

Rob Nygren's Paris Brest Paris 2019

(There are no problems.....only solutions.)

1. Introduction to PBP (Paris Brest Paris)

Paris Brest Paris is a 1200+ kilometer bike ride in which you have 90, 84 or 80 hours to complete.

For history and more details see the website www.paris-brest-paris.org

I first heard of PBP years ago in a Bicycling Magazine story I read, at the time I had no thought of ever being able to ride this distance and I was just getting into Mountain Biking. The concept of me ever doing PBP, never entered my mind.

Many year later, and now a guy who does a lot of road riding, I had completed a few Rides to Conquer Cancer events, these were 2 day rides of approximately 120K each day. My Riding partner Rod suggested we do an MS ride that was being held in Cowichan Valley, this was also a 2 day event but shorter rides. Our Team Captain was Dave MacMurchie, he was the first Randonneur I'd ever met, he is a man passionate about this style of riding as well as being a great team leader.

We did the MS Ride for many years and every year Dave talked about Randonneuring and explained what a Brevet, a Permanent and a Populaire were, it took a few years until I did the Victoria Populaire 100K ride. I got lost and finished quite late, with in about 10 minutes of the time limit. I got my first Pin; I think it was more out of sympathy then ability.

So I looked into Paris-Brest-Paris, this ride that Dave has talked about.

Paris Brest Paris is cycling event in France that was once a race but is now a participation event that is held every 4 years. You ride from rural Paris (The 2019 start was in Rambouillet) to the City of Brest on the west coast of France approximately 610K there and back. Very simple, but you have to do it in 90 hours or less from start to finish, the clock never stops. The above mentioned website is a great source for more information you can also check out the, www.randonneurs.bc.ca site it also does a great job of describing the event, and I'll leave that up to the pros.

Brevet

This is a timed event with a set distance; your allotted time is approximately 15 kilometers per hour, so a 200k ride you are allowed 13 hours and 30 minutes. There are controls that you must check into, some have people there waiting for you, others can be in the form of a question about the control area. An example "What does it say on the yellow sign by the gate?" and other controls could be a signature from

a clerk in a store or coffee shop, a receipt or a picture. The goal is to show you were there. These rides are on the honor system and there is really no reason to cheat. If you have a break down you can get help from another rider or a passerby, but you can't call a friend.....that's another game.

To qualify to do PBP you must complete 4 Brevets of 200K, 300K, 400K and 600K in the year of the event and finish within the time limit. Again the time limit is based on 15 kph so the 200K Brevet has to be completed 13.5 hours, the 300K Brevet in 20 hours, the 400K in 27 hours and the 600 K in 40 hours.

PBP allows you more time 90 hours but if you are a strong rider you can choose the 84 hour group or even stronger you can do 80 hours. I believe the fasted time is around 44 hours, I don't think I could do that if you my bike on a car.

Populaire

This is a group ride that can be any distance, but has the same time parameters of 15 kph.

Permanent

This is a ride you do on your own of a prearranged route but does not qualify for PBP rides. You make arrangements with Club director and you do the ride on the prescribed route and date.

Fletche

I have never done one..... see the websites for more information.

2. So how did we get here?

I joined Dave and his friend Graham Fishlock, who has done a couple PBPs and was doing the 2015 event. They were doing a 200K Permanent I rode 40K to meet them and then rode 40K with them and stopped for coffee. And here is when the idea of doing PBP started to take shape. I listened to Graham's story and it was a brief rundown but enough to get me to look at the PBP website.

When I went to the website I realized I'd looked at it a couple years back when Dave first talked about it, and I started to read up on it then. I had thought about trying it in 2015, that plan never got any traction and was quickly forgotten. At this point in my life my further distance was 162K (100 miles) and to do 1,219K in 90 hours was still very hard to comprehend.

2015 finished and 2016 came and went with me gradually adding more distance to my rides and starting to think about a 2019 attempt at Paris Brest Paris.

2017 was year I started to take it seriously, I went back to Victoria and did the 100k Victoria Populaire. It went well I never got lost, rode with some nice people and won a water bottle from Fairfield Cycles. I drove home feeling pretty good about my ride only to find myself on the floor that evening with cramps. My wife casually walked past and smiled as I lay on the kitchen floor trying to stand up, but it wasn't happening. It took a while and a gallon of water. The cramps eventually went away, for now.

My first 200K..... Attempted and Failed.

It was a beautiful March morning, my buddy Dave told me to stick with Graham Fishlock and Ken Bonner both icons of Randoneuring, so I did.

They stared slowly which would make my wife happy, she is always worried I go too hard at the start. After about 20 K, we got into the hills and they dropped me. I just couldn't keep up, it started to rain, and I was alone, behind, and slightly lost.

I carried on and made a mistake, the q-sheet said turn right, then in .1 of a k turn left. I saw turn left after 1 k. Not usually a big problem but I was screaming downhill looking for a left hand turn, I must have gone more than a kilometer, and I looked and the Q-sheet with moisture on the lenses of my glasses I jumped ahead and saw 2.7 k.....at 3.5 k I came to an intersection at the bottom of the hill.

"Oh FUCK " is what I said when I read the Q-sheet.

So up the hill....whenever you get lost riding, you discover it at the bottom of the hill.

At the control I was told I'm an hour behind the last guys, but still within the time limit.

Next mistake came when I missed another turn and relied on my knowledge of Victoria, I rode along quite comfortable and missed a turn around the Johnson Street Bridge. With the water on my right and thinking I'll be on Dallas Road anytime only to find out I was on Craigflower Road.

An hour later I called in and abandoned the ride. And then the sun came out.

Solutions

When you're lost stop right away and check the sheet, and don't rely on your local knowledge of a community you have no local knowledge of.

That summer I did complete my first 200K, starting in Duncan via Port Renfrew and into Victoria. I remember seeing Deidre for the first time; it was a short visit she was long gone after the first hill.

Then I did another in September and got some delicious apple pie. I changed clothes in a gas station and drove from Victoria back to Courtenay 250 K. This was not a great decision, my hands started to cramp on the steering wheel, I had to peel my fingers off one at a time while driving, then the other hand cramped, it if wasn't so dangerous it would be funny....ok it was kinda funny. I was also having a hard time staying awake; I stopped at a rest stop to stretch and rest. Sometimes stretching makes you cramp.....cramping is a real problem for me that need's a solution.

My third 200 k that year was a Remembrance Day ride again in Victoria. My riding partner forgot his bike shoes and had to ride in his runners. We started a few minutes later and the other riders were already out of sight. It was a hard day, it rained a lot, we got lost, I thought we were in outside the time limit. I was a wet, cold, cranky person; I thought that's it I'm done with stuff.

But I have to thank Mark Payton who was the ride organizer for reaching out to me and making me feel better about the days ride, and letting us know we still had another 20 plus minutes. I'd also like to thank my riding partner Rod, who I dragged into this ride, for having beer in his truck, for the ride home.

Solution

A cold beer can warm you up in a hurry.

A kind word helps you over a hump.

A Wahoo or Garmin

3. Setting a Goal

The Goal is to complete Paris Brest Paris in the allotted time.

There are a series of other goals to complete to get to that point. I was always prepared for failure as long as I gave my best effort.

I had rode a few 200k Brevets, but before I commit to PBP I wanted to do a 300k, I needed to do a 300k.

My first 300k Brevet was the spring of 2018, "The Once Over" the route took us from Victoria through Cowichan Valley to Lake Cowichan, Port Renfrew, Sooke and back into Victoria.

Lots of the route was familiar other than the ride out of Victoria, which took us up the Malahat. It was early in the day and not much traffic, it was ok. Like a lot of my Brevets I was riding by myself fairly soon, most riders were stronger and faster than I am. There were a couple of late starters behind me, but caught up to me at the first Control at Shawnigan Lake, it was Secret Control being manned by the guy who got me started on this trail to PBP Dave McMurchie.

I hung around a bit, and in hind sight probably too long. I was off with the last group and was quickly chasing and eventually dropped. The riding in the Cowichan Duncan area does have a lot of hills and I was fighting head winds all day. The portion to Lake Cowichan was extremely brutal, gradual up hill and a head wind all the way. I was quite happy arriving in Lake Cowichan and to hit the A&W for a giant burger and coke, because I was health conscious I skipped the fries. I headed out to Port Renfrew.

This is really a paved Logging road and not much traffic. I started thinking about bears or cougars so I turned off the music just in case. I also timed the passing cars and found that a car or truck would pass me on average every 5 or 6 minutes. This was good to know in case I was attacked, I only had to defend

myself from a Cougar or Bear for 5 minutes. I realise that the likely hood of a Bear or Cougar attack is highly unlikely, but I could definitely hang in for 5 minutes.

I had recently switched from tubes to tubeless tires after my recent failure a few weeks earlier, that's a whole other story. So as I rode in the back country it happened. I hit something and I could hear a hissing sound from the front tire. I could see sealant shooting out, so I quickly stopped lifted the front of the bike and spun the front tire. I had a momentary panic attack, shit how the hell to fix a tubeless tire, I do have a spare tire and tube with me.

