

Day 12 Update

September 20, 2007
Lake St. Louis, MO to Effingham, IL

Up early for a long day of riding, the two groups of the Alumni Bike Race team drove out of the Lake St. Louis Day's Inn hotel and headed east. As usual, the two teams decided to split the mileage evenly, and the Bucknell team took the first leg. Walt, Frank, Pat, and Nir began the day by navigating the busy streets leading away from the St. Louis suburbs. After only a few miles the group reached route 67's Clark Bridge and the mighty Mississippi River. The cable-stayed bridge was named for the William Clark, the famous companion of Meriwether Lewis whose two-year expedition mapped out much of what is now the western United States. Though they were headed in the opposite direction, the Bucknell riders felt like explorers in their own rite.

The sky was an uncharacteristically dull gray, though the heat and the humidity of the previous day's ride persisted. Frank and Walt each started off strong in the morning, putting away 50 miles before noon. By that time the riders' thoughts turned towards the incredible one million dollars in pledges and donations they received from Bucknell alumni and friends of Bucknell. To honor the contributions, Frank, Walt, and Pat decided to ride one mile for every ten thousand dollars donated. In other words, the three Bucknell Alumni committed to completing a hundred mile day, or a Century, the no-hitter of cycling. Throughout the afternoon, Walt, Pat, and Frank rode through their designated section of the 160 mile course and into the second section. The sun beat down as their muscles strained and stiffened, grinding towards their lofty goal.

Meanwhile, the senior members of the Penn group, comprised of Mike, Bruce, Kyle, and Jay, felt compelled to put in long miles of their own. They drove to the beginning of the second section in the morning, crossing the Mississippi River into Illinois, the seventh state of the cross-country race. Through the hot and stagnant air of the Illinois country-side Mike and Bruce roamed eastward. With a steady and determined pace, along with sound drafting technique, the duo covered over 80 miles.

Without any communication between the two vans, the race team members had no idea that their signature cyclists, the senior four Alumni riders, were on their way towards completing 360 combined miles in a single day. Despite warm and humid conditions, the intense day of cycling was made more bearable by pleasant vistas of endless golden soybean fields and pastures. Bruce and Mike passed through charming small towns like Vandalia, the one-time capital of Illinois. As quickly as the riders entered the picturesque towns, they left the city limits and re-entered the rural field of "The Land of Lincoln";

After arriving at their hotel in Effingham, the Penn group was slowly becoming concerned as to the whereabouts of the

other group, when Nir and Pat rode into the parking lot followed by Walt and Frank in the Bucknell Van. The foursome looked sun-burnt and exhausted, as did the Penn riders, and they greeted one another with congratulations for a record-breaking day. While the Bucknell riders rested their aching bodies, the Penn group began plans for their own century and looked forward to at Day 13 of long, flat roads toward Indianapolis.

Jay Kosa, Bucknell '07

Photography by Jake Alba and Frank Arentowicz