



MONTHLY MEANDERS

REPORT OF DIRTY KANZA (DK200)

This is a race report of myself (Kae Takeshita) and husband Dan (Daniel Szokarski) from Dirty Kanza, the premier endurance gravel grinder in eastern Kansas. WARNING - this is VERY long, but not as long as the actual race)

Team Kae & Dan were back in Kansas to tackle 200 miles (206 to be exact) of remote gravel roads! We had unfinished business as the previous race ended with a disaster.

[Before the race] Despite much concern for wet weather and tornadoes (over 20 tornadoes were reported in previous week in Kansas), the week leading up to the race was dry, and the forecast was very sunny for the weekend. So I expected a completely dry and fast course, except 3 creek crossings which I spotted in the course map.

When we got up a bit before 4 AM on the race day, Dan told me, "It was raining hard." I thought he was joking around and did not take him seriously. Pushing the window curtains aside I saw huge puddles in the parking lot. I looked at a radar and confirmed an isolated but strong storm did pass by, covering the first part of the course. Ummm, I sensed a bit of trouble.

[Start] 5AM, the downtown was already well lit up and cheerful with music blasting. Locals, photographers, friends and family of the racers were everywhere around the start line. There was only one start wave for DK200. There were over 1000 racers, and we placed ourselves according to the predicted finish time. I positioned myself very close to the front. I was



looking around to check out my female competition while waiting for the 6AM start. The previous year's winner, a California chick was one of those who were getting a "call-up" in front of everyone. Same went for the last year's runner-up. Who else? Actually, I really didn't know anyone. All I knew was that high caliber racers came from all over the nation. I spotted a racer sponsored by Panaracer, Robin Farina, a former US National Road Champion. I took a mental note. Huh? Did I just hear Ted King being called? That Ted King,

the World ProTour cyclist? "He retired last year, he came out of retirement to race Dirty Kanza!" said the race announcer. So it was him! Woah.

It was 6 AM and the race was on. The lead-out vehicles were 3 or 4 wide, taking the entire width of downtown Main Street. The spectators were cheering and we were rolling.....

[Leg 1] Leaving the town of Emporia, we rode on pavement for a mile or two. As soon as we hit the gravel I could tell that the ground was wet, but totally manageable. Then, someone shouted "WATER!" Yes, there was water, a puddle on the ground..., and it was a BIG one. It covered the entire width of the wide gravel road. All we could do was just go straight. Then, another one, and another one. By Mile 3 or 4, our front and rear were covered by mud. (Not sure of actual mileage as computer screen was covered by mud, too.) It still was better than the last year's mud bath. We kept on riding... and suddenly the pack slowed down. Some racers were beginning to stop and work on their bikes. The nightmare from 2015 race swiftly came back to my mind... I just pushed the pedal, avoiding the stopped

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Aug 2016

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To Al & Cindy Schneider for hosting another fabulous club picnic.

Approximately 40 people enjoyed a beautiful day, great ride, good food and had a wonderful time socializing with old and new friends.

Club Officials

Elected Officers

President

Joe Beemster 847-215-2314

V.P.-Ride Chair

Dave Waycie 847-845-9663
dave.waycie@gmail.com

Treasurer

Johannes Smits 630-935-4074

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Mitch Rosset rrkite99@aol.com

Publicity Chair

Pam Kaloustian 847-707-0203
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Appointed Officers

Harmon Chairman

Erich Massat 847-253-5815

Newsletter

Ella Shields 773-407-4712

St. Pat's Ride

Al Gibbs

Chairmen

Banquet/Holiday Party

Pam Burke

Harmon Data Base

Emily Qualich 847- 821-1009

Mileage Statistician

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Newsletter Mailings

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Picnic

Al & Cindy Schneider 847-696-2356

Web Page

Johannes Smits 630-935-4074

Newsletter Policy

We can always use information for the newsletter. I'd love to hear from you. E-mail your ride notes, stories or articles for the newsletter to me by the 10th of the preceding month
Ella Shields
eshieldsbike@yahoo.com
(Please include your name and phone number in case I have any questions)



