the moment and figure out how to train effectively as a "mature" cyclist. I've known several over-50 randonneurs who have engaged personal coaches to help identify limiters and design training plans. While this path may or may not be one you see in your future, developing a better understanding of the aging process and the steps we can take to prevent our fitness from falling off a cliff will be useful to all.

With this book in hand, I hope to structure a methodical training

plan that will lead to a strong finish in Paris-Brest-Paris next August. While I completed PBP comfortably within the 84-hour time limit I had selected in 2015, I was absolutely shattered by sleep deprivation through much of the event. My goal this time around is not necessarily to finish any sooner, but rather to ride stronger and quicker so that I can get additional sleep and more fully enjoy the adventure. Beyond PBP, I hope to be riding stronger than ever in my 50s and 60s (and beyond!). With the insights I've gained from Friel's book, I feel like I'm off to a good start. Time will tell. Experts in the area of training and/or readers of Friel's past books may find little new here to inform training decisions, but the concepts he uncovers, especially those related to aging, should be broadly understood by the over-50 cycling set. If you fall into this category and want to up your game, this book may be for you. 🚲

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London–Edinburgh–London: An Epic Cycling Adventure

BY STACY KLINE

Cole Porter’s beguiling, “Begin the Beguine,” seems a fitting phrase for Greg and me, given our tendency to gravitate towards audacious bike touring adventures in preparation for grand randonneés.

In 2015, to get in shape for an 84-hour PBP start, we completed the Dutch 100 Cols Tocht, the 200,000’, 200 Cols, 2500-mile cyclotour, in 30 days, through France’s famed mountain ranges. Likewise in 2017, we rode the Sustrans 1200-mile Land’s End to John O’Groats (LEJOG) route, the

United Kingdom’s beloved “End to End” crossing, in 15 days. LEJOG was, like 100 Cols, an epic adventure with loads of climbing, over quite steep terrain. I’ve learned to say yes to Greg’s seemingly outlandish adventures over the years because I am never disappointed on our journeys, and I know that I will get

whipped into shape along the way. Like the 100 Cols Tocht, LEJOG should be on every randonneur’s bucket list.

Although feeling better prepared after LEJOG to take on the London-Edinburgh-London (LEL) 1400km Grand Randonnée, Bill Bryant’s sage advice regarding PBP was always in the back of my mind, “Regardless of your past experience, do not take this ride for granted.” I had no idea, however, what was in store for us on LEL 2017 regarding the weather....

After a wonderful week off in London, by way of Edinburgh, including the annual RideLondon FreeCycle event with eight amazing miles closed to motorized traffic (which we rode on Boris Bikes for good measure), it was time for the big ride. Greg and I made our way to Loughton, a northwest suburb of London, the day before the ride, and it was exciting to see 1500 cyclists getting checked in, filling up drop bags, and making all kinds of final preparations for the following morning. LEL registration includes two color-coded drop bags labeled with the rider’s official number. LEL is an exceptionally well-organized ride, so much so that I remember wishing that they would allow 2000 riders or more on this incredible ride; even the bike tags were gorgeous with the rider’s name printed on them. So many

Did someone call a cab? Heading back in a London Black Cab to the Isle of Dogs at 5am for a well-earned rest!

— PHOTO STACY KLINE





Greg and Stacy Kline after completing 1200 mile unsupported bike ride across the United Kingdom from Land's End in Southwest England (Cornwall) to John O'Groats on the Northernmost point in Scotland.

—PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

2017, under a clearing sky, Greg and I set off with 1500 of our closest friends, on an epic cycling adventure. My take on the word epic with regards to cycling is that I have never been a fan of “epics.” It’s all well and good for a novel, Willie Hunt, or a San Francisco randonneur, but I’m a timid adventurer; my Twitter tagline reads “Risk-averse Thrill Seeker” despite my email signature including Helen Keller’s famous quote, “Life is a daring adventure, or nothing.”

The first day on the bike was glorious. We moved at a moderate clip for me, with a most welcome tailwind and the company of a few Audax UK cyclists who knew their way. Although there were puddles all around, and rain showers in the distance, we were lucky to have a warm, rain-free first day, riding through the hedgerows and gentle rolling hills of the English countryside. The controls on the first day were in the picturesque villages of St. Ives and Spalding, and the volunteers welcomed us with meals and generous offers of support. We rolled into Louth just before 10:00pm and because of our strong first day, we spent five hours off the bike, enjoying a meal, shower, and a long nap since this was one of our drop bag choices.

Rolling out at 3:00am, grateful to not feel tired or sleepy, I was excited to start our second day on the road. We love to ride at night. I need very little sleep, which is a great asset for randonneuring, and both Greg and I enjoy the quiet, traffic-free roads in the dead of night. We were quite prepared for the weather and cycled comfortably with fenders and our Carradice Pendle saddlebags packed with wool arm and leg warmers, a lightweight rain coat suitable for summer temperatures, rain covers for our helmets, shoes, and

volunteers made the event possible, and we even got to meet a cycling hero of ours, Audax UK’s Sir Balthazar Wobbly and his Pashley Guv’nor. We saw so many familiar RUSA faces—Eric Larsen, Robert Sexton, Joth & Emma Dixon, Mark Thomas, Brian Feinberg, Larry Sokolsky and Vickie Tyer—in Loughton or at the LEL meet up at The Salt Quay, a quintessentially British pub on the Thames.

You may find yourself on the saddle of a large velocipede, and you may ask yourself, well, how did I get here?

Greg and I don’t ride with ear buds because we truly enjoy listening to the sounds of cycling. I like to tell folks that when you aren’t listening to music, you create your own, and inevitably a song will pop in my head and become a sort of talisman for the ride, edited to include the various landmarks along the way. How we got here was quite

simple since there are no qualifying events for LEL: none. Nothing is required, except perhaps being crazy enough to want to attempt such a ride. After PBP, we had heard about a documentary being produced about the 2013 LEL ride, that donors to this project would be guaranteed a spot on the 2017 ride, and that is how Greg and I, and many other riders, qualified for the first round of LEL registration. The movie was exquisitely produced, and is a very accurate representation of what to expect on this fantastic ride, with perhaps one difference, the 2017 perfect storm of bad weather.

Cramming our beloved Fuso bicycles into a London Black Cab was no small feat and likewise generated no small amount of mirth for the cabbies who transported us to and from the ride start. Greg and I were able to get a 9:30AM start, so on Sunday, July 30,

saddles, a headband for me, cycling cap for Greg, and the absolutely essential rain legs that keep you from losing your mind as the rain slaps your thighs for hours on end. The days were still long since we were riding in the high latitudes on our way north to Edinburgh, and that meant it wasn't long until daylight when one's internal body clock resets for another day. Amazingly, the second day saw very little rain, and mostly tailwinds.

The climbing started to pick up as we traveled through Pocklington and Thirsk, and we reached the beautiful ruins of Barnard Castle in the early evening. The climb out of the village was surreal at dusk and we pressed on through Brampton to begin the exquisite climb up Yad Moss as night closed in. I had wanted to make it to Moffat for our second overnight, but we only made it to Brampton for a three-hour rest due to the challenging climbing. It was exciting to descend the moors, over the cobblestone, in a light

As we started to climb again, it really started to come down. Riders were pulled over, waiting out the heavy squall and I remember thinking, "Don't stop, for goodness sake. Who knows how long it will last!"

rain, and we arrived at Moffat for lunch and a change of clothes. This welcome break prepared us for the big climb up the side of the hollow known colloquially as "The Devils Beef Tub" and the 80-kilometer press to Edinburgh. This is when the weather started to get really interesting.

Greg and I have a lot of experience with the weather extremes of the Desert Southwest and the tropics. We have experienced flash floods and gully washer thunderstorms more times than I care to remember. The rains we experienced riding into and out of

Edinburgh are akin to those torrential rains. We have never ridden in such heavy rain. Greg remarked, "When the roads in Scotland are flooded, it's really f'ing raining." The exhilarating arrival in Edinburgh was bookended by these rains. We didn't take time for our dram of Scotch so that we could get back on the road, and we left Edinburgh in another torrential downpour with heavy traffic. The young American randonneur from the East Coast with whom we were riding noticed that we missed our turn. We descended back towards Edinburgh several miles to the



turn, and as we started to climb again, it really started to come down. Riders were pulled over, waiting out the heavy squall and I remember thinking, “Don’t stop, for goodness sake. Who knows how long it will last!”

After our young friend pulled away we were fortunate to be able to ride with several Audax UK cyclists through Innerleithen and Eskdalemuir. They were incredibly supportive and a great source of information. In the wee hours of our third overnight, I was able to draft behind an amazing tandem tricycle team, famed Audax UK randonneurs Aidan Hedley and Judith Swallow. Judith smiled as I latched on and she said, “Witty conversation or snacks, no one rides for free.” We hauled into Brampton, grateful for a quick nap. I was really starting to feel worn out at this point, and was considering quitting. The weather was unreal, and we now had the headwinds to deal with. One Audax UK cyclist continually encouraged me to press on, and she insisted that I shouldn’t quit since I had already done the hard part. The British weather was having none of this, however, and climbing Yad Moss after a long patch of cobblestone in the wind and rain was incredibly challenging. Once again an Audax UK saviour appeared in the form of Drew Buck, his “Romahome” motorhome parked halfway up the climb, with a comfy chair and a sign that read, “Drew’s Cafe for LEL: Tea, Coffee, Magic Flapjack, TLC and Cuddles...It’s Free.” That little bit of kindness got me through the difficult climb and into the headwinds through Barnard Castle, Thirsk, and my final overnight at Pocklington.

Because of a miscalculation, I had thought I had less time than I did to reach Louth and I did not get a nap at

Greg and Stacy Kline with Vickie Tyer and daughter Syd at Greg and Vickie’s finish of LEL shortly after 3:30am on 8/4/17.

—PHOTO STACY KLINE



Pocklington. I struggled overnight to wake up, but to no avail, and as day broke and we descended to the Humber Bridge, one of the longest suspension bridges in the world and the longest that can be cycled across, I decided to abandon after almost 1200 kilometers. A very kind soul, whose 70-year-old father was riding with us, transported me to Louth as if by magic carpet, and I was able to catch a quick cat nap. I called Vickie Tyer to check in, and she said in her comforting Texan voice, “Don’t worry honey, you can ride along with my daughter, Sid!” Thankfully my final struggles did not prevent Greg from a successful finish, and he made the Louth cōntrole with six minutes to spare. Sid, ever careful to stay off the course so as to not disqualify her dear mom, and I spent a marvelous day traveling to each of the three final cōntroles, cheering on Greg and Vickie, and helping other riders as needed. It was fun to catch up with the amazing filmmaker Damon Peacock interviewing Vickie about her second LEL, especially since she was prominently featured in the 2013 documentary.

Greg pressed on for the final 200 kilometers, quickly making up for lost

Volunteers at drop-bag check-in for London-Edinburgh-London

—PHOTO STACY KLINE

time, reporting that after I abandoned there was more torrential rain and ferocious headwinds. Thankfully he was able to ride with some very strong Audax UK cyclists, taking fifteen-second pulls in an exceptionally skilled double paceline, and this made his final day an extremely enjoyable one. He was able to get several hours of sleep, plenty of food, with loads of camaraderie, truly enjoying the ride through Cambridge with the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway. He finished with over two hours to spare, riding in side by side with Vickie.

I have never been so proud to abandon an effort that I had worked so hard to complete. It was an epic adventure that I would not have missed for the world. Greg and I simply can’t wait to ride again in 2021. 🚲

An Overnight Brevet—What a Hoot!

BY BETTY JEAN JORDAN

What's more fun than a brevet? An overnight brevet!
What's even more fun than an overnight brevet? An overnight brevet with picnicking, camping, and greyhounds!

The Audax Atlanta chapter of RUSA typically has an overnight 200km brevet in July to take advantage of cooler temperatures and lighter traffic. Last summer we had the inaugural Hoot Owl 200km brevet. It started at 9:00pm one Saturday evening and ended at 10:30am Sunday morning. The fastest riders started after sunset and finished before sunrise.

Because I did a cycling race that

Saturday morning, I decided not to ride the Hoot Owl that night. However, because the route included a control in my small town of Monticello, I took the opportunity to provide ride support. Many of my fellow Georgia randonneurs generously give their time and energy to stage and support brevets, so I was glad to give a little back.

The local 24-hour Circle K was the official control, but I thought it would

be a lot more festive to greet riders as they rode through the Monticello square. I got permission from the sheriff's department and the chamber of commerce to pitch a tent on the square. I also camped out with my greyhounds Allie and Fleetwood. I love taking them with me to any event, and this time they also provided me with some overnight security.

That Saturday evening before the sunset, my husband Robert joined me on the square for a picnic. I'll take any excuse for a picnic! Cooking is another hobby and I especially enjoy preparing finger foods for an al fresco spread. This time our picnic included roast beef croissant sandwiches, homemade hummus with crudités, pimento cheese wafers, fresh watermelon, and ginger cookies. There was plenty to share with the riders later that night.

After our picnic, Robert and I relaxed on a bench with Allie and Fleetwood content to lie on the grass beside us. We may live in a small town, but we get a good bit of traffic, particularly from trucks on the four state highways that pass through our square. We watched the world go by until about 10:00pm when Robert headed home. Then it was time for me to get some sleep before the first riders started coming through.

Monticello was about seventy-five miles into the route, and I estimated that the fastest riders would arrive

Fleetwood and Allie say, "Hey, we thought there were going to be some hoot owls out here!"

—PHOTO BETTY JEAN JORDAN





Welcome sign at the Monticello-Jasper County Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center.

—PHOTO BETTY JEAN JORDAN

shortly after 2:00am. I set an alarm and tried to get some sleep. Admittedly, it wasn't very restful. Traffic didn't die down until about midnight, the tent was hot, and I was concerned about oversleeping. I didn't mind, though, because it was an adventure!

My alarm went off. I made sure everything was set out for the riders. About twenty minutes later, the first ones arrived: Brian, Graham, Joe, and Wayne. I rang a cowbell to welcome them. Several chairs gave them a few minutes respite. I offered them water, Gatorade, Cokes, tea, and leftovers from the picnic. Additionally, the chamber of commerce had given me packs of Georgia peanuts to hand out. Several riders commented that these would make excellent giveaways at PBP 2019.

The chamber also let me borrow the key to the visitor center. The riders really appreciated a nice, clean restroom and a good dose of air conditioning. Additionally, my friend Linda, who

volunteers at the chamber, made a delightful sign to welcome the riders.

On top of all this was some greyhound love! I hope the dogs gave the riders a good boost during those wee hours. I was also pleased that Fleetwood behaved so well. Robert and I had adopted him only a month earlier, and this was Fleetwood's first big outing. He did great, as did Allie, who's



Are Graham and Betty Jean happy or delirious? It's hard to tell the difference at 3:00 AM.

—PHOTO GRAHAM SKARDON

an old pro at meet and greets. By the way, we named him Fleetwood because his mother's name is Stevie Nicks.

Then, Andrew and Mike arrived. Amazingly, this was their first brevet! I told them that they were hardy souls to start with an overnight one. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, and I was glad to find out later that they completed the brevet successfully, as did all the other riders.

Robert, the final rider, rolled in a few minutes before Andrew and Mike headed out. Robert has perfected the art of savoring controls. We had a good, long visit. It was the first chance I had had to talk with him after the Race Across America, which had occurred a few weeks before the Hoot Owl 200km. Robert had crewed for a four-person women's team from Denmark, and believe it or not, I helped him make the connection to the team. Between the Internet, Facebook, and Skype, it really is a small world, particularly in the cycling community.

After Robert got back on the road around 4:30am, the hounds and I packed up and headed home. I got a few solid hours of sleep in my own bed. Next time I hope to ride the Hoot Owl 200, but I'd also be happy to provide support again. It was a real hoot! 🚲

Interview with Alan Johnson

As RUSA celebrates its 20th year as a robust cycling organization, we have to raise a toast to our volunteers, especially the RBAs who host our brevets and challenge us with difficult events. They encourage us to carry on through the darkest nights, the wind, and the rain. Our RBAs ensure our brevets are acknowledged and recorded by our French colleagues.

