

## Day 15 Update

September 23, 2007

Day 15: London, OH to Parkersburg, WV

In London, Ohio, the morning air was cool, crisp, and fitting for the beginning of Autumn in Midwestern America. On a day of seasonal transition, the riders of the Alumni Bike Race team reflected upon how incredibly their surroundings had changed, and how their surroundings had changed them.

Four senior alumni riders (Frank, Walt, Bruce, Mike, Murray, and Ted), four junior riders (Nir, Jay, Kyle, and Pat), and two members of the film crew (Jesse and Jake) began the trip in early September as either long-time friends, mere acquaintances, or complete strangers eager and curious about how such a motley crew would make it across the country. On this chilly morning in London, the team members could coordinate their hotel departure without speaking. One-time strangers laughed and joked like old friends, and there was little ambiguity regarding the goals of the day: Get up early, ride hard throughout the day, check-in and meet for dinner, post blogs, and get some sleep. The only difference from the previous fourteen days was the alarming proximity of the race's completion date.

The Penn group began their day only shortly after the Bucknell van departed, and headed out on the 130 mile course to Parkersburg, WV. The three senior riders felt tight and weary from two astoundingly prolific days in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, during which they logged a staggering 510 miles. Scenic Route 56 was the road used for traveling through much of rural Southern Ohio. Faded barns, corn fields, and occasional town centers lined the street throughout the morning and a warm sunlight made for an exceptionally beautiful ride. After striding up and down steep rollers amongst secluded wooded hills, the team, operating on their usual three rider rotation, made its way onto the shoulder of highway route 50 by Ohio University in the town of Athens. By the time they finished his day's riding, Mike, Bruce, and Ted had recorded 60, 59, and 69 miles. In an effort to give the tired legs of the senior riders a break, Nir had contributed 109 impressive miles. Interestingly enough, he was not the day's leader in mileage.

The Bucknell van started their trip early in the morning with Walt and Frank riding the first 25 miles of farm country. After completing the mileage with ease, the pair decided that the day was too beautiful and the weather was too perfect to stop. Pat and Kyle joined them for the next 25 miles, and the foursome meandered through small towns, stopping often to soak up the scenery. In Centerville, OH the team stopped at a massive, hand-painted mural depicting the scene of the famous Centerville Pumpkin Festival in its inaugural year of 1903. The riders learned that the festival attracted pumpkin farmers from across the country and, a few miles outside of town, visited a market featuring pumpkins and gourds all shapes and sizes. Back on their bikes the Bucknell riders continued on their way towards the Ohio River. Jay rotated onto the road as Frank and Pat continued into the day's hilliest and most challenging sections. 100-ft. rollers slowed the pace of the riders but did not stop them. The pain of sore muscles was almost untraceable for the riders as they raced the roller-coaster course under a canopy of freshly turned orange and yellow tree leaves.

After having neatly 75 miles by only 2:00pm, Frank felt inspired to go for major distance. With his sixtieth birthday only a day away, Frank decided that he would complete two miles for each day of his age. Pat, Kyle, and Jay rotated as Frank's riding partner as he tore up long, uphill sections of highway, finally stopping only miles from the endpoint at Parkersburg, West Virginia. He recorded a new Alumni Bike Race Team high mileage with 120 continuous miles in a mind-blowingly fast seven hours. A few minutes later the Bucknell crew cross into West Virginia, the tenth state of the trip and the home of the punishing Appalachian Mountains. With a short but grueling day of riding and Frank's Birthday celebration waiting in Day 16, the riders retired for the evening content, tired, and thankful for four more days of adventure.

Jay Kosa, Bucknell &lsquo;07

Photography by Jake Alba and Frank Arentwoicz. Picture of the day by Jess Alba.