But then it stopped, I looked down there was a little white spot on the tire where it leaked, I grabbed the tire like all of us would instinctively do and it held, it didn't need air. In less than 30 seconds I was on the road. Ya gotta love a good tubeless tire story.

I was greeted at the Port Renfrew Control by Mark and Roxanne who were the designated volunteers for the ride; they had food, coffee and water for me. The wind had died down, the sun was out and we sat on the deck of a small coffee shop that was closed but they allowed the Randonneur's to use their space. Mark and Roxanne were extremely supportive and it was nice to see someone after 200k's and about 100 to go.

Around 5 k out of Port Renfrew the road is more like a wall, it was grueling of a ride, I knew Mark and Roxanne were behind and would be heading back to Victoria soon my last chance for any support, I would be on my own. But my biggest concern at the moment is they would drive around the corner and I would be walking up a hill. I was relieved when they drove past, they slowed and asked if I need anything, I said no, they drove off and I was happy they didn't catch me walking. Which, I did a bunch of shortly after they drove away.

It was a lot of climbing and descending on the push to Victoria, I was feeling pretty good on the long fast descent to Jordan River, the weather was getting colder and then, what was supposed to be tail wind home was gone. I stopped and ate a gel pack, then started the climb...there's always another climb on this route, ½ a k later on the hill I got off and walked and had another gel, I was feeling depleted and thought of Mark and Roxanne asking if I needed anything. At this point I needed something. That good feeling of 15 minutes ago was gone. It started to rain lightly and was getting dark and I had 65 k to go, lots of time and no energy. I took a positive approach telling myself every kilometer is a new Personal Best.

This seemed to work for a short time and I was riding comfortably again. The ride into Sooke was a constant up and down, rollers you could call them. I was doing the math how much time? How long would it take to finish. Then I started negotiating with myself, that's never a good idea. The rollers got harder to reach the top, I was walking up the last 50 meters then coast down then it was 100, 200 300.

I just needed to get to Sooke I told myself, I could rest, eat and then finish.

I was cold and wet, soaked in sweat as I entered the MacDonald's in Sooke. I was not in good shape at this point, feeling worn, beat and a bit depressed. The thought of riding in the rain and the dark to

Victoria was even more depressing I didn't feel safe or stable enough to carry on. I called my wife to come pick me up.

It was very cold standing outside waiting for Ann, but she was there quite quickly, I was 37k from finishing it does not seem far today, but that night it was like a 100k. I called in to the control and told them I was done.

I never regretted not finishing that night, I like to think if I had to, I could have finished, I was done I had a way home and I took it. It was a valuable lesson learned, after that ride I didn't figure in a safety valve to my ride plan. It was finish the ride on my own.

The first goal of riding 300k was not done. I was happy I did a Personal Best of 265k.

A little background info.

I bought a new bike in October 2017, it's a Kona Essato TI. By the name you can tell it's a titanium bike, it was a long process that ended with the frame and fork purchase then the wheels, tires and components. (There will be a section on the Bike)

I registered for the Chilli 200 it was an early March 200k Brevet. I booked a Hotel as close to the start and finish of the ride as I could. I showed up in the morning early and ready to go.

The ride started well, I found myself in a group of 5 riders and we did a good pace, the weather was warm and clear it couldn't have been better. At the 30k mark I got a flat.

The whole group stopped, I took the wheel off, found a small chard that was the cause, put in new tube. It was going quite smooth until I turned on the air to the Co2 mini pump, the tube didn't seem to fill as rapidly as they normally do, I have probably used Co2 -20 times without a problem, I had one plastic pump break in my hand once. This was a new metal head unit, and this is the first time I used it.

The tire was firm and I was out of air, but not nearly as firm as I'd like it, my right hand was feeling a little cold, then it got really cold, then I couldn't feel the coldness. I looked at my hand and the Co2 cartridge had frozen to the palm of my hand.

Stephen took out his portable floor pump and finished the job as I peeled the metal cartridge off my hand, yes it left a mark. This was a total rookie mistake; I didn't tighten up the cartridge enough.

We cleaned up the gear and rode down Land Ends Road. It was a beautiful ride and when we reached the Pat Bay highway we split into 2 groups. At the first Control we stopped at the Shell had a quick bathroom break and a snack, then we were off.

Going downhill on Quadra Rd. I could feel softness in my rear tire, shit another flat. I didn't want to bother the fellow who I was riding with, and didn't want to slow the group coming from behind; I pulled in an ally, and started my repair. I looked and could not find the source of the flat, so I installed the new tube, grabbed my last Co2 cartridge and started to screw it on.....Mistake number 2, I forgot to close the valve on the head unit. So as fast I screwed it on I was out of air. Good news it didn't freeze to my hand.

A few choice words were uttered.

But, I am prepared, I have a pump....I pumped up my tire as much I could and I am on the road. I am riding into a stiff head wind with a soft tire and about 30k till the next Control that is a gas station and I have an adapter.

5 minutes later I have a third flat.

I have a new tire as well and it is time to put it on. At this point I am working on the side of the Pat Bay highway, it noisy I'm cranky, and the new tire won't go on. My mood is not great; I have grease and grime all over me. After 15 minutes, I grab the old tire invert it then search for something, I go one way then another, then on the third time through I feel the prick of a very fine piece of metal, I can't get it out with my fingers so I push on the opposite side with my finger and pull out the tiny piece with my teeth.

I am feeling better this only eaten a half hour time. So time to clean up and put on the old tire, I patch the tube and now I can't get the old tire on the rim. These are Mavis Ksyrym tubeless ready rims after more choice words I say Fu@# it. And start walking back to the hotel, its only 5 k away.

I am carrying the wheel and tire in one hand and bike over my shoulder, then an older cyclist comes by, he asks if I need help. I tell my tale of WOE. He tells me he used to own a bike shop and offers to help.

The tire did not go on the normal way, he tried everything I did. The he pulled out a Crank Bros tool, a bit more to it than a normal tire lever. He slipped it between the bead of the tire and the rim and pulled, I could see the veins in his fore arms pop, and his arms looked like they were chiselled from granite. I felt weak, unfit and somewhat useless as he pulled the bead over the rim. He generously offered a Co2 cartridge.

I should have said yes, but I had my compact Lyzene pump out and started to pump as I was thanking him for his help. I should have gotten his name. I have used this pump on many previous occasions, but it was mostly other people's tires I've pumped up or just enough to get me home. Never during a 200k Brevet with 130 k to go.

So I pump it up the best I can and jump on the bike, now the tire won't set on the rim, so I stop and let some air out massage the tire and try again. No luck. I start to ride down the highway into the head wind with a horrible wiggle in the back tire, it's 25k until the next Control another gas station, they should have a pump, I do have the adapter from Presta to Schrader. But after a couple k's at 12 kph I turned around. Another....DNF.

Before I got back to the hotel I stopped at a Starbucks and got a coffee. This series of unfortunate events ate up 2 hours and I wasn't going to finish in the time limit. Back at the Hotel I put the bike into the back of my car and go into the hotel. As I walked through the lobby a got a couple funny looks from the Desk Manager and a couple checking in. Being a 250 pound cyclist in full spandy gear, I was used to second looks.

I entered my room; I look into the mirror....."Ohhhh Shit!"

I had worst dirt/oil/grease Hitler mustache, Chiseled arms guy, Starbucks girl and the people in the lobby must all enjoyed a good laugh about that.

I had a shower, a beer, a nap then drove home.

I need some more solutions!

At the bike shop they convinced me to go tubeless. So I did. \$100.

I bought a bigger better pump, \$95.

I tested my other pumps and none would go higher than 40 psi, the new Bontranger goes over 110 psi.

Getting pieces of wire or items out of the tires, and not using my teeth?

I bought the smallest cutest multi tool. \$35.

4. Angels and Demons

My last 2 Brevets were busts, Flats on the Chilli 200 and bonking on the Once Over. It's now July 21 2018, I have rested, trained, built up mileage, worked on my gear problems and tapered for this ride it's a 300k ride starting and finishing in Chemainus.

I took a serious approach to this ride, I went early the day before the ride and checked into my motel around 3:00pm it was a nice warm day, and the weather looked great for Saturdays ride. It was very quiet at the Motel not much going on, it seemed a little odd to me considering everything was booked up. This was not a 5 star or even a 3 star motel, but it would do.

I unloaded the car, and set things up for 5:00am wake up, and went out to drive part of the route. A good portion of this ride went through Nanaimo, and areas I have not ridden. I was certain I would be on my own most of the day so I wanted to learn what I could. I learned a few valuable things on my reconnaissance drive. One being Departure Bay road is not the road the goes down the hill to the Ferry, this mistake would have added another grunt of an uphill. There were also a couple trails I had not known existed.

After my reconnaissance I had dinner at a White Spot, Caesar Salad, Spaghetti and Meatballs and an IPA beer. The beer was for Andrew who told me I was being too serious.

I drove back to the Motel and got there around 7:30pm, the parking lot was full, mostly with Harley Davidson Motorcycles. The space in front of my room was empty so I pulled in there, as I got out of my car I saw a couple of Hells Angel's walking towards my room.

