

PA 1000K

I've said before that there is no such thing as an easy 600K, because even the flat ones subject riders to fatigue that can not be duplicated on shorter rides. So it naturally follows that there is no such thing as an easy 1000K! This being said, the 622 miles that Tom Rosenbauer put together, to make this ride, offered some of the most challenging climbs in the area... "The area." Well, to be clear, the area, in this case, extends to the northeastern corner of Pennsylvania!

In these reports, I always mention the people I happen to be riding with, so this report will be no different as far as that goes. Timothy Argo, Daniel Blumenfeld, Crista Borrás, Bill Beck, (Who I am not sure if I am going to forgive after that photo he took of me at Blairstown!) Joe Brown, Rick Carpenter, Greg Conderacci, Mary E Crawley, David Goodwin, Guy Harris, Jim Logan, Andrea Matney, Chris Mento, George Metzler, Emily O'Brien, Kelly Smith, Chuck Wood, Billy Olsen, and of course, me, Steve Scheetz. I listed everyone, because even the people I was not riding with for a long period of time, I did share some time with, and did chat with, so there you have it, the entire field of the PA 1000K!

For some reason, I can never seem to be able to sleep effectively the evening before a big event. Did this one qualify? Well, I remember bolting up right, jumping out of bed, thinking I was late, only to look at the clock as it was saying 10:21PM... I am thinking that oh yes, this qualifies! While I did manage to get back to sleep, the alarm ripped me, (they are very cruel that way,) back into reality right at 2AM. Having packed everything the night before, all I had to do was jump in the car and go. The idea of thinking about anything at 2AM was simply bad, so I made sure that I did not have to. I toyed with the idea of riding out to the start, but decided against it due to the problem of logistics, the transportation of drop bags, and whatever else I was not thinking of, at the time.

4:00AM came around next door to instantly! Knowing most everyone on the list above, I barely got to make the hello rounds before it was time to leave. There it was; the rider meeting followed shortly by the rider take off.

The terrain of the first 33 miles can be characterized as rolling, and it would take us through Hellertown, Bethlehem, and then all the way to the base of the

Blue Mountain Ridge, close to the Ski area. I rode this section, mostly, with Dan B, who was riding his recumbent, although there was a large group that had both tandems in it, and pretty much everyone else that we were sort of mixed in and out of. It was actually pretty cool, because I don't usually ride with the people who registered for this 1000K, and it was very nice to chat in that setting. Once we got to the first control, I was in and out in the time it took to check in. Needing/wanting nothing there, I was looking to roll out as soon as possible. Rick C was also ready to go, so we took off together.

We had a very nice set of roads for the next segment. The climb to the top of the ridge is actually a reasonable climb, the descent COULD take a rider all the way to "Ludicrous Speed!" The rest of the way to Fox Gap is the reason why I love riding in Carbon County. Smooth roads with lightly rolling hills, the riding just feels nice. Anyone who has ever done the Gap Gallup, hosted by the Lehigh Wheelmen Association, he/she has ridden these roads and he/she knows exactly what I am talking about! However, like all good things, we arrived at the bottom of Fox Gap entirely too soon! Some riders climb better than others, knowing that this was still one of the FIRST climbs of the ride, I took it easier than usual, which is to say I practically crawled up the side of the ridge! Knowing that everyone would be at the top ahead of me, I settled on the notion that I would be able to catch some on the descent. Knowing the roads of the course was extremely helpful to this end, but there is one distraction, and that is the single level house that was built with ramparts and golden dog statues on its roof. Somehow, I always pause whenever I pass that house... Those reading this, who have no idea what I am talking about, let me put it this way... Some houses are built in places where they should not be. For example, there is this mansion built with a Mexican motif along a route where there is nothing but trailer parks. This is an oddity, to be sure. However, this house with the ramparts? Fortunately, I have seen it enough times that it almost did not faze me, so I kept on rolling. My bottles were pretty dry by the time I arrived at the top of Fox Gap, so when I made it to Portland, eight miles later, I was really looking for water! David G had the same idea, and we chatted a bit while we filled up our bottles. Greg C and

Andrea M came around the corner as we were standing there, and when we all went across the bridge, I recall pointing toward the Delaware Water gap.. I didn't notice that they had stopped until I was all the way across, but when I went back, I was amazed to find that they were taking photos in almost the exact same spot that the group I was with used on Tom R's 300K. Anyway, it was one of those views that is peerless, and when I see a view like that, I stop wondering why I ride!

