



The Long Road

Newsletter for members of Randonneurs Ontario

The Long Road

Volume 23 Issue 5

Sept./Oct. 2006

ADK 540 ride report

The Adirondack 540 was run on September 15, 16, 17 at Ticonderoga NY. I am writing this because I was pleased with my ride and more important, to acknowledge the support provided by a great crew that made it possible. The event is both a fund raiser for the Adirondack Council and a qualifier for RAAM. To qualify for RAAM, a rider must complete 4 loops of the course in a time of less than 53 hours. Mortals can compete by riding 1, 2 or 3 laps of the course. A single lap is 220 km which attracted 8 riders including me. There were 2 riders attempting the 2 loop event, 1 rider doing 3 loops and 9 trying to qualify for RAAM. I went because I love riding in the Adirondacks and Vytas needed support help for his 4 loop ride. So, I volunteered to do support, but would start by riding 1 loop on Friday morning. It would be my first time in an Ultra Marathon Cycling Association (UMCA) race and the first time doing support.

In addition to me (Peter Grant), the Ottawa Randonneurs team that went to the race were Vytas Janusauskas who went to ride the full 4 laps. After my ride I would join Jim Morris, Patricia Von Niessen and Colleen Janusauskas on the support team. Loop 1 would be entirely in daylight and Colleen alone could support both Vytas and me. The following loops would all likely include night riding which under UMCA rules would require 2 person teams. Jim and I would do loops 2 and 4 while Patti and Colleen would do loop 3.

The 7:00 AM start was at the stop light at highway 74 and 9N. John Ceceri, the organizer may have got his timing off as he started the race part way through a green cycle that turned red after part of the pack had passed. Mindful of his stern warnings about penalties for traffic violations, I stopped along with about 1/3 of the pack. We watched the other 2/3 of the pack disappear down highway 9N during a long red light cycle. The light changed and I was finally riding. In UMCA

riding there is no drafting allowed so each rider used care to stay back about 5 bike lengths until ready to pass. Alternately riders can ride side by side which a few did to exchange greetings and enquire about what distance each other was riding. In about 30 km we were spread out, each person riding a solitary time trial.

For about 45 km the route does some ups and downs along the shore of Lake Champlain at elevation 38 m. The first real climb is a gentle up hill to Hurricane Mountain at about 525 m at 65 km. There is then a 200 m plunge down into the Keene Valley. The Ausable River parallels highway 9N which descends a further 100 m over the next 15 km. This gradual descent caused a fabulous illusion of power as I pedalled at maybe 35 kph without effort through this pretty valley. The illusion ended instantly after the left turn at Jay onto route 86 which started the steep climb up to Willmington and the mid course checkpoint.

I needed a bathroom break at Willmington, but even more important needed to focus on my hydration, eating and electrolytes. I had felt too full to eat after an early morning omelet for breakfast and had eaten little for the first 3 hours. Now it was making my climbing weaker. Colleen had started support after about 20 km, but I had taken little at first. Pain in my legs forced me to start drinking more and I began taking a bottle from Colleen each time she appeared. By appear, I mean she would drive along the road until passing both Vytas and me, stop and stand by the road with a selection of bottles and food. To me she would become visi-



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Message from the President

Sadly, the cycling season is slowly coming to a close. In the summer I had to arrive at work early to find an empty spot in the bike rack, now my bike is the only one there. By the time you read this, the Randonneur Ontario schedule for 2006 will be over. The next club rides will be in the early spring, ridden with bikes still dusty from storage, being pedaled by legs that are no longer used to long hours of use. But it will be a year of increased enthusiasm for the club, with what I predict to be a record number of people heading to France to ride alongside their global Randonneur cousins on the biggest ride of them all, Paris-Brest-Paris.

A special ride it is indeed, and one the club should help to celebrate, as it was that ride that started the club so many years ago. To that end there are plans for a new club jersey (pictures of which are on the website) to show off our colours on the roads of Ontario, and to our fellow riders in France. There are also plans for new national jerseys, with 2 to choose from, one from the east coast, with a modern Lycra jersey, while the west coast is going retro with a wool jersey. Also, the club will be using special P-B-P control cards next year, the same control cards that most clubs in the world will be using. And the club also has plans for a special PBP newsletter, one that will share the thoughts, memories and photographs of some of our members who partook in the ride in 2003.

