

One of my riding buddies lives in the start town of Palmdale and he called me as we were driving in the evening before. He said that the forecast was for windy wind with wind gusts and partly scattered wind. Erik car-pooled down with my family and I and we were just leaving our dinner stop at the Mad Greek in Baker. The whole rest of the drive in we were quite focused on the direction and intensity of the wind. We got to the room and crashed.

Being a hopeless optimist, I awoke (4am) sure that the wind had stopped or at least slowed down overnight. We went downstairs and outside to watch the early guys leave (they allow an early start time of 4:30am if you want it). These guys were bundled up good AND they were shivering. Neither Erik nor I had ANY cold weather gear; just lycra shorts, short sleeve jersey, summer gloves. We got directions to a 24 hour Wal-Mart and screamed to it and purchased a long-sleeve sweatshirt each (easily the best \$15 I have EVER spent). We arrived at the start line in the middle of roll call; less than one minute to spare. Everyone else was more appropriately dressed than us with the exception of the other Vegas area entrant, Jason Landberg. Man, did he ever look cold!

We headed out into a stiff, stiff headwind and the temperature was only 39 degrees. The pace was slow; I took my turn in the lead part of the pack and did some pulls in the 10 to 12 mph range. Even at this pace, I could only manage short pulls of maybe 30 seconds or so. I knew that if I hung in with the strong riders, that I would have lots of shelter from the wind as long as I did my share and could hang on the hills. The large rollers start about 20 miles in and the pace started to pick up as some surges were made. When we rolled past the first support station at 30 miles, I got my first look back at the group. I thought we were about 30 riders; we were only about 8. We re-formed a pace line. This wasn't really a "pace line"; it was just a group of guys hiding behind the dumbest one and we kept taking turns being the dummy. The first real climbs start here; we were entering a section of the course called "The Ridge Route". It didn't take long for the guys who had worked too hard on the flats to fall off and there were just four of us climbing at the front; Jeff Landaur, Eric Wilson, Keith Laird, and myself, Scott Dakus. We rode pretty hard over the ridge route that offered a bit of shelter from the wind, but the nasty wind was back on the flat section up to check point two.

This is where the 100 milers started. The course is a "lollipop" format. You go out 50 miles, do a 100 mile loop, and then return the last 50 miles. We made our first stop to refuel at this rest stop and got back on the road before anyone else showed up. We had at least a 5 minute lead. There were over 300 century riders on the road ahead of us now, so we would get to see some new faces and perhaps get some of them to help as a bit. The next section featured a long, grinding climb into a nice wind. We passed quite a few century riders during the next five miles and when it was my turn at the front, I went hard for a long pull to reach another one. By the time we caught his wheel, we had lost Eric and Keith and it was just Jeff and I. This rider we caught was very strong and was a huge help in getting up the mountain. At the check point at the top, we stopped and he continued on. This is where I donated my sweatshirt to some van and Jeff and I hit the road. This next section is a 20 mile series of decents and short climbs down a spectacular ridge with beautiful valleys on each side. We worked with other caught riders off and on

untill the lunch stop at mile 100 or so.

We headed on towards the ominous "Heartbreak climb". Jeff Landaur is sort of a living legend in ultra cycling and is currently one of the fastest guys out there over huge distances. I was having a good day and Jeff was having an off day and I was quite flattered to be off the front with him; we calculated that if we just kept cruising and did nothing stupid that we wouldn't get caught. We took it easy up the climb. At one point, Jeff said to me that he was glad he had put a 27-tooth cog on the night before, because the climb was killing him. That was real funny, because the night before at the hotel, I talked Erik Skramstad OUT of putting his 27 on the bike. I use a compact and my low gear was a 34X23. I was on it early and often. We got Heartbreak behind us and settled in for sheer punishment across the long saddle at the top of the climb. We were with a couple of century riders who were glad to see us. Jeff and I traded pulls of maybe 20 seconds in this brutally windy section; sometimes we were only going 8 mph and this was flat! Every once in a while, one of the other guys would try to do a pull, but they were usually spent by the time they even got to the front, but man they sure did try. This section just emptied my legs completely over and over again. This is the only section of the ride that we were truly in "survival mode". At the end of it we had a great down hill with a strong tail wind. I was going 51 mph when we aproached the stop sign. There is just something wrong with that, isn't there?

Well, we hit the truck stop again; this is where the century riders finish. We have about 50 miles to go; most of it tail wind; perhaps 3000 feet of climbing and no more folks to ride with. Again, we kept to business and waisted very little time, but never put in too intense of efforts; just good, tempo riding. At this point, I was stronger on the climbs, but Jeff was clearly stronger on the flats and did the lion's share of the work over the last 30 mile stretch. We had some fun, did a few sprints and rolled into the finish with a time of 11:33. My family came out and waited with us for the next riders to finish. Erik Wilson is a good friend and I even drank one of his beers (Fosters) while I was waiting for him. He was the next rider to finish; about 45 minuts back. Then other guys started to trickle in. Keith pulled a quad and had to drop out at about 110 miles. Most of the folks who did finish, finished after dark. If you look at the results, you will see that Nevada was represented proudly with Erik, Jason, and I all finishing in the top 12 of a ride that is perrenially one of the toughest doubles out there even on a calm day.

--Scott Dakus