One of those RBAs is Alan Johnson, RUSA #306, who hosts events in North Carolina. Alan is celebrating his 20th anniversary as a RUSA official, and he is one of the few riders who was an event official with International Randonneurs, the organization that preceded RUSA.

At one point, riders jokingly referred to Alan as Fearless Leader. It stuck, and today Alan often signs his emails with that nickname. I owe our Fearless Leader a huge debt of gratitude. In 2002, during my very first 600km, several spokes broke on my rear wheel, making it virtually un-rideable. Alan graciously brought me a rear wheel from his bike, allowing me to complete the first of what would become a string of successful series.

I recently sat down with Alan and asked him to reflect on his years as a randonneur and RBA. What follows is that interview:

Tell us about your randonneuring history. When did you start in our sport?

I started riding to work in 1980, and joined North Carolina Bicycle Club in '81. My first ride was a fifty-mile

ride that turned out to be seventy-five miles. The next weekend I rode the Fall Century. On that ride, I met a rider who had a patch from a triple century. Being my first 100-mile ride, I couldn't imagine riding three hundred miles, but the idea stuck in my mind and three years later, I was doing twice that distance on my first SR series, plus a 1000km.

I started randonneuring in 1983, the year that Jim and Kathy Mulligan

moved down to North Carolina from up north. The Mulligans started a brevet series with International Randonneurs that year. They wanted to get riders qualified for PBP. I'd been doing centuries at the time, and I saw that a 200km was just an extra twenty-five miles. I was only able to complete one 200km ride that year, but I did help out some. At that time, I was in the Navy Reserve and the rides were on weekends, in conflict with when I was out of town in Norfolk, Virginia.

Several riders completed the series that the Mulligans ran and went to France for PBP. After PBP, a Christmas party was held at which riders were telling all these stories about randonneuring, especially about riding through the night with limited headlights. They also talked about the cold weather which had them scrounging around for some old panty hose and trash bags to put on. The whole time I was thinking, "That sounds like fun," which is proof that we randonneurs are crazy.

The adventures I heard about inspired me to complete a full series the next year. Jim and Kathy also organized a 1000km brevet, which ran from Murphy to Manteo. Eight riders started and four of us finished. Steve Knight and I finished in sixty-five hours and were the only finishers without a sag crew. That's when I knew I could attempt



In 2013 Alan celebrated with cake after his 7Cs permanent 70th birthday ride.

—PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Bike Virginia tour in the Shenandoah Valley, June 2010.

—BIKE VIRGINIA PHOTO

PBP. I went home and opened a savings account for the next PBP in 1991.

By the way, Shelby Hayden-Clifton finished first on the 1000km. Planning for Race Across America later that year, she used the brevet as a training ride with her crew. Shelby tied with Pat Hines as the first official female RAAM finishers.

You became aware of PBP in the first year of doing brevets. How important was that event?

That was the most exciting thing I've ever done. I've only done it one time, in 1991. My plans for PBP in 2003 came to a halt when I was hit by a car on a Bike Virginia ride and unable to ride for eight months. So my personal best rides are the 1000km from Murphy to Manteo and the 1991 PBP.

The most memorable event on PBP was on the return coming into the control at Villaines-La-Juhel. The road was filled with cheering spectators who spread apart as I rode through. I felt like I was wearing the yellow jersey coming to the top of L'Alpe d'Huez.

How did you become a ride organizer for RUSA?

The brevets were intermittent over many years, with only 200km or 300km brevets in the non-PBP years. The Mulligans organized them through 1991, and then they moved away. Gilbert Anderson organized them for a few years, and then Steve Knight took over for a few years.

Back then, we'd go out and mark the route with arrows and other things. Then we'd scout the route ahead of time to make sure it was okay, and, finally, we'd do the ride. In 1997, I again volunteered to help Steve, but he told me he had decided to quit. So, I took over from him and ran the series under International Randonneurs in



1997 and 1998. In 1998, when RUSA was formed, Jennifer Wise called and invited me to join RUSA, which I did. She also asked me to serve as an official RBA. So, I ran the 1998 series under both IR and RUSA. I have continued to run a full brevet series every year since then and have watched RUSA grow from three hundred members to its present size.

What has been your most well attended ride?

Our biggest rides were in the IR days, before I became a RUSA RBA, back when there was only a small number of ride planners in the country. We had some brevets with fifty or so riders who came from up and down the East Coast.

Have your duties as an RBA changed or evolved over the years?

Not really. My main duties are to organize the brevet, make sure the roads are good, that the signs for turns are still in place, and to find a suitable detour, if needed. Once I have those things done, I organize all of the paperwork. I ask people to sign up for the ride ahead of time, so that I have their cards

and packets ready to hand out. Then, I support the ride as it goes on.

You've essentially kept the same or similar routes over the years. How did you set those up?

Originally, I had to figure out where I was going to go and trace out the distance on paper county maps. I'd look at the miles between turns, add them all up and figure out how far the riders had to go. I had a cue sheet that was either typed or handwritten, with maybe a hand-drawn map, which was then copied at a copy center. I didn't have a printer or copier at home, let alone a computer with graphics. Then I'd drive the route to check the roads, and finally ride it on the bike to check it out.

What has been the worst weather you've started an event in?

Basically it has been steady and cold rain. The randonneurs always say it's not a proper brevet without rain. I think I've earned a reputation for rainy starts. Now, when it's dry in our area and we need rain, people encourage me to schedule a brevet.

How do you line up volunteers for your rides?

I put a note on the internet saying I need help. Sometimes, I contact individual riders. It is more effective to do individual contacting than group contacting. It's getting more and more difficult to get volunteers. All the RBAs seem to be having the same issue. It seems like everyone wants to ride and very few riders want to help.

How many bikes do you use for randonneuring?

One bike. It's not the same bike I started with, but there is just one bike that I use.

What equipment do you use for randonneuring?

I have lights, and a bike computer. I have a handlebar bag or a bag on the back, to carry my supplies. I try to be as self-contained as possible. I also use a GPS, but not for navigation. It's to

let me know how much farther it is to turns. I've never relied on a GPS for getting any place.

How has the equipment changed in your years of randonneuring?

My early bike computer consisted of a wheel-driven mileage counter. Navigation was still done with cue sheets and maps, if you were lucky. Our headlights were flashlights clipped onto our handlebars. My lighting system consisted of a Union headlight with a five-watt bulb from Radio Shack and a six-volt lantern battery in my seat bag. At PBP I used a Sanyo bottom bracket generator for one headlight and a clamp-on flashlight for back up.

How did you earn the nickname "Fearless Leader"?

I have no idea. I thought you started it. Before RUSA, my nickname in the North Carolina Bicycle Club was Big Al. That other nickname may go back to

when I started riding brevets again after the accident, but I don't know for sure.

One thing I like about randonneuring is the comradeship of the randonneurs and how they help each other out. In 2010 I was doing my first SR series since my accident in 2002. I was doing the 600km workers' pre-ride with Mike Dayton (you), Carol Bell, Joel Lawrence, and Jerry Phelps. The heat was getting to me but everyone kept encouraging me to keep going. Once the sun went down, I felt better and continued on the return, where we stopped at the Langston Motel. Carol had reserved a three-room apartment for us. Carol had one room and you had taken one of the two beds in the other bedroom. I claimed the other bed but when I came out of the shower, Joel had taken it. You commented that I had lost the bed. Joel asked if I wanted the bed and I responded, "Do you want your card signed when we get back?" I got the bed. It's great to have power. 🚲



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Stranger in a Strange Land: A Newbie Takes on the Ocean Beach 200k

BY OLIVER SEVERINO

“I think I jinxed myself when I decided to pass Hector!” I yelled to fellow rider Russell as we cruised downhill from the town of Rainbow. Around the half-way point of my first brevet, my cyclocomputer had lost its GPS fix, and I wasn’t sure if I was still on course.

They say pride goeth before a fall. I’d been following Hector because he was one of the organizers and obviously knew the way, but being confident in my route-finding, I had decided to forge on ahead. Silly me.

A year and a half before all this, I’d decided to start cycling again after years away from riding. I had tried to keep reasonably fit before, but I was never particularly athletic. Therefore, my first time back on a non-stationary

bike was a short jaunt on local bike paths. That ride was remarkable only for the kind of buttock soreness best not mentioned in polite circles.

In spite of the poor start, I kept at it and managed to get several metric centuries and a pair of full centuries under my belt by the time the first-year anniversary of my cycling renaissance rolled around. And that’s when I learned about randonneuring....

Two hundred kilometers? That’s not much more than a century...ooohhhh, and they have shiny medallions to collect! Maybe I’m part magpie or just simply a birdbrain, but shortly after learning of RUSA, I signed up and planned to bag my first brevet in



June 2018 when the San Diego Randonneurs held the Ocean Beach 200km and 300km ACP brevets.

Birdbrain I may be, but I never skimp on preparation, so the planning began in earnest well before the event. As it was my first brevet, I read the RUSA manual cover to cover, bought a better headlight just in case, and studied the route profile carefully. The event was in San Diego, but I'm a flatlander from the deserts of Yuma, Arizona, where the hills would barely trouble a malnourished gerbil. Therefore, I had to plan a training regimen to boost my climbing ability as the event got nearer.

And of course, I carefully pondered my choice of bike. Given the long distance, unfamiliar route, and unsupported nature of the ride, reliability and comfort would be paramount. Rather than taking my whiz-bang Italian speedster, I decided my trusty gravel bike would be more suitable.

June 9th rolled around, and despite just three hours of sleep thanks to a long drive the night before, I arrived

at the 7-11 on Bacon Street near Robb Field on time for the 6:00 a.m. start. A few riders were already there, none of whom I knew. Being a noob, I was hesitant to approach obviously veteran riders, but I needed to know if they were also on the brevet. Thankfully, I got an affirmative, and everyone seemed quite friendly.

A short time later, David Danovsky, the RBA, arrived and handed out our brevet cards. After briefly explaining

touring bike that seemed so heavy that I felt tired just looking at it. Nevertheless, he didn't seem to have any trouble keeping pace with everyone. He was training for the Cascade 1200 and looked like he was on track. Keith Olsen, doing the 200km like me, was riding a fixie. With the steep hills on the route profile, I thought that was badass with a capital B.

Next was Kelly Deboer, who I would later learn was the famous Kelly

The event was in San Diego, but I'm a flatlander from the deserts of Yuma, Arizona, where the hills would barely trouble a malnourished gerbil. Therefore, I had to plan a training regimen to boost my climbing ability as the event got nearer.

the controls and confirming the finishing point, he ushered us off. There I was, on my very first ever rando ride. My fears of being the unwelcome stranger from Arizona soon proved unfounded as various riders took turns introducing themselves and seemed genuinely interested in the new guy.

There were just over a dozen of us. One rider was Russell Cammell, who had a Wilier, the same brand as my pet Italian bike. He was an older gent originally from New Zealand but had traveled the world, served in the Army, and successfully completed Paris-Brest-Paris despite some navigational issues. Then there was Mac Imacseng: lanky, always smiling, and despite being a runner new to randonneuring had completed PBP as well. Hector Maytorena was one of the brevet organizers for the San Diego Randonneurs. He was on a

Jay that the San Diego Randonneurs have named an event after. An eight-time K-Hound, Kelly came up with many of the routes in the San Diego area. Despite being a randonneuring legend, he was every bit as affable and unassuming as everyone else on the ride. In fact, we spent much of the ride to the first control chatting about new bike technology, especially in the burgeoning gravel category since both of us happened to be on Specialized Diverge gravel bikes.

The first thirty or so miles went by pretty fast as we cruised quiet city streets. We ended up on a lovely bike path surrounded by rolling hills. It had some gravel portions for added spice. After exiting the bike path, we hit the first control at a Chevron in Escondido, where I was somewhat disappointed to find out that about half of the group



One of the great ocean vistas all along the return route.

—PHOTO OLIVER SEVERINO



was splitting off. Kelly was leading them on a gravel ride that day, and the first control was where we parted ways. After a snack and topping off my water bottles, I set out again...and promptly made a wrong turn.

Thankfully, I quickly realized my mistake and soon caught up with some of the others. I tried to minimize further navigational *faux pas* by following Hector. Our little group then shrank to three when a succession of climbs loomed and Keith opted to stop and switch his wheel around to the lower climbing gear. With visions of Charly Miller and the old pre-derailleur pioneers in my head, I once again thought Keith deserved mad props for doing the brevet on a single-speed.

It was at this point while slogging up one of the rollers that I made that fateful decision to pass Hector. The hills then gave way to Old Highway 395, which was downhill for miles. My legs got a chance to recuperate from the climbing while I enjoyed the Southern California sun and greenery.

You can't go downhill forever, however, and at mile forty-eight I hit the first of the really tough climbs on the route. As 395 crossed over I-15, I had to tackle a mile and a half of seven to eight percent grade. After what seemed like an eternity, the grade slackened, and I could enjoy the steep descent on the other side.

Four miles later, it was back to slogging around in my granny gear on the climb to Rainbow. With mostly a four to five percent grade and a kick up to seven percent at the end of a nearly four-mile segment, it was slow going for me. I decided to switch to the climbing page of my cyclocomputer to monitor progress. After a while, I noticed my dot had stopped moving up the slope. Surely I can't be THAT slow! Suddenly, I realized my computer that had been flawless on all previous trips had lost my GPS fix. While on my longest ride ever. With nary a road sign in sight. Oh, poo.

That errant dot on my computer screen planted the seeds of doubt. I had

Finishing where we started at Robb Field.

—PHOTO OLIVER SEVERINO

my cue sheet, of course, but I had printed it smaller than ideal for reading on a moving bike. So, I stopped to search for a sign that I was still on the correct route. Thankfully, Russell was close behind and confirmed that I was still on the right track. We finished the climb together, rolling into control two, the Rainbow Mini Mart, together. After a short break to rehydrate and grab the all-important receipt, we were off again to the next control, which was just a couple of miles away. Next to a tree nursery we answered the control question and then meandered out of Rainbow back onto 395.

A few miles later, Russell warned me that we were hitting a set of bad climbs. Sure enough, several steep rollers greeted us on Reche Road. Once the rollers ended, we were treated to a nice downhill section and then a short detour onto Hellers Bend, a pretty and

quiet tree-lined road away from all the traffic. I was hoping the worst was over with the hills behind us, but the long ride back to the coast and Oceanside would have us heading into a stiff headwind off the ocean. On a positive note, my GPS started functioning again, which gave me some comfort for the final third of the ride.

The long ride on the shoulder of Highway 76 was tiring. The winds barely relented as we hit the San Luis Rey River Trail and left all the cars behind. The final control before the finish was at a store in downtown Oceanside, where Russell and I took turns to head inside. Russell grabbed a quick bite, but my decidedly non-veteran back and behind were begging for a break. So, I told him I was going to try to find a fast food place to sit down for lunch. David arrived, and although he was doing the 300, he said he would join me for a quick meal before continuing. He led the way to Angelo's Burgers, which apparently is famous for big servings at

less-touristy prices. As we ate, Hector rode by and waved but kept going. David soon followed. I still had a lot of food, but David assured me I could finish eating because there was plenty of time until the cutoff.

The food and rest stop hit the spot, and I felt much better when I headed out again. Carlsbad Boulevard followed the coast, and then I hit famous Highway 101 that parallels the scenic beaches north of San Diego. I was solo now, but there were plenty of other cyclists on this stretch also enjoying the scenery and gorgeous weather.

The 109-mile mark indicated that the end of the brevet was near, but there was one final major obstacle: the climb through Torrey Pines State Park. At just under six percent grade for about half a mile, Torrey Pines wasn't as steep or long as previous sections, but it felt worse with over a hundred miles of riding already in my legs. As I crawled up, I was thankful that at least there was a double bike lane—even if I

collapsed into a sorry, sweaty mess, the cars had room to avoid me.