But next year is not only about P-B-P. We also have a full schedule of rides that should satisfy all our members, with many 200 and 300 km brevets (35! in total), as well as 3 1000km brevets for those who really like the long distances. Between those there are many 400s and 600s, and plenty of populairs as well.

With quick transportation between chapters, and lots of caffeine, it would be possible to do over 16000 kms of brevets within the club alone! Or if your interest is more along the SR numbers, how about being able to ride 8 full Super Randonneur series in one year, with one club?

But I shouldn't ignore the near past. I want to give a big Thank You to all those who came out to the 2006 AGM, whether in person or in proxy. Regrettably, we still had to wait almost half an hour after the scheduled start time to get the requisite numbers to have a quorum, but the meeting progressed quickly once started. The full details will be listed in the AGM minutes, for your reading pleasure. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will be able to see who the clubs new executive is.

Also, elsewhere will be my plea for help with the PBP newsletter, and with art work for the jersey (anyone know how to use Photoshop or Adobe Illustrator?)

As the riding year comes to an end, so does my column. But there are still things to look forward to before the next brevet. Coming soon will be your chance to vote for your favorite club members for the annual awards, and for those in Toronto for the holidays, the annual New Years Day ride will once again take place. Then, before you know it, we will be at the banquet, which is when we realize that we don't recognize each other without lycra and helmets on. And we will celebrate the year past with the handing out of the awards, and then shortly after that, it will be time to start riding again. I can't wait!

Until then,
Michael



Editors Notes

ble as I rounded a curve. At that point I would empty a bottle, toss it by the road and call out which one I wanted from her. I assume that she then stashed my stuff back in the van and got out a selection for Vytas as he would then be fast approaching.

At Willmington, nothing from the selection of power bars and high tech foods in my lunch bag seemed unappealing. There was the old fashioned alternative. I took a 100 gram bag of pepperoni and a bag of oat meal cookies and rode on to Lake Placid. The climbing continued to about 670 m at 130 km then there was a plunge of about 400 m into the Keene Valley. I had stopped for a pee break just before the drop and Vytas passed me. Vytas is fast, I do not get in front of him on a downhill so I held back for a while. A big tour bus passed me as we started down. Then, from my vantage point it looked like the bus got on Vytas's wheel and followed him down. The two of them made a great impression on the radar gun at the bottom of the hill.

The next climb started at 155 km with a steep 200 m climb out of the Keene Valley. At the 3/4 point I was feeling much better than at the 1/2. I was drinking a lot, eating ECAPS and my lunch of pepperoni and oatmeal cookies seemed to hit the spot. I had slowed down both to give my legs a rest but also, with all the water I was drinking I had to stop to pee a few times.

From about 165 km to 190 km there was more gradual descent and flat that should have been another high speed ride, but the pleasure was limited by poor quality pavement. Approaching Ticonderoga, there was a short climb to about 350 m and a beautiful view of Ticonderoga, Lake Champlain and Vermont landscapes. Time for viewing was short as the road dropped down 250 m to Ticonderoga and for me the finish line. While I was far from riding a record speed for the course, 8 hrs 28 min was a my best 220 km time trial. My computer showed 2276 m of climbing and that I was stopped for 13 min 30 sec.

Sunday morning as we were packing to leave, Jim mentioned that the organizer had been looking for me, something about getting a plaque. The next fastest rider doing only the 220 km had come in at 8 hrs 42 min.

So, thank you Colleen, you took more than 30 minutes off my time as well as just keeping me going. Thank you Vytas for organizing the expedition and taking me along. Thank everyone on the team for your good company on a great weekend.

Peter Grant

Another riding season has come to an end for our club, though many are still riding during those nice autumn days. It was a successful year for many, with new members, new goals reached and old milestones surpassed. While the rides are at an end, the club still has many actives under way. The AGM has just been held; see the minutes in this edition of the newsletter. A couple of members have ridden in events such as ADK540 and the Furnace Creek 508. I think all would agree that this has been a successful year.

Next year is PBP, which creates lots of interest in our organization. We are presently designing a new jersey to be worn by club members during the season and at PBP. A new website is being designed as a portal for all Randonneuring in Canada. A special brevet card designed in France in association with PBP and distributed to the clubs worldwide will be used next year. We hope to create a special edition of the newsletter dedicated to history of PBP.

