

## **2010 Apple Valley 400k Ride Report and Comments**

The following are rider comments from the AV 400k ride held Saturday, August 21. Overall 29 riders started, 25 finished, including three riders that did a pre-ride several days before the brevet.

The weather overall was good, although fog in the morning and evening, and high humidity were challenges for most riders.

### **Dan Diehn – Great Lakes Randonneurs**

Thanks for all of your hard work in putting together the 400km. I had a great day riding in Minnesota. A group of us had an experience which may be unique in RUSA history. While passing a farm shortly after the 3rd control, we noticed the farmers zip-line set up in the front yard. The farmer saw us and offered to get the equipment to let us give it a try. We wasted about a half hour but it was lots of fun and added a memorable moment to the event.

### **Richard Soderberg - Minneapolis**

Rob, thanks for arranging the ride. This was a real thoroughly organized event---I'm sure everyone enjoyed the extra thought and effort that you put into selecting the route, mapping out all available convenience stores for us in the latter half, and making sure that we were fully aware of any road works, etc. I really enjoyed the fact that we had a different route going back; not only was it a very scenic one, but the change in views added a lot to the whole experience (and it was a good move to eliminate some climbs on a day when temperature/humidity is such a big factor.) The pictures are a great memory to have, too! (The only thing that struck me along the way, and Norman mentioned it too, is that most of the control points don't seem to carry any fruit at all. Maybe that's a seasonal or just temporary thing and it's not something that any of us can change, anyway, but if I had known about it I might have brought some with me.)

On a different note, I made the wrong choice driving home after the ride. Luckily I didn't hurt anyone. But I did fall asleep on Hwy 77 and drove off the road. I woke up as I crashed through some post/fence and into the median. The car is probably a total loss, but I didn't really suffer any injuries. No pun intended, but this was a real wake-up call for me. I can't believe that I acted that recklessly. Thanks again for offering me a place to stay, I wish my judgment hadn't been so impaired that I thought I could make it on my own.

### **Mark Olsen – Rochester**

[I really enjoyed the route this time. All of the controls were open for us and we were comfortable with the food options. The scenery is some of the nicest available in the region.](#)

### **Jeff Rhodes**

I enjoyed the ride overall. It was a little eerie riding through the fog, following the taillights of the riders ahead. The sections that were on the newly paved roads were genuine riding treats. It really allowed me to sit back, pedal, relax and enjoy the view. The part that I enjoyed the most, was also the toughest - Plainview to Stockton. The sky was clear and there was very little traffic on the road. The scenery in the valleys was spectacular - a nice change from the previous 50+ miles of farmland. It was the climb out to CR-31, and the climb out of Rollingstone combined with the heat and physical issues that did me in. I would like to think that if the temperature were cooler, I would have been able to pull together the energy to keep moving. I hope you will be using the same route next year. I look forward to tackling again.

## **Bob Booth – Madison**

I thought the route was great. Scenic, mostly low traffic. The fog in the morning was less of an issue than the fog at night. Once the fog cleared and I got a taste of the heat I realized that we were fortunate that the fog hung around as long as it did.

I was one of the zipline riders along with Dan, Andrei, and Greg Silver. The owner was just mowing his lawn and saw some bikers talking and pointing at this zipline stretched across his property. The guy (Ron) asked if we wanted to try it. Greg Silver was like a kid at Christmas. We all took turns, there may be a phone photo or two that Dan may have. We got a bit carried away and yelled to other riders as they came by that it was a secret control and they had to zipline. The looks on the faces was priceless, but no other takers. We gave the owner a donation for his effort.

One other note: for such a small group there seemed to be a high percentage of riders with mechanical issues. I was aware of a tire, a cleat, wheel/drive train, cable, and numerous punctures.

On a personal note, I had the wonderful experience of trying to pass a kidney stone on the brevet. It was like trying to piss ground glass suspended in acid.

Thanks for the road marking. I rely on the cue sheet but it is reassuring to see confirmation painted on the road.

## **Price Flanagan**

Thanks so much for the photos already and the recap.

A few thoughts on this brevet:

1. Ran over bike computer.
2. Learned how nice it is to ride w/o the reminder of current speed. Thanks Bob and Greg! And Andrei for finding it. A souvenir.
3. Wonderful land, especially after Plainview. Thanks to Mark for some history on the White Water area. We will check it out the next time we go to Winona for the Great River Shakespeare festival.
4. Chinese buffet in Plainview. Thanks Rich Moore for pointing that out at the control.
5. Got a reading tip: H.P. Lovecraft, though this will have to wait until I get through the Isabel Dalhousie "mysteries". Always a little behind.
6. Learned that all AV arrows are not the 400k AV arrows.
7. I always ride out faster than my current endurance fitness allows.

