

Day 10 Update

September 18, 2007
Eureka, KS to Hermitage, MO

After two days of trudging across the Kansas Plains, the Alumni Bike Race team members were weary of the abuse delivered by punishing crosswinds. Waking up at 6:30 in the morning after little sleep and nine days of biking, many of the riders were slow to pack the vans. The Penn group of Bruce, Mike, and Nir reunited and added Pat to their crew. Because the Bucknell group had an Alumni dinner in Kansas City, MO planned for the evening, they decided to head out early to begin their share of the ride. After stopping in Yates Center for a Kansas country breakfast, the Bucknell group drove on to their start point at Fort Scott. Only five miles into the ride Walt and his junior riding partner Jay reached the Kansas-Missouri state line. There the Bucknell group celebrated its arrival in the sixth state of their journey. Meanwhile the Penn group, having started in Eureka, KS, marched through the last of the windy Kansas landscape.

The Bucknell group rode in pairs across the still windy but slightly more manageable back roads of western Missouri. Taking turns every 20 miles the twin pairs of Walt and Jay and Frank and Kyle roared up and down a series of rolling hills. The appearance of green trees and shrubs, the most noticeable difference between Kansas and Missouri, brought smiles to the faces of the weary riders. Golden wheat fields gave way to sparse areas of forest and lush green cow pastures, reminding the alumni riders of their Pennsylvania campuses and inspiring them to push on towards their ultimate destinations.

A day after reaching the halfway point of the race across America, many of the team members voiced their mixed feelings, describing a strong desire to finish the race and finally catch up on sleep along while also hoping that the fun and the extraordinary experiences of biking across the country would never end. During long, largely predictable stretches of rural highway, the cyclists' minds turned towards their distant homes, from the hills of Santa Monica to the calm waters of Lake George. Undoubtedly, the riders were beginning to miss their families and friends, but in the same breath they shared an unwavering sense of gratitude for the chance to partake in such an amazing adventure.

By the late afternoon, Pat joined up with the Bucknell van and the group of five Bucknell Alumni finished their miles and headed for their hotel in Hermitage, MO. From there, the group rode two and a half hours northwest to Kansas City to meet up with Bucknell Alumni, all of whom were excited to show their support for the race. Bruce, Mike and Nir rode on without Pat and for the remaining 45 miles of their section of the day's race. From that point on, senior riders Mike and Bruce rode with conviction and contributed impressive mileage. Upon finishing their section, the Penn riders drove to the hotel and took advantage of a rare opportunity for rest and recuperation.

Late in the night, the Bucknell group headed back from a delicious dinner, well-fed and exhausted, but all the while anxious to continue their remarkable journey to across fourteen states in nineteen days. With only nine days remaining, the Alumni Bike Race team prepared for the long, grueling days ahead and felt thankful for every second.

Written by Jay Kosa

Photography by Jake Alba and Frank Arentwoicz