Many ambitious projects are planned as well as a full riding season, if you can spare a bit of time to organize a ride or assist in any of these projects please contact any member of the executive.

Bye for now

Jim

PS: We are specifically looking for anyone who can transfer the design of the new jersey to a PhotoShop or Illustrator file.





Randonneurs Ontario

Long Distance Cycling Association
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Ride Results

August 6, 2006: Carden Plain 300K

Paul Regan - 15:55
Michael Thomson - 12:10

August 19, 2006: Merrickville 200

Vytas Janusauskas - 07:46:00
Peter Grant - 07:46:00
David McCaw - 07:46:00

August 12, 2006: Shawville 200

Peter Grant - 08:30
David McCaw - 08:30
Patti Von Niessen - 08:30

August 5, 2006: Kingston 600

Mark Draper - 39:26:00

August 26, 2006 - Big Chute 200K

Hank Bouhuyzen - 8:08:00
Marti DuPlessis - 8:08:00
Ken Jobba - 8:08:00

September 23, 2006: Big Bay 200

Chad Burkhardt - 11:30min
Carey Chappelle - 11:30
Gary Donkers - 11:30
Dick Felton - 8:55min
Rolf Haukwitz - 9:50
Bill Hyde - 9:48min
Nathan Klages - 9:50
Bill Little - 9:48
Pat Little - 11:25
John Maccio - 9:48
Con Melady - 9:48
Ernie Schaerer - 9:48
Merry Schaerer - 9:48
Tom Sutton - 9:48
Gilbert Vandenheuvel - 9:48
Rudy Ziegler - 9:48



**Minutes of Annual General Meeting
September 16, 2006 at 13:00 hours**

Call to Order, recording of proxies, confirmation of quorum

Michael Thomson, President called the meeting to order at 13:50 hours. The opening of the meeting was delayed pending arrival of a sufficient number of members present in person or represented by proxies to ensure a Quorum. (The treasurer stated that 22 members are required for the quorum.) When the Secretary confirmed 14 members in attendance and 12 members represented by proxies the President called the meeting to order.

In attendance at the close of the meeting:

- * Brettler, Elias
- Dionne, Louis
- Felton, Dick
- *Griffin, James
- Hopper, Mark
- Maloney, Mike
- McEwan, Keith
- * Leiss, Peter
- Piltch, Phillip
- Prefontaine, Real
- Regan, Paul
- Scaife, Karen
- * Sheardown, Isabelle
- * Thomson, Michael

Proxies received from:

- Couet, Alain
- Peter Grant
- Howorth, Peggy Janusauskas, Collen
- Janusauskas, Vytas
- Jorgensen, Bud
- Lau, Michael
- * Morris, Jim,
- Pal, Julia
- * Pye, William (Bill
- Ritchie, Alan
- *Von Niessen, Patricia
- * Denotes Board members

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Keith McEwan / Seconded by Dick Felton that the Agenda be approved as tabled. CARRIED

Minutes of last meeting (November 28, 2005)

The Secretary read the Minutes of the last meeting. It was subsequently

Moved by Phil Piltch / Seconded by Eli Brettler that the minutes of the last AGM be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

- President's Address

The President thanked the members present for attending and those, which had sent proxies. Again this year Randonneurs Ontario had a successful year as represented by the number of brevets both ACP approved and non-ACP rides completed. He also offered his congratulations to members who completed Randonneurs Mondiaux 1200 km brevets. A few ACP listed brevets had to be cancelled as no one showed up. This does not go well with ACP and raises the question of whether or not we have too large a number of brevets. Next year as the PBP year there will no doubt be a larger turnout.

Michael also reported that he has completed the transfer of the Routes Sheet from PDF to the Excel format.

Closing of the Niagara Chapter

Last year Dan Waldron, V-P of the Niagara chapter had requested that the Niagara Chapter be closed because of the limited number of participants and his other time commitments. However with help from the Toronto chapter the brevets listed were completed. The issue of closing the Chapter was again brought to the attention of the Board this year. No brevets were held in 2006. It was the opinion of the Board that the Niagara routes could be listed the Toronto Chapter routes.

Following debate and at the suggestion of Peter Leiss it was agreed not to close the Chapter but simply to suspend it for 2007, thus the Ontario Randonneurs would not lose the ACP number currently allocated to the Niagara Chapter. The Assembly endorsed this action.

