

## Enduralytes Are Not Enough

The race started as it always does, with the playing of the national anthem. There was some fellowship along the first several miles as we threaded our way up to and through San Francisquito Canyon, and while nobody was drafting, we were all riding in close proximity to each other. I briefly exchanged greetings with some of the other racers, but one really stood out. Emily "Archaeopteryx" O'Brien, on her fixed gear is without doubt one of the most impressive people I have seen on a bike! She did Boston Montreal Boston on that same bike earlier this year, and we had a chance to chat about that. I still can't comprehend how she managed that course on a fixed gear, but she did it! You GO GIRL!! The aspect of this race that I like the most has to do with the people. More so the ones that are seen regularly, but that will be discussed later. During this first 23 miles, I would characterize the climb as something more like rolling hills, rather than a steady climb, no matter what the elevation profile says! By the end of this, we were all racing, and we were all pretty well strung out for the most part. My memory of this section was slightly different from what I found this year.. The hills that I remembered were more difficult than the ones I rode up this year, but a section that I remembered as being flat, was actually a gradual up grade! It wasn't a big deal, but I find it interesting how we remember things a certain way, and later we learn that they are actually different.

I must admit that I was not feeling at 100% during this first stage, though I don't remember feeling much better to the first feed zone in my last visit to the 508, so I am not thinking that this means anything. Once at the feed zone, I lost my knee warmers, and grabbed two fresh bottles, one being sustained energy, the other being Cytomax. This stop was flawless, because I was in and out quickly, and I was on my way to the descent almost before it registered that I had stopped! Once at the bottom, we were on the long flat haul into the desert. I did not notice much of a wind at this point, or at least nothing unusual as I was cruising along.

However, in less than an hour from the first stop, I found the wind, and I found myself needing more water and Sustained Energy. The wind, which slowed everyone pretty effectively, served well to dampen my mood, and I am sure everyone else was feeling slower as a result. Once I started the “Windmill Climb,” I was feeling very nauseous, and I elected to switch to water and Cytomax, leaving the Sustained Energy out of the equation. This slowed the Nausea quite a bit, but my crew also knew that this would throw off my electrolytes.

I saw it as lacking a choice at the point where I was. My thought was to go with what went down, and hope to correct the problem later. California City was one of these corrections. I had a turkey wrap, with lots of sodium injected in the form of pickles. This did not help as much as I would have liked, because my nausea kept me from eating enough of it to really give me a strong boost. So the Slogfest continued through the wind down a road I remembered traveling over 30MPH in 2004. This year was significantly slower, although the stretch of rolling hills before the climb to Randsburg did not seem to be quite as hard. Once in Randsburg, I had a little more food, and some Enduralytes. This made me feel pretty well over the next selection of rolling hills. This section featured some of the fastest descents I found on the course in 2004. This year, the descents were slower, and the climbs were faster! Funny how that works! While I don't remember any of the descents being super fast, they were still down, and down is good! It took some time, but I managed to get into Trona at about the same time the van had to start following me with the lights. With my energy level starting to drop off, I pulled off the side of the road so that I could eat something, and I have to say that nothing tasted better than the chicken and bean burrito purchased at the gas station in Trona! I knew where we were, and I also knew that I was 50+ miles ahead at the same time when I did it in 2004... This knowledge did not help, but I was still on my bike, and there were worse things.

Stopping to eat a burrito, I was surprised that I actually felt really good about eating! I was able to wolf the whole thing down, and given the way I felt throughout the day, that was saying something dramatic! We took off and started

the climb to Panamint Valley, the last climb before Townes Pass, but in the darkness, I found this climb to be very demoralizing, because the end of the hill is not visible, and it seems to go on forever! Fortunately, one of those times when I was feeling horrible about my progress (or lack there of) I had someone in the Van to tell me that the flashing lights in the distance, in front of me, was the top of the hill! That was an important boost, and once I started down, all was right in the world!!!

On a side note, Felix's driving was superb! If I could pick a support vehicle driver, Felix is ALWAYS going to be the person I pick as A # 1! We discussed coyotes and braking while descending Townes Pass, and he said that NEVER, had he seen a coyote crossing the road while in aero at warp 9... So I found it very amusing when I was traveling, in aero, at speed, to see a coyote trot across the road in front of me! Oh there was no danger of any collision, and I think that was what made the incident funny as opposed to traumatic! I am not sure what the folks in the van thought, but I was feeling good at that point! Perhaps the best I had felt all day.