They were extremely well dressed for gang bangers, trimmed hair, the vests were tailored. I think they were more like bosses or lawyers for the gang. They were in the room beside mine and were standing by their door having a beer as I walked up. The good looking one said, "Hi, how are you?"

I replied " Good, thanks.....You guys aren't going to keep me up , partying all night, are you? I've got a 300k bike ride in the morning." This could go a couple ways I thought after I said it, and maybe I should have just said Hi and went into my room.

He smiled and said they'd be quiet tonight but can't make any promises for tomorrow night.

"Great" I said and went into my room and went to bed.

Turns out there was a Hells Angels anniversary party happening in Nanaimo this weekend?

I was up at 5:00 after a pretty quiet night, lots of chatter in the parking lot but I never looked out. I noted a few more bikes in the parking lot and dove off to Chemainus.

There were only 5 of us who started and I stayed with the group as long as I could, but after about 20k , there were 3 ahead of me and 1 behind. And by the time I was around 75k, I was well behind everyone. I was riding quite comfortably and riding at a 22 kph pace, this was what I planned on, so it was all good. I reached the last manned Control in early afternoon at Cathedral Grove on the way to Port Alberni. Mike wanted to give me my pin then and there, assuming I'd finish, but I turned it down. I did not want to jinx it, as I haven't earned it yet. This was my thought through this whole time, not to get ahead of myself. So I carried on, my pace slowed but I had lots of time and I took a couple long breaks and finished without any incidents or accidents.

I rode the last few k's thinking about the Angels at the Motel, should I get changed in the Parking lot at the start. Or risk walking through the Motel parking lot full of drunk Hells Angels in my spandex gear?

I thought I could say to them if they said anything. "Anybody can wear wrangler blue jeans with leather chaps and vest...But it takes a real man to walk through a Hells Angels parking lot party wearing spandy pants!"

I stopped at the final Control, The Best Western Hotel, I went in and a very nice young lady signed my card. I rode to my car and changed in a deserted parking lot and drove back to the Motel. No sense showing up the Hells Angels.

And there were a lot of them there, and not as nice looking as the fellow from the night before; they left my parking spot open. I quietly went into my room, had a bag of chips couple Beers an Advil and went to bed.

While I was lying in bed, I remembered I left my wallet and phone in the car. I didn't really want to get up to get it. So I stayed in bed because I figured the Angels did not want the hassle of a petty crime and nobody else was coming to the Motel. As it turns out I was the only non-Angel.

I was up early in the morning had breakfast and drove home. I did my first 300 with no fanfare.

I was ready to commit to Paris Breast Paris 2019.

13 months to train, plan and figure out gear.

5. Planning, Training and doing Brevets

YouTube was one of my best resources for planning and training: thanks to Eric, Adam Watkins, and Daemon Peacock. I had some local knowledge from Stephen Hinde from Nanaimo, who has done 3 PBP's, we did 3-200k Permanents together as preparation for me, and he was working on his 12-200K rides in 12 months pin. The BC Randonneurs website had a lot of great content as well. Just a reminder I live In Comox Valley 200+ kilometers from almost everyone in the club (Victoria BC). Most of the Brevets are that distance away, I am slower than all the people riding, so I don't see them for long. A bit at the start and most have gone home by the time I finish.

Where to start?

Yellow pads and pens.

For riding I broke it down into 4 quarters.

1. August 2018 to February 2019-Training
2. March 2019 to June 2019-Brevets
3. July 2019 to August 2019-Recovery, Build up and Tapper
4. August 18 to August 22-Paris Brest Paris

The Trip-We had to book it as though we were going, and we were going qualified or not.

1. Italy 15 days-2 birthday parties-A Beer Fest-Wine tasting and 9 training rides.
2. Paris 10 days-PBP2019
3. Denmark 10 days- Recovering Eating and Drinking

It all looks simple now.

6. Failures and new Plans

Tubes or Tubeless?

Running tubeless was great until I had a failure, the small punctures fixed themselves and this is a good thing. When out on a 100 training ride, I picked up a screw in my tire and there was a bang and a flat. The hole was too big for the sealant to fix itself.

So there I was again with a horrid mess of sealant to clean up so I could put on my new spare tire and new tube. This brought up another problem the new tire would not go on easy and when it did we ended up puncturing the tube.

I decided to go back to tubes, and the reason why is why.

*If I have to fix a flat in the dark and the rain at PBP2019 the sealant mess would consume way too much time.

*The Crank Bros. tool I bought didn't work for me. So I bought another tool (it looks big plastic pliers) for pulling on tight tires. This is still hard with new tires. So now my spare tire is one that has been used before. Now when I get new tires I put them on at home and it's a fight, I fill them up with air then let the air out and take off the tire and put it back on. This process seems to stretch the bead enough so when I get a flat on the road I can fix it.

*I carry a patch kit, 2 tubes, a tire boot and spare tire. I have 2 tire levers and my bulky tire pliers. It may seem a bit much, but I will not let a flat or tire problem be the reason for not finishing an event, especially PBP 2019.

Co2 or Pump?

Pump! A portable floor pump, that goes up to 120psi. It is bigger than Co2 and far more reliable and when traveling I don't bring a standard floor pump anymore. Buying a more expensive pump will pay for itself after a half dozen flats compared to Co2.

Preparing for PBP2019

The month before I left I replaced:

*Tires 30/32 Specialized Robaix

*Running Gear, Ultegra chain, Front rings and rear cassette.

*New brake pads bleed the brakes and replace all the cables.

7. Qualifying Brevets 200k Victoria, 100 Anniversaries Armistice Day, November 11, 2018

This was the second time I did this ride, last year version was a mess, my riding buddy Rod forgot his shoes in Courtenay and had to ride in running shoes, the weather was ok to rain later on, we were not aware of a lot of the area and we got lost a few times. It took us over 13 hours. I thought the time limit was 13 hours so I was wet, tired and cranky, I sent Rod in with the cards.

As it turned out we were done in time, but I was already considering this would be my last Brevet. The next day I got a call from Mark Payton the ride organizer he was very nice and supportive. This was a turning point and I may not have continued it was not for that call. Mark is a great guy and organizes lots of the rides in Victoria.

So back to 2018's Brevet, the weather was great I rode a lot of the time with Mikael J., Stephan, Anna B and her partner Mike H. It was a good day and a good group. I thought Anna seemed to be very loud and always yelling at her partner. As we rode Stephan mentioned to me that Mike was deaf in one ear. This is one of those times I'm glad I kept my mouth shut, because I would have felt like a tool if I said anything. I was happy for the group to get me through a lot niche spots that would have been hard to figure out on my own.

I did 3 Permanents with Stephen in December, January, and one in Palm Springs in February, it was warm and flat. The Palm Springs trip was a really good practice trip for PBP. This is where I'd be when I had to register for PBP. I had it all figured out with notes by my computer, but it all went for crap on the way back to our friends house. Deb (our friend) and my wife thought we should go to a Sam's club. At about 5 minutes to 3:00 I realized we were not going to be back in time. Registration for me started a 3:00 pacific time Midnight in Paris.

So I sat in lawn chair in the outdoor section and started at 3:01. It took me 20 minutes, and was made harder because I did not see the English button on my phone so I did it all in French. This was one of the most stressful parts of this whole series of events. It took me 3 attempts and finished up while walking through the parking lot. Just call me Mr. Multilingual.

I did another 200k Brevet "The Chilli 200" in Victoria March 9 because I just wanted to make sure I had one in the year of the event, plus I had DNF'd twice before on this Brevet. I rode the second half with Mikal J. from Victoria who was a great riding partner and knew the roads. It was a good day.

I was feeling fit and looking forward to the 300, I had 6 weeks to train, rest, prepare and taper.

Time 9:38

300k Victoria-Duncan-Port Renfrew-Sooke-Victoria," The Once Over" April 20, 2019

A year earlier, I crapped out on this ride but this year I was better prepared and 25 lbs. lighter. I realized that I couldn't spend any more money on bike parts to go faster or longer, so in November I went on a diet of sorts and it was working. I'll leave this alone because nobody wants to read about someone else's weight loss.

The weather was good, the bike was great and I was making good time but again found myself alone. The first 200k went well and with good time. When I reached the Control in Port Renfrew there were 5 of us there, I had a good beak and left with the group. Ken Bonner left ahead of us, and we split into 2 groups of 2 in the hills coming out of Port Renfrew, this year I rode them all, not fast but I rode them.

Michael T. and I were catching up to Mikael J and Luke G. when Michael got a flat, he suggested I go ahead but I stayed with him to help out. My new pump was so good, I blew his tube up.....literally, so we put in another tube.

We continued on to Sooke and stopped at McDonalds where I quit last year, there we had some fries and coffee. Than as we were getting up to go, Buddy B came in. We stayed, while he had a quick snack and at dusk the 3 of us were off.

It was nice finishing up a ride with other people, and having pilot fish to lead the way for me was awesome. And staying and helping Michael T would pay off a lot for me in the 400k and 600k rides.