Treasurer's report

The Financial statement of the Club as September 15th is appended to the Minutes. As the Club financial year goes to the end of September he cannot consider this report as final although he does not foresee major changes. The Club has



again experience a good year and will end in a surplus situation. Distribution of the Newsletter via e-mail accounts for some of the savings. The Insurance premium is not final as well as the cost of the medals. It was Moved by Jim Griffin / Seconded by Isabelle Sheardown that the Financial report for 2006 be approved. CARRIED.

The Budget for 2007 is also appended to the minutes. The assembly made no changes. It was moved by Jim Griffin / Seconded by Phil Piltch that the 2007 Budget be approved as submitted.

CARRIED.

The Bank balance of the Club as of September 16th, 200 is also appended to the minutes.

Brevets schedule

Peter Leiss presented the Chapter schedules prepared by the respective Vice President of each Chapter. The Some minor changes were made to the Toronto schedule.

Peter stated that the ACP schedule must be submitted to France by September 30th. The ACP brevets was well as all non –ACP rides must be submitted to the Ontario Cycling Association for Insurance purposes.

Moved by Peter: Leiss / Seconded by Phil Piltch that all Chapter Schedules for 2007 as amended be approved.

CARRIED

Peter thanks all V-P and all members who participated in developing the 2007 schedule.

Consideration of a New Club Jersey

Michael Thomson reported that on two separate occasions he sent information to all members requesting design for a new Club Jersey.

Only one submission was received from Mrs. T. Pye. A copy of the design was posted on the wall for members in attendance to see. The design was accepted as submitted. Michael stated that he is in the process of obtaining quotes from the manufactures. To date he has received only one reply. The cost per Jersey will be determined by the art design required, the number of colors and the number of jersey ordered. Michael stated he would put the design on the Website and ask for comments as well interest to purchase.

The issue of a national Jersey for 2007 was raised. Michael reported that Nova Scotia has come up with a design, which was accepted by some provincial associations. B.C. Randonneurs are planning a wool jersey with their own design.

Elections of the Board of Directors

The President reported that only one nomination for each position on the Board was received. The President required nominations from the floor. As none were proposed the following were elected by acclamation.

President	Michael Thomson
V-P Brevets Administration	Peter Leiss
Treasurer	Jim Griffin
Secretary	
V-P Toronto	Elias Brettler
V-P Muskoka	Isabelle Sheardown
V-P Huron	Carey Chapelle
V-P Ottawa	Patti Von Niessen
Member at large (Toronto)	Dan Waldren
Member at large (Ottawa)	Bill Pye
Director of Communication & Newsletter Editor	Jim Morris

Moved by Isabelle Sheardown / Seconded by Karen Scaife that the list of nominees be approved.

CARRIED

Michael reported that Real Prefontaine did not wish to be nominated as Secretary but agreed to continue to act in this capacity until a replacement if found. Real stated that he will definitely not continue beyond the next year.

New Business

The President reported that Jim Morris was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report.

- The web continues to be an important method of communication for the club members.*
- Approximately 70% of our newsletter now goes out in electronic format (35 in printed format, 75 in PDF format.*
- The website for promotion of Randonneuring in Canada is being created and should be live in the next month.*
- The email continues to be a reliable method of providing timely information.*
- The visit to our website (Ontario) in the last three months were over 10,000 per month.*
- There is sufficient content on hand for the next two Newsletters.*

Michael stated he will attempt to have the fall Newsletters or a Special edition of the Newsletter totally committed PBP related events.

Peter Leiss reported that ACP has developed a special Brevet card for

participants planning to participate in the PBP of 2007 and wants all Clubs to use it. They are selling it at a cost of 0.70 euros for orders of 200 or less and 0.65 euros for orders of more than 200. Jim Morris reported to Peter that he could have the ACP proposed brevet card reproduce at a much lower cost. The Board of Directors accepted all participants would use his proposal and the same brevet card this year.

Peter Leiss reminded the Assembly of the needs to received nominations for the Awards given out by Ontario Randonneurs. This information will be posted on Website and O.R. e-mail list.

The Board of Directors will review the nominations at their December meeting and make the final selection at their January meeting.

Nominations.

The meeting date of the 2007 AGM has been tentatively set for September 15th.

Adjournment

Moved by Isabelle Sheardown / Seconded unanimously that the meeting be adjourned. (15:25 hours)

CARRIED

TransAlp Challenge Ian Hamilton

I've had a couple of requests to hear about the TransAlp Challenge mountain bike stage race that I recently rode in July, and thought that people may find the report of interest.