The rest of the way to Blairstown was uneventful, the roads are relatively quiet and smooth, and we made excellent progress. To say good things about this area really makes me want to say something like: "I would never have known I was in New Jersey!" Would that be wrong? All the way to the control, the roads were flawless, and in addition to that, we were riding in the shade. We met up with everyone who had gone ahead. I remember really looking forward to the orange brownies that we bought the last time we went through this area, but alas, there were none to be found.

Shoving off, I was not feeling 100%, though I could not figure out why. The next leg was even more scenic than the last, but it turned out that it was the most problematic, for me. I was drinking, but the day was warm and humid, so I was feeling the effects of dehydration. I was taking salt, but with two major climbs, and one heavy duty minor climb, my legs were cramping at regular intervals with less than 100 miles in them. What was worse was what happened all the way up the second major climb. I only had to unclip once, but my performance level was down in the sub basement... While I knew what was wrong, I also knew that fixing it would take time, time I did not want to take. It was frustrating knowing that there was not a thing I could do about what was happening until I reached the next control in Barryville, though after I relayed this to Tom, I believe I may have left the impression that I was considering dropping out. I say this because I got the distinct impression that he was trying to talk me out of such action. Well, that was cool, but I didn't want to hear it... I was in a place where I knew what needed to be done, and I wanted no distractions from it. so I did what I could to assure him that I just needed some time to sort things out.... In the immortal

words of Marshall Ulrich: "I had to give myself a little talk and say: "So I'm suffering. Big deal. I expect to suffer, and really, I just don't care."

With that in mind, I got back on the bike and headed northwest toward Hawley. I was reminded of the 600K over the next couple of roads, because they were identical. Anyone who read my report on the 600K will remember a point where Maile Neel was nearly blown off of her bike, and I decided, at the time, that rather than continuing forward, we should take shelter from the wind under a big oak tree. Well, coming upon the tree again, I thought about taking a photo to send Maile's way. However, according to Maile, the tree was unrecognizable without the black skies and lightning bolts, so I guess I will have to go back sometime when there is another storm and take a shot of it then... Lake Wallenpaupack was a welcome sight, stopping at a convenience store to replenish, since I was still feeling pretty low, I did not make a long stop of it, in fact, I continued on as quickly as possible, stopping yet again in the thriving metropolis of "Gravity." It is funny the way things turn out, because Gravity seems to be a hop skip and a very HUGE jump to the top of the next ridge! By now I was starting to feel better, though I was still riding slower than usual and my legs still felt a few twinges, now and again, that let me know that I was still not completely out of the weeds. The descent to Carbondale was a welcome relief to the massive climb to the top of the ridge. Arriving at said descent, I pedaled a few power strokes before settling into my aero crouch, hovering over my seat with my nose about an inch off of the end of my aerobars, and my hands in the drops. I feel the most comfortable hitting ludicrous speed in this position, because I have the illusion of control! Moving easily toward the town, I know that I was somewhere either side of 60 MPH, and this was at least the fourth time of the day this happened. Yes, going up is slow, but going down?

Tempted as I was to sign in and leave the Dunkin Donuts control in Carbondale, I decided to buy an iced coffee, sit and drink it. I was not all that surprised to see Billy Olsen rolling down the hill, but I blinked twice when I saw a smaller figure coming down right behind him in the form of Emily O'Brian, on her FIXED GEAR! How she managed to do those climbs on that bike is not

important. What is important is that she DID do those climbs on that bike, and that puts her in an entirely different category from the rest of us! Well, it was an easy decision to ride with Billy and Emily, especially since it was rapidly becoming dark... In the darkness, it is always better to be riding with someone than alone. So away we went, continuing through "The Endless Mountains" region of Pennsylvania... Reality? It was not so tough.. We climbed up and out of Carbondale, and that took some time, but there were a lot of rollers between us and I-81. I recalled passing a sign for Elk Mountain, and I knew that we were closing the distance. Soon we would be riding north, and finally stopping for the evening. Given the fact that my legs were still trying to cramp up, I was looking forward to a bed....