Time 16:25

400k Mill Bay-Lantzville-Mill Bay. "The V.I.400" May 11.2019

Me and the 2 Mikes started off predawn and the route took us over the Kinsol Trestle , Luke G. was quickly ahead us. The 3 of us stayed together all day and into the night. I suffered from cramps at about the 200k mark Michael T and Mikael J could have easily left me behind, but put up with my slower pace and some longer rests and few times when I had to walk. The cramping went away after about 100k, and there is still 100k to go. The last 100k was hard; I reached a bad point riding back to Duncan from Lake Cowichan with about 50 k to go. I started to get depressed and I thought the 2 Mikes were talking about me. I was not in a good head space so I just kept my mouth shut and followed the lights. This was new experience.

It was a relief to get to the 7-11 in Duncan at 2:00 in the morning. There are a lot of interesting people there at that time of day. So I had an apple fritter, a coke and sandwich for the home stretch. We were pretty quiet for the rest of the ride. We didn't even talk about the fight outside the Super 8. We finished together at the Tim Horton's we started at the day before.

Time 22:17

600k Victoria-Port Renfrew-Duncan-Courtenay-Mill Bay. "The V.I. 600" May 25, 2019.

There is also a 600k in June on Vancouver Island and another on the Lower Mainland if this craps out; I am only 2 weeks out from the 400k, so I am a little apprehensive.

This also required a lot of planning as the ride starts in Victoria and ends at Mill Bay and involved 2 hotels and a ferry ride. The 400k point was 1 kilometer from my house in Courtenay, so Michael T and I planned to sleep there for 4 hours.

The ride to Sooke then Port Renfrew went without incident we stopped at the first Control and had some food. I bought a huge piece of bannock and a coffee. I couldn't finish the bannock it started to feel like I was eating a giant ball of dough, and I was concerned it might hang around all day. I have rode this road 3 times before but this was the first time in this direction. Michael and I stayed together he is lighter and faster going up the hills, I can usually catch up on the downhill. We went from sea level to 450 meters on the way to Lake Cowichan riding over the hump.

We met Luke G. there and went to a Tim Horton's for food. We hung around for a long time, I didn't say anything both guys were stronger riders than me and Michael has done a couple PBP's so I just followed suite.

Bike and body were hanging in no problems until around the 250k mark, my right knee started to hurt. I had problems over the past 2 years with a tight IT band, it hadn't been a bother all spring.

It started off as a mild pain, but I could gear down and spin, this worked at first until we hit another hill. Going up the hill it really started to hurt, it was on the outside of the knee and definitely not the IT, it got a point I couldn't pedal, so I got off the bike and walked for 5 minutes. I told Michael and said he would wait at the top of the next hill.

I struggled up the next hill and again had to walk, I was confused because putting weight on it walking was fine but riding was excruciating at this point. My mind started to wander and worry. Is this where the trail ends, am I going to have to call my wife to drive 2 hours to pick me up. As I carried on, I found that I could spin the cranks as long as I had pressure on the pedal but as soon as I went to a gear that was too easy the pain would come back, but too hard was like having a knife jabbed into the knee.

It was a slow go for about 10k, Luke G had now caught up to us, I just wanted to get to the next control in Yellow Point.

At the Control I stretched my right leg by pulling my foot up to the back of my thigh, I held this stretch for 5 minutes and it seemed to help, so I did for a couple more minutes. The boys were ready to go. I thought ok this is it. I got on the bike and started to pedal and after a few minutes it was fine. There was the odd twinge now and then. (After the ride I talked to my Physiotherapist and he thinks it was cramping in the hip flexor area, so we worked on that.)

There were 3 of us again, everything was going good as we rode into the sunset. It was dark when we pulled off the highway and we pulled into a gas station for water. As we were pulling in Michael's shifter cable snapped. This would be something I never would think could happen, I have never broken a cable ever while riding. I stood and watched as they attempted to do the repair, (Michael actually carry's a

spare cable, he's very well prepared.) the only help I could offer was to hold the flashlight. (Note to self, change cables before PBP)

They couldn't fix it there so Michael found a cog in the back he liked and away we went. Luke G decided after stopping in Parksville he was going to sleep on the side of the road somewhere, Michael and I carried to my house 50k away. It was a struggle to get to my house, riding at 3:00am and being awake for 22 hours was a new experience. I was riding pretty slow at this point. The original plan had us doing the 15 k loop of the Comox Valley then going to my house. I was too tired.

Arriving at home was a wonderful feeling; I had some food a shower and went to sleep. Michael was up and ready to go when I got up, so he left a little before me and we agreed to meet at The Tim Horton's our next control. I had a nice but brief visit with Ann and I was off.

The sun was up and it was warm and fresh out, the loop to Timmy's didn't take long. Michael looked refreshed and had fixed his cable so now he had all the gears for the next 200k.

The next 200k started well riding the Old Island Highway; we had a break in Qualicum, where I fiddled with my Wahoo to much it froze. A dumb mistake and this bugged me for hours.

From Nanaimo on I could barely hold Michael's wheel, so he'd wait for me and we eventually finished with 1:28 to spare. Michael was nervous that we cut it so close, I was just happy to be done. Mark Payton was there when we finished and took our picture. He had done the pre-ride and set up the route. He let us know that Ken B. and Luke G had finished a few hours ahead of us.

I called Ann and told her I was done and Qualified for PBP.

I changed and drove back to Duncan and checked into my hotel, not sure what the girl at the desk thought of how rough I looked, but she did ask if I had a valid credit card to pay for the room.

I showered and got in my car and drove 2 blocks to the White Spot across the highway, it would have been quicker to walk.

The waitress came over with the menu, but I knew what I wanted. This was a celebration for me so I ordered. " I'll get the Steak and Frites, medium rare. I'll also have the starter Caesar Salad. To drink I'd like a large beer, and when the steak comes I'd like a glass of the Shiraz."

She said "Okay, 6 or 9 once glass of wine?"

"9 once."

I had my beer ate dinner drank my first then second glass of wine. I was feeling great when the waitress came over with the bill, she looked me in the eyes and said "Sir have you arranged for a ride home this evening?"Yikes

I told her I was at the hotel across the street and I was walking back, I didn't think I was in that bad of shape. I laughed at myself as I walked back to the Hotel. I still felt like celebrating so I stopped in the pub and ordered a pint of IPA.

The first taste was great. I pulled out my cell phone and started to text Dave Mc. to see if he could join me for breakfast. Cell phone in my left hand beer in my right I started to text. I woke up to the sound the sound of breaking glass, and I was wet and smelled like beer. I actually fell asleep sitting up texting. The waitress came over and we both looked down at the wasted beer and broken glass on the floor. She went for a mop. I put \$5.00 on the table and dragged my sorry ass off to bed.

Time 38:32

8. The Trip

Italy

The stay in Italy started with a long wait to get our rental car, we ordered a Jeep because it was big enough to fit the bike case, and the rest of our gear. The Jeep was not available...It was hard to wait over an hour for them to clean the replacement van, not sure of the model. It was fine, lots of room and a standard transmission; it's been 10 years since I drove a standard so you know there's going to be stalls.

Just getting out of the airport was an adventure; we drove for 45 minutes the wrong way, turned around and drove back to Florence. We were driving the wrong way on a one-way street, as I tried to convince Ann the sign meant no stopping. That didn't work, and we eventually found our way on the right highway to Lucca.

We followed the GPS and it led up to a point and said we were there, but we were not there. With all the planning and double and triple checking I do, I never bothered to get the exact address of Ann's cousin Betina's house. We called Betina and got some directions and soon found ourselves driving up a 1 Kilometer road (which had an average grade of 10%, did I mention it's been 10 years since I drove a stick). I was muttering and swearing like a cranky old man. Ann's Mom Else was probably terrified in the back seat. As we topped the hill standing on the road waiting for us was Ann's other cousin Gita.

After 20 hours of traveling we were at the 10 Piegajo Alto in Pecaglia, and looking forward to 2 weeks at Casa Porta Verde.

No one was happier than Else to be out of the car, and wow what a place to stay. I was fine after a couple of beers. Ann's cousins are Danish so at Casa Porta Verde it felt like I was in Denmark, although we were in the hills just outside of Lucca.

Driving was a challenge; I will just give you a list and let you fill in the blanks.

1. Driving into the walled city of Lucca... Imagine The Griswold's in any Vacation movie.
2. Reading any street name spit out by the GPS .
3. Leaning Tower Pizza. More cameras than people leaning against nothing.
4. Trying to find a swimming hole at the top of a mountain, gravel switchbacks no guard rails. Yikes
5. Driving half a day to a Winery, and not realizing the winery and the name of the town were the same but 35 kilometers apart.(See above about addresses, my bad.)
6. Trying to park by the Devil's Bridge on a Sunday, thought I broke the rental car.
7. Finding our Airbnb in Florence. We just parked the car and left it alone for the 3 days were there.
8. Going back to the airport.

Riding in Italy

Let me start off by saying Drivers in Italy respect Cyclists a lot more than they respect other drivers.

Riding my Bike in Italy was an amazing part of this story. I would typically get up around 6:00 and hit the road by 7:00am. Everyone else was usually asleep so I would make a couple cups of coffee eat a banana and go. Most days I didn't have a planned route I would just go. This led to some dead ends wrong turns, numerous hills, coffee shops and pastries.