On June 6th, 5 and ½ weeks before the TransAlp started, while heading out on the road from my house to get in some off-road training on the trails in Gatineau Park, I was hit by a car at the intersection of Hwy 105 and the turnoff into Wakefield, and sustained a fractured radius and a sprained shoulder. While my arm was put in an "alpha" cast for one week, both the fracture and the sprain were not as bad as they might have been, and through aggressive physiotherapy treatments, I was luckily able to recover sufficiently to

be able to start the TransAlp as scheduled. However, I missed three consecutive weeks of training prior to the event, and did not start the event feeling anywhere near my peak.

My team-mate and I "finished" the TransAlp on Saturday, July 22nd. The race started in Bavaria on July 15th, crossed into Austria, then Switzerland, then Italy, and finished at Lake Garda in northern Italy, involving 665 km of distance (on and off-road) over 8 Stages, with over 22,500 vertical metres of climbing.

While we had sunny weather throughout, Europe was in the midst of a heat wave, and we had extreme heat throughout the event, with the exception of only the highest mountain passes.

At the purely athletic level, we found that the TransAlp is a significantly more difficult event than the TransRockies Challenge, due to the huge amount of steep climbing involved each day. Many of the mountain passes required (for us, at least) a 3 to 3.5 hour sustained effort of riding and pushing the bike uphill on roads and trails that varied from 8 to 27 percent grades, and there were often 2 or 3 big climbs in each day of the event.

The Euro riders are super-fit, and their idea of mountain biking in the Alps is all about doing monster climbs on switchback roads for 2 to 3.5 hours continuously. They don't seem to care whether the riding surface is paved, or gravel, or whatever - it's all about the pure athleticism of climbing these monster mountains. Also, there just isn't an abundance of connecting singletrack available to them, so they make up for it with pure athletic challenge.

The descents from some of the mountain passes were fun, adrenaline-filled, and absolutely mind-boggling - in one case, 30 km of continuous fast, steep, downhill switchbacks (on good gravel roads and pavement). I actually drew the temper out of the steel in my disc brake rotor, it got so hot, and I got repeated brake fading in some cases. My rotor is now yellow in colour in the inner portions and black/carbonized around the outer ring. The rotors in-



stantly caused our gloves to smoke when we touched them after these descents (we were curious...). I'm sure that if we had been riding at the same speed in the dark, the rotors would have glowed red-hot. Wild.

Some of the singletrack and cobblestone "road" descents (especially in Italy) were quite nightmarish in steepness, technical difficulty and length, and with my recovering arm and shoulder, I didn't want to push it for fear of re-injuring myself. That slowed us down.

We, along with one of the British teams we were riding with who had also ridden the TransRockies, found that the whole tone of the TransAlp event amongst the riders is much more serious (read: less fun) than the TransRockies. The Euro riders are all business.

My team-mate's comparative assessment was that the TransAlp involves a lot less pure mountain biking than the TransRockies, in that there is a lot of pavement and gravel road riding going up the climbs, and on the descents. The event does not have much in the way of true wilderness experience, unlike the TransRockies. For me, as this was my first trip to Europe, I didn't mind this aspect, but my team-mate concluded that he will not ride another TransAlp for these reasons, along with the much greater amount of climbing involved.

On Day 5, the race officials asked us to accept a third team member (a lady named Anna from Frankfurt - age 49) whose team-mate had grown tired of waiting for her, and had gone on without her. Anna turned out to be an excellent addition to the team, and although she was generally a little slower in the climbs, she never complained once, was very nice, and she was as tough as nails.

The final descent into Limone, Italy was nightmarish in steepness and technical difficulty, but the final finish line itself was right on the beach at Lake Garda in the midst of a total party atmosphere (which is nice when you can finally be part of it rather than trying to sleep through it). Lake Garda is

a beautiful, exotic place with a Mediterranean (hot!!!) climate, and a very popular mountain biking, wind-surfing and holiday destination, especially for German tourists. The evening's meal and party on the beach was amazing, and they had a full-length professional fireworks show for us as well. My team-mate and I had to get our bikes to the transport trucks at 6 a.m. the next morning, however, so that cut the celebrations short in our case. The shuttle back to Bavaria was a very scenic ride, and quite comfortable in an air-conditioned tour bus.

