

## Day 7 Update

Alamosa, CO to Trinidad, CO

Climbing one mountain range over 10,000 feet was an achievement for the Alumni Bike Race team, but summiting two in one day was an outright battle. Beginning in Alamosa, CO at 7,500 feet of elevation, the team broke up into two groups. Junior riders Kyle and Jay joined the Penn van members Mike and Nir to mitigate the effects of losing Murray Zeller, who finished his stint and returned to his home in San Francisco, and Bruce who was sick with a severe cold. Pat, Walt and Frank comprised the Bucknell van crew. By 8:00am both teams embarked on the second day of steep ascents and exhilarating downhill plunges that would sprawl over 130 miles of Colorado mountainside.

The Penn van headed out along route 160, rotating their four riders every 10 miles, a pair at a time. From the onset of the day's ride, the Colorado winds were blowing harshly and the cyclists struggled to keep their usual paces. A lengthy tour across tussock fields provided some challenging riding, and after a brief downhill 33 miles into the course, the Penn group arrived at the foot of the La Via Pass. The gradual ascent through the pass began easily enough, with the course rolling past impressive views of the mighty Mt. Blanca. At 14,345 ft the mountain towered prominently against a soft foreground of wildflowers. Nir made a strong run at the entire 14 mile, 2,000 ft climb while Jay and Kyle switched off as his riding partner. As they churned up elevation the brush gave way to mountain pines and golden green aspen trees. After reaching the zenith of the first pass, Jay and Nir launched down a steep 13-mile slope, the mountain winds blowing so hard that the riders were blown sideways despite ducking behind their handlebars. When the ground finally leveled out, Mike, Kyle, and Nir rode into the picturesque little town of La Veta.

Meanwhile, the Bucknell team finished the first mountain pass with Walt's solid effort and was already trekking up the second Rocky Mountain Range. Pat and Frank tag-teamed the ascent, winding slowly up 3,000 ft by way of the Cuchara Pass. Just before the summit the team was joined by Bruce, who decided he would no longer be side-lined by his illness. He joined the group for 22 miles of the long rolling hills that descended through the green Colorado countryside into Trinidad. The Penn Team rolled along behind them after stopping to admire the gorgeous blue waters of Monument Lake. As flyfishermen waded into the waters and families picnicked on the sun-soaked shores, the riders marveled at serenity of the Rockies.

With all riders putting in long, steep and hard-fought rides, the final numbers for the day were impressive. Senior riders Mike, Frank, and Walt recorded 47, 64, and 84 miles, junior alumni riders Pat, Jay, and Kyle logged 62, 52, 55 miles, and Nir contributed a solid day's work with 72 miles. During a day of intense riding, the sublimely sunny weather and pristine mountain views provided inspiration and awe to all the riders, many of whom voted the day as the most pleasant of the trip.

With the two-day adventure over the Rocky Mountains behind them, the Alumni Bike Race team pulled into their hotel in Trinidad, CO tired but extremely proud of its collective achievement. The cyclists ate dinner and retired to their rooms excited for Day 8's long downhill journey into Kansas.