8. The sun is your friend, if you slow down, hydrate, and apply sunscreen.
9. The night is your friend, if you follow the light of "Edolux" and share the road with other great randos.
10. The fog is your friend, as it delays the sun.
11. The way up is down.
12. The way down is up.
13. Riding on freshly paved Minnesota road.

### **Richard Moore**

Thanks for organizing a great ride. I'd like to add that I thought the fog was really cool. Not only did it keep us cool, but it was neat the way the droplets stuck to my arm and leg hairs. Every time I went over a bump I could feel a little shower of droplets falling off the hairs onto my skin.

I'd also like to let everyone know that the Chinese restaurant in Plainview (2 blocks east of the control) has an excellent buffet and first rate air conditioning.

Looking forward to cool fall rides,

### **Mike Achor – Rochester**

Great route; Quite scenic.

### **Michele Brougher – Minneapolis**

I thought the changes from last year were good ones. The out-and-back is nice from a planning perspective, but it's just much nicer to have different scenery on the way back. My GPS and correlated software showed the total elevation to be about 10,000 feet instead of 13,000; I didn't feel as though I had ridden 13,000 feet at the end so I suspect it really is closer to 10,000. The ride along the Zumbro River was a real treat too and I had never been on several stretches of the route. New is always an adventure.

I had a great time and met some new people on this ride. The really anal rando crowd might give me an F for time management at controls, but lunch at Subway pondering ways to permanently attach one's leg to the pedal was a hoot and stopping for a real chinese dinner was also a treat.

I had to climb very slowly as I continue to rehab my torn hamstring. I was joined in the injury/bad luck department by a stripped rear hub, bald tires, a broken cleat, and a kidney stone. Sure we had a few issues, but we all finished just the same. Could not have asked for better weather, though the climb out of Rollingstone was a little like being in an Easy Bake Oven (without the cake at the end). The early and late fog was also somewhat of a challenge since I really couldn't see for at least 60 miles of this ride; I envy those with good eyes or contact lenses. But the fog really cut down on the heat and that is always appreciated.

I passed on the free zip line rides outside Plainview, but I took a picture. I figured that I would likely break my neck and doing that on a brevet while NOT riding is just not how I'd want to be remembered. Maybe next time.

A few of us were treated to a big domestic disruption probably originating at the bar in Randolph at about 2:00am. A car was pulled over on the side of the highway just north of Randolph and some woman was standing on the opposite side of the highway screaming at her boyfriend (still in the car) that he was an

ass. One hates to ride through a bad situation, but really what else were we going to do? I found it just as amusing at the strange snorting animal that milled around us while we changed a tire outside Mazeppa. Best guess is that it was a deer or a raccoon; are there wild pigs in Mazeppa I wonder.

Can't wait for the 600k. Hard to believe that the summer is passing so quickly.

## **Craig Futterer**

I especially liked the addition of CR-11 along the Zumbro River through Hammond (can we add this for the 300?). This section was a very pleasant, scenic and shady section at just about the perfect time in my day.

I did not ride my Randonneuse this ride, I chose to ride my road bike with a few modifications. My thoughts were to lighten the load a bit and make some of the hills go by faster. I think for the most part it worked... I did miss the comfort later in the day and the extra teeth on my cassette, but overall things went well and I met my goal of arriving at the finish prior to "last call" at Old Chicago. Riding with 26cm tires and adding the headlight mount to my front skewer (I replaced the nut on one end with what looks like a small BMX type peg) worked well. By mounting my headlamp lower it easily lit up the imperfections in the road and moved the lamp off my handlebars providing less clutter.

I did struggle a bit in the heat and took some additional time at a couple of the controls during the middle of the day. I also had a difficult time eating solid food for a stretch, but was able to get needed nourishment through liquids so I could keep moving. Once the sun went down I seemed to become reenergized and was able to eat more and picked up the pace a bit, I am sure having less hills toward the end was a contributing factor.

I would however, not recommend the Nachos Grande immediately after the finish!!!

## **Andrei Solodin**

I had a mostly uneventful ride, so I don't have much to say. I felt really strong this time, and didn't really feel tired until about 20 mi to Zumbrota. Still I finished really strong. Ironically, it was the drive home to St Paul that was the most challenging part, I struggled to stay awake. Either because it was my second 400k or because of less climbing, I didn't feel that this was an "epic" ride, the way I felt after last year's 400k. It may sound strange, but I enjoy challenging climbs. It's the long boring stretches of flats that seem to tire me out. Though I have to say, the road along Zumbro river was spectacular.