As I rolled back into Robb Field and then Bacon Street, I could scarcely believe I'd finished a 125-mile ride. I, the noob who less than a year and a half earlier could barely tolerate a few miles, had finished a 200km brevet! At the 7-11 where we'd all started out, I found David, Russell, and Hector waiting. David checked my brevet card and congratulated me on finishing. He and Russell were about to set off on the next leg to finish the 300km, so I wished them a safe ride as I rode back to where my SUV was parked.

As I changed and loaded up my bike, I reflected on the day and what a great ride it had been. I'm still not sure where I'm going to head in my randonneuring career, but I certainly plan on doing more brevets, at least the shorter ones for now. With that, I'd like to thank the San Diego Randonneurs for welcoming this stranger into the land of randonneuring! 🚲



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12819	White, Demetrious	Center Point	AL	12764	Alston, Michael G	Oakland	CA	12844	Bauer, Joni D	Stockton	CA
12820	White, Tracey J	Center Point	AL	12782	Takeda, Jun	Oakland	CA	12815	Martin, Charlie A	Sunnyvale	CA
12856	Grissett, Carolyn E	Elkmont	AL	12822	Medeiros, Roberto	Oakland	CA	12826	O'Brien, Patrick C	West Hills	CA
12801	Staley, Michael	Hoover	AL	12823	Lee, Marina	Oakland	CA	12827	Berg, Scott	West Hills	CA
12802	Staley, Katelyn	Hoover	AL	12868	Corral Jr, Daniel Christopher	Oakland	CA	12754	Mata, Jose	Windsor	CA
12854	Gugliotta, Paul	Lowndesboro	AL	12869	Adelstein, Esther R D	Oakland	CA	12804	Dreessen, Michael Neal	Boulder	CO
12791	Young, Eric D	Mobile	AL	12825	Aboulhouda, Chantal C	Portola Valley	CA	12780	Helmuth, Michael	Denver	CO
12743	Rodriguez, William	Phenix City	AL	12770	Durkin, Sean W	San Diego	CA	12884	Leoni, C J	Greenwood Village	CO
12747	Risher, Thomas K	Prattville	AL	12765	Colijn, Peter	San Francisco	CA	12787	Callahan, Michael	Longmont	CO
12818	Hackinen, Meaghan Marie	Kelowna	BC	12767	Reig Rincon de Arellano, Vicente	San Francisco	CA	12797	Burge, Geoffrey L	Greenwich	CT
12878	Males, Brian	Bakersfield	CA	12781	Wong, Allison W	San Francisco	CA	12757	Johnson, Dwight C	New Haven	CT
12783	MacNeil, David	Cupertino	CA	12793	Montanari, Mirko	San Francisco	CA	12745	Gardner, Robert H	Washington	DC
12775	Voris, David	Fremont	CA	12794	McCurry, Nicholas	San Francisco	CA	12874	Fell, J R	Washington	DC
12792	Snyder, Steve J	Fremont	CA	12806	French, John Davies	San Francisco	CA	12843	Indoe, Timothy L	Deltona	FL
12777	Kopacz, Timothy N	Glendale	CA	12824	Nixon, Evan A	San Francisco	CA	12786	Ulmer, Kyle	Gainesville	FL
12867	Crierie, Alan	La Mesa	CA	12861	Magnusson, Dan	San Francisco	CA	12830	Claus, James	Gainesville	FL
12860	Pace, Mike	Los Angeles	CA	12776	Vining, Matt	San Gabriel	CA	12831	Claus, William	Gainesville	FL
12852	Stilwell, Wayne	Meadow Vista	CA	12795	St Gal de Pons, Loic A.	San Jose	CA	12798	Goodman, David E	Lutz	FL
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12799	Arenz, Scott	Atlanta	GA
12810	Tsao, Raymond	Atlanta	GA
12805	Bell, Katelynn	Augusta	GA
12736	Albaneso, Mike D	Cumming	GA
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12733	Beishline, Andrew Clayton	Woodstock	GA
12762	Kaminske, Daniel	Garden City	ID
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Organizing and Riding a Hilly and Hot NJ 600

BY JOE KRATOVIL AND KATIE RASCHDORF

Joe Kratovil and Katie Raschdorf share their individual experiences as they planned and rode the Princeton 600km in late June.

Joe Kratovil

It is with both excitement and dread that I anticipated working our Princeton 600km in late June. Typically, New Jersey is hot and humid at that time of year. For our 2018 event the weekend forecast called for scorching temperatures combined with high humidity. While the people who predict weather are sometimes wrong this time they got it right.

The route is a two-loop affair with the base of operations being the Clarion Hotel just outside of Princeton, New Jersey. The first loop of 217 miles goes north into the neighboring state of Pennsylvania where there is lots of climbing. The second loop of 155 miles heads to the south and is mostly flat. This was the third consecutive year that we used this route, with a substantial change to the second loop for 2018.

Seven volunteers pre-rode the entire 600km on the two weekends leading up to the event, and fifteen volunteers were scheduled to help on the weekend of the ride with a field cap of 25 riders.

It was a muggy 75 degrees just prior to the 5:00am start. Organizer Katie Raschdorf gave the last minute announcements while I took a head count of the riders gathered. Despite being warned in advance, my eyes widened as I took in two Fat Tire



Katie Raschdorf and Jon Levitt at a High Point on the route.

—PHOTO JOE KRATOVIL



Rick Lentz at Wind Gap, PA.

—PHOTO GIL LEBRON

Bikes with massively wide slicks. While I've seen riders attempt long brevets on all kinds of crazy machines, this was a first. My final count was twenty-two ready to start.

After the field was given the off, the small group of volunteers present at the start confirmed their assignments for the day. Gil Lebron, Safety Officer, headed to mile fifty at the top of Jugtown Mountain where there is a long fast descent with a hairpin-turn. Gil stood on the shoulder of the road gesturing and yelling at riders to slow down. Our first year running this route a rider crashed there. Since then Gil's antics have prevented another such incident. Just 2.5 miles further, at the bottom of the mountain, volunteer Bill Olsen awaited the riders at the first intermediate control. All made it safely to his location by 9:03am.

Having completed his safety assignment, Gil and his pick-up truck

became a roving water station. As the thermometer moved into the nineties, the water provided by Gil became critical to rider safety. Volunteers were also present at every control with water, ice and energy bars. Cue-sheets noted additional places to stop along the route where riders could replenish fluids and buy food. Custom cues, added to the map, generated GPS alerts when services were at hand. With the help of the roving vehicle, it was possible to take on supplies about every twenty miles.

All twenty-two riders made it into Pennsylvania by late morning where the heavy climbing began. At Wind Gap the Appalachian Trail is crossed on a climb. Gil kept an eye on a rider who was struggling up the hill nursing leg cramps. After a short break at the truck the rider decided not to continue.

All our volunteers communicated on a text group. Back at the hotel I

kept tabs on things while readying the banquet room to feed returning riders; five volunteers arrived with prepared food, snacks, and beverages, and we had fourteen double hotel rooms for showering and sleeping.

The two Fat Tire Bikes were near the front of the field at the hilliest part of the route, and three riders who were on their first brevet were still in the game and doing well at the Easton control, mile 156. Then news came that the Fat Tire Bikes never arrived in Easton as a navigation error had them off course. When they discovered their error they opted to ride directly to the sleep stop and call it quits. Another rider who made it through Easton called in from a small river town informing us he could go no further. In the last two years the Easton control has seen the highest number of casualties. For this reason the volunteer assigned there, Len Zawodniak, had a van to sag riders back to the hotel.

At 8:20pm Katie informed us that the lead rider was leaving the penultimate control just fourteen miles from the hotel. Seventeen riders in total were still riding. The first arrived at 9:15pm. Seven arrived by 11:00pm, and the entire field was in the sleep stop by 1:55am. Some riders hoped to depart for the flatter southern loop with just a meal and a shower. In the end, the hot day filled with climbing left no one with enough energy to employ such a plan. All would take sleep, but twenty-five minutes before the last rider arrived, a single rider on a recumbent headed out on the second loop. His total time at the control was less than three hours. It would be 4:00am before the next would depart. All seventeen were on the road by 4:52am. One rider reversed course returning to the hotel after only a few miles. He decided that another 250km was not in the cards. Sixteen were still riding.

My next assignment, after taking sleep, was to staff the finish. All controls on the second loop were also staffed.



Chris Hays and Robert May
at start on Fat Tire Bikes.

—PHOTO KATIE RASCHDORF

In addition, two volunteers had set up roadside water stations along remote and open sections of the route. Once again riders could replenish fluids every twenty miles.

As morning transitioned into afternoon it became clear that it would be another unbearably hot day. Nonetheless, the field of sixteen made it through the control at mile 299 (Tuckerton, NJ). From there it is a straight stretch of exposed county highway for twenty-three miles with no turns and few services. All sixteen make it through to the Super Wawa Market which seemed like an oasis in a desert. It's an optional stop with no volunteer. One heat-exhausted rider decided to end his ride there and called our emergency number for a pick-up. The remaining fifteen riders faced eight more miles of exposed highway before turning off onto country lanes. After twelve more miles they came across a roadside water stop set up by volunteer Rich Ruge, who ran a first class operation with ice, water, sliced watermelon, and chairs set up in the shade.

Anthony Mennona, from Montpelier, VT, negotiated the final twelve miles, passing through the



campus of historic Princeton University to the finish and arrived at 1:30pm. It would be almost two hours before the next finisher. Two more hours passed before the third arrived. The banquet room was set up with pizza, snacks and beverages, including beer. The remaining field trickled in to the finish. All were feeling a strong sense of accomplishment, and the mood was celebratory. The three first-time randonneurs finished together. The three female riders in the event followed suit. Seven hours after volunteers saw the first finisher, the final two riders made it in with more than an hour to spare. The group lingered in the comfortably air-conditioned banquet room eating, drinking, and talking excitedly. In the

true spirit of randonneuring all were happy and grateful for the experience.

New Jersey Randonneurs would like to thank the following organizers and volunteers: CJ Arayata, James Bondra, Leslie Craven, Mary Foley, John Hawrylak, Todd Kerekes, Gil Lebron, Jon Levitt, Christine Newman, Bill Olsen, Katie Raschdorf, Rich Ruge, Mordecai Silver, Will Sherman, Bob Torres, and Len Zawodniak.

Katie Raschdorf

Chris Newman has been telling me season after season that riding a single speed would make me stronger.....

As the organizer for the New Jersey 600km event, I had the luxury of being able to pick the pre-ride date that worked best with my schedule. If you're lucky sometimes you get better weather on the pre-ride date. Chris and I decided to pre-ride from Sunday June 17th into Monday the 18th. Chris is light, a good climber, and unflappable. She's strong and I'm lucky she rides with me, or is it that she's lucky I'm too slow to ride away from her? The weekend's forecast looked like it was going to be a scorcher, and despite the fact that I've had some trouble dealing with heat over the past few years, I hoped that if we managed our time and kept our ice-socks filled, we would be ok.



Roadside Rest Stop

—PHOTO RICH RUGE

With 11,186' of climbing over 219 miles, the first day's route is a figure eight with the first loop being just "hilly" while the top loop is the "REALLY hilly" part. I made it to the mid-point of the figure eight and decided that it was just too hot, with temperatures having soared into the 90's. The hills were cracking me and the most difficult climbs were yet to come. Chris and I talked, and since she did not have the option to abandon and reschedule for another weekend, she opted to continue on. I headed south, back to the hotel sleep stop. I offered to meet her there in the evening with food and drink.

The forecast for Monday the 18th was for temperatures even hotter than the day before and with a course that offers little shade I volunteered to run support for Chris and RBA emeritus Joe Kratovil who decided to ride with Chris on day two. I leap-frogged them throughout the day offering water and ice and in spite of blast furnace type heat and a blown out tire, Chris was successful in getting around, earning another SR series.

This season I pre-rode the 300km event solo, and I've ridden a 600km solo before. But given the choice, I'd much rather ride in the company of friends. And the best way to keep the company of friends is to ride a tandem. I called to beg and plead with my stokerific buddy, Jon Levitt, to ride Team Tandemator with me the following weekend. JBL and I have ridden over 5000 miles together including a successful PBP. JBL agreed and drafted Will Sherman to ride along with us. The route was familiar, the weather looked more forgiving than the previous weekend, and we were ready to roll.

The three of us rolled out of the start in anticipation of a beautiful day of riding ahead of us. Although a tiny bit concerned about the climbing and the almost four hundred pounds of loaded tandem, I was confident it was going to be a great day.

And it was, until the gear slipping



600k Paceline

—PHOTO GIL LEBRON

started at about mile 45...of 219.

The tandem has been plagued with gear slippage on and off since it was built in 2007. Usually it only affects one or two gears and we can work around the issue. Not this time. The more we climbed the more we slipped, to the point where we were down to about two gears. Since Joe owns a permanent that covers 100km of the upper loop he decided to join us that day as well. Joe is a mechanic so we stopped to fiddle with the derailleur a few times to no avail. Joe called in another mechanic, Brandon, asking him to meet us at the sleep stop to take a look and see what he might be able to do.

At the highest point of the route, we were still smiling after lugging that *%@! 400-pound single-speed up the mountain. At that moment I concluded that Chris was wrong; riding a single speed did not make me stronger; instead it made me question my sanity. Thankfully my stoker was hilarious and excellent company in spite of our troubles. Even though I'm certain he was more annoyed than I was, he was still able to laugh at our situation.

We completed the rest of day one at what felt like a snail's pace, as the advantage of a tandem lies in the momentum generated by big gears. Without those big gears our average

pace dropped considerably. Even on the flats we could only move at 13mph.

We rolled into the sleep stop behind our planned schedule, with only an hour and a half to spare. I felt shattered from the effort of the 11,000' we had just climbed in a bigger than ideal gear. I handed the bike over to Paul, who promised to figure it out with Brandon, and headed straight to bed to get some rest. Thankfully Brandon was able to fix the issue.

With a little less than ninety minutes of sleep we rolled out on day two. The weather forecast looked favorable: partly cloudy skies with temperatures in the low 80's. I was hoping we would make up time as we should have been able to average 15-17 mph with leisurely stops to refuel. However, the forecast was wrong. The sun came out, and the temperatures jetted up to the 90's with high humidity. Our pace slowed on the long open stretches and we were forced to stop often to replenish water and ice. Will, so patient with all our troubles the day before, rode ahead as it was going to be another long day for Team Tandemator. Lack of sleep and dehydration took its toll on me but with Jon stoking the engine we managed to get around in time. Another SR series complete. 🚲

The Mac and Cheese 1200: A Ride Report

Two days before the start, my friend Katie and I flew to Milwaukee and took a shuttle to the “staging” hotel in Manitowoc, WI. We had shipped our bikes and the fabulous bike mechanic, Eric Lyngaas, owner of Northern Rose Bicycles in Minneapolis, was going to reassemble them for us. Eric and his expertise would prove critical on the ride for several riders who would not have finished without his skilled and innovative assistance.

We spent the afternoon watching Eric put our bikes back together and a memorable evening in a local bar watching an almost-tornado blow through. On Wednesday morning, we nervously packed and repacked the Mac and Cheese branded drop bags we had received at check-in and ate a big lunch before boarding the ferry that would take us across Lake Michigan to the start hotel in Ludington, MI. Four hours and one time zone later, we disembarked and pedaled the short distance to the hotel.

The route was unique in that it was point to point and not a loop, involving the ferry ride as well as a van transfer across the Mackinac Bridge. The website description had promised quiet roads passing near state parks and historical sites, and a bike mechanic who would travel with the volunteers

to each control. Descriptions of each day’s menu and accommodations were also provided. A 1200km that promises barbecue, milkshakes, enchiladas, a full breakfast buffet daily and my own bed

in an actual hotel room is the ride for me!

Many folks were up well before the official 5:00am start time. The weather was clear but a bit chilly, made even more so by the sudden eruption of cold water from the sprinklers in the staging area. Michele had given us detailed ride and route information during the ferry ride so with a final admonition to be careful and have fun, our group of sixty riders started off into the darkness.