Once we got to the bottom, however, we had to ride through the wind yet again. Oh well, only another 30 some odd miles to go before we turned south, UP the pass, but out of the wind! I remember passing people along the floor of the valley, though I could not say who. The next thing I remember is starting the climb through Townes Pass and seeing Chris Kostman, Camera in hand, taking photos!

On another side note, the people, everyone in the race staff the crews even the competitors are just great! There is a camaraderie associated with the 508 that includes everyone! Chris always finds a way to make everyone feel welcome, and to illustrate this, some in his race staff are veteran racers themselves.

In the 2004 race, I remember missing the turn at the top of the windmill climb, and my crew, having complete confidence in my ability to navigate the course (as we drove it a couple of days before hand) weren't there to come fetch me. I believe it was team Daddy Long Legs who actually drove up to tell me that

I was going the wrong way! The point is simply this: In the sport of ultra cycling, we look out for each other along the course, and if there is a racer in need, any crew will be willing to offer support if the regular crew is not available at the time of need. That is what makes this race so much better than others.

Once Chris left, I focused on the long climb to the top of Townes Pass. It was slow, and it was plodding, but this was expected, so I just got into a rhythm and rode. There were several nature calls along the way up, and while this served to break up the monotony of the grind, in hind-sight, I think I would have been better off had I been able to keep rolling straight up without stopping.

Nearing the top, I recall looking over a guard rail, and I could see some support vehicles turning to start the climb... This view must be breath taking in the daylight! I was starting to become antsy, and the top could not come soon enough. I remember hitting a rock that I tried to avoid, and that miss-step came back to bite me seven miles later. Once we crested and started heading down, I remember being asked about five times if I wanted a jacket or a long sleeve jersey, or SOMETHING for the cold, and each time I heard the request, my response was "let's just go." So we just went, and I was really glad that I did, because like the last time I did this, the temperature increased steadily as we descended into Death Valley.

That thing that came back to bite me was a blow out, in the rear tire, about half way down! I don't remember how fast I was going, but there was no problem with being able to control stop before anything serious happened to the rim. Once stopped, Felix jumped out with my spare wheel, and away we went. Unfortunately, I put a thicker tire on my spare wheel thinking I would need it later in the course, but I forgot to make sure that it fit my bike! (mental note to self.. Make sure to check to see that the larger tires fit!) Anyway, they did not line up perfectly with my rear breaks, so I felt and heard it rubbing the rest of the way into Stove Pipe Wells. We paused here so that I could get my regular wheel back on, and eat something. I am pretty sure that I was having some symptoms of Hyponatremia through the next stretch to Furnace Creek, because on roads where I thought I was flying, I was moving about 7-10 MPH slower than I thought.

Death Valley has a peculiar smell to it also.. Along this stretch between Stove Pipe Wells to Furnace Creek, it was one of the things I was thinking about. I didn't remember that in 2004, but then again, in 2004, we were fighting a 40 MPH headwind, so our minds were on something else entirely! The first sign that we were closing in on Furnace Creek came in the form of the camp grounds, but only a few minutes later, we were greeted by the welcoming lights from the time station! My team kept trying to feed me, but at every suggestion, my stomach cringed. I think I settled for a bottle of ensure, but I am by no means certain.

We continued across the valley floor, and this consisted of some ups some downs some lefts some rights... Death Valley roads have a peculiar way of navigating.. There is a kind of zig zag pattern that sort of numbs the brain! Towards the end I kept thinking that I was getting close to Jubilee Pass, but then another ZigZag presented itself bringing a suitable groan from me that, thankfully, nobody else heard.... Many racers are riding across the Valley, and every so often I would see the flashing lights of a support van.. Catching up, I would notice that it was someone I passed before... There is a second type of leap frog game played through the night, but it was good to know that I was not the only person there. After a stop at Bad Water, I prepared myself for yet another 10 or so of these zig zags before the road rolls through what seems to be the middle of the valley and it stays there till Jubilee Pass. By the time I arrived at the bottom of Jubilee Pass, the sun was starting to rise. Even though I wanted to be in the dark along this and the next two climbs, I did not really mind seeing the expanse of the valley growing as I climbed. There is a certain beauty in the desert, but few places illustrate it quite as impressively as viewing the valley from three quarters of the way up Salsbury Pass. When I looked behind me this vast expanse filled my vision!

