

## 100-200 Puzzle Complete

*Mike N., 2014*

The 100-200 bike ride is a puzzle. There are a plethora of possible problems that could arise and cause one to come short of the finish. My first attempt, two years ago, was missing the piece on nutrition. I know that sounds silly to run out of energy for lack of food but with the 145 miles I traveled in 2012 I burned over 10,000 calories. My second attempt I addressed the food issue, with the help of my support team (Donna) but neglected another piece, sleep. I didn't actually neglect it but was short changed the proper amount of shut eye by various circumstances. Falling asleep on the bike was reason enough to end that trip.

This year, the thirtieth anniversary of the original ride, the pieces came together. Donna and I came up to North Troy a day early. We relaxed, did some casual sightseeing and got a good night sleep Friday night. I woke up a little before 4:30, went down to breakfast (yogurt, granola, fruit and eggs provided by our sleep deprived host) added to that a breakfast bar and banana and joined the few other guests on the three quarters of a mile ride to the border. There we met the rest of the participants in this "ride without rules" and were given some route instruction and advice from Steve Barner, one of the original riders from that 1984 beginning. The weather was cool, low to mid fifties, but promised to be 70 by mid-day. It was foggy and beautiful. I turned on my tail light as I heard my wife's voice in my head telling me to "be careful." I looked around at the other riders and assessed their abilities. These were experienced riders and from the look the pace would be fast.

5:30 was the start and we did. The light was better and the fog was thinning as we started down the hill. Fifty or so bikes took over the rural road and headed out of town. After the first hill I realized the front group was pulling away. If I pushed a little harder I might catch them. As if hearing me they pushed harder and pulled away more. My common sense took over and I settled into a comfortable pace. I was sure that another group would pull up behind me going just slightly faster than I was and I would jump on the back and benefit from the draft. They didn't. I rode alone for hours. Riding alone is a wonderful thing sometimes. But as I watched the group of riders ahead of me pulling farther and farther away in the distance I began to have self-doubts. Had I trained enough? Should I be here? As I wrestled with the demons of my mind I looked around. What a gorgeous view. The rolling hills and farms were framed by mountains and beautiful morning colors. I stopped feeling sorry for myself and began enjoying the surroundings.

In years past I had planned on averaging 17mph for the first hundred miles and as the hills increased I would naturally slow down. I wanted to average 15 for the whole ride to finish on time. As I looked down I saw that my average was above 17 even as that other group pulled away. I would ride my own ride and enjoy it. I arrived at the Waterbury Town Green (about 50 miles in) and saw other bikers. I grabbed a chocolate milk and a piece of banana bread and sat for a minute. After sending Donna a text to

let her know where I was I hit the road. Like any long journey it helps to break it up into smaller pieces and Waterbury was that first piece down. I felt good. Next piece was Granville Gulf. This is one of the prettiest parts of the ride (that is saying a lot). The road goes up gradually for several miles until it starts down with a 25 mph coast. The road passes a beautiful waterfall, tempting one to stop and take pictures. I didn't carry a camera so continued on with my downhill break.

At some point Donna passed and I told her to meet me at the Rochester Town Green. That is about a hundred miles and a good place for a longer break. We sat and had sandwiches, refilled bottles and relaxed for maybe fifteen minutes. I felt good after seeing that my ride time was less than six hours to this point. Time-wise I was in good shape. Off I went again. Last year I didn't get much farther than Rochester. I fell asleep on the way up Killington. This year I would make it past there for sure. I caught up with a group I rode with earlier and for the rest of the ride we played leap frog, periodically passing each other only to be passed again. The next big hurdle was Terrible Mountain. That is where I bonked the first time. If I could make it at least to the top of there, I would be happy. I pulled into Ludlow and looked for Donna. Ludlow is at the base of Terrible and another break (140 miles in). There was an accident so traffic was snarled and I was forced to ride the sidewalk to the park. I found Donna, used the bathroom (which had no light) and off I went. I told Donna to meet me at the top of the mountain. I took my time, taking a rolling break and had a much easier time climbing. I saw Donna on a rise and told her not yet. Terrible is about 8 miles long, all but a little bit up. I passed her and kept going. She passed me with cow bells ringing (isn't she great). I met her again at the actual top and stopped for a bit. I felt good and had gone farther than before. I told Donna to meet at Weston Green. We had a short stop there and I was off again. My calves were beginning to tighten up. Then I remembered the compression socks I brought. I don't know if you have ever tried compression socks but they squeeze your muscles giving them a mini massage with every pedal stroke.

