

2009 PA 200K

WIND!!! I was toying with the idea of riding to the start, like I did last year, but when I opened my door, stepped outside and was blown all around my driveway, I concluded that it was the better course of prudence to DRIVE, with my bicycle in the back of the car, to the start... It was really great to see some of the familiar faces, many of whom I had not seen since last year, but it was also great meeting some new people. Ron and Barb Anderson both wondered if I rode in, and I was embarrassed to say that I did not... To further my humiliation, I rode WITH SLEEVES (those of you who know me, PLEASE, do not pass out!) So after some camaraderie, it was time to get down to business. Tom had asked how he should split the massive group as far as starting, should the group of sub-9 hour finishers go and then the rest? I suggested that it should be 10 hours given the wind pronouncing, grandly, that I would be finishing either side of 10 hours.

Sure enough that was the cut, and it pretty much split the group down the middle.. Half of us left, and a few minutes later, the other half took off. Riding in the lead group was not going to last, for me, because Lower Saucon Road comes in at about 7 miles. That hill is rather steep, and given my speed going UP, there would be no way to stay with the faster climbers. Instead, I did what I usually do, and that is to take my time going up so I can hammer on the way down and blitz the flats... Ummmm, well there were not too terribly many flats on this ride, but that is my general philosophy, anyway... It was on this climb that I linked up with Victor Urvantsev and Kate Marshall. Both of whom are strong riders, and Victor, I remembered from last year's 300K. Up to this point, the wind was a little limiting, but it was not so severe that we were completely miserable... Down we went, and I was appreciating the descent as time to recover before we hit the last climb before riding through Easton.

Due to a bridge being out, Tommy had to change the course a bit, and while sometimes re-routing sucks, that was not the case with this one.. In fact, even though the hill is a bit steeper and a bit longer, the overall effect is nicer. Even given the wind, which was a little oppressive in spots along this stretch, I was STILL able to appreciate this way. There was one road that was incorporated, Buttermilk, which had some of the people in the know, of this course, cringing! Fortunately we came in after the climb so there was just a nice section of road before descending into Easton. The next stretch was old hat, but given the wind, we had some EXTRA TIME to view the countryside! I was actually not unhappy wearing sleeves at this point. Rolling into the control, we saw some more of the splintered lead group.. Nate Morgenstern and Juan Salazar were there and gone.. The initial idea was to be in and out of this control as quickly as possible. Sure enough, Victor, Kate, and I were pretty efficient here and off we went. Next stop, the top of Fox Gap! But

first, we had to go up and over Wind Gap, and as per its name, we were feeling the wind, particularly on the descent, I was in my drops, but the wind definitely let me know that control was an illusion!

We chatted as we crossed Cherry Valley Road, and I had Victor and Kate looking for the house that did not belong, and that became sort of an unannounced game. Find the most ridiculous house on the course! Soon enough we were on 191 South making our way up Fox Gap, and while I felt more comfortable going up, progress was still slow. I know every square inch of that hill, intimately, which is both a blessing and a curse! The swearing begins when one realizes he is only half way to the top.... Needless to say that the blessings are found with the tell tale signs that the climb is about over! However, the biggest blessing, for me, was seeing Tommy at the top of the climb, complete with water! Yeah BABEE! Tommy also brought up more topics for conversation... First, who put their socks in the microwave oven at the Wind Gap Control? Second.... What, in the world would possess someone to do such a thing? Despite the fact that it was a problem for Tom, and is a problem for the PA Brevet series, as a whole, it was still a source of amusement in the pondering!

On the way down, we moved easily toward the Portland Family Restaurant. My idea was to sign in and get out as quickly as possible, because of the chill factor. While we were stopped with Tom, even though it was for less than 10 minutes, all three of us were feeling cold, and the descent that followed did not help one little bit! The damp biting wind was still with us, though the cross winds did not affect handling all that much, it DID contribute to our wanting to pedal to stay warm! In and out of the Portland control. We hit the road toward the bridge at Belvidere. As hard as it is to imagine, even I was looking forward to a long climb on which to feel warm! Lomason Glen was given to us for just this purpose! The long way up the Fidler's Elbow Ridge, the climb was protected from the wind, and it was steep enough to get warm! Warm enough to handle the descent down Montana Road! This section was only 33 miles, from Portland to the General Store across the river from Milford, but it feels so much longer given the long climbs. However, with a bit more than two hours to the 10 hour mark, we went into the store, and were out and on our way. People think that I eat fast, but Victor managed to eat a whole sandwich in the time it took me to visit the men's room!

Two hours to make the 30 miles to the finish line away we go heading into some very familiar territory... Up Red Cliff road, down Tinicum Creek, Up Cafferty Rd and down into Point Pleasant for the Penultimate Control. The clock on the wall said 3:00... Last Call..... for ALCOHOL! A whole hour to travel 15 miles! This stretch is one that I have done in less than that on several occasions!

However, on THIS occasion, we felt the full force of the wind in our face! It did not seem to matter which way we turned, we were just brutalized by the wind! Rollers that I could easily coast up the up hills on were now work... SERIOUS work! Victor and I tried to work together as a shield for

Kate, who, because of her light weight, was being blown all over the road... I was being blown all over the road! In fact, this section was very reminiscent of Furnace Creek 2004 when we were hit with the thermonuclear desert windstorm in Death Valley. Fortunately, this section was not terribly long, and we managed to make it into the control with a time of 10:25. I was feeling pretty good when I pulled in.. Hey Tom, let's do it again!

This 200k has always been a challenging course, and last year, Tom made it even more so with the addition of more hills. The wind did take its toll on many people, so having a finish rate of 81% is even more impressive! Looking at the results, there has to be a special something for Joseph Carbone who, despite the fact that he was out of time, still chose to complete the entire course in 17:05... RESPECT! One of the familiar names: Guy "Who Needs Gears anyway?" Harris took the course on his FIXED-GEAR! In a word, WOW! Thanks, of course to Tommy who puts a ton of time and effort into these events, your routing around the bridge out should be a permanent route change! Bridges??? We don't need no stinking bridges!! Oh, One cannot forget the efforts of Nate Morgenstern who cooked some really tasty BBQ Chicken!