Katie, Nigel and I had developed a ride plan (well, they developed a plan for which I was very grateful since my usual plan is...no plan) which called for us to ride conservatively but efficiently to maximize our time off the bike on day one given that the following days would provide the opportunity to visit local sites including Whitefish Point Lighthouse and Taqamenon Falls.

Nigel allows the Florida folks to pass him.

— PHOTO CHRIS NEWMAN





Just a couple of cheese heads and their tasty medals.

—PHOTO BY VOLUNTEER

We recognized that the first day would prove the most challenging with 7000' of climbing over 237 miles so our calculations had us arriving at the overnight by 1:00am, allowing us to sleep for four to five hours. This was one of my favorite days. The route hugged the coastline, the scenery was lovely and varied, including rolling farmland, giant sand dunes, fields of sunflowers, water

views and stands of evergreen trees. There were barns covered in giant metal bugs or license plates, fanciful lawn art and statues of the Blues Brothers.

The first "hiccup" in our ride plan occurred at mile fifty-two at the summit of a significant climb. Nigel and I reached the top only to look back down the climb and see that Katie was forced to walk the final section because she could not shift out of the large chain ring. The strain of riding the first fifty miles with a significant mechanical issue had caused a worrisome twinge in her knee as well. Nigel attempted a roadside, tool-free repair and we headed down the hill toward the first timed control where we encountered Vinnie M from Seattle who had zipped past the control and had to circle back to get his card signed.

We reached mile 118 and Katie's bike was still not shifting correctly. Fortunately, we encountered Geof S from North Carolina who was able to effect a repair using his experience and tools provided by the ever-present volunteers. We headed out of the control hoping to make up some time on the next flattish, bike trail section, but Katie's worrisome knee twinge had morphed into full-on pain, and her ankle was now starting to swell as

well. By the time we reached the next control, she had decided to drop out, but Nigel, employing all his persuasive, lawyerly skills gave the most inspiring pep talk I have ever heard, convincing Katie to clip in and just aim for the next control fifty miles away. Unfortunately for Katie, while her brain could respond to Nigel's inspiring words, her knee and ankle could not, so she decided to limit the damage and get a ride at the next control. Nigel, Geof and I pedaled the final forty miles to the Mackinac Bridge. We arrived at 5:00am to a waiting group of perky volunteers who fed us barbecue that we devoured like wild animals in the van as we crossed the bridge to the overnight control.

Three hours later, having showered, slept and eaten both dinner and breakfast, the three of us were back on our bikes and headed for Whitefish Point Lighthouse, the most northern point on our route. The route was blessedly flat and broken into a few long sections so navigation was effortless, and the weather was warming up so that a brief downpour was actually refreshing. We stopped for a lunch of gigantic sandwiches then continued along the shoreline of Lake Superior past marshes and through the lakeside town of Paradise and signs touting fresh Lake Superior Whitefish until we reached the lighthouse in late afternoon. Once again, an encouraging group of volunteers, including Michele's mom who had chosen to celebrate her birthday by serving sandwiches to hungry randonneurs, greeted us with food, beverages and good wishes.

We had hoped to visit the Shipwreck Museum but we were riding at the time limit so we spent only a short time off the bikes before heading into a fairly brutal headwind made somewhat bearable by Nigel's pulling us the eleven miles to the first turn which placed us





in the path of a substantial crosswind. I had packed so many layers to deal with potential cold and rain but the weather challenge this day was heat that reached into the nineties. We were looking forward to visiting Taqauemenon Falls, which had been described to us as the third largest falls east of the Mississippi. It would have been helpful if we had also paid more attention to the complete description, since there are upper and lower falls and which one you visit is important. The lower falls are reached at the top of a steep, rolling climb and a bit of a hike, and they don't look all that big once you finally arrive. We chewed up quite a bit of time visiting the "wrong" falls so we skipped the "right falls" and headed toward Newberry State Forest where the trees provided welcome respite from the August sun.

We had started riding at 9:00am that morning after only a few hours of sleep, and the fatigue was starting to affect all of us as we rode into a fairly steady headwind and the enveloping night. We agreed to sneak in a "ditch nap" once we could find somewhere to stop that wasn't actually a ditch and

settled on a church with a sidewalk and an overhang where we couldn't be seen from the road. The twenty minutes off the bike rejuvenated us all sufficiently to allow us to safely roll into the overnight in Manistique around 2:30am. We had managed to pull back a few hours so in order to maximize our sleep we had decided to leave each overnight at the control closing time.

Saturday was the hardest morning for me to get back on my bike. I was exhausted and demoralized from riding the previous hundred miles in a headwind and the forecast for day three included another day of relentless headwinds and temperatures in the nineties. I was worried that I was not strong enough to help pull, leaving Nigel stuck at the front all day, while simultaneously panicked I was strong enough and Nigel would expect me to help pull. I wasn't sure which option was worse, but neither one had me eager to be back on the bike. Katie talked me down and, since I had no life-threatening injury to use as an excuse for staying in bed, I reluctantly joined Nigel and Geof as we headed out into the wind, again.

Day 4 started on a bike trail along the lake.

—PHOTO CHRIS NEWMAN

Our lunch control was at the Fathorn Long Branch Saloon where we enjoyed boxed lunches, cold drinks, air conditioning and adult beverages for those with the stomach for a midday beer. Fortified by our lunch and the chance to rest our legs and cool down, we returned to the route and additional climbing in the early September sun. I was never quite sure if we were in Michigan or Wisconsin. Even though I felt silly asking Nigel if he knew what state we were in, I felt relieved when he confessed that he, too, was not quite sure where we were. At mile 130 we reached the information control, which had been upgraded into a full-blown support stop replete with food, beverages and smiling volunteers, including Katie who had been helping to support the ride since she dropped out on Friday. We ate, drank and returned to our bikes since it was starting to get dark and we had seventy more miles to Green Bay and our overnight hotel.

Sunday morning came way too soon but the excitement of a short day with cheesy potato soup waiting for us at mile sixty-three had me in a fine mood as we pulled away around 8:00am. The morning proved challenging as we made our way through rolling farm country with many other riders including the very happy group from Florida who had managed to ride together for over 1000km and who still appeared to be enjoying each other's company. We were once again riding in heat and headwinds while keeping our eyes on the very dark clouds that seemed to be chasing us around the course. We reached Renard's Cheese Shop to find that they had run out of cheesy potato soup so we opted for the killer grilled cheese sandwiches and took an hour break, not by choice but because they were swamped with customers on a beautiful summer day.

We left Renard's with a mere sixty miles to the finish, but sixty miles that would prove to be tougher than we

planned. We reached the coast where the rain finally caught us and caused the temperature to drop dramatically. We stopped and put on rain gear only to turn inland, which required another stop to remove rain gear as the temperature returned to uncomfortable levels. This would be repeated multiple times. We rode through the slightly creepy nuclear power facility property where we had been warned not to stop, except at the stop sign where we should definitely stop. It was dark and drizzling but actually quite serene as we traveled a forested road and at mile 129 we reached the Mariner Bike Trail that would take us almost all the way to our hotel. These final few miles became especially laborious as the wind and rain pelted us and we struggled along the lake Michigan shoreline. As soon as we turned from the path inland, the weather cleared. We pedaled the short distance to our finish hotel where we were loudly greeted by volunteers clanging cowbells and offering heartfelt

congratulations. We felt like rock stars.

The volunteers took our bikes and we headed downstairs to eat and collect our medals. It was quite late when we arrived, and we were almost the last finishers, so I was shocked at the huge crowd we encountered upon entering the dining room. It seemed as though all the earlier finishers were there as well as all the volunteers and assorted supporters and family members who let out a collective cheer when Nigel and I walked in. It was awesome. It was also awesome that there was still plenty of hot food, loads of beer, and we had our photo taken in the classic cheese hats wearing our very cool medals. Katie was there to greet us as was Geof who had succumbed to the heat on day three and had become a volunteer along with the few other folks who had to drop out.

The inaugural Mac and Cheese was truly a fabulous ride with unparalleled support provided by Michele Brougner and the Great Lakes Randonneurs, Tom Dusky and the Detroit Randonneurs. These folks made sure all riders' needs were addressed; they kept us very well fed, hydrated and rested. We were spoiled by the overnights with real beds with comfy sheets and usually only one roommate; and by Eric the full-time, incredible mechanic who saved many riders. The route was thoughtful, with varying terrain, quiet roads and intriguing local history and culture. I have no doubt that the planning for this 1200km, much like the others I have been privileged to ride, is overwhelming and life consuming and a true labor of love. Many thanks to everyone who made this brevet possible. I truly hope it will be offered again in the future; it is a ride that should be on every randonneur's bucket list! 🚲

Geof and Nigel enjoy another beautiful day.

— PHOTO CHRIS NEWMAN



The Coulee Challenge 1200km: The Riders' Stories

BY ROB WELSH, MINNESOTA RBA, COULEE CHALLENGE COMMITTEE MEMBER

WITH A. SARAH HREHA, CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN, KYLE SOBOTA, JEFF NEWBERRY, JODI BEINKE, AND JOHN AND ANN JURCZYNSKI

The 2018 Coulee Challenge 1200km was a satisfying success for the Minnesota Randonneurs and Driftless Randonneurs, far surpassing the level of interest, number of riders and finishers expected. The organizing committee was grateful to have a strong cadre of friendly and experienced volunteers and a great course to ride.

Eighty-eight riders started the Coulee Challenge, and seventy-five finished. Given the warmer than expected temperatures and the challenge of more than thirty 300' to 500' climbs, we had an exceptional success rate (85%).

We positioned this ride as a Paris-Brest-Paris preparation ride, with lots of rollers and smooth roads. Riders responded well and there was strong agreement after the ride that this was a great way to prepare for PBP. Two PBP related events on the day before the ride start gave riders a sense of the history of PBP and provided lots of great advice from an experienced PBP panel of anciens. We also held a 100km pre-ride two days before the main event during which twenty riders enjoyed the bike friendly atmosphere of the Twin Cities.

Remarkably, out of the seventy-five finishers, twenty-eight were riding their first 1200km event. Seven of these were women (25%) and eleven women overall completed the ride

(15%). We believe these are highwater marks for women at a 1200km event and we hope this participation rate will increase.

We also had nine non-randonneur riders join us. These riders all had strong backgrounds in gravel or adventure cycling events such as the Tour Divide, Wild Atlantic Way (Ireland) or other notable endurance events. These riders did well, enjoyed themselves and we were very happy to have them. We encourage other gravel and adventure cyclists to join us for our longer and shorter brevets and populaires.

The Coulee Committee thanks each

of the participants and our volunteers for their contribution to making this event a success and for creating stories that will last: Dan Diehn, Tom Ehlman, Greg Smith, and Rob Welsh.

Here are the stories of six riders that completed the Coulee ride. These stories represent a variety of experience and perspectives and most have been edited to fit in this article. The full text of all the articles is posted on the Coulee Challenge website (www.CouleeChallenge.com), under Post Ride Links.

A. Sarah Hreha lives in Connecticut but grew up in Minnesota just a few miles from the Coulee Challenge start.

I became a RUSA member on January 3, 2018 and registered for the Coulee Challenge on January 6 as an outside goal, since I'd never ridden a brevet or done more than 154 miles in a day. There was something comforting—poetic—about going home to Minnesota for my first Grand Brevet. The whole thing seemed like such a stretch; I'd done innumerable multi-day rides, supported and unsupported, but

**Making friends was an unexpected pleasure,
and I learned a lot just by chatting.
The sense of community was amazing.**

A. SARAH HREHA



A. Sarah Hreha grew up near the start of the Coulee Challenge and was happy to ride.

— PHOTO DEB FORD

nothing like the Coulee Challenge. I was not a confident climber. But I wanted—still want—to ride PBP in 2019 and needed to know how my body would hold up. Besides being on home turf, the Coulee Challenge offered great support, so I could focus on the physical challenge and not logistics.

What surprised me the most was how much I enjoyed the other riders! I joined a small group on the first day and stayed with them until day three when I broke off. I missed them the rest of the way. Making friends was an unexpected pleasure, and I learned a lot just by chatting. The sense of community was amazing. So was the sense of strength I got from grinding up those coulees and making it back to Apple Valley within the time limit.

I spent most of day four with a rider whose sense of humor matched mine, for good and bad. I finished the ride laughing, which bodes well for PBP, I think, though we were clearly a little giddy. This was not a beginners' ride; seasoned randonneurs were clearly the majority. But, as a novice Super

randonneuse, I do recommend it for prepared newbies because of the support and encouragement the organizers provide over tough, beautiful terrain.

Christian Rasmussen joined us from Denmark. Christian has ridden several 1200km events internationally, including PBP, and plans to be in Rambouillet next August. His notes have been translated from Danish with a few edits. His full

article has been published in the Danish Randonneur magazine.

On Saturday, two days before the ride, registered riders could participate in a 100km Populaire around Minneapolis and St. Paul (Twin Cities). I joined this ride, partly in order to meet some of the other participants, and partly to see some of the surrounding area.

It was a good prelude. There were exchanged experiences, stories, and we

Christian Rasmussen came from Denmark to ride the Coulee Challenge.

— PHOTO DEB FORD





Kyle Sobota, a gravel rider new to randonneuring, was impressed with the courage and perseverance of his fellow riders.

— PHOTO DEB FORD

Kyle Sobota is a gravel/adventure rider from Shakopee, Minnesota, a short distance from the Coulee ride start. Kyle showed up for his first randonneur ride, a 600km, in late June. He made friends easily and quickly adapted to rando mode.

When I registered for the Coulee Challenge, along with my good friend Paul Carroll, we made a major leap out of our comfort zone and usual training for my “A” gravel events of 200+ miles. None of my close riding friends had completed a brevet, so a randonneur event was uncharted territory. My typical event might not even equal the mileage of one day. 2018 would be turn out to be the year of more miles, more events, more tinkering, and more obsessing.

Being green to randonneur events, I was in awe of the determination of my fellow riders at the Coulee Challenge. Riders displayed courage

learned about one of the larger metro areas in the United States. About fifty kilometers was on a very well-developed bicycle trail network, which according to several local people is one of the most comprehensive in North America. We passed many interesting areas including downtown Minneapolis, St Paul, the Mississippi River, a copy of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London etc. Additionally, the bike was tested before the ride; it worked perfectly.

The Coulee Challenge 1200km invited participants to discover that Minnesota and Wisconsin are much more than “flat terrain with cows and corn fields.” There were a lot of corn fields, there were some cows, and there were some flat areas, but it was the hills, the beautiful river valleys (coulees), and the good mood encouraging the development of new and exciting friends, which made this ride a positive

and spectacular experience!

I can therefore heartily recommend Coulee Challenge 1200 to randonneurs from Denmark who want to try something different. The route profile, with the many short, steep climbs, looks like the PBP route, and made this a perfect “pre-ride” the year before PBP.



Experienced randonneur Jeff Newberry.

— PHOTO DEB FORD

and perseverance through lack of sleep, heat and humidity, and steep climbs. All ages, degrees of experience, types of equipment, and body types were represented. Before this event, it didn't seem real to me that normal people could complete this type of ride. Now I am one of them.

During the pre-ride meeting I learned the term "Relentless Forward Movement," which continues to stick with me. Efficiency at the end of a day of riding was the biggest learning experience for me. Eating, showering, packing, and bike maintenance took Paul and me roughly 2.5 hours each night. I couldn't imagine the efficiency of riders stopping for two or three hours including sleeping!

I consider completing the Coulee Challenge one of the biggest and most rewarding accomplishments of my life. During the ride I found myself instantly a part of an interesting multi-day reunion of sorts, even though my official randonneur experience amounted to one 600km only six weeks prior. I encourage any long distance cyclist to try a brevet and to consider the Coulee Challenge.

Jeff Newberry completed his RUSA Galaxy Award (100,000km) on the Coulee Challenge so he has a lot of rando experience. From Austin, Texas, Jeff is always well prepared and loves riding with other riders but he had a tough first day at the Coulee.