The next stop was Mount Snow. The profile of Mt Snow is daunting. It goes up for a long time then gets steep and goes up more. Donna and I met again at the bottom of the climb. I refueled, reloaded water bottles and told her to meet me at the top. I had already gone 172 miles and had a 12 mile climb to go. The route instructions say this about the top of Snow, "If you've made it this far, you're going to finish!" I started up. The first part was not bad. It would go up at a gradual rate and then go down a bit. It repeated this for 7 or 8 miles, trending up but giving me a break. I still felt good. Then I saw the steeper part. It was not quite as steep as Devoe, but close. I got into my low gear and spun as well as I could. There was no rush, I just needed to make it 4 or 5 miles more and I would finish. I could see the top, just around that corner. No it still goes up. Maybe around that corner, my spin churns to a crawl. I was still moving. I would stand and pedal a few yards then sit to stretch muscles and break up the monotony. Then something startles me. A rider passes me going twice as fast. He makes it look easy, how is he climbing like that after 180 miles? Finally the last turn and the real top, but where is Donna. She is always here. I stop and text her. She is on her way back. I sit down on the shoulder of the road. I felt good, I just needed to sit. In retrospect I probably looked pretty bad, sitting on the shoulder, disregarding the gravel

(which, by the way, felt good on my tired legs). One of the other drivers came to see if I was alright and by then Donna was back and I grabbed another drink and a banana. There were three or four other riders at the top, either getting there ahead of me or arriving shortly after. At this point, at least according to the instructions, I would finish. That weight lifted and I flew down the hill. Twenty miles to go in the next section before what is described as a “super-steep climb”. I sent Donna ahead so I wouldn’t miss the turn. Cruising at 22 mph after 190 miles I felt great. I got to the turn and Donna waved me on. This was steep. It was as steep as Devoe with periodic cuts of gravel across the road. I stood to get more power and the rear wheel spun. I couldn’t get this close and have to walk. I sat, a pedaled and finally topped the hill. From here it is down all the way.

While hiking in the Adirondacks I’ve encountered what I call “summit fever”. It is where one gets close to the top, the finish and adrenaline kicks in. I had summit fever and picked up the pace. Ten miles to go. The winding downhill road reminded me of thirteen curves only double, triple the length. I saw a bike’s tail light in front of me. It was pretty dark but I knew that was the guy that passed me on the climb of Mt Snow. I passed him and he disappeared into the dark behind me. The flashing of my headlight reflecting off the trees and signs, the darkness was comforting. I could see the road enough to avoid the big holes and was going fast enough to ignore the small ones. Only one more turn, in town, Tunnel Street. I saw Donna at the corner, she waved me on.

As I turned down Tunnel Street, Donna pulled behind me. Now I had an escort, lighting the way from behind. Only two miles to go and I would be in Massachusetts. I was actually going to finish. The road continued down, then flattened, then a slight up. It was full dark now and my speed slowed both because of the slight uphill and the difficulty in seeing the road. Donna’s headlights were not helping. Where was that sign.

Then up ahead we saw lights. There were no street lights so I hoped it was the end. It was. Steve Barner, our organizer was standing in the road congratulating me. He had finished maybe three hours before but had stayed, along with five or six others, to cheer us on. I past the sign into Massachusetts, took pictures, hugged my wife and I was done.

I worked hard to finish but could not have done it without Donna’s fantastic support. Another factor was knowing that I had so many friends that were wishing me well. That knowledge got me through many a lonely mile and I thank you. We did it. Who’s up for next year?