Don't miss an issue of Monthly Meanders!! Contact Mitch Rosset with your new address or e-mail address at rrkite99@aol.com

TOP 20 MILES

Through July 19

133 rides by 128 members

5,274 max miles

Men:

1	Dennis	Ellertson	3572
2	Paul	LeFevre	2512
3	Kilian	Emanuel	2305
4	Dave	Waycie	1819
5	Larry	Frank	1744
6	Luca	Zaramella	1708
7	Erich	Massat	1701
8	Joe	Beemster	1615
9	Johannes	Smits	1604
10	Jeff	Rossi	1417
11	Jim	Boyer	1393
12	Jorn	Lim	1377
13	Jeff	Magnani	1359
14	Kevin	Moore	1347
15	JV	Villadolid	1287
16	Guy	Ockerlund	1274
17	Mitch	Rosset	1070
18	Jim	Flehsig	1058
19	Brian	Hale	1056
20	Don	Miller	1039

Women:

1	Emily	Qualich	1570
2	Betsy	Burtelow	1349
3	Pat	Calabrese	1262
4	Reinhilde	Geis	1143
5	Marianne	Kron	1115
6	Sheri	Rosenbaum	1008
7	Pam	Kaloustian	826
8	Debbie	Wilson	817
9	Ellen	Heineman	704
10	Paula	Matzek	662
11	Ella	Shields	653
12	Cindy	Kessler	588
13	Nancy	Beck	497
14	Pam	Burke	496
15	Anna	Andzejewska	313
16	Cindy	Trent	303
17	Tara	Riley	283
18	Lorrie	Stork	281
19	Jackie	Kelley	272
20	Eileen	Newman	249

Total Rides Led

Through July 19

Al Gibbs	1
Barb Barr	1
Betsy Burtelow	1
Bob Dominski	1
Brian Hale	3
Cindy Kessler	2
Dave Waycie	2
Deb Wilson	1
Dennis Ellertson	14
Don Sorter	2
Earle Horwitz	1
Ella Shields	1
Ellen Heineman	1
Emily Qualich	2
Erich Massat	2
Eva Waycie	2
Frank Bing	4
Jeff Rossi	10
Jeff Magnani	1
Jim, Boyer	9
Joe Beemster	2
Johannes Smits	1
JV Villadolid	1
Kilian Emanuel	32
Larry Frank	4
Luis Magana	1
Mitch Rosset	1
Pam Burke	1
Patty Bloome	2
Paul LeFevre	14
Reinhilde Geis	2
Sheri Rosenbaum	1
Laura Randazzo	1
Tara Riley	2
Toan Tran	2
Tom Wilson	4
Tony Vercillo	4
Total Hosts	37

Aug Ride Schedule	All Riders Should:	*wear a helmet *bring water *bring a pump	*have a bike in good condition *bring a spare tube and patch kit *arrive early...15-30 minutes	*bring an ID card *carry a cell phone *bring money for lunch/snacks	
Day	Time	Ride Name	Start	Miles	Ride Host
Sat 8/6	8:00	Honey Do	Paul Douglas Forest Preserve On Central Rd. 1 1/2 miles west of Roselle Rd, just north of I-90.	30-58	Ride Host Needed
	8:30	Another Day/ Another Way	Evergreen Park School I-90 west to US-20. Turn right on S. Union Rd. Turn right on E. Coral Rd. Turn left on Northrup. Turn right on Washington to school.	70/100	Ride Host Needed
Sun 8/7	9:00	Sunday Short Ride	Long Grove Commons Route 22 and Old McHenry Road. Park in lot north of the PNC Bank.	31-55	Brian Hale 847-804-1561
	8:00	Paul's Northeast IL Century	Euclid School Corner of Euclid and Wheeling Road, Mount Prospect	100	Paul LeFevre 224-234-0615
Sat 8/13	8:00	Honey Do	Paul Douglas Forest Preserve See Above	30-58	Toan Tran 847-630-0035
	8:30	TINFU	Evergreen Park School See Above	50/75/ 100	Dave Waycie 