Each ride started with a decent of 1 kilometer with an average gradient of 10%, which meant I had to climb it at the end of every ride. I noticed on Strava the segment name Piagaio Alto and that Ted King (Former World Tour rider) did it in 3:21 my best time was 7:17. But I am 4th overall on the decent at 1:54, the best time down is Fransesco Tonelli's time of 1:18, no sign of Mr. Big Shot Ben King in the top 10.

Most of the roads were quiet and some of them seemed like bike paths until a small car drove past you. But I did ride some pretty busy parts to get to the quiet areas. The hills offered some steep climbs of 10-20% and tons of switch backs.

As this story is not about riding in Italy I will try to be brief.

The weather was fantastic it was 25-35 degrees when I rode, and I did 9 rides from 30-95k's. I worried that I was doing too much climbing and may be wearing myself out for PBP, but I would say it turned out to be the best training camp I could do. I got a week's rest before PBP and these Italian Mountains outside Lucca were harder than what I did in PBP.

I met a Scottish ex-pat living in Lucca named James, a big guy like me and a strong rider, he spotted right away I was not a local rider, because I had 2 bottles. Local Italians, who are the best dressed cyclists by

the way, only carry one bottle and refill at the top of most hills where there are Fountain styled water taps on the side of the road.

He also showed me a few roads that were not marked and proved to be a great tour guide. He took me through an area I wouldn't have thought was a road because it felt like we were riding through people's patios, yards and driveways.

Other observations about Italian riders, I would often see groups of older rider (my age) and the guy in the front was always bald, wore big sunglasses and had a goate beard, sort of like whoever looked the most like Marco Pantani got to be the leader.

I would see groups of 2 or 4 riding in matching kit, not professionals just beer league racers...but they looked great.

We were so fortunate to have such great accommodations and met some pretty interesting people as well.

Thanks again Betina

Paris

9. Paris to Rambouillet the train rides.

On my second day in Paris I decided I was going to take the train to Rambouillet a day before the bike check. This may seem a little over board but, I haven't taken a train in France in 15 years.

It turns out it was a good plan, I learned that there are no people working at this station so you have nobody to talk to or help you. I stood in the tunnel and looked at the ticket machine for a few minutes, then a young man came and purchased a ticket in about 30 seconds. Then I tried, I was struggling at first then a nice gentleman who spoke very good English came and showed me. I had a ticket then he showed a spot to slide the ticket in to get a stamp (to validate the ticket). It sucked the ticket from my hand made a loud snapping sound and spooked me in the process.

He then showed me the screen with the train's times and destination, all the trains on my side ended in Rambouillet. So I just needed to get on the correct train and go. There are cars marked for bikes on the train but I panicked and just got onto the first car when the train stopped. It was pretty empty and I sat by the door with my bike. And 45 minutes later I was in Rambouillet.

I rode around town looking for the staging and starting areas, it took a little time but I finally got the lay of the land. I stopped at a corner store and bought some food for the train ride back to Paris.

The train station had a ticket booth and a self serve machine; I went to the booth and bought a ticket. I took my bike down through the tunnel and up to the deck and within a couple minutes I was on the train. I reached into my pocket to grab my cell phone to text Ann, but not there and not in any of the bike bags. I must have left at the ticket booth. So I quickly pack up and get off the train. Down the stairs through the tunnel up the stairs I go. I got to the entrance and left my bike by the window, I walked to

the ticket window it was now closed, but my phone was there. That was a huge relief to get the phone back.

Now I try to get back outside, my ticket is the bike bag and the bike is outside. The ticket guy is gone for coffee my wallet is with my bike so I can't buy another ticket. I stood there waiting for the ticket guy to come back and I chat to a lady about my screw up. She says just follow her through the gate, so we que up and go through the first rotating arm it swings up behind me. She slides her ticket into the slot and nothing happens. Now we can't go forward or backwards meanwhile people are coming and going and we are stuck.

After a minute or so another Train employee comes over, the lady is trying to explain that her ticket didn't work, I'm trying to explain my cell phone story. The train guy doesn't speak English but he has app on his phone he is trying to get us to type our situations into. I don't think he had any clue what we were talking about, so after a few more minutes he just opened the gate and sent us through.

The train ride back to Paris was uneventful; I got off the train and rode back to the Condo in Paris. When I got there Ann and her mom weren't there, and they had the only key, I tried calling and texting but no reply, so I rode around the block and found a nice little bar and ordered a beer.

We had had problem communicating with our cell phones, I guess in an attempt to make things easier I screwed something up. (Never change the settings on your phone!) So I texted my buddy Earl in Canada, he called Ann and she told him she would be about an hour. So I had another beer.

This was great spot as I found out the taxis line up here, so this is where we would come in the morning to get a cab to the train station for the Bike Check.

10. Bike Check and Drop Bag

It rained all day at the bike check, I lined up with about a 1,000 ridersIf you have read anything about this day just skip ahead.

It was amazing to see all the bike and configurations and set ups, so many different plans. There were many different languages being spoken in the lineup. The actual check was quick once I was in the tent. I went to get my race package and misread a sign that made me think my package was at the building to the right upstairs. So that's where I went.

I stood in a line at the bottom of the stairs as the group from Oregon were having their team picture taken, I thought this was odd but they were quickly done and I had to go down so they could get off the stair case. When they left, I went up the stairs and there was nothing there.

So I'm apparently the odd person who photo bombed himself into the Team Oregon team photo..

At the end of the day I was pretty wet and so was my pack when I handed it to the people for the bag drop. I rode back to the train met my wife and Mother in Law and went back to Paris.

11. The Start

The start was amazing! We rolled out exactly at 7:45pm , I thought for sure we would not get all 300 of us through with a stamped card, but they did a fantastic job, and we were off.

The roll out started slowly with a hundreds of people cheering us on, but within a few Ks, we started picking up speed and forming groups that were growing and shrinking. It was game on and I was in fast group of 75-100 people including a team of about 20 Italians, most dressed in beautiful matching kit, and they seemed to stay together quite well.

We rode into the sunset around 35 kph which was a faster pace than I am used, but in the middle of the group I was barely pedalling. At this point the weather was great with a declining sun, again it was a great start, and yes I was concerned about too much effort, but there was not much effort. As the group roared along we were shedding riders and adding riders, there was a lot of chatter in the group then we hit the first hill, the chatter stopped and was followed with mild grunting and a little groaning, then we crested the hill and on the descent the sound of the free hubs was defining and wonderful, I have never heard it so loud.

Very Cool!

Soon after that, the group started to break up on the next hill, and we began talking again on the flats.

I rode with a large American who called himself Bubba and we followed a couple other Americans from Davis (I think) , they were asking if I know Ken Bonner, I said every Randonneur in BC and probably in Canada knows Ken, I explained that I have met him on numerous rides, but he never seems to remember who I am. (Ken has usually completed every Brevet and has ridden home before I have finished, so I am not leaving much of an impression).

A third rider from Davis or Seattle caught up to us , he saw I was from BC and asked If I knew Ken Bonner, this time I replied “ Yes. Yes I do, he’s is my Grandfather”, this brought chuckles from the other 3 Yanks, and an “oh Wow” from the new comer.

One of the 3 Americans commented, “that’s a better story.”

As we rode into the dark, people were harder to keep track of and after about 60 k I stopped in a town that seemed to be having a giant street party, got a coffee and a piece of cake and handed out a few cards with a Canadian Quarter on it, these proved very popular over the ride.

As I left town I pulled off the road and went down a trail to pee, an interesting note here is, as the ride went on over the next 4 days I found that I would just stand on the side of the road to pee, no use wasting time or energy to walk into the bush.

After my break, I was alone in the dark. I did feel lonely for the first time....I looked up the road to see hundreds of tail lights forming a long red line. For a moment I felt like I was left behind and feeling a little sad, but then looked down the road to see hundreds of head lights coming my way.

Within a few minutes I was in a new group, I don't know where they were from not much talking at this point. I was feeling pretty good but it was a challenge staying on the wheel and being predictable for the rider on my wheel.

I sort of planned on taking more pictures, but in the large groups and then in the dark it just never seemed like a safe option.

12. The Zombie Apocalypse

The first rest stop was good I was in and out quickly had a pastry and coke. Then I was out the door.

As it got later in the night or early in the morning a fog came in, I was surprised how cold it got, I am glad I brought my extra gloves, I read on Facebook that they were not needed, but they were needed every night/morning.

Riding in a small pack in the dark and in the fog I was getting moisture on both sides of my glasses, so things were looking a little fuzzy. It is now around 5:00 am I have been riding for around 9 hours and awake for 22 hours, things started to look different.

Most of us were wearing the green vests with 2 vertical reflective stripes and had red solid tail lights. Riding in the back of this pack and just hanging on, I started to notice the fuzzy bright stripes and the glowing red lights seemed to be shifting horizontally, the tops of the riders were separating from their bikes and moving randomly side to side.....so I gave my a head a shake and decided to just look at the lights.

