

Day 3 Update

September 11, 2007

Day Three: Mountains in the Desert

With a well-deserved and greatly appreciated decrease in mileage scheduled for day three (140 miles), the race team got to the latest start to date. Still, the riders, again split into two groups, were on the move by 6:45. One group consisting of Bruce, Mike, Nir, and Pat began the day riding from the hotel in Yarnell, a small secluded mountain town. Meanwhile the other group, Frank, Walt, and Kyle, drove on to Prescott to tackle the second leg of the distance.

Originally the bike team had planned to travel along the route used by the Race Across America Marathon (RAAM) which followed the 10 and route 40 to Williams, AZ. However, Frank had a chance to speak with the director of the RAAM, who said that next year the race would change the route to a road that led through Sedona, AZ, which offered more elevation and much less traffic. While the distance was slightly less, the riders agreed on tackling the shorter though steeper route through Sedona.

At 9:00am Walt began the day's riding for the second group on a road surrounded by massive granite boulders outside of Prescott. As usual, he put in a long, solid ride. Kyle and Frank rotated in as the three tackled a mountain topping out at 7,000 ft of elevation. Upon reaching the summit, Walt and Frank teamed up to for a scenic race down a twelve mile downhill towards Jerome, AZ. As the pair coasted through the Jerome's quaint town center, they admired the amazingly vast expanses of the majestic red cliffs in the Arizona countryside. Frank and Walt covered 20 and 28 miles when Kyle eagerly took over at the base of the mountain in Cottonwood and took a 23 mile tour through magnificent rock formations that surrounded route 89A. Amazingly, the 92 degree midday sun was refreshingly cooler than the previous day. For most of the group, the first visit to Sedona was an awe-inspiring and memorable one. With camera's flashing and bike brakes screeching, the riders marveled at the surrounding vistas towards.

Meanwhile the first group was taking on the first section of the mileage. Mike, Bruce, and Nir began at 8:00am. From Yarnell, the group sped downhill from 5,000 ft to 4,000ft of elevation through the craggy, desolate landscape. The group rotated Pat onto the road, who was accompanied intermittently by Bruce, Nir, and Mike, for 25 miles. They then climbed to 6,100ft and rode on to cover their 50 miles up route 89 through a surprisingly lush pine-covered forest; not the image usually conjured by thoughts of the Arizona landscape. Penn riders Bruce and Mike each recorded 40 miles.

After completing their total mileage goal for the day(130), the two groups rendezvoused at their hotel and Flagstaff, then headed towards Phoenix for an evening fund-raising event. For the third straight day the core group of senior riders, Bruce, Mike, Walt, and Frank covered the vast majority of the distance with 128 combined miles. The colt members of the team, Kyle and Pat continued to provide support which was integral to the team's overall success. From the arid, cactus-laden deserts, up through mountain forests, and across a massive expanse of cliffs exposing veins of red and gold rock, Arizona provided the Alumni Bike Race team with pleasantly diverse backdrops and an exciting third day.

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