Before the ride I had been cautioning my training buddy, Rob Tulloh, that sometimes something will happen to you on a 1200km that throws off your plans. Just before reaching mile eighty-five in Pepin, I felt myself falling off pace with my Texas pals and shortly after reaching the control, I knew I was going to be sick. After a quick clean up, I topped off my bottles, tried to hold down a Coke, then started turning the pedals, though I was running on fumes. For the next eighty miles, I could not keep up with anyone, especially on climbs. Finally in



Alma (mile 166) I downed some Pepto-Bismol and anti-diarrhea tablets, ate some ice cream and left Anda, Sarah, and Rodney at the control, figuring they'd catch and pass me before long. But as the sun began setting I saw a rider up ahead and soon enough I caught him, and realized my legs were back! By the home stretch into Black River Falls I was with Anda, Rodney and Sarah again and it was quite a lift to find myself genuinely enjoying the company of new friends. We made the overnight control by 12:30am. The next morning I awoke refreshed and rejoined the Texas posse, but we all took it a little easier, mindful of the challenging climbing that was not letting up.

The Coulee Challenge was billed as excellent training for PBP and while I wholeheartedly agree with the assessment, I believe that many Coulee riders will find the grades in France somewhat easier going than the stiffer climbs we faced in the Driftless Area of Wisconsin. Perhaps it is always the case

Jodi Beinke takes a scenic break.

—PHOTO UNKNOWN BYSTANDER

that the challenges we are currently battling seem like the hardest. I hope to return for another go through that singular landscape and another helping of Minnesota hospitality. You betcha!

Jodi Beinke lives in the Twin Cities and started riding randonneur events in 2017. She completed her first 200km brevet last year with two minutes to spare. (Special note: as the Minnesota RBA I was thrilled to see Jodi continue to improve as she worked her way through the 2018 brevet qualifying series. She finished the Coulee ride in 85 hours and stayed around to help check in later riders.)

Having the opportunity to be a part of the first Minnesota Coulee Challenge was an experience I will always look back on with a smile! This



Deb Ford

was my first big randonneuring event. I'm fairly new to the randonneur rides and hadn't had a lot of experience doing much more than sixty to one hundred miles at a time. I love to ride and explore new places and I thought this would be a great opportunity to do just that! I quickly set a plan to begin training for the Coulee Challenge. I started doing longer rides back-to-back and included lots of hill climbing! Soon I was feeling stronger, more confident and excited to test my mind and body. The route was very challenging with many long, winding hills, but we were rewarded with some absolutely incredible downhills! The scenery was beyond spectacular and the support from all the volunteers that helped along the way topped off the experience. It was so much fun to meet and hear stories from people from all over the United States and beyond with the same love for cycling. This experience has gotten me even more excited for more randonneur rides in the future!

I can't wait to see what the next cycling journey holds!

Tandem riders John and Ann Jurczynski joined us from New Hampshire. They are fast! They also have one of the best Coulee ride stories—there was some magic in the coulees!

Ann and I rode most of the first day and some of the second morning of the Coulee Challenge with a fun group of fast riders. Shortly after the first control on day two, our titanium frame did not feel right while climbing. Sure enough we got off the bike and

discovered a crack. We limped into the next control in Viroqua, where the route RWGPS link showed a bike shop. Ann knocked on the closed shop door and Peter Taylor, the owner of Bluedog Cycles appeared.

This is when the magic started...

After finding a second crack in the frame, Peter confirmed that our bike was not safe to ride and we faced being out of the event. Peter then mentioned that he rode a mountain bike tandem with his daughter Lucy. Bells started ringing and whistles began blowing! That was the spark that kept our ride alive.

It was so much fun to meet and hear stories from people from all over the United States and beyond with the same love for cycling.

JODI BEINKE

John and Ann Jurczynski were not deterred by serious equipment challenges.

—PHOTO DEB FORD

Peter fetched his tandem and began converting his Salsa Powder Keg mountain bike into a superb (but heavy) randonneuring machine. Meanwhile we rode our old tandem two blocks to the next control to get our brevet cards signed and met Greg Smith, an event organizer, who was happy to return Peter's bike after the event (we still had 450 miles to go).

After four hours we were on the road again. Excited that our ride was not over, we rode probably harder than we needed to. Most of the field passed us in Viroqua so we found many new folks to chase and chat with.

Day three was another hot and hilly day, but we pulled into the hotel in Winona earlier than expected. We ate, checked the weather for the next day, saw thunderstorms in the afternoon and being accustomed to doing one stage 1200km's, slept a couple hours and were back on the road by 1:20am. We expected other riders to do the same, but we were on our own. As we neared the finish we stepped up the pace and cruised into Apple Valley as the first finishers!

The Coulee Challenge exceeded our expectations in many ways. It was great training for PBP with about the same amount of elevation gain but steeper climbs. We enjoyed a fun and friendly group of riders and the organizers were very friendly and helpful and....

There was some magic in the coulees! 🚲

American Randonneur

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We welcome submissions of interest to readers of *American Randonneur*. Articles with photos or other visual elements are particularly welcome. While the focus of AR is on randonneuring events held in the U.S., articles on international events are also published.

Types of articles include but aren't limited to the following:

- Ride reports
- Ride promotional articles
- Technical articles
- Gear articles
- Training, health, nutrition articles
- Humorous articles
- Collage articles incorporating tweets, facebook quotes and/or short quotes from blog posts
- Reprints of blog posts (occasionally. Material not printed elsewhere is preferred, however, exceptions may be made.)
- Reports on non-rando long-distance/endurance events of interest to randos
- Letters to the editor
- Book reviews
- Cartoons
- Sketches

Length of articles: articles of up to 2000 words would be appropriate. There is no minimum length requirement, but please contact the editor if you wish to write more than 2000 words.

Photos: must be high resolution and unaltered. They can be submitted as attachments to email messages. Other options are available and can be discussed with the editor.

How to submit articles: articles should be sent as Word files (no PDFs, no links to blog posts) to editor@rusa.org or jchernekoff@yahoo.com. Send photos separately; do not include them in articles.

The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, accuracy and brevity.

Paid advertising: is available. Please contact Jim Poppy (jpopy55@icloud.com) for details.

Submission deadlines:

Spring issue — December 15 Fall issue — June 15
Summer issue — March 15 Winter issue — September 15

Questions? Please contact the editor at editor@rusa.org.



What's the Worst That Could Happen?

Looking out my window on this wet winter day I am trying to remember what was going through my mind fifteen years ago as I contemplated my first PBP. Luckily, I have notes. I also have a pile of advice from experienced randonneurs who volunteered their insights.

What's the worst thing that could happen? I am a pretty optimistic person so this is not my typical first thought in the morning, but I also believe that when undertaking an out-sized, or 'first ever' adventure, it is good to hope for the best, but prepare and plan for the worst.

So what are some of those "worst things" scenarios? Well, your bike frame could crack. Your bike could be lost in transit and not arrive before the start. You could spawn a kidney stone mid-ride. Your racey new wheel set could spontaneously lose tension in most of the spokes somewhere along the way. All these things really happened to people I know or have met, and for each of them it seemed, at the time, the worst possible thing that could happen. The point here is that you cannot imagine every worst thing, but you can prepare for and overcome most of them. Thinking ahead, imagining some of the worst things, and planning for them is the reason that now, the winter before your big adventure, is a good time to let your imagination roam through the dark possibilities and consider backup plans.

By now you already have a plan and have made a serious commitment of resources. All this is great if everything

goes according to plan. But what if it doesn't? What if the 'worst thing' happens even *before* you get to the start line? Have you considered travel insurance? Then there is this thing called Deep Vein Thrombosis (I have written about this in the past; google DVT) which can derail your big adventure and actually threaten your life. As a highly trained endurance athlete getting on a plane and flying for hours, you may be at risk for developing this devastating health crisis. I am not trying to scare you out of going, but I do want to encourage you to learn how to protect yourself on that flight. This, too, is something that happened to a rider I know.

I don't think I need to say a lot about training. As mentioned at the top it is a windy rainy day here, not the most inviting conditions for riding. But a cold windy and wet ride is not an impossibility at PBP next August. It's not the worst thing, but I remember telling my pals as we slogged through the soggy French countryside in 2007, one of the wettest PBP's on record, that it was nothing compared to a winter training ride back home. As for how your training fits into your plan between now and August, consider a long event, longer than your 600km brevet. Ideally you will find the 1,000km Goldilocks

brevet a few months before August. Not too steep, not too flat, not too hot, not too far away, juuust right. But if not, think about a credit card tour (with friends?) to the next state over at rando speed.

As for the bike, the best advice I have heard from others is to schedule your mechanicals in advance of the ride. That's only half joking advice. Sometime this winter, before you start putting on serious miles, consider a complete overhaul for your trusty steed. Have everything on your bike inspected, repaired or replaced if needed. Before I rode the VanIsle 1200 in Canada, I had my bike tuned up and thought I was good to go. Halfway through the return leg the rear hub failed me; one of the tiny freehub pawl springs (Campy don't you know) had broken and I was suddenly riding a big free-wheeled scooter. Not the worst thing, but it could have ended my ride. I finished the event, but that's a story for another day.

There are so many issues around the business of getting you and your bike to France that it is not practical for me to try to cover that topic here. The best advice I can give is to talk with others who have done this before. I do know that the more connecting flights you have, the greater the chance that you and your bike may not arrive at the same time. So, if at all possible, get you and your bike on the same nonstop flight. This may be 'too expensive' but stop and think about the worst thing that could happen. Are you ready to buy a new bike in Paris and then ride 1200km on a new-to-you saddle? Coming home from PBP in 2003 my bike ended up in San Francisco and I ended

up in Seattle. As bad as that was, I could not help but be grateful that it was on the way home and not on the way to the big event. The snafu was the result of someone rushing to get home in San Francisco who grabbed the gray Trico bike box he thought was his. Take home message here: decorate your bike box in such a way that no one can make that mistake. As for packing that bike, there are lots of tips in store for the next issue.

One of the best overall tips is this: do now what you can't do later. This is appropriate for almost every aspect of your big adventure. You can probably learn a little French now, maybe not so much later. So too with losing that five pounds; easier now than in July or August.

The winter before is also a good time for working on your mental preparation. If you have doubts, that's good, so long as they motivate you. One great piece of advice I got from an ancient ancien went something like this: "You cannot ride 1200 kilometers. It is

too far to get your head around. Don't even try. But you can ride to the first control. It's a distance you've ridden before. You know how to do it. Break it down into smaller bites that you know you can swallow." That's just one example of ways to prepare your head for something you have never done before. Keep in mind, if it was easy, everyone would do it; on the other hand, thousands of people have done this before you, and I am sure they all had doubts.

Finally, a few notes on the *best* possible thing that could happen....

That guy with the kidney stone? With his rudimentary knowledge of French, which he knew would come in handy, and his previous experience with this 'little problem,' he was able to convince the folks at the local hospital that, once he had passed that stone he was good to go. He finagled a ride back to the point where he was hauled off and finished his PBP.

The guy with the broken frame splinted it (with what I can't remember

but then wrapped the break tightly in, you guessed it, duct tape and, with the ghost of Rube Goldberg on one shoulder and the spirit of Maurice Garin on the other, was able to finish his ride. More than a good story, I saw this bike with my own two eyes.

The guy whose bike never showed up? Just two days before the start, he and his credit card made a trip to Paris where he bought a brand-new bike. He rode that bike to Brest and back, finishing his ride within time, albeit with some saddle sores to remember.

The guy with the new wheels was a strong, fast rider. I saw him outside the mechanic's tent in Brest where he looked like his best friend was undergoing by-pass surgery. He had been waiting an hour and a half, and the mechanics still had not started work on his wobbly wheels. When I left Brest I wasn't sure how his story would end. His backup plan was to ride like the wind, which he did. He finished his ride within time. 🚲

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Sliven–Varna–(Sofia)–Sliven: 1200km Ride Report

BY GEORGI STOYCHEV

I had planned this marathon for quite some time because I was already going to travel to see my relatives in Bulgaria. It was important for me to finish a 1200km brevet in 2018 because this would allow me to sign up early for Paris-Brest-Paris 2019.

On the night before the event, we received some last-minute instructions from organizer Lazar Vladislavov. It was also nice to see Dimitar Balansky and Valery Kitanchev. Valery, Lazar, and Dimitar were some of the first Bulgarian randonneurs. We were pedaling long distances together back in 2000 and 2001 when I was just a teenager. For Lazar, this would be his 15th SVS 1200, an event that has been run regularly since 2001 and is the first 1200km in eastern and central Europe.

DAY ONE: 445km Sliven-Varna-Ispereh-Popovo

The first day was flat, and my plan was to gain time that could prove valuable later. At the front of the group was Dimitar Lulov, and he expressed the desire to work with me. I then heard from another rider: “Let’s see how much you can do.”

I thought this was great as I love it when someone doubts me! But then the temperature suddenly rose to over 98 degrees! We decided to stop at a

local dairy for a cold Ayran drink and cheese. The pavement in this area was bad, the road was narrow, and descending was dangerous. Luckily, it was daytime. Soon we arrived at Dalgopol and “Wonder Rocks.”

The tempo was unreasonably fast, and I developed a nagging back pain and some stomach problems. We stopped several times and slowed the pace. Hydration and food were now more important than speed. Farther along, we arrived in Beloslav and waited for the ferry. There we met Shiuchi Tanaka from Japan and Plamen Andonov from Varna. As soon as we arrived on the opposite bank, we were in Varna. Moving slowly along the Sea Garden, we arrived at the first control, Villa Maria. The food was exceptional and plentiful.

After Varna, we headed towards Shumen. This town has a rich history and was first mentioned in 1153 by the Arab traveler Idrisi. Some of the most notable sites are Madara Rider, Shumen Fortress, and the Monument to 1300 Years of Bulgaria.

Later that day we faced several short ascents through Belokopitovo, Hitrino, and Venetz. I arrived in Ispereh around 1:30 in the morning. Although Ispereh emerged in 1545 as a medieval settlement, the earliest known traces of human presence in the area date from the Bronze Age. The Thracian Tomb of

Wonder Rocks.

—PHOTO GEORGI STOYCHEV





Waiting for the ferry in Beloslav.

A stop in Arbanasi with my cousin Peter (below).

—PHOTOS GEORGI STOYCHEV

Sveshtari, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is also located nearby.

Zoe, whom I have known for about seventeen years, warmly welcomed us to Isparih. This was the first sleep control, but I planned on skipping it. We had not even completed 400km yet, and I wasn't very tired. I ate, closed my

eyes for twenty minutes, and moved on toward my hometown: Popovo!

The pavement in the villages around Isparih was not very good for nighttime riding, so I used my 600-lumen headlight and pedaled at a slower speed. Suddenly, it started to rain. My eyes began closing, and I had

to listen to my body. It was time for a fifteen-minute snooze in the ditch.

My next stop was Razgrad. The town was built upon the ruins of the Ancient Roman town of Abritus on the banks of the Beli Lom River, which in turn was built on a Thracian settlement of the 4th-5th century BC. Artifacts from rulers and a sacrificial altar to Hercules were found there. The wind increased, and it was difficult for me to even keep my bicycle upright. From here to Popovo I was on familiar roads. I arrived around 4:30 a.m.

DAY TWO: 194 km

Popovo-Veliko Tarnovo-Elena-Sliven

After a quick shower and dinner, my head hit the pillow, and I fell asleep immediately. I woke up after two hours,





Bee hives in the background in Elena.

—PHOTO GEORGI STOYCHEV

drank coffee with my sister Anita, and left around 7:30 a.m. The second day began with a brutal headwind, just like the previous night, but even stronger. After a short ascent on the main road with serious traffic, I arrived in Arbanassi. It was our next control, and my cousin Peter was waiting there for me. Thanks to him for such a nice welcome! My whole family is scattered around northeastern Bulgaria and was following my progress and encouraging me.