I passed several people heading up Jubilee Pass, and even before we arrived at the bottom, we passed one or two parked off the road with people taking naps. (that leap frog effect through the night) Heading up Salsbury Pass, Picachu was in close proximity to me, and I saw his support team quit a bit... (what a great group of people!) In case I don't get the chance later, congrats on

finishing!! Great Effort!! Shoshone was a non-stop time station, because the demoralizing head wind I fought against from the top of Salsbury Pass, to the bottom turn, had become a monster tail wind pushing me along as I pedaled effortlessly. I am not sure what my cruising speed was, but I found myself at the start of the climb to Ibex Pass with very little time passing. Things slowed significantly here, my monster tail wind evaporated, and I started to bake in the sun.

After an obscenely slow descent, I informed my crew that I was feeling very uncomfortable, so we stopped briefly to do a clothing change.. The rest of the way to Baker was relatively flat, but the way this section is laid out, it feels so much longer than it is! First of all, it is possible to see a long string of power lines from a long way out. It didn't matter how fast I was riding, they appeared to keep moving away from me! Then, after an excruciating period of time, they are there!

My final side note has to mention the sky around this area and the interesting cloud formations. Maybe I was hallucinating, but they resembled upside down Hershey's Kisses! MMMMMMMMMMMmmmmmmmm Chocolate! Nah, I knew I was not hallucinating, because if I were, right next to the chocolate, I would have seen a Morton's salt shaker! Once the town of Baker becomes visible, It is still a long way off, but I was thinking of food, and food is a powerful motivator for me! I just kept on riding, and it was there soon enough.

I rolled into the control point feeling peculiar.. I am not sure what was wrong, but something was definitely amiss! Now I may have made a mistake by sitting for as long as I sat in Baker, but I was waiting for food, and the line, at the Mad Greek, (I think) the only restaurant in town, was taking longer than anyone in my team imagined. After some time passed, Mary Louise came out with a cheeseburger and French fries. I still felt nauseous, but I forced the burger down, because I knew I was riding with a severe caloric deficit, and I has some serious need...

Not looking forward to the next segment, I knew that it was not very long, so gritting my teeth when I felt my raw parts hit the saddle, I pushed on. I was unbelievably stiff after the long stop, but the stop was a necessity, so I can't say

that it was a mistake. Since if was also feeling raw, riding across the cattle guards, while sitting, was NOT an option! For the next hour I crawled up the climb to Kelso, and I know that I was starting to hallucinate. I saw my support van as a tiny speck in the distance, and seeing it there reminded me of the last segment and the power lines. A racer passed me, though I can't remember who it was. The only cogent thoughts I was having were the ones that said that I was becoming a danger to myself remaining on the bike, but as fortunes have it, my team turned around to check up on me, and as soon as I saw the van start heading in my direction, I stopped, pulled off the side of the road, and waited. I don't remember what I said to them, but I know that in very short order, I was laying on the floor of the van... My next memory was of Felix saying "Oh, you are awake!" After some time and some discussion, we agreed that my condition was not good, and that I would not be able to make it within 48 unless I wanted to put myself into a lack of salt coma!

My issue was that I needed an infusion of electrolytes, but with the caloric deficit, and the sodium deficit, I could not bring the levels back in a short enough period of time to be able to finish. I thought I could do it with Enduralytes, but hindsight says that Enduralytes were not enough. What I need to finish, will have to be determined in the stretch of time that it takes for me to prepare for my next trip to the Furnace Creek 508!

I don't want to thank my crew.. I NEED to thank my crew! Mary Louise Molieri and Felix "Magpie" Gallo were the absolute BEST! Everyone who has done this event knows that nobody can do this race without support, and I can't think of any words to dispute this wisdom! Without my crew force feeding me at some points, I would not have made it anywhere close to where I wound up... Felix drove the whole way, and they both took care of me when I was at my worst! Thank you so much, you are the BEST! I will crew for either of you any time! Need a wrench?

I would also like to thank Chris Kostman for hosting this event, and thank you to everyone who helped make this possible! I hope to see everyone out in the desert again!!