

270 Mile BANG! (PA 300K Report)

My buddy Scotty has a way with words when it comes to rides, so I am taking a page out of his book for the title of this report! My morning started at a bit past 1:30 on Saturday. It took me a few minutes to crawl out of bed, walk to the next room to shut my alarm off.. (Thus making sure I was awake.) I quickly dressed, took care of some last minute items, and with my back pack, filled with some stuff, I took off in the direction of Lake Nockamixon. I checked the mileage twice over the past couple weeks, but I still can't figure out how it was that I managed to make it to the Hostel, 55 miles away, in just over two hours! One explanation is terrain, as in there is an awful lot of flat between my place and the hostel, but in any case, whatever it was, the clock does not lie!

I left around 2:40ish and while the trip was pretty uneventful, I did notice that there were quite a large number of drunks out on the roads!! Mental note to self.. Let's not do that again! There was a little bit of fog, though nothing like my trip in on the 200K a couple of weeks before, there was a point where I did not realize I had merged onto Rt313, from Minsi Trail Road, for about half a mile, and then it was because of the fact that there was a broken yellow line in the middle of the road.. I thought: "Oh, I must be on 313, well, that is interesting... Then, after some thoughts about running late, I pushed on.. My arrival was somewhere between 4:45 and 4:50. There was a few minutes to say hello to some of my friends before the ride meeting, but while I was ready to leave at 5:00AM when everyone else was heading out, I decided to linger a bit, have some oatmeal, drink half a cup of coffee, and chat a bit with Tom Rosenbauer, (who commented how obvious it was that I really was not in much of a rush as I scooped a second helping of oatmeal in my dish...) I decided that since I pushed really hard to get there, I should make sure I was well fueled before starting the 300K, besides; do I look like I would ever willingly miss a meal?

The route from the Hostel to Cherryville, (the first control point, near to the base of the Blue Mountain climb,) was actually pretty nice. It was almost as if someone created most of them for me to push the big gears on! Making really good time, I caught up with Dr. Len Zawodniak and Maile Neel, two of the people I was planning to ride with during the day.

The next stretch took us up Blue Mountain, where, at the top, we were treated to a really spectacular view! Unfortunately, part of that view was at the fog at the bottom of the descent! On the way down, we all disappeared into the mist, and the two things that were going through my mind, involved crashing into some unseen pothole of some sort, or being run over by some maniac in a car who could not really see us in the fog. Somewhere, not too far after the turn, we acquired another member of our group in the form of Victor Urvantsev. We rolled across the valley on the north side of the ridge for miles, and the only comment I have for the roads of Carbon County is that they have very little traffic, they are pretty well maintained, and they offer some spectacular views!! (Anyone who has ever done the Gap Gallop ride has ridden on some of these roads.)

The next point of interest is the climb to Fox Gap. Typically 2 miles long, there was some mercy shown and we climbed an easier way up the ridge to about the halfway point. My water bottles were pretty dry by the time I arrived at the top of the climb, but we were extremely fortunate to find Tom Rosenbauer there manning the “Secret Control” (complete with NEON sign for extra stealthiness.) Anyway, Tommy had all sorts of goodies in his car for us, but the thing that he had that was really treasured, was the Iced Water jug! I think I speak for all of us when I say that we were so happy to see that! It was here that we were joined by Dan Aaron, and Mordecai Silver. Now most people know how much I like to talk, this ride was no exception.. We all chatted going up hills, going down hills, and even rolling along the flats! I really enjoyed riding with this group! On the way down, Tom changed the route so that this one matched the PA 200k of a couple weeks ago. I have to say that this descent is much more scenic, and just way better than the original route! We rolled on familiar roads through the town of Portland, and Maile snapped some really spectacular shots of the river and Delaware Water Gap!

Once in Blainstown, we met up with Paul Shapiro, Brian the “Ice Man” (and New NJ RBA) as well as Joe Kratovil who happened to be scouting the NJ 300K that will be happening on MAY 17. Not that I needed reminding, but we were reminded, yet again, how social our group is.

Shortly after we left, Maile’s right shifter cable snapped, and due to a mistake on my part, (a mistake made from my being a bike parts snob!) it took us much longer to fix than it should have. Maile and I DID manage to put it all together, and continue the ride

north up over the ridge and down to Millbrook. Did I mention how amazed everyone was that she had spare shifter cables in her bike bag? It never ceases to amaze people how resourceful a randonneur/randonneuse can be when he/she needs to be!! Since nobody else had a cable, she would have been pretty much done for the day if she did not have the foresight to carry a 20 gram cable in her bike bag! Anyway, heading north from there, we were treated to some really gorgeous scenery as we made our way to the turn around point another 20 miles up the road. We had sent everyone up the road, while we fixed the shifter cable, so it was no surprise to pass Lenny and Victor, who were on the way back, as we made our way up to the Deli that marked the halfway point of the 300K.

We were surprised to see Tommy Rosenbauer again, particularly since he was actually dressed to ride! Rejoining with Dan and Mordecai, we had a group of five, as we started heading back to the Hostels riding up some “imaginary hills” the trend was still down, or flat on the way back, so we did not do terribly bad regarding time Tom turned back to his car a couple of miles after we passed the Millbrook Village, but not before I noticed a black bear standing in a field as I glanced through a bunch of trees while I was riding down one of the rollers. Later I mentioned to the rest of our group who were a bit miffed at my not mentioning it, but truth be told, it did not actually register till I was too far away to do anything about it...

Further down the course, we rolled through the town Delaware Water Gap, Continuing south, we passed through Portland on our way to Belvidere, and the day was positively spectacular at this point! It was cooling down, but the sun was still out, and it was just showing off how green everything was! Crossing the river into NJ, I made the strategic call to Mitch Lesack. While I was not there yet, I was becoming concerned about falling asleep on my bike on the ride home from the hostel. My plan was to have Mitch meet me somewhere, and ride with me on a sizable chunk of my ride home, and let it be known that I have the bestest friends in the whole world! Carol Lesack, who answered the phone, told Mitch that she didn't want to hear about me crashing somewhere, so he had better ride out and see to it that I stayed awake for the last part of the trip! (Of course, Mitch will use any excuse to get on the bike and go for a ride, and helping a buddy out while he was doing something stupid was as good as any!)

Our next control point was a pizza restaurant, and it was here that Dan and Mordecai decided to hang out and leave. Maile and I both interested in finishing as soon as possible decided to ride on, so we hit the thoroughly familiar (to me) roads that finished the rest of the course. The lights went out, along a rolling section heading to Reiglesville, but we were still moving at a pretty decent pace as we made our way across the bridge, and onto 611 south. Mitch met us a few miles up the road, and it was VERY nice knowing that I was going to have company for my post ride, ride home.

Finally arriving at the Hostel at 10:00PM, I was just looking for some food, some caffeine, and believe it or not, I was feeling cold, so having heat was a good thing... Yes, even I, sometimes feel cold! I am not sure how long we stayed, but eventually I managed to get it together enough so that Mitch and I could leave. Shivering in my sleeveless jersey, most of the way to Mitch's house, I still managed to find a way to come close to falling asleep, on my bike! So let me shock everyone to the core when I say that when Mitch offered to DRIVE me from his house (not quite halfway between the hostel and my house) to mine, I did not complain about the severe arm twisting! (Did I mention that I have some really awesome friends?)

For the day I would up with around 270ish miles, and while about 90 of them were by myself, the miles that counted were ridden with a bunch of really cool people! Next will be Tommy Rosenbauer's 400K.. (I will be driving to that one!)