After lunch in Arbanassi, I went further south towards Sliven. The road to Sliven had a few climbs, including Vratnik Pass at elevation 3,084' and over fourteen miles of climbing. After

the village of Byala was the second climb on the way to Sliven. My goal was to arrive in Sliven before dusk; I was there around 8:15 pm. Neither the controller nor any of the participants were there yet. The owner of the complex validated my control card and placed a stamp on it as arranged with

the organizer. I ordered some food and took a quick shower. During dinner, Rumen and Dimitar appeared, and I learned that many participants had already given up. Soon afterwards, I was in a horizontal position, telling the controller Sasho that I would sleep for two hours only.



Panoramic view from the restaurant in Kalofer.

—PHOTO GEORGI STOYCHEV



Rowing Canal in Plovdiv.
—PHOTO GEORGI STOYCHEV



DAY THREE: 324 km
Sliven-Kazanlak-Kalofer-Plovdiv-
Peshtera-Batak-Dospad-Trigrad

Unfortunately, I didn't wake up until 3:00 a.m. and felt disoriented. At 3:30 a.m. I took off in the direction of Kazanlak, the center of rose oil extraction in Bulgaria. The next stage, where some mountain passes awaited, proved to be the most difficult: Goliam Beglik (elevation 5014') and Trigrad Gorge (elevation 3938').

The day was filled with historic battle towns and villages linked to our Freedom Fighters. Shortly after Kazanlak, I found myself in the emblematic Kalofer. The town emerged in the 16th century, managing to preserve its Bulgarian character during the Ottoman Empire and developing as a center of craftsmanship. During the Bulgarian National Revival, the

town became a center of revolutionary activity.

After little more than 100km for the day, I arrived at Panorama Restaurant. The view from there was stunning. I then pushed further south towards Plovdiv, the next control. There is evidence of habitation in Plovdiv dating back to the 6th millennium BC; it is said to be one of the oldest cities in Europe. After I took a picture of the Rowing Canal, I left the city and quickly covered the distance to the beautiful Novo Selo, famous for the Thracian necropolis.

The long, 36-mile climb to Golyam Beglik was next. The starting point of the climb is Batak, known for the Batak massacre and the April Uprising of 1876 against the Ottomans. Five thousand people were killed there, and the village was burned to ashes.

With a serious climb awaiting,



Novo Selo.

—PHOTO GEORGI STOYCHEV

I decided to stop and eat generously in Batak. It was also time to put on woolen clothes and turn my headlight on. The more I climbed, the more the temperature dropped. Just before I reached the peak, it also began to rain. Fortunately, the other side was dry during the descent. The weather was clear, and the view of the Golyam Beglik reservoir was irresistibly beautiful. The only life around was a few fishermen and a herd of wild horses. We were in the middle of the summer, but the temperature was no more than 55 degrees.

Thankfully, I managed to get down to Dospat Reservoir just before sunset and take a few pictures. The view was unique and breathtaking! Six miles of serious climbing followed, and then I

Dospat Reservoir.
—PHOTO GEORGI STOYCHEV

arrived at the next night control, the bear museum in Trigrad. Everyone was freezing and looking for seating around the fireplace. Dimitar, Rumen, and Sasho were there already. After eating some great food, I decided to nap for forty-five minutes. I then headed toward the most serious ascent, which was over Pamporovo Ski Resort.

DAY FOUR: 238 km
**Trigrad-Shiroka Laka-Pamporovo-
Chepelare-Bachkovo-Asenovgrad-
Chirpan-Nova Zagora-Sliven**

That day began with a short descent into the Trigrad Gorge. Here I met the organizer Lazar, who was climbing up. Next came the village of Nastan, followed by the eighteen-mile ascent to





Pamporovo. During the climb, I passed through Shiroka Laka, home of our most famous bagpipers. The village was calm early in the morning. It was cold, so I took some photos in a hurry and went on.

After about fourteen steep miles, I arrived in Pamporovo around 7:45 a.m. The climbs in Bulgaria are long, but they aren't as steep and brutal as the ones I'm used to. The temperature was around 39 degrees, so I drank my morning coffee, ate, and quickly got ready for the long descent of around fifty-five miles!

This is my first ever descent where I had to stop two times to eat and rest. I had to put my reflective vest on and also turn on all the lights. Luckily, the temperature increased, as did the oxygen level. The temperature was still rising when I arrived in Asenovgrad. Traffic across the city was terrible, and just like in Plovdiv, I decided to go ahead without stopping. At this moment, everything was happening on autopilot because every part of the body ached,

Lakov	Dimitar	85:35	Bulgaria
Stoychev	Georgi	84:20	USA
TANAKA	Shuichi	87:50	JAPAN
Thompson	W David	86:30	USA
Vladislav	Lazar	87:50	Bulgaria
Yordanov	Rumen	85:35	Bulgaria
Balanski	Dimitar	DNF	Bulgaria
Atanasov	Kiril	DNF	Bulgaria
Antonov	Mladen	DNF	Bulgaria
Fedyushin	Sergey	DNF	Russia
Shirochikov	Sergey	DNF	Russia

Unofficial result—in under my goal!

The long descent from Pamporovo (below).

Early morning in Shiroka Laka (bottom).

—PHOTOS GEORGI STOYCHEV



and I was ready to finish!

Not long after, I found myself in Chirpan, our last control before the finish. I ate some delicious soup and continued to Stara and Nova Zagora. Then, I approached Sliven. Unfortunately, I missed the last roadside water fountain; however, I didn't want to stop since my goal was to finish in under eighty-five hours. There were some ripe plums on the road, which saved the day.

After Nova Zagora, Todor Kirchev appeared from nowhere. (We had ridden together in France back in 2015.) It turned out that he was going to visit a friend and decided to say hello after

noticing that my Live Tracker was approaching Sliven. After a serious fight with the wind, I reached the final control in Sliven. My unofficial finish time: 84 hours and 20 minutes.

Lazar announced at the finish that this was the toughest SVS 1200km he had completed, and he has finished fifteen of the seventeen editions. It was also very nice to see Valeri Kitanchev at the finish and to talk again about the event. Thank you for your constant support during the ride! 🚲

Mac and Cheese 1200km Report: The Planner's Perspective

BY MICHELE BROUGHER

A 1200km is like a theatrical production. You have riders, volunteers, organizers, and a variety of people and events that just “show up” as extras. There is a front-side of the ride that is experienced by the riders. That viewpoint can be poignant and exciting, but is inherently personal; in four days, everyone experiences something shockingly different.

If you are an organizer of a 1200km (or the director of a movie), your goal is to provide everyone with access to the same experience and to hide away all the problems that would spoil the “fun.” Your experience is about everyone’s ride, the fast and the slow, the tired and the downtrodden. You distantly share in the triumph and you feel all the pain. This article is about living the back-side of the Mac & Cheese.

Day 1: 4:45am

“There was a naked woman in my room last night,” said an indignant

person ten minutes before the start of the ride. I must confess to being a little taken aback by that one. As an organizer, we want everything to be fun and run smoothly. You try to prepare for everything, but I had not planned for this one.

To be honest, by the start of the ride, we were all glad there was a ride. An epic storm had hit both sides of Lake Michigan. The start hotel had been without power for twenty-four hours, I’d been stung by a wasp and had taken a truckload of drugs to head off anaphylactic shock, and my car had

electrical problems. I had just heard that a bridge was out on the route for Day 4. Rerouting was in the future, but I couldn’t worry about that now. Fifty-three people were lined up to start the most logistically challenging ride ever conceived in RUSA history.

Day 1: 6:00pm

“This is going really well! I’m going to pour myself a beer,” said James Johnson, one of our volunteers. We had just finished setting up the overnight in St. Ignace. Then my phone went off; it was the sweep from Detroit. “The yellow velomobile is having a major mechanical problem about two hours out of Mackinaw City; it’s not ride-able.”

There are times you have to decide how committed you are to a single rider; we had already resolved one major mechanical during the day. The yellow velomobile was helmed by someone who had finished nine 1200km events—an experienced rider but one I did not know personally. If I dispatched Eric and someone to take him, I’d have to have someone else drive my truck to move the bikes for the bridge crossing. Easy decision: I sent both Eric and Mike to fix the velomobile. “Hey Jim, stop drinking that beer. I’ve got a new job for you.”

Day 2: 9:00am

All riders had left and the overnight was sort of closed. The last of the bikes

50 uprights, 1 recumbent and 2 velomobiles lined up to start.

—PHOTO VINCENT DOMINGUEZ



Bikes, bikes all organized for night one as we bus people across the Mackinac Bridge.

— PHOTO MICHELE BROUGHER

had crossed the bridge to the start point for the second day literally as they were needed.

The worst part of the first day had been when our first casualty was literally carried in. Katie's knee looked like a small pumpkin. I did my best to console her on a ride well done, but having been in her shoes, it is difficult to deal with both not finishing and not being able to walk. Kingston, my control captain, took Katie to the hospital in Manistique.

The last riders left shortly before noon. Both had had severe mechanical issues: the Yellow Velo had broken pulleys, and another bike had broken handlebars. Eric fixed both and even built a Garmin mount out of an old syringe.

We were two hours late leaving the overnight. Jeremy left in our fifteen-person passenger van, the White Whale, for Tahquamenon Falls and Eric and I left for Manistique. Monika and Todd, our new sweeps, left for Whitefish Point. We had survived what everyone assumed would be the toughest day.

Day 2: 4:00pm

I'd really hoped that the two people who had stopped would be the last, but this was not to be the case. One rider got off track and nearly went to Sault St Marie. It's tough to be off course, and this rider was from my own club, which made it a lot tougher. The yellow velomobile also got off course, but recovered and kept going. He was the last to hit Whitefish.

At Manistique, we set up again. Kingston Smith, from GLR, was running the overnight and had been there since the previous day. He had picked up Katie from the hospital. She was in pain, but now had painkillers and the assurance of knowing she had chosen



correctly in deciding to stop. She was a great volunteer, too.

Despite a few showers, day two was largely a quiet day, though Eric stayed up again fixing bikes all night; two bikes had to be re-cabled and an assortment of shifting issues mended.

I also kept tabs on the sweep, and the yellow velomobile was still very far back. Very few riders came to the overnight alone that day. Everyone seemed to have had a lot of fun. However, this was also a night that we staffed two controls until after midnight. It would be 7:00am before the sweep would arrive.

Day 3: 8:30am

Eric and I packed up early and hit the road before the last rider was out. The day was grey and windy, and this day had the longest stretches between services.

We made Green Bay, our final overnight, by early afternoon. Green Bay wound up being the most colorful and perhaps most difficult of the

overnights. We arrived early and Jim got the overnight set up quickly, so several of the volunteers hit the pub.

The next thing I knew, some slightly tipsy volunteers had absconded with a road sign and turned it into a ride sign. They then flagged down the police to ask if they could post our technically stolen sign for arriving riders. The police were otherwise occupied with Labor Day shenanigans up the street and might have said something like, "We don't care what you do."

About 10:00pm, I got a frantic call from Jeremy. Cell phone coverage was minimal so I could barely hear him. All I got from the conversation was, "drunk driver," "hit and run," "police," and "van may not be drive-able, waiting for the yellow velo." I did my best to reassure, even though I wasn't entirely certain of the severity of the incident. If it was a hit and run, the car could easily be headed for other riders, and at least a third of the riders were still out. I couldn't reach the sweep; however, there was nothing to do but wait.



It was the most nerve-wracking night of the entire ride. I stopped all early riders from leaving the overnight. The safety of riders and volunteers is always paramount. The last thing we needed was to worry about riders both before and after Green Bay. With 200 miles for the day, it was nearly 3:00am when the last group came in.

Jeremy finally called and I got more information. He was okay; he had been in the van parked at the control when a drunk driver had overshot the turn and hit the van head on. He was shaken, but okay. The van looked kind

of bad, but it was also okay. The yellow velomobile was okay, but had been quite close.

Day 4: 7:30 AM

I had to make it to the finish early to set up. Kingston came and picked me up, and we completed the setup but noticed that the forecast was not looking promising for that afternoon or night.

The end of this 1200km was a giant party. From around 5:00pm until 9:00pm people arrived in groups. Later riders reported nasty fog along the lakeshore. The yellow velomobile had been riding alone for three days, and he had gotten minimal sleep but had always been polite, focused and dedicated.

Since the sweep vehicle could not follow the velomobile for the last few miles along the bike trail, Jeremy, another volunteer, and I took off for Two Rivers. I got on a bike and rode the last twenty miles behind the lanterne rouge. There are some things one doesn't

Volunteer photo at the end of ride party—only half of the 35 who participated.

—PHOTO PATRICK CHIN HONG

leave to chance. At the hotel, all the volunteers stretched out in the street as the lanterne rouge finished an epic pedal. Six hundred miles of solo riding.

Epilogue

After a year and a half of planning, the Mac & Cheese was finally over. I think perhaps the best compliment I got was from someone after the ride in this email:

"I said it to you more than a couple of times during the event that it seemed you had combined the best of every grand brevet into the M&C. I loved it. Everyone loved it. Every detail was attended to. Everyone was fed, watered and sent on their way with a smile and good cheer. I have never been at a GB where everyone stayed until the very end—partying and swapping stories. Testament to an outstanding time had by all. No one wanted to leave!"

It is special because that is *exactly* what it was—all of the best of a dozen rides combined together. 🚲

Jeremy Gray and Michele Brouger, Head and Top Cheese.

—PHOTO VINCENT DOMINGUEZ



Early Season Events in Central Florida

BY PAUL ROZELLE

The arrival of 2019 and PBP also brings an array of opportunities to ride the qualifying events. Central Florida has two early season events this winter and spring designed to ready randonneurs for PBP.

First is our popular Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend of brevets, held January 19-20, 2019, in Tavares (about forty-five minutes north of Orlando). Riders have the opportunity to complete half of the qualifiers in one weekend by riding a 200km on Saturday followed by a 300km on Sunday. The holiday on Monday is open as a travel day, or you can ride one of the many excellent permanents in the area if you still crave more miles. In 2015, riders from fifteen states attended, making for a special gathering of randonneurs from around the country. The routes are easy, even by Florida standards. The first day visits the gently rolling hills of the interior while the 300 on the second day travels quiet, scenic roads to the Atlantic Coast.

Our second offering is for those who fancy knocking out all the qualifiers in our mild, dry weather well in advance of PBP. Join us starting Monday, April 8, in Tavares for our first Brevet Week! After completing the 200km and 300km the first two days, riders get Wednesday as a rest day before tackling our most

challenging 400km on Thursday. Friday is thankfully another rest day, but the weekend brings the capstone 600km, rounding out the epic seven-day, four-event, 1500km adventure. Those completing all four events will be awarded a special Brevet Week medal and can return home secure in the knowledge that they are qualified. The series will include visits to both coasts as well as a tour of the Lake County hill country, multiple swamps, and an expansive national forest.

Both events are held in our “dry” season, marked by mild temperatures—typically 70s during the day and 50s at night—and little rain. While Florida is an international tourist mecca for over one hundred million people a year, as a cycling destination it remains a hidden gem. The central part of the state has thousands of miles of quiet country roads canopied by Spanish-moss-laden live oaks, some of which predate European settlement on the continent. These roads traverse rolling terrain showcasing abundant wildlife, pristine lakes, and sprawling cattle ranches and orange groves. By the time you read this, details and registration for both events will be up on our web page, floridarandonneurs.com/wordpress/. In 2019, we hope your road to Paris runs through Central Florida! 🚲

Marion Kusters riding along the St. John's River on a sunny 200k in May.

—PHOTO PAUL ROZELLE



Haute Randonnée Six-Pack Report

BY STEPHEN ZAVESTOSKI

When the Rocky Mountain Cycling Club (RMCC) announced it was hosting a variation of a 1200km route that would allow riders to “experience the entire course” in daylight, I was sold. Covering the route in the time allotted for a 1200km brevet, as originally intended, meant crossing some spectacular terrain in the middle of the night. Breaking the 1200km route into six 200km brevets made so much sense that I was surprised to learn from John Lee Ellis during rider check-in that this would be the first event of its kind.