That last stretch, before the control, demonstrated a type of terrain that we had not seen most of the ride.... As amazing as it sounds, the road was actually FLAT for the last 5 miles, or so that we would be riding... Food Shower Sleep, in that order. With the wake up call set for an hour and a half, I was sure that we would be able to leave and start rolling under the cover of darkness.

Binghamton, had it been awake to see, would have been, probably, as freaked out as the police officers who watched the group of cyclists riding through the darkness all light up. Billy, Emily, and I were just cruising along chit chatting about the usual topics people chit chat about while on a 1000K, in the dark, right before the dawn of the second day, but we all seemed to be feeling pretty decently. The main group came up on us shortly after day break, so we decided to ride with them for a while. While we were cruising in a pack, I noticed that the one tandem was doing a lot of pulling, so since the flats are sort of my forte, I should be helping out at the front. What I did not count on was dropping everyone else BUT said tandem.. That was most definitely not my intention, so I slowed down a bit and waited for the group to get back together, and even though it took some time, we were all together in the rain during the last 10 miles, so that was nice. The knowledge that everyone was needing some food, was evidenced by the fact that everyone was looking around the store for that perfect food... The control in Sayre, most definitely, did not come too soon, and I think I

speaking for all of us when I say that we were very happy to see that they had a decent selection of food there!

The difference was night and day after we crossed the Susquehanna river from Sayre. Billy Emily and I went from urban to country on that bridge like the flipping of a switch. We enjoyed the road south to Towanda because it was actually pretty nice. The rolling sections, (I love rolling sections,) were almost built for me, there were some flat sections, and we did not even mind the fact that there were a couple of crunchers to keep us all honest! We were rolling through dry air at this point, and that was a welcome change from the rain leading into the last control. Andrea and Greg came up at one point, but it was a comment right before we were going to cross the bridge into Towanda, that made the difference... I was chatting with Andrea and Greg, and somehow, out of the blue, Andrea said: "It's going to rain again." This sort of thing is like saying: "I am really happy that there were no flats during the ride..." (And saying this while there are still more than 5 miles to go to the finish) Certain things just are not said on rides! Well, Andrea proved this one out, because it started raining less than 2 minutes from when she made the statement.... Thanks Andrea, thanks a lot!! Emily had been talking about how she was having a craving for scrapple, so it was a very easy decision to stop at a local diner, hang out, and eat... This is one of the things that makes the long Brevets fun.. Riding through some town and spending a little time there. I have driven past/through Towanda, several times, but I never considered stopping, until I was there on my bike.

Now that we were all fed, had coffee, and were feeling pretty good; we took off to the next control in the town of Canton. This was a pretty cool section. Lots of ups and downs, but the road was quiet, and peaceful. The only disturbance in the silence was the noise created by the squeaking of my chain from all of the rain we rode through earlier that morning.. However, now that we had lots of sun, the squeaking did not matter.... In fact, sun has a way of making everyone feel much better about everything in general. "What my frame split in two? Oh that is OK, at least the Sun is out..." Well, maybe not that good, but close! Remembering what was on the elevation profile, I identified our proximity to

Canton when I started noticing the huge ridge looming in front of us. A few more ups and downs and we were rolling into town... Even if we did not see riders leaving as we were pulling in, we would have known that this was the place by the quart of 10w30 sitting on the sidewalk in front of the control. My first order of business, before signing in, even, was to do something about that squeak in my chain! THAT would have become very annoying as the ride continued forward!

Over all, we did not spend much time at the control, especially since we spent so much time at the diner in Towanda. We were ready to ride fairly quickly, all things considered, so away we went, heading to the ridge in front of us. Roads can be cruel sometimes, and this particular one was not an exception. The elevation profile had this gigantic spike with what could only be described as hair on top. Well, not knowing the road, it came as a complete shock to me when I lost count on the string of hills, resembling the Manayunk Wall's lower half in steepness, after 7. Also, each up hill was a half mile in length. This stretch lasted 17 miles, and took what seemed like forever, yet only lasted about an hour and a half. To the next control was 70 miles, but I saw a lot of down hill, on the map profile, so I don't think any of us was not really worried about time. Right then, we were only thinking of the descent into the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania as we rode through English Center. The view was breath taking, as we discussed grades and laughed at the notion of having to climb up some of what looked like a sheer cliff face painted with green textured paint to resemble foliage! We continued on our trek, stopping to attempt to capture the magnificence with our cameras, but I have to say... Once I saw the results, I realized that I captured nothing.... The photo, firmly ensconced in my head could not be captured by my camera, and that was the way that was.