Unfortunately, we "finished" with 2 blemishes on the team/personal record:

1. On Day 6 (the hardest, hottest day) in 40 degree Celsius heat, my team-mate (at 58 years old) took the decision to abandon the Stage at Kilometre 40 of 85 (and 5 kilometres into a 30 km continuous, very hot climb on asphalt without much shade). While his decision was understandable, the effect was that it immediately knocked our team out of Official Finisher status, and, between that and Anna having a flat tire at around the same time, also cost us about 40 minutes of non-progress while the race officials had to be informed by radio, etc.
2. Anna and I indicated our desire to continue, and continued on another 17 km uphill to the next feed station, where we were then informed that we hadn't made the 4:00 pm time cutoff (we had missed the cutoff by about 45 minutes.....) due to safety concerns pertaining to the high mountain pass yet to be climbed with roughly 30 km remaining in the Stage, the inability of the safety motorcycles to access the mountain peak, and the prospect of losing daylight. As a result, we were not allowed to complete that Stage, and along with a number of other riders, were shuttled in from that feed station. Although I was extremely tired by that point due to the heat, I was not prepared to quit of my own volition, and so this was a great personal disappointment for me, in that I had hoped to ride each Stage in its entirety.

My team-mate and Anna and I completed Stages 7 and 8, however, so we were allowed to continue the event and pick up "Finishers" medals and jerseys; however, we were not Official Finishers of the event

and accordingly, did not receive an official time and placement for the team.

Stage performances:

For the first 4 Stages, I felt weak, had some gastrointestinal issues and despite a very methodical training season with coaching up until my accident, I was seriously lacking in sustained climbing fitness for grades that steep. My team-mate ended up towing me on some paved parts of the third stage towards the end of the Stage 3. I think that some of this problem was due to having been thrown off my peaking process by the accident and the necessary recovery time on the couch, but the heat was a factor as well.

My heart rate was significantly higher than my team-mate's on the climbs for the first 4 days (e.g. 156 bpm while pushing the bike uphill, whereas his HR was down in the 130s for the same effort), so I knew something was not right.

I have learned a lot about the European approach to mountain biking in the Alps, and it differs a lot from the approach in North America. This will call for some major changes in the approach to training for this kind of event, if I decide to do it again. I later learned that most riders were training upwards of 19 or more hours per week before the event, and they simply had more leg power and sustainable output (lower HR) to ride up the climbs with less pushing than we were doing.

My fitness finally came in on the afternoon of Stage 5, during a high-altitude climb, in which I suddenly felt super-strong (similar to last year on the afternoon of Day 3 of the TransRockies over Highwood Pass, Alberta). I felt superb, and began passing some other teams, but then had to wait at the top for my team-mate and Anna. Given that this has happened to me twice, I think my body prefers higher altitudes combined with cooler temperatures.

I had very poor quality sleeps throughout the race (due to my being a very light sleeper combined

with my team-mate's persistent snoring and no air-conditioning in sweltering hot hotel rooms, along with noisy partying in some of the little towns). Next time, I would either opt for my own hotel room, or at least bring very good ear plugs!!!

I had trouble adjusting to the high heat during the days, especially in the valley-bottoms in places without shade. Even at higher altitudes, the heat was a factor.

From the afternoon of Day 5 onwards, I was averaging the same or better pace than my team-mate, and my heart rate came down quite nicely on the climbs, but still, with Anna, we were, most days, the slowest team of the field. Not a stellar performance in relation to the other teams.

I noticed that in general, I was comparatively stronger on the asphalt, and, with some exceptions, not as strong on the gravel and trails. My experience during TransRockies last year was similar. I'm not sure what aspects of fitness this problem may point to, or whether it's some kind of a mental factor, but it seems to be emerging as a consistent issue (off-road) for me. Perhaps I just need to focus on more off-road training.

The scenery was incredible throughout, and I now have a very good feel for how people live in the Alps. People live in small villages at high elevation that would be unimaginable to North Americans. So it was a great way to see some of the mountainous parts of Europe.

Next time, however, I would opt to stay in the area and relax on the beach for a few days.

Overall, the event was a fantastic experience, and I have never been so absolutely challenged by any other undertaking in my life. The event takes you from being completely shattered physically, emotionally, and mentally, to absolute highs on the higher peaks and passes, and everything in between.

Ian.