As it turned out, Day 1 of the Haute Randonnée Six-Pack started from Louisville, CO, not in daylight but in the total darkness of 4:00 a.m. For the first couple of hours, out-of-towners like me got to know the locals as we rolled from Louisville towards Estes Park, the first control and resupply point before beginning the daunting climb to an elevation of just over 12,000’ on Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Having arrived from sea level the day before, this 4,000’ climb and the subsequent forty miles of riding before dropping back down below 8,000’ had me worried. But I measured my effort and was able to reach the high point with not much more than a little lightheadedness. Perfect pavement and quintessential Rocky Mountain high

country scenery made the descent out of the National Park unforgettable.

At the first day’s final control in Granby, a number of riders regrouped and recounted the beauty of the descent while enjoying ice cream. But an afternoon thunderstorm was brewing, and being anxious to finish the final twenty-seven miles ahead

of it, each of us climbed back into the saddle at our own pace.

I wound up in a group of four with about ten miles to go when the skies opened up. We rode for ten minutes in a downpour, and then just as abruptly as it started, the rain ended.

After overnighting in Kremmling, riders headed toward Leadville on the second day. To break up a 1200km route into six 200km days that each ended in a town with accommodations, the organizers had to tweak the route here and there. This meant that the route on Day 2 (Vail Pass-Tennessee Pass-Leadville) took us past the turn for Leadville at around mile eighty for a 17-mile out-and-back to Edwards before we started the grueling climbs of Battle Mountain and Tennessee Pass. Within minutes of our arrival at Tennessee Pass, the skies opened once again. I waited under shelter for the worst of it to pass and then began the final descent towards Leadville.

Steve Zavestoski at Independence Pass.

—PHOTO KEN MOSS





I consider Day 3 the “Queen Stage” not just because it was the longest at 145 miles, but also because it included the most spectacular of all the climbs. Independence Pass did not disappoint. After two days of riding, three passes over 10,000’, and a night sleeping above 10,000’, the ride up Independence Pass was not terribly taxing. This allowed me to appreciate the stunning alpine landscape.

After a quick descent into Aspen for the first control, we rode about twenty-six miles of gentle downhill and on a wind-assisted bike path into Carbondale, the next control. The day had heated up such that riding through some sprinklers on the way out of town was insufficient. But the next twenty miles took us along the Crystal River. Three of us who had been riding together since Aspen agreed that a break for a dip in a swimming hole was in order.

We were dry again by the time we reached the day’s final climb up McClure Pass. Heading west over the pass towards the finish in Paonia, one

could feel the dryness of the west side of the Rockies and see it in the parched stream beds. Paonia’s bike shop/juice bar (Cirque Cyclery/Remedy Cafe) offered a perfect end to the Queen Stage.

Having studied the route and previously driven the stretch of U.S. Highway 50 where we’d be spending most of our time on Day 4, I had already decided that the “Black Canyon of the Gunnison-Blue Mesa” stage was simply an unavoidable reality. We had crossed the Continental Divide as we headed west; therefore, we had to make our way south and then east for the final two days through and back over the spine of the Rockies.

Fortunately, the start of the day went by quickly as a strong group formed a few miles in and covered the first fifty miles down to Montrose in just under three hours. But the group broke up out of Montrose, and I made the five-mile climb up to the control at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park headquarters alone. Once back down to US 50, all that remained were fifty-six miles to Gunnison. Two

View of Arapahoe Basin from Loveland Pass.
—PHOTO STEPHEN ZAVESTOSKI

four-miles climbs—to Cerro and Blue Mesa summits—finally gave way to twenty flat miles along the Blue Mesa Reservoir. Toward the end of the reservoir I could see the afternoon thunderstorm forming like clockwork. I raced the fast-approaching storm for the final eight miles to Gunnison. As I threw my leg over the bike at the finish, a few heavy drops of rain quickly turned into another torrential downpour. Riders who came in later seemed nearly giddy with the thrill of having survived such a downpour.

Day 5 began with more US 50 riding, but there is no such thing as rush hour traffic on a Monday morning in Gunnison. It felt like we had the road to ourselves all the way to the base of the Monarch Pass climb. A steady 6% for a little over eight miles, the Monarch Pass climb placed us back on the Atlantic side of the Continental Divide. Heat,

Steve Zavestoski at the Trail Ridge Rd. Summit (12,183'), Rocky Mountain National Park.

—PHOTO CATHERINE SHENK

highway miles, and another climb up Trout Pass made for a long day. However, the day ended with about fifteen flat and gently rolling miles skirting South Park with views of the Collegiate Peaks draining towards the Arkansas River, which we had ridden along on our way out of Leadville a few days earlier.

I thought that overnighiting in Fairplay, just a hair lower than Leadville at 9,953', would pose no problem with five days and multiple 10,000' and 12,000' passes behind me. But the final day of the Haute Randonnée was my toughest. I was surprised to find myself laboring on the gentle climb out of Fairplay up to Hoosier Pass (11,539'). I felt better on the descent to Breckenridge, but leaving Keystone and starting up Loveland Pass, I knew it would be another tough climb. So, I approached it as I had the Trail Ridge Road climb on the first day—slow and easy—and found myself enjoying the views back down toward Arapaho's Basin as I approached the pass. The next forty-five miles more or less paralleled Interstate 70 through a combination of bike paths and frontage roads. Descending Lookout Mountain into Golden was probably more fun than someone should be allowed to have on a bike. Payback for the fun came in the form of twenty miles along busy state highways and one last thunderstorm on the way into Louisville.

Despite the logistics of getting myself and my bike from California to Colorado and some concerns about riding at altitude, the Haute Randonnée Six-Pack was well worth the effort.

Ken Moss cooling off in the river.

—PHOTO STEVE ZAVESTOSKI



Catherine Shenk and John Lee Ellis, with support from other members of the RMCC, took care of logistics, including detailed cue sheets, daily pre-ride route reports, and transporting drop bags. I'm sure that with feedback

from riders on this inaugural running of the Haute Randonnée Six-Pack, they will improve the route to make the next edition even better. RMCC has pioneered a multi-day brevet format that has a bright future. 🚲



Build Your Own Brevet Week: May 26-31, 2019, West Union, IA

BY ROB WELSH

The Quad Cities and Minnesota Randonneurs are offering a special Build Your Own Brevet Week next spring to help PBP-bound randonneurs prepare for the big event. Instead of a traditional brevet week that builds into the longer rides, you will have the flexibility to ride the brevets in any order you want to meet your training plan and schedule.

Here's why Build Your Own Brevet Week is a great idea:

1. If you have already picked up your 200km and 300km events (by late May you will probably have these), along with some other training miles, you could ride the longest brevets first, while you are still fresh.

2. At PBP the vast majority of riders will be riding 400km or longer right out of the gate to get to Loudeac, Carhaix or Brest before taking a sleep break.

Tinteniac	363km
Loudeac	448km
St. Nicholas du Pelem	494km
Carhaix	526km
Brest	614km

(Mileage based on the 2015 route. 2019 may be slightly shorter with the start in Rambouillet.)

3. To prepare for this, you could ride:

Sunday	400km
Mon/Tues	600km
Wed/Thurs	200km
Fri	300km (or call it good after completing 1200km!)

4. If you are a typical PBP rider, another approach could be:

Sunday/Monday	600km (38 hours)
Tuesday	400km (22 hours)
Wednesday	200km (12 hours)

With this plan, you would complete 1200km in 85-88 hours.

5. If you don't have a good base yet, or prefer to start easy, you could begin with the shorter brevets and build toward the longer ones. The flexibility allows you to ride the brevets in any order and take a rest day at any point.

6. Although hard-core randonneurs might cringe, if the weather (or your body) goes to pot one day, you could also



Pre-ride gathering during the 2015 Build Your Own Brevet Week.

—PHOTO ROB WELSH

choose to skip a day. At any other brevet (including PBP), you don't have this choice. However, in West Union, it will be painless and you won't need to feel guilty about it!

7. West Union, Iowa, is in the heart of great riding, with lots of rolling terrain, good roads, and low traffic. It is centrally located, within a few hours of Minneapolis, Chicago, Des Moines, and St. Louis. 🚲

For more details, contact:

Mike Fox, Quad Cities Randonneurs
MikeyFoxMan@gmail.com

Tom Ehlman, Minnesota Randonneurs
Ehlman_Thomas@Yahoo.com

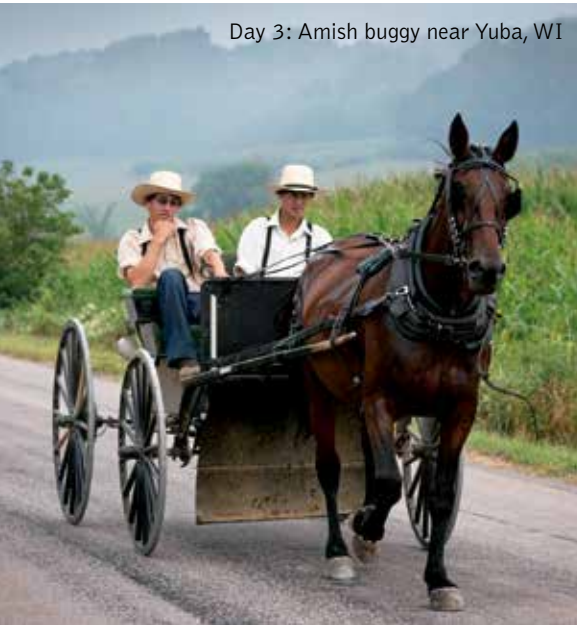
More information and a rider interest/communications list will be coming soon on the Quad Cities web site at: www.qcrando.org/

Coulee Challenge Landscapes

PHOTOS BY DEB FORD

www.deborahford.photography/Events/2018-Coulee-Challenge-1200k

Day 3: Amish buggy near Yuba, WI



Day 1: Lyster Lutheran Church, Nelson, WI

Day 1: early morning paceline heading to Red Wing, MN



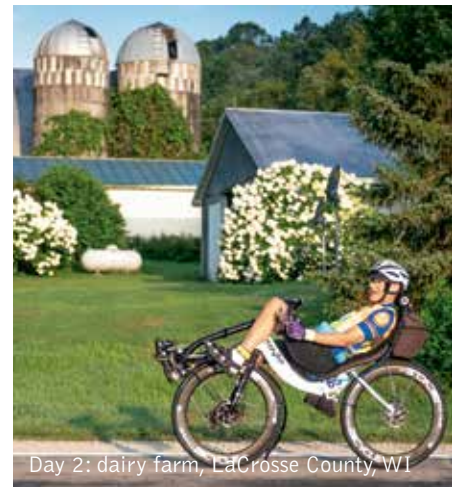
Day 2: wildflowers near Excelsior, WI



Day 1: Buffalo River near Tell, WI



Day 1: rural Buffalo County, WI



Day 2: dairy farm, LaCrosse County, WI

RUSA Awards

R-12 Award Recipients

The R-12 Award is earned by riding a 200km (or longer) randonneuring event in each of 12 consecutive months. The counting sequence can commence during any month of the year but must continue uninterrupted for another 11 months.

Events that count toward the R- 12 Award are:

- Any event on the RUSA calendar 200km or longer.
- Foreign ACP-sanctioned brevets and team events (flèches), Paris-Brest-Paris, and RM-sanctioned events of 1200km or longer, provided that these non-US events account for no more than 6 of the 12 counting months.
- RUSA permanents — a particular permanent route may be ridden more than once during the twelve-month period for R-12 credit. The applicant must be a RUSA member during each of the twelve months.

RUSA congratulates the latest honorees, listed below.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Bergeron, Robert D [7]	Raleigh, NC	9/6/2018
Blakely, Sierra (F) [3]	Olympia, WA	8/30/2018
Burke, Brian P [6]	Cumming, GA	8/24/2018
Coleman, Sam Robert [2]	San Diego, CA	7/22/2018
Cousseau, Peter L [4]	Seattle, WA	6/29/2018
Dembinski, Jan Peter	Woodstock, VT	10/11/2018
Denning, Dick	Celina, OH	7/26/2018
Diehn, Dan [3]	Black River Falls, WI	10/7/2018
Ehrentreich, Norman [3]	Minneapolis, MN	7/21/2018

Fleming, Neil [7]	Atlanta, GA	9/16/2018
Geisert, Rodney D	Columbia, MO	7/7/2018
Gold, Tayler S [2]	Apopka, FL	8/12/2018
Hawks, Rob [8]	Richmond, CA	7/24/2018
Heg, Christopher [10]	Seattle, WA	8/16/2018
Hughart, Holden [2]	Portland, OR	9/17/2018
Hull, Mitchell	Battle Creek, MI	9/25/2018
Janssen, Earl [6]	Severna Park, MD	7/25/2018
Johnson, Alan S. [4]	Phoenix, AZ	10/11/2018
Lanteigne, Ken [5]	Gresham, OR	9/10/2018
Loibner, Dieter [3]	Portland, OR	9/27/2018
Mayr, Rudi	Lawrenceville, NJ	8/23/2018
Merritt, Greg [4]	Berkeley, CA	10/7/2018
Nadovich, Chris [6]	Easton, PA	7/15/2018
Newberry, Jeff [9]	Austin, TX	9/6/2018
Preston, John [9]	Plantation, FL	7/14/2018
Ray, Joseph [2]	Bernardsville, NJ	8/9/2018
Sherman, Will [2]	Brooklyn, NY	8/4/2018
Singer, Ian Ryan [2]	Weston, FL	7/20/2018
Smith, Paul K [5]	Cooper City, FL	9/13/2018
Snavelly, Henry J [4]	Centennial, CO	9/17/2018
Stum, Richard [8]	Mt Pleasant, UT	9/4/2018
Tagawa, Mark [2]	Paramount, CA	9/11/2018
Tamas, Tibor [4]	Fort Worth, TX	8/19/2018
Trott Jr, Steven Kent	West Point, IN	9/7/2018
Trott, Lydia Ellen (F)	West Point, IN	9/7/2018
Tulloh, Robert F [4]	Austin, TX	7/3/2018
Turner, Greg H	Brockport, NY	6/29/2018
Winkert, George [12]	Highland, MD	8/5/2018

Ultra R-12 Award

The Ultra R-12 Award recognizes the completion of 10 R-12s. There is no time limit; there may be gaps between any of the 12-month sequences that define each R-12.

It is likely that members will have applied previously for each of the ten component R-12 awards; however, it is not a requirement to have done so. A given month can only be used towards one Ultra R-12 award and one may

earn only one Ultra R-12 award during a ten-year period. The applicant must be a RUSA member during each of the 120 months included in the ten 12-month periods.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the Ultra R-12 award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Heg, Christopher	Seattle, WA	8/16/2018

RUSA Awards

RUSA American Explorer Award

The American Explorer Award recognizes the achievements of RUSA members rambling across the United States. The award is earned by riding events that cover at least ten (10) different U.S. states and territories.

This is an ongoing achievement program that recognizes continued exploration of additional states and territories. The maximum achievable number of states and territories will depend on the availability of routes and the member's desire to explore.

Award criteria:

- Rides must be of the following types:
 - ACP brevets and flèches;
 - RUSA brevets, populaires, arrows and darts;
 - RUSA permanents and permanent populaires;
 - RUSA sanctioned Super Randonnée permanents;

- 1200km events held in the United States after 1998.
- Routes must pass through or be contained within any of the 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, ...). Each state or territory through which the ride passes is counted and multiple states/territories can be achieved on a single ride.
- There is no time limit to earn this award.
- Only RUSA members may apply and each qualifying ride must be completed while an active member of RUSA.

Recognition

- A minimum of ten states or territories must be completed to receive initial recognition.