Maybe for next year, we can do more climbing again, but keep this road. Also, this time I managed to stay with a group at all times during the ride, and it made the ride so much more enjoyable. And I was one of the riders who partook in the zip line. It was very entertaining.

I had an interesting chat with Mark Olsen and he explained to me that there are 2 factions within the rando community: the cyclotourist type and the ultra-marathon, racing type. I guess I belong to the former. I also read an interesting article on the PBP web site (I think that's where I saw it, though I can't find the link to it now) that explains the paradox of the

brevet not being a race yet recording the completion time, thus enabling the riders to compete for best time. I guess the beauty of randoneuring is that riders can treat it as a race or a just a weekend ride and still enjoy it. At the same time, I do see quite a difference between the two factions. Off the record, someone told me they would not eat at a Subway in Plainview because it was "1/2 mi out of the way", and instead ate at the BP where the food was of considerably worse quality, to the extent of causing a GI distress. I keep being surprised to hear things like that.

## **Bill Nauseef**

First, i need to thank you again for making this event possible; it must entail a remarkable amount of planning & logistics. My only constructive comment/suggestion regards some of the road markings. i'm sure that what i found occassionally confusing may seem obvious to those familiar with the roads. Especially at night, i had difficulty finding road markings. The one notable one, that had me standing at the fork wondering for several minutes which way to go, was where route 81 veered to the right, while SH50 continued straight. It is very clear on the queue sheet (in retrospect), but i could not see any markings on the road that went to the right (not marked as Rt81 at the junction, but farther down the road). i recognize that i may have simply missed the marking, but i wonder if it would be possible or helpful to have two confirmatory marks on the road after turns. In the daytime, the markings were very easy to find. Please don't misinterpret this comment as a complaint, because it is not; just a perspective from someone unfamiliar with the area.

Second, i don't have any remarkable tales to tell, but did have three close encounters.

This was my first venture beyond 200 miles, so i had several personal new successes, for which i'm very thankful. There were some very dark & deep spots between 160 and 200 miles, during which time Bill Bennett & i played tag (he zipping away on the downhills & my catching him on the climbs). Eventually, Bill pulled away. i had a second encounter with a local rider at the penultimate stop (in Cannon Falls). i left that stop before the other rider, but he caught me ~10 miles down the road. He kindly asked if i was confident of my whereabouts & if i could find my way to the finish. i assured him that i was ok & that he shouldn't slow his ride for me (which i could tell he would willingly do if asked). This occurred just before crossing US52. i was very impressed by his kind gesture. My third encounter was with a deer that jumped ~ 2 feet in front me to cross the road in the dark. Both the deer & i were very surprised.

Having successfully negotiated the 400K, i'm now considering the 600K. i had asked before about the strategy & you sent a very thoughtful note about riding through the night. i think, if one can safely extrapolate, that i'd finish in under 30 hours so that it would be sensible to ride through the night. When folks opt to do that, do they stop at Rushford, change clothes, eat something "real" (not more Hammer stuff but sandwiches etc), & spend an extended time before heading out? i can't get a clear sense of how much time is spent before continuing on through the night. It's hard to imagine that it's just a routine stop, but i want to get your perspective, given your extensive experience.

## **Rob's Comments**

I am glad that riders enjoyed the route and had a very good ride. The good feedback on the Zumbro River sections will ensure we keep these on our list of favorites.

I will take the hit for some turns that could have been better marked (CR-11 in Millville, CR-81 near Hampton, CR-12 after Mazeppa) and a stray arrow from the 200k route in Zumbrota that I

overlooked. I reiterate, however, my pre-ride comments and written warnings to always refer to the cue sheet as the final authority.

One safety comment – over ½ of the taillights on the 400k rider's bikes are VERY marginal, and are difficult to see more than 50' away, which is not far. In the fog, this distance was far less. Riders should check their taillights and ensure they are bright enough for night riding in rural areas and under difficult conditions.

A word of caution when driving home after a long brevet. Two riders reported struggling to stay awake on their way to homes in Minneapolis and St. Paul, less than 20 miles each. One ended up in the ditch. Please take extra care to ensure you are capable of driving, even a short distance. On the AV 600k, we will have a room available for showers and a bed for a nap. If you are uncertain at all about your driving capability, have a nap in your car before you leave