Then shortly after that the rider in front of me seemed to pivot 180 degrees on his bike and was riding backwards, this was a good time to stop.....I realized that I was seeing things, but the memory even 2 months later seems as real as being Ken Bonners Grandson.....I stopped and had a pee and consumed a caffeine gel and rode off to the first Control in Villaines La Juhel.

When I left VIJ the sun was coming out, but it wasn't warming up fast enough, I stopped after an hour at a road side stand and got a sausage on a bun, I ate half then rode off and ate the other half on the road.

I was fully awake and refreshed the Zombies were gone, and I was looking forward to sleeping in Tinteniatic.

13. Tinteniatic A sleeping plan gone wrong from the Start.

So, here is where things starting going a little sideway. I checked into the control no problems, I was pretty much on schedule, I went looking for my drop bag... This proved to be a chore, and I eventually called the drop bag people who told me it was in the room where I got my card stamped, (this information was available on Facebook, never thought to check there...lol).

I got my drop bag and headed for the shower and dorm, a very nice lady helped me out although the towel was very interesting, a very large piece of paper towel not the most absorbent.

I opened my bag...Remember standing in the rain for 4 hours at the bike check, everything was nice and moist. I showered, dried the best I could put on a damp cotton t-shirt and shorts. I took out my clean cycling kit and wrapped in the wool blanket, and quickly went to sleep.

About 10 minutes into my slumber, that very nice lady woke me up, she thought I paid for 1 hour, I paid for 3, after a walk downstairs and a quick look at her notes she realized the error. She said sorry I said no worries and went back to bed.

I laid there wide awake for an hour and a half when I finally got up and decided to go. I rode off feeling fatigued, and met up with a French rider who was from this area. The riders were spread out a lot at this point, we rode together for a while then the rain came, it was an absolute down pour so we pulled into a covered area and waited it out for 10 minutes. When it slowed down we left, the sun was setting and it was pouring rain but we were warm and the rain soon stopped and we witnessed multiple rainbows.

As the road got steeper the Frenchman said good bye and rode off. As I reached Quedillac the sun was setting and the town looked like a big party, I wanted to stop, but I'd only been riding a little while. I just carried on.

It was dark and cold when I got to the Loudeac, I checked in to the control and sat down for a bowl of coffee a baguette and pastry dinner. I tired table sleeping but after an hour I got up to leave, outside I struggled to get my jacket zipped up, I dropped my bottles, then dropped my phone and computer when I bent over to pick them up. I was a bit of a gong show. I loaded up my bike, then a had the killer yawn. I was struggling to walk so I turned around and went back to find the sleeping area.

I bought 2 hours sleep in the giant gym...insert 500 men farting and snoring jokes here. I needed the sleep that I didn't get in Tinteniac. I knew I would be behind schedule but I needed to sleep.

It was a good sleep.

14. The Hidden Control

I left Loudeac at 2:30 am, It seems like an obscene time to be starting a ride. It was dark and cold my leg warmers were having a hard time staying up, this is what happens when you lose weight and don't try on your leg warmers. I was not planning on stopping in St. Nicholas but it turned out to be the Hidden Control, and I was quite happy to stop and rest. The good news is the baguettes had chicken not ham. I really enjoyed that baguette. I lingered there for 30 minutes then hit the road at 5:35.

It was a short ride to Carhaix 33K in 1:35 and a little pause time, I don't remember much of this stage it was daylight when I finished around 7:10. I had breakfast with a British man who enjoyed his own voice.

There was a German lady being interviewed beside us. I just tried not to be noticed I was not really in that good of a mood. I tried the table sleeping again....it just don't work for me.

15. Brest...A day of emotion.

I left Carhaix at 9:00 ish in the morning, there was a period where I was totally alone and didn't see another rider for 15 minutes, this was uncomfortable as I had not seen a sign for a while, but as the road went up hill yet again I could see a group in the distance and I was relieved to know I was on track.

It wasn't long and I was in a group the sun was out and warm, other than what seemed like the longest climb of my life it was a good ride to Brest. I didn't really study the route that well, and this was the highest climb on the route.

There was a young boy standing on the side of the road yelling "Only 15 Kilometers to Brest", this was a good sign, I started to feel excited and was looking forward to the Bridge. We were soon descending like demons, and then another climb and it dragged on. I said to the guy I was climbing with, " This hill is just sucking the fun out of my excitement" He chuckled and we continued.

When I saw the Bridge, there was no real emotion, and even less as I got closer. When I stopped for the picture, a lady from Australia took a few of me and I took a few of her, we chatted a bit and I was quickly and unceremoniously on my way. No tears of joy, just a business type approach to get to the control.

The ride into the control was a little hairy with the city riding, there was so little of this on the previous 600K, I only made 1 wrong turn but was quickly corrected. It was a relief to reach the control, still not much emotion, I wanted or expected more, I even took a picture of the lady stamping my card.....time for some food.

The lineup was out the door so I decided to eat something from the bike bag and stretch. So I lay on the ground to stretch, I pulled my knee to my chest.....an hour later I woke up.

I don't remember completing the stretch.

I got up, I was a little groggy and walked around to look at the food lineup it was still long, so I decide to take my chances on the road, besides how many baguettes, pastry's and macaroni can a guy eat.

I was on the bike and the rode a quite quickly came to a Hamburger place, I don't recall the name kind of like Quickie Burger, there were lots of bikes so I rolled the dice. Inside I pointed at the picture of the Bacon Cheese Burger, I asked for a Coke and Frites. He gave me a Pepsi...."No Coke ..Pepsi" is what I wanted him to say, but he didn't say anything. The poor guy was run off his feet there must have 25 bikes outside plus some locals.

He brought my bag of food to the cleanest of the dirty tables handed me a bag of food I handed him the bag of garbage, a fair trade. I grabbed the big sloppy burger; I was really looking forward to this and took a big huge bite. I was instantly surprised and there was something odd about this burger...Peanut Butter,

there was peanut butter on the burger, I looked at the menu and read the ingredients and there it was "la archide " the French word for peanuts.

So I can now say I've eaten a Bacon Peanut Butter Cheese Burger..... And Frites.

Time to Brest 41:09.....Time remaining 48:51

Another 90k to Carhaix, climbing and descending, I rode past a couple young kids holding a sign that said " do you have our pins ?", I felt terrible about this as I forgot to restock my cards and quarters in Tinteniac. We were led astray at one point, but were quickly on track to Carhaix. I felt reasonably good on this stage, the weather was ideal not too hot and the hour sleep seemed to rejuvenate me. I arrived in Carhaix around 7:00pm.

Time to Carhaix 47:14....Time remaining 42:46

The ride to Loudeac took longer than expected, I took a break at the Secret Control in St. Nicholas, not sure if it was really a secret. I was a couple k off the route and the lady from Davis USA stopped and we checked our phones and gps, then some rider came the other way said this is the wrong way. They were going back to St.Nicholas. We followed them until a large group coming from St.Nicholas came along so we turned and tagged on to them for a while. I had thought this stage was about 33 k it turned out to be 43ish. The last 10 k were playing havoc on my brain. All I could think is "Are we there yet?"

I finally arrived at 2:12am, got some food and rented a cot. So here's another blunder. I took most of my clothes off and crawled into bed under a wool blanket, I put my damp riding gear on top of the blanket thinking they would dry out. The opposite happened, they were wetter than ever. The saving grace is my under shirt was merino wool so even wet it would eventually warm up.

The other problem when I woke up was I was shivering and shaking, this went on for 15 minutes, and stopped just after I left Loudeac. I was not in the most positive mood when I left but as the sun came up and the weather warmed up I was feeling pretty good.

Time to Loudeac 54:25.....Time remaining 35:36

Riding in a light fog with the sun coming was somewhat surreal, I was riding on and off with a large group from India, the pace was around 23-25kph. Very nice! I was loving this ride again. We came to a big hill I jumped out of the saddle to pass a lady in front of me who slowed quite quickly. I was about 200 meters up the climb and I was empty. Bang that quick, I had to get off the bike, I stood on the side of the road for a couple minutes, I then I walked for 5 more. I was on a short flat spot on the hill so I got on the bike and went into my easiest gear and climbed really slow. After about 30 minutes and eating whatever I had with me I was recovering again.

I stopped at a bathroom on the side of the road just outside of Tinteniac, I remembered it from the day before. It was a beautiful little wood framed building, it was clean and well stocked with TP and had warm water. I did my morning routine, and cleaned up what I could. I filled a water bottle added a NUUN tablet and left a happy camper. It wasn't far to Tinteniac and I was soon there.

Time to Tinteniach 61:58.....Time remaining 28:02

16.FougeresIs this the end?

The ride to Fougeres started well, it was a very nice route out of Tinteniach, I was refreshed from the shower and the rest I had, the weather was great. It was 10:45 am I was 63 hours in and rode about 870 K's, this leaves 27 hours to ride 350 K. At 20 kph, my riding time should be 17.5 hours and 9.5 to sleep and rest. This was not the original plan, I was still within the realm of finishing inside 90 hours. But my planning had me past Fougeres at this time of day, I was 5 hours behind where I hoped to be.