NAME	CITY, STATE	STATES ADDED	TOTAL STATES	APPROVED
Banks, Debra C. (F)	Sacramento, CA	3	13	5/23/2018
Beauchamp, Christina (F)	Raleigh, NC	4	29	10/2/2018
Bergstrom, Sarah E (F)	Medford, MA	10	10	5/8/2018
Bingham, Bob	Graham, NC	2	13	6/16/2018
Blacker, Rick	Olympia, WA	13	13	8/24/2018
Burke, Brian P	Cumming, GA	15	15	8/18/2018
Chernekoff, Janice (F)	Lyon Station, PA	7	18	5/21/2018
Chin-Hong, Patrick	Amherst, MA	25	25	10/10/2018
Conaway, Kary	George, IA	10	10	6/21/2018
Danovsky, David	San Diego, CA	10	10	8/5/2018
Diehn, Dan	Black River Falls, WI	1	24	10/8/2018
Driscoll, Dan	Arlington, TX	5	30	8/23/2018
Fambles, Millison D	Olympia, WA	13	13	8/24/2018
Fleming, Neil	Atlanta, GA	2	15	9/16/2018
Fournier, Charles Joseph	Redding, CA	52	52	6/27/2018
Fournier, Margaret Mary (F)	Redding, CA	10	20	8/20/2018
Fraser, Malcolm R	Boulder, CO	10	10	8/12/2018
Greene, Daniel	Nashua, NH	1	14	8/21/2018
Greene, Nigel	Elkins Park, PA	1	23	10/9/2018
Greene, Susan (F)	Nashua, NH	10	10	8/21/2018
Hall, Mary E (F)	Dallas, TX	7	18	8/7/2018
Hazel, Geoff	Bellevue, WA	10	10	8/20/2018
Huber, Kerin (F)	Pasadena, CA	2	36	6/13/2018

RUSA American Explorer Award (continued)

NAME	CITY, STATE	STATES ADDED	TOTAL STATES	APPROVED
Klaassen, Spencer	Saint Joseph, MO	1	40	10/10/2018
Lanteigne, Ken	Gresham, OR	13	13	9/10/2018
Lippincott, Jeff	Princeton, NJ	15	15	10/9/2018
Mathews, Craig	The Woodlands, TX	10	20	6/3/2018
Maytorena, Hector Enrique	San Diego, CA	10	10	8/19/2018
McLerran, Doug	Aurora, IL	4	29	5/24/2018
Midura, Lawrence A	East Syracuse, NY	28	28	10/11/2018
Muoneke, Vincent	Federal Way, WA	1	26	9/30/2018
Nadovich, Chris	Easton, PA	6	21	8/22/2018
Newberry, Jeff	Austin, TX	18	18	8/23/2018
Nichols, Eric	Newfields, NH	10	10	6/21/2018
Olsen, William	Califon, NJ	28	28	7/20/2018
Reimbolt, Tom	Boise, ID	10	10	8/21/2018
Slocum, Christopher C.	Toms River, NJ	5	15	10/12/2018
Smith, Gregory H	Richland Center, WI	4	21	5/15/2018
Stevens, William	Volo, IL	4	14	9/19/2018
Stum, Richard	Mt Pleasant, UT	12	12	9/4/2018
Sturgill, Michael R	Phoenix, AZ	24	24	9/26/2018
Sullivan, Lara (F)	Ely, MN	18	18	9/26/2018
Tamas, Tibor	Fort Worth, TX	19	37	7/14/2018
Thomas, Mark	Kirkland, WA	5	27	10/9/2018
Thompson, W David	New Smyrna Beach, FL	1	22	10/7/2018
Torres, Bob	Carlstadt, NJ	16	16	10/14/2018
Trott Jr, Steven Kent	West Point, IN	10	10	9/7/2018
Trott, Lydia Ellen (F)	West Point, IN	10	10	9/7/2018

Galaxy Award

The Galaxy Award is for RUSA members who have successfully completed at least 100,000 km in RUSA events.

This award can be earned just once by a member and is automatically recognized upon completion of the required distance (no application required).

The qualifying distance for this award is based on all events on RUSA's calendar (ACP brevets and Flèches, RUSA brevets, populaires, arrows and darts), RUSA

permanents, and 1200km events held in the United States after 1999. Foreign events (including PBP) are not counted.

RUSA congratulates the riders who have earned this prestigious award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Newberry, Jeff	Austin, TX	8/13/2018
Shapiro, Paul G	Princeton Junction, NJ	9/6/2018

RUSA Awards

P-12 Recipients

The P-12 Award is earned by riding a sub-200km randonneuring event in each of 12 consecutive months. The counting sequence can commence during any month of the year but must continue uninterrupted for another 11 months.

Events that count toward the P-12 Award are:

- Any populaire (100km - 199km) on the RUSA calendar.
 - Any dart of less than 200km.
 - Any RUSA permanent of 100km-199km.
- A particular permanent route may be ridden more than once during the twelve-month period for P-12 credit.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Behning, Mark C	Sacramento, CA	9/4/2018
Bratkowski, Michael	Studio City, CA	10/8/2018
Carsten, Ben	Austin, TX	8/4/2018
Coleman, Sam Robert	San Diego, CA	7/6/2018
Cox, Kenyon [2]	Belpre, OH	7/5/2018
Crixell, Joshua [6]	Temple, TX	8/25/2018
Danovsky, David [3]	San Diego, CA	9/18/2018
Driscoll, Dan [10]	Arlington, TX	10/7/2018
Ende, John Capn [2]	Asheville, NC	8/6/2018
Fraser, Malcolm R [2]	Boulder, CO	7/15/2018
Gridley, Ross [6]	Pickerington, OH	10/7/2018
Haley, Joshua J	Oviedo, FL	7/15/2018
Hallinger, Mark R	Bethesda, MD	9/27/2018
Hendry, Robert A [3]	Franklin, TN	9/21/2018
Hewitt, Rudy [5]	Wheaton, MD	8/3/2018
Horchoff, Patrick A [9]	River Ridge, LA	9/4/2018
Hush, Eve W (F) [4]	Hebron, OH	8/2/2018
Lutz, Albert B	Tigard, OR	7/25/2018
Newberry, Jeff [2]	Austin, TX	7/2/2018
Olszyk, Anita (F) [5]	Lacey, WA	9/18/2018
Ranson, Emily (F)	Ellicott City, MD	8/20/2018
Rawls, Allen [3]	Morrisville, NC	7/12/2018
Sammons, Jeff [3]	Brentwood, TN	9/22/2018
Schurman, Regina (F)	Lisle, IL	10/7/2018
Shaw, Mike [3]	Oceanside, CA	9/24/2018
Slocum, Christopher C. [2]	Toms River, NJ	9/5/2018
Staats, David N [6]	Columbus, OH	10/7/2018
Stum, Richard	Mt Pleasant, UT	9/4/2018

RUSA Cup Recipients

The RUSA Cup is earned by completing at least one of each type of RUSA calendared event, comprising 5000km in total, within a two-year period.

Riders must complete, within two years of the first counting event:

- a 200k, 300k, 400k, 600k, and 1000k brevet
- a 1200k or longer Grand Randonnée
- a RUSA team event (Dart, Dart Populaire, Arrow, or Flèches-USA)
- a Populaire
- any other calendared events—including Populaires—to achieve the required 5000 km.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Brougher, Michele S (F)	St Louis Park, MN	8/14/2018
Geisert, Rodney D	Columbia, MO	8/19/2018
Gold, Tayler S	Apopka, FL	10/11/2018
Klaassen, Spencer	Saint Joseph, MO	10/10/2018
Mayr, Rudi	Lawrenceville, NJ	8/28/2018
McLerran, Doug	Aurora, IL	8/21/2018
Nguyen, Thai	Bothell, WA	9/13/2018
Olsen, William	Califon, NJ	7/20/2018
Ross, Roy M	Mountain View, CA	9/14/2018
Slocum, Christopher C.	Toms River, NJ	9/5/2018
Torres, Bob	Carlstadt, NJ	10/11/2018
Trott, Lydia Ellen (F)	West Point, IN	10/14/2018
Tulloh, Robert F	Austin, TX	9/16/2018
Uz, Metin	Palo Alto, CA	9/13/2018
Walsh, Mick	Seattle, WA	7/13/2018
Walstad, Eric	San Francisco, CA	10/3/2018

RUSA Awards

RUSA Coast-to-Coast Award

The Coast-to-Coast 1200km award is earned by RUSA members who have successfully completed four different Randonneurs Mondiaux 1200km-or-longer randonnées held in the United States.

A member may earn multiple Coast-to-Coast awards. No event or different editions of the same event may be used more than once among multiple awards. For example, if Boston-Montreal-Boston 2002 is used in a member's Coast-to-Coast award, BMB'06 (or other edition) may not be used to claim another award.

The four events needed to qualify can be completed at any time and over any number of years.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the Coast to Coast 1200km Award.

APPROVED	NAME	CITY, STATE
9/8/2018	Dembinski, Jan Peter	Woodstock, VT

EVENTS	
	2014 Natchez Trace 1500
	2015 Taste of Carolina
	2016 Cascade 1200
	2018 Taste of Carolina Spring

APPROVED	NAME	CITY, STATE
7/5/2018	Driscoll, Dan	Arlington, TX

EVENTS	
	2015 Florida Sunshine 1200
	2016 Cracker Swamp 1200
	2017 Gold Rush Randonnee
	2018 Blue Ridge to Bay

APPROVED	NAME	CITY, STATE
9/26/2018	Sturgill, Michael R	Phoenix, AZ

EVENTS	
	2009 Shenandoah 1200
	2011 Colorado High Country 1200
	2012 Taste of Carolina
	2013 Endless Mountains 1240

RUSA American Randonneur Challenge

The American Randonneur Challenge (ARC) is a special award given by Randonneurs USA to any RUSA member who successfully completes in the same season two or more Randonneur Mondiaux 1200-kilometer or longer grand randonnées held in the United States. The ARC award can be earned only by riding the event as a 1200k; riders entered to do it as a 1000k + 200k may not claim the award.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the ARC award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Driscoll, Dan	Arlington, TX	8/23/2018
Newberry, Jeff	Austin, TX	8/23/2018
Nguyen, Thai	Bothell, WA	9/13/2018
Shopland, Ian	Olympia, WA	8/30/2018
Sturgill, Michael R	Phoenix, AZ	9/26/2018



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RUSA Awards

Ultra Randonneur Award

The Ultra Randonneur Award is for RUSA members who have ridden ten (10) Super Randonneur series. The Super Randonneur (SR) series of brevets (200 K, 300 K, 400 K and 600 K in a calendar year) that are used to qualify for the Ultra Randonneur Award need not be in consecutive years, nor is there a time limit on how long it takes to accumulate the ten SR series. Note that it is possible to earn more than one SR series per year, making it possible to earn this award in fewer than ten seasons. Non-US ACP and RM brevets can be used provided that these non-US events account for no more than 50% of the rides counted towards this award.

RUSA congratulates the riders who earned and applied for the Ultra Randonneur Award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Budvytis, Gintautas	Castro Valley, CA	8/12/2018
Krishnamoorthy, Narayan	Kirkland, WA	7/30/2018
Morris, John L	Durham, NC	7/16/2018
Morton, Byron E	Raleigh, NC	7/24/2018
Muoneke, Vincent	Federal Way, WA	7/16/2018
Newberry, Jeff	Austin, TX	8/20/2018
Pratt, Chris	Houston, TX	10/1/2018
Roffe, Theodore	Seattle, WA	8/9/2018
Sturgill, Michael R	Phoenix, AZ	9/26/2018
Tulloh, Robert F	Austin, TX	8/21/2018
Uz, Metin	Palo Alto, CA	6/29/2018

Mondial Award

The Mondial Award is for RUSA members who have successfully completed at least 40,000 km in RUSA events.

The name “Mondial” comes from the French adjective meaning worldwide or global. The name relates to the fact that the circumference of the Earth is approximately 40,000 km.

This award can be earned just once by a member and is automatically awarded upon completion of the required distance (no application or purchase required).

The qualifying distance for this award is based on all events on RUSA’s calendar (ACP brevets and Flèches, RUSA brevets, populaires, arrows and darts), RUSA permanents, and 1200km events held in the United States after 1999. Foreign events (including PBP) are not counted.

RUSA congratulates the riders who have just earned this prestigious award.

NAME	CITY, STATE	APPROVED
Dembinski, Jan Peter	Woodstock, VT	9/22/2018
Greene, Nigel	Elkins Park, PA	9/22/2018
Kusters, Marion (F)	Apopka, FL	8/11/2018
Ward, Kenneth	Kent, WA	8/13/2018

ACP Randonneur 5000

In 1961, the Audax Club Parisien created the Randonneur 5000 award to recognize finishing ACP and Randonneurs Mondiaux events totaling at least 5000km within a four-year period.

To qualify, the randonneur must complete:

- A full series of ACP brevets (200, 300, 400, 600, and 1000km) [longer brevets cannot be substituted for shorter ones];
- A Paris-Brest-Paris randonnée;
- A Flèche Vélocio, or other ACP-sanctioned flèche (your team of at least three bicycles must finish officially); and
- additional ACP and/or RM events to bring the total distance up to at least 5000 km.

The qualifying events must be completed within a four-year period, beginning on the date of the first qualifying event.

RUSA extends its congratulations to the US riders who have received this special award.

APPROVED	NAME	CITY, STATE
8/1/2018	Ueek, Mark	Lincoln, CA
10/3/2018	Walstad, Eric	San Francisco, CA
10/8/2018	Welsh, Rob	Apple Valley, MN
8/12/2018	Wolff, Robert A	Sherborn, MA



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Arizona Desert Camps 2019

During February and March based from Tucson, Arizona - each week has a different theme for different types of riders. You can combine weeks to extend your cycling season in Arizona. Come join us!

Week #1 February 23 – March 2

Tour of the Historic Hotels

50-65 miles per day between classic Arizona hotels. Staying one night in historic Bisbee, Arizona.

Week #2 March 2 – March 9

First Century Week

The first night from Tucson we stay in Nogales. The next four nights are based in Sierra Vista. The final day we return back to Tucson. 60-100 miles per day.

Week #3 March 9 - 16

Chiricahua Challenge

75-90 miles per day to the Chiricahua Mountains with two nights in Bisbee, Arizona.

Week #4 March 16 - 23

Second Century Week

The first night from Tucson we stay in Nogales. The next four nights are based in Sierra Vista. The final day we return back to Tucson. 60-100 miles per day.

Week #5 March 23 - 31

Mountain Tour Mt. Graham

80-100 miles per day from Tucson to Lordsburg, New Mexico and back. This is a popular training week for serious riders. A highlight of this week is climbing 9,100' Mt. Graham with over 40 switchbacks.

Week #6 March 31 – April 7

Brevet Week in Arizona

Based in Tucson, Arizona

Ride the 200, 300, 400 and 600 KM Brevets in one week. Rest days between the 300 and 400 and 600 KM events. Most routes are big loops with motel sleeping options back in Tucson during the 400 and 600 KM brevets.

Check out the PAC Tour website for dates, prices, registration information and a full schedule of available tours.

www.pactour.com 262-736-2453

"Elite Tour Ridge of the Rockies"

June 15-28

Mexico (El Paso, TX) to Canada

12 days, 160 miles per day

The Elite Tour is an intense tour intended for serious cyclists who want to challenge themselves with longer daily miles. The tour will start near the Mexican border and follow the Rocky Mountains north along many paved roads while crossing the Continental Divide several times. This Elite Tour is also a qualifying ride for the Race Across America. Full support with many rest stops, lunch and full support are provided each day. Lodging will be in nice motels with local restaurants nearby.

Sold Out

"Ridge of the Rockies Tour" July 6 - 26

Albuquerque, New Mexico to Canada

19 days, 95 miles per day

This Tour is the "Touring Version" of the Elite Tour. The route will begin in Albuquerque, New Mexico and follow the Rocky Mountains north to Kalispell, Montana. The route will meander to explore some new roads through New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. There is a rest day planned near Yellowstone National Park so riders will have time to explore the this area. Full support with many rest stops, lunch and full support are provided each day. Lodging will be in nice motels with local restaurants nearby.

Cycling Across the Andes in Peru

September 23 to October 11

1,200 KM, 11 Cycling days

This is an epic tour starting near the Brazilian jungle and cycling back toward the deserts along the Pacific Ocean. We will climb 14 passes over 12,000 feet in elevation. Meals will be in local restaurants and we will sleep in hotels along the route. Several non cycling days are planned to visit the ruins at Machu Picchu and the Nazca Lines

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