We saw a general store before the climb out of the Canyon, and it was a no brainer to stop and top off our fluids. This was the second major spike of the day, and while it was a long climb, it was not an unreasonable climb. I still took my time going up, Billy Olsen was feeling particularly strong as he motored up through the canyon up to the top in Haneyville. It was also at what I called the sweet spot for Emily. Certain grades she had the perfect gearing for, and she

took this climb head on. We had a conversation about just that subject when I caught up with her on the rolling section at the top. I was feeling pretty good at this time, because I DID take my time up the climb. Billy rode ahead, which was fine, but Emily and I were not about to chase him down, because we knew he would be stopping at the next control at the bottom of the spike we were now on top of. The temptation to just rip down the descent was too great.. I really don't know how fast I was going; I just know I was down the hill before I knew what hit me. Crossing the bridge into Lockhaven my calculations had the control pretty much around the corner, so I just headed in that direction... While we spent some time at this control, nobody was not about to complain It was over 90 miles since we stopped for breakfast in Towanda, so it was definitely time for something to eat.. We had another big spike to look forward to before we hit the easier terrain down to second sleep stop in Lewisburg....

This next climb was not so bad. Any climb done in the big chain ring can not possibly be THAT bad.... Of course if it does not ever end, then, maybe..... At the top of this spike, there was a little mini spike that did not look to be too terribly difficult... However, once we arrived on the side of this "mini spike" we realized the error in this assessment, because I seem to recall sucking wind going up! Anyway, that was just part of the expectation. At least it was cooling off now and we were all feeling much more comfortable as a result. We did stop to look up at the Galaxy a couple of times, because without the moon, it inspired one word from my vocabulary... "WOW!!!"

I WAS feeling better right up until I realized that we had a really long way to go to the sleep stop.... The only saving grace at this point was the fact that the road was going to be fairly easy terrain the rest of the way, so this was a good thing.

Several miles up the road, we met up with Ron, one of the volunteers manning the sleep stop. He was checking to see how we were doing, informing us that we were at the end of the pack. No, none of us were shocked at this news, we were just pacing, we had a plan, and that was that. My first course of

action was a shower. Emily and Billy decided to eat first. I can't remember what was on the TV in Ron and Barb's room, but it was something cheesy and distracting. Distraction was very welcome at this particular point because I knew that day 3 was going to come before I knew what hit me! In fact, it seemed like once I got in bed, I blinked once and the alarm was ringing... Crawling around, getting ready was a very slow process, but once I was up and awake, I was feeling pretty decent and ready to roll.

We rolled south into Sunbury, stopping for caffeine, a bit of food, and I bought some vitamin "I" for that stubborn pain that would not go away. After Sunbury, we had several ups and downs, but the variation in the terrain kept us awake as the sun came up. There were several views that bordered on spectacular as we headed south along the Susquehanna into Millersburg, and while we were still feeling good, Breakfast was most definitely in order! Stopping at a restaurant in Millersburg, We were joined by Andrea and Greg. The conversation was light, and I recall making some sort of lame joke, and when called on it, saying something like "That is about the funniest I can be on the third day of a 1000K!" For some reason people thought THAT was funny... Hmmmmm Greg and Andrea shoved off before we did, but Emily, Billy and I stayed together. The next stage was rolling as we headed east, though there were two big spikes left to climb, one on either side of the next control. Meeting Volunteer Paul S along the route was a welcome addition; he was riding his fixed gear, and escorted us up to the top of the first of these big spikes. Not being much of a climber, and having to stop half way up for a phone call, I found myself chasing after Billy and Emily on the 10 mile descent... (Did I say 10 mile? OH YEAH!) I was ripping down the side of the ridge, even though it was not much of a downgrade, I was pushing hard to catch back up, passing a bunch of motorcycles who were doing wheelies and such along the way. The next part was a bit surreal, because when I saw the two cyclists in front of me, I expected them to be Emily and Billy. However, this was not the case. Instead, it was Greg and Andrea. I was baffled that I had not caught up, but I guess I spent more time than I thought.

Continuing a pretty solid pace after the descent, I wound up catching up a mile or two before the control. It was here that we ran into and started riding with David G. He was suffering from the sleep deprivation, so we invited him to ride with us, and we would definitely keep him awake! Big spike #2 for the day was fast approaching, so we all prepared for a long slogging climb up to the top of the ridge before descending to I-78 as we made our way to the Penultimate control in Blue Ball, Lancaster County..

I was most definitely ready for the descent when it finally arrived, and I was actually feeling like it was going to be a fairly easy ride to the next control, because the way to Blue Ball, from here, was mostly rolling terrain. Billy, who had felt pretty good just kept on riding, David and I waited for Emily at a gas station, and planned out our next course of action. We stayed together, but for the rest of the distance to the control, we played leap frog with Greg and Andrea. I have only seen the view once before, but the road we were riding on gave us a clear view of Blue Ball from about 8 miles away, and to quote Emily, I was smelling the Barn Doors! Excitement built up, in me as I was thinking about getting home, and this more or less carried me in... The Penultimate Control was a postcard drop where we printed our times and signed our cards to confirm. So there we were, about to embark on the final leg of this 1000K. Is everyone sure they want to know "the REST of the story?"

After pausing briefly at the Johanna Store, near Morgantown, we received a couple of really nice breaks in the form of long descents. The first was over familiar ground, to me, and that would take us into Hopewell Park. From there, we would head up to the top of Shed Road, and descent for a while, yet again, right before we descended down to the Sckuykill River. Oh those barn doors were starting to smell rather pungent, at this time! We had a couple of climbs left, but that did not matter a bit.. We were pushing, and once we arrived into Gilbertsville, it was time to really start hammering the rest of the way home due to the fact that it started out with a downward trending rolling section, followed by a number of miles of flat road! We were really making progress, right up until we saw the flashing lights at the head of the road we were supposed to turn onto.

Apparently there was a head on collision, but everyone was OK, despite all of this, we were not allowed to ride down the road. Instead, I knew the area enough to take us around the affected area, because there was NOTHING that was going to get in the way of us finishing! Did those Barn Doors have fresh paint??? Rolling around everything and sliding up onto 563, I could almost smell the soup Tommy was cooking! (Oh we still had more than 10 miles to go, but they were flat miles) Well, it was flat with one roller... Now despite everything, those miles seemed to take forever, despite the fact that we were making very solid time! Pulling into the Hostel, I dropped my bike on the ground, staggered into the building, 67 hours and 28 minutes after I left, and proceeded to drink some warm coke as I was considering the food options!

Most everyone was still there, and that was good, because everyone was recapping the day. It was right about this time that we heard some news about the accident. Apparently the tandem with Mary C and Kelly S was being passed by a car that misjudged the distance between it and the oncoming truck and they were sort of stuck. Apparently, Andrea and Greg happened into that area around the time Mary and Kelly were allowed to leave, and they finished up with the tandem. It was very cool seeing that everyone made it back safely, and despite the fact that there was one DNF, I am thinking that it was better that it was a medical issue, and not an accident of some sort.

First of all I want to convey my respect and congratulations to everyone on this event. There was nothing easy about it, and while I did not realize it from the very beginning, I was in the presence of some really awesome riders. Emily, whose skills on a bike are nothing less than super human! Viewing her descending could be compared to viewing a Picasso... Her pedal stroke is so smooth and so fluid; it truly is art in motion! Crista and Chuck? I never imagined a tandem doing such things... All that AND great conversation too! Billy Olsen who did a 1200K the week before, AND delivering such a performance? One word... "WOW!" Dan B who was just a blast to chat with, chose THIS ride, to be his longest ride ever, on a recumbent??? This 622 miles with 48,000+ feet of climbing???

Finally, I need to thank Tommy Rosenbauer, for hosting yet another first class brevet! I believe I speak for everyone when I say that I had an AWESOME weekend! I look forward to next year!