The weather got warmer as we entered early afternoon, I was struggling to stay awake on the bike in broad daylight, I fought the twitched of sleep deprivation. I saw the riders on the side of the road sleeping, and wanted to join them. But there was not much time left in the budget.

I carried on and caught to an Italian, I could tell he was Italian by the beautiful matching kit, and it said Italy on the jersey. He was wavering a more then me, I rode up beside him asked how he was doing. We were both tired, we talked and rode for an hour. This really helped me get through the stage. At one point we separated I don't recall if rode ahead or I did, I just don't know.

In my text messages with Ann I told her I only had 2 croissants and a coke in Tinteniach.

My riding time for this stage was 2:54 minutes and 37 minutes off the bike with an average speed of 18.5 kph, this was longer then I hoped for this section. The final ride into Fougeres was horrible, traffic seemed to be the worst I've seen the entire ride, lots of twists and turns, I was in a very agitated state, and suffering like never before on a bike.

"I'm Done." is all I wrote in the text to Ann. I felt some relief knowing this was over. I parked my bike and went to the control got my card stamped, I was expecting them to tell me I am outside the time allowed and I was DQed, but all I received was a just a cheerful smile and a stamp.

I needed food, So I ordered soup, rice and chicken, a baguette, a carrot salad a coke and pastry.

It was a large dining area with not a lot of people, I found a place to plug in my phone to charge and sat at a table with a young man from the U.S., he was not in a good spot either he was doing the 80 hour ride, but his bike was broke and was not going to be able to finish in the time he was allowed, his phone was dead and he was looking for the train home. I either offered him my bike or thought I did, this is one of those things I may have imagined.

We chatted for a while, I gave him my phone charger and cable told where and what my bike looked like and went to the dorm to sleep.

I approached the desk and asked for trois heures de sommeil?

He looked at put up finger une heures.

I said 3- he said 1- I said 2-he said 1.

He gave me a space blanket showed me my bed, he woke me up an hour later.

It was a glorious hour of sleep, it felt like the hour sleep in Brest it was over in an instant.

I went into what seemed like a gym locker room, I was feeling very alone and very sad at this point, I was envisioning telling my story of quitting in Fougères, it was not the ending I had planned. I thought of all the messages and emails from family and friends who supported me and believed in me.

There were many comments from them, saying "You got this!" and "all that training will pay off". But 924k in 66.5 hours, that's a good story. I stood up and looked in the mirror and starting cry, this was the exact opposite of getting to Brest (too much emotion). I looked at myself dirty and crying and thought this is not how I want the story to end. At this point the saying from the trailer for the movie Brevet (a film about the 2015 PBP I haven't seen) came into my head " When you can't go any further. Just keep going."

So I washed my face and headed for the bike, I wasn't 100% sure of what I was doing at that point, I just needed to get to my bike. I got there and saw the cable sticking out of bag and wondered what the Young American did? I was wondering about the train to Paris, and how to find it. I climbed on the bike and started rolling and was quickly in the shoot, I came to the signs, right was Brest, and left was Paris. There was no sign that said Train.

I could hear the cheers and the word "Bravo" so I turned left, my new plan was to make it 1,000. K and go from there.

The ride out of town was far better than the ride into town and I was quickly out of town and feeling quite good. I was surprised how good I felt. At this point there were a few issues in the under carriage area, my left hand was fairly numb and it was a little difficult to hold the handle bar. My right hand was the same but not nearly as bad.

I was pretty happy I didn't see a sign that said train.

Time to Fougères 66:29 Time remaining 22:31

On the Road Again.....got some eau & on the Go!

30 minutes out I reached down for some water.....Because I had planned to quit; I forgot to refill my bottles.

45 minutes out I took my last gel, I am sure there will be a family on the side of the road soon with coffee and water. 60 minutes out, still no water. This is not good, I was nervous should I ask another rider, I was too embarrassed or stubborn to do that. But I was pretty dry and then I see a lady out working in her Garden, I stopped and in my best French asked "eau ?"

She looked at and said Oh?

I showed her my water bottle and said "Eau"

Oh...Eau she said and left and came back with a large bottle of water. She filled my bottles I gave her a card with the quarter, It didn't seem like enough. I said Merci and was on the road.

Then the most maddening thing happened. The rime "I got some eau and I'm on the go" came into my head , at first I thought if funny.....but it lingered and lingered and would not go away.

A short while later, there was a family with water and coffee, I reloaded my water and had a coffee and cake. Then there was another then another. There was probably nothing to worry about....cause I got some eau and.....

16. Captain Canada.

As I continued on up the hill, it felt like a very long hill I came to a small town near the top and a sweet little grocery store was open. Not wanting to bonk again, I stopped went inside and bought a chicken sandwich, 2 bananas, a bag of chips and a large Orangina . I drank the pop at the checkout waiting to pay, and ate half the sandwich and chips outside. I felt like a bit of a slob, dirty and crusty as I stuffed the remaining food into my pockets and bags.

While I was doing this I looked across the street at a bar, sitting outside at a table drinking a beer was a handsome man in a Canadian jersey, he was clean, fit, and comfortable. He seemed to be really enjoying himself; I have never wanted to be someone else before. But whoever this guy was, I was impressed and I wanted a beer.

But!

No beer for me.

17. Sag Wagon....Please.

The ride went well after seeing Captain Canada, The decent was amazing fast no cars, at the bottom of the decent there had been a crash, the person was in a space blanket on the side of the road, and we were held back for a short time. There were some French and Italian riders looking after things, when the police showed up I followed some Danish riders and left. There was nothing else I could help with, and I felt worse leaving after seeing the puddle of blood on the road. The riders who looked after things

did an amazing job slowing down the riders coming down the hill and controlling the situation, they deserve a lot of credit.

It was dusk and somber as we rode away, not going as fast as we could just a comfortable pace the sun was setting fast and the Darkness would soon be here again. The ride to Villaines-la-Juehel was 85 k, and took me around 4:20 and an average speed of 19.4kph, and it was 10:00pm. Compared to how I felt 8 hours earlier I felt great.

Time to V.I.J 74:15....Time remaining 15:45

I ate well and rested, had a wonderful conversation with a French rider, and listened to a couple 80 hour Aussie guys plan their strategy, my strategy was just finish.

I think I am outside the time limit, nobody said anything at the control. I leave at 11:12 pm, I feel rested and ready for a night of riding I have 14.5 hours to ride 206K and finish inside 90 hours. I am over the 1000K distance, but I have forgotten that goal. There was still a crowd to cheer us on as we leave, amazing support. But I was soon out of town and following the taillights; I was feeling good and could manage bridge to groups up the road.

Then it happened, the biggest Yawn, I tried to fight it back, I did not want to yawn because that is the prequel to sleep, I wanted to sleep in Perche. It hurt to hold it back and then it happened again without warning. I started to yawn again and again. I could feel drowsiness like never before just hammering me.

I continued on, I was riding along when I woke up riding in grass. I must have fallen asleep while riding, I am sure I was only out a second or two.

I started to look for a place to sleep; I too would soon be a corpse on the side of the road wrapped up in a space blanket cocoon. The spot I found was against a rock wall that was still warm from the day's heat and it had a slope that resembled my Lazy-Boy at home. This was more comfortable than the cot in the gym with 500 snoring and farting people.

I slept for plus or minus an hour, it was tuff getting up but I did. The riding was hard and slow, I just wanted to keep going, keep moving forward. I stopped to pee and when I remounted the bike I struggled to clip in. I yelled at the top of my lungs " I hate these F@#ing pedals." I am getting new one when I get home.....it must have taken 5 minutes and 2 stops to finally get both feet clipped in (this is the second pair of Ultegra road SPD's I have bought, I've had the other pair for 10 years, It wasn't the pedals fault).

Short time later I got off the bike to walk for a while, my feet had fallen asleep and I could not wiggle my toes, so I walked and then stood over the bike and walked again. I was sort of hopping the Sag Wagon would come by (I never saw a Sag Wagon so I am not sure why expected one at 2 in the morning).

There was no Wagon, but if there was I would have had a hard time saying no.

I was alone with no visible riders in front of me and 1 Englishman yelling at me from behind, I had ridden past the sign, if he didn't yell I'd still be riding into the abyss. The British people were a big help to me on this ride.

We rode together for an hour, it was nice talking to him, he told of his story, near Carhaix when his front wheel was broke beyond repair, I remember riding by him and asking if he need help. I was relieved when he said no. He thought his ride was done, but a local brought him a new wheel. It cost him a few bucks but he was rolling.

We drifted apart and I was again alone, lights in the distance both front and back of me I was dragging my ass, and struggling again. So I decided on another nap, and still no sign of a sag wagon. This rest would prove not as positive as the first, the wind shifted as I laid down and was now blowing up through my space blanket skirt. Not being sharp enough to move I was there 30 minutes struggling, I finally got up and changed sides of the road, this was not much better, with tossing and turning the space blanket started to tear. So I got up and rode very slowly for a couple more hours to Perche, I arrived at 6:12 AM

Time to Mortange Au Perche 82:25.....Time remaining 7:35

This stage took 7 hours to cover 85k, my riding time was 4:47 actually not bad at 17.7KPH. This was clearly the hardest stage of PBP2019 for me. This leaves my 7.5 hours to do 121 K.

I texted Ann "I am going to finish, but I am going to be outside the time limit".

18. How much time do you have?

The rest stop in Perche was great, it was warm and a clean bathroom with no wait, the paperwork was a little painful, but I was glad to get it done.

In the food line was another Brit he was having a tuff go of things, he grabbed the only plain baguette in the bun box, he was in the line to pay in front of me, he paid for his food and then asked the nice lady at the till "where do I get ingredients for my baguette?"

She looked at him perplexed and pointed at the receipt; he paid for a bun as there were no Baguettes on their menu with cheese or meet.

He replied in a very whinny voice "there's nothing on my baguette, how do I get anything on my Baguette!"

A gentleman came to help, then our hungry friend started again” there’s nothing on my baguette, I guess I just eat a plain baguette.....” this, as comical as was to watch, went on for a bit, I paid for my food and there were now 3 people tracking stuff for his baguette. I never saw or heard the end of the baguette story.

I ate and rested and drank coffee for almost 2 hours, I had sent Ann the text I’ll finish and that I’d be late.

Then out of nowhere some random guys sits across from me and we chat for a while, he asked how I was doing and told him the story of last night’s horrible ride and that I am going to finish outside the time limits.

He asked how much time I had to finish, I did some quick math, it was about 8:00 am my cut off is 1:45, so I have 5 hours 45 minutes to ride 121K.

He looks at me and very matter of fact way and says “120 k in just under 6 hours you can do that”.

So I say “Yes, yes I can. Thanks.” I leave very confidently.

At 8:09 I jumped on the bike and pressed the start button on the Wahoo and rode out of Mortagne-au-Perche and it’s 77k’s to Dreux.

The ride was great other than the usual pains I felt pretty good, but after the worst night anything would feel better. I was riding well and teamed up with a rider from India I remembered him from the morning before, we shared turns pulling without talking.

As we hit the first big hill he just jumped out of the draft and attacked the hill, my first thought was to go with him. Then I heard my Wife in the back of my brain “spiny spiny”. Most people would say just spin up the hill or spin to win.

So I let him go and I spiny-ed spiny-ed up the hill, I caught up to him on the decent and we worked together until the next big hill. He sprinted up the hill and I “spiny-ed spiny-ed”. I didn’t see him for a while but caught up to him on a flat and asked why he would race up the hills. His answer was simply he liked the hills. Next hill he was gone again and I caught him on the flat. The next hill after that, same thing but this time I caught him half way up the hill he standing holding his bike and guzzling water. I didn’t see him again. I hope he recovered and finished.

Ride time to Dreux was 3:27:20 with 03:17 paused and an average riding speed of 22.8 kph. It was 11:35am when I passed the timing station, My 90 hour finishing time is 1:45pm.

I wasn’t there long, card stamped a pee, bought some food, a coke and water, uploaded the stage from Strava to Facebook. I plugged the Wahoo into the charger and put it in my top tube bag, and with that I was gone.

Time to Dreax 87:48Time remaining 2:12

19. 44K Less than 2 hours & the British invasion.

As I rode out of Dreax I discovered it was really painful to sit on the bike, but after a couple adjustments I could find a sweet spot and I was ok. My left hand was fairly numb, my right hand had a little numbness and I could barely feel my toes. I saw others who were in far worse shape than me.

There was a steep decline on the way out of town, I went into a full tuck, my best Julian Alaphilepe and was flying it was a great feeling. I had an adrenalin rush less than 2 hours an 44k to go. The math at this point was constant.

Then this happened, a voice behind with a very proper British accent says" It appears that you are trying to make some time, I am also trying to make time. I propose we work together."

This was an amazing feeling, I looked behind then beside me I say my new friend James, and he looked and sounded like former pro and GCN presenter Danial Lloyd.

Our pace was good, I was constantly riding above 25k per hour, we discussed our aches and pains, and how we both got behind. His storey was much more noble than mine, he had stopped to help an injured rider, he was certain they would credit him for the lost time he just wanted to make sure.

After a while I asked how far we had to go, his computer had died so I pulled mine out of the bag, Ahh shit I'd forgotten to restart the Wahoo. So I did and we carried on, catching up to groups drafting for a while then leaving them when a faster group came by.

Riders we passed seemed to either be struggling to finish or well ahead of their finish times and they wanted to enjoy the last stage of PBP, they seemed so relaxed. I was in a hurry; my first goal was to qualify for PBP2019. My second goal was to finish and third was to finish inside 90 hours. 8 hours ago I was just hoping to finish, now I am close to finishing inside 90 hours. I don't know exactly how far we have to go.

Then up ahead there are couple guys taking their time and having a nice talk, James appears to know them and rides up to them and says" Rob from Canada and I are chasing the time limit and we were wondering if you blokes, would like to pull for us?"

They were Irishmen, one I had met the night before and he was really grumpy then but in a very cheerful mood today, his friend had quads like Curt Hartnet in his hay day, they were massive. They seemed happy to help but spoke in a foreign language. And we were again on a great pace, I had an hour to finish at this point, and none of us knew the distance to the end.

As we settled in behind the 2, and our little pace line was going quite well 28-30 kph, I was hardly turning a pedal. Then James spoke up again in his very British accent " Rob from Canada is having a real problem with his Arse, It appears to resemble Steak Tar Tar, and when he remounts on his saddle, he states it's like sitting on broken glass."

They all laughed and spoke in Galick , I didn't know what they were saying but could guess. They really had a good laugh. I just sort of smiled and said to James " I guess I am the butt of their humour"

We groaned and carried on.

I don't have a sense of distance but I know I have 45 minutes, and we have gone about 15 k since I turned on the Wahoo. The pace continued and I was taking my turn at the front and then all of a sudden James and the little Irishman were not with us, but we continued for a bit more, then the big legged guy says he has to wait for his friend and James and tells me to carry on.

So I am alone again, a few minutes before we separated Team Alberta went by in beautiful matching kit and flying, It would have been nice to have jumped on those wheels.

5 Kilometers to Rambouillet, is what the sign said. I looked at my watch I had 24 minutes to finish in 90 hours.....more math, 3 minutes to do a kilometer at 20 kph, that's 15 minutes of riding time, for the first time in hours I felt as though I would make it.

1 more k goes by I redo the math and then this thought, the 5 k to Rambouillet is to the city limits, then there is some Pave, and 1 k up the hill to the finish. Yikes calmness gives way to panic, I am out of the saddle going hard and being cautious when I sit down. I don't want to be the 90 hour and 1 minute guy.

Another k and another and another then I see the pave, and the sign to the right hand turn up the hill. I make the turn People pointing the direction, bikes going up the hill coming down the hill. I am out of the saddle riding hard. I had 6 minutes when I turned off the road.

At this point my eyes are welling up, and the emotion is high, I was feeling a little silly like the guy at every Gran Fondo that is racing 2 hours after the first group came in. But I was going finish in time, I yelled at a few people " Chasing Time !", I heard a few "Go Canada" cheers, that was really quite wonderful feeling. People on the road were great they cleared the path most seemed to be aware of what I was doing.

At the top of the hill there is a left turn, it was farther to go than I thought. I reached the finish line, there's lots of people cheering, the joy of coming in late. As I crossed the line I didn't see the sensor that reads your chip and stops your time, someone said to keep going it's around the corner, so I am riding doing the last loop in the Court Yard, and I see the wires and pads. I look at my watch its 1:43.

I am fairly certain that I'm inside the time, but I need to get my card stamped. I nice gentleman points to the control about 50 yards away, so I drop my bike. He quickly says non, and points to the bike paddock. There are thousands of bikes in there, so in I go find a place for my bike and start to run for the Control, I took the direct route through the fenced area, 20 yards away I see there is a fence. I think to myself this

is going to be ugly me climbing this fence, but there is a hole in the fence big enough for me, so I crawl through. I look behind and there are 2 more guys coming.

I enter the building at 1:44 and pass my card to the lady, she stamps it as my watch turns to 1:45, and she entered the time as 1:45. I was finally sure I am done PBP2019, and inside the time. I got my medal and meal ticket. I got my dinner and bought a couple beers and messaged my wife.

It was a great meal and the beers were fantastic.....then I was woken up by one of lady volunteers, "Pardon misère, you cannot sleep in the food tent. " I had fallen asleep sitting straight up with half a beer in my hand. This one I did not spill.

Time to Rambouillet 89:55:36..... Time remaining 4 minutes 24 seconds.

20. In Conclusion

I found out later from Andrew one of my riding buddies in an email that my official time was 89:55:35, he was following me on line, as were many other people. He had checked the PBP website and emailed me congratulations and I was still in Rambouillet. If I knew I had that much time to spare I could have had another bowl of coffee and a croissant.

I found a nice spot under a tree across from the Alex Singer booth; I messaged Ann my location and lay down. I wasn't asleep for too long when they showed up. Not a pretty picture was I.

But I am a Paris Brest Paris finisher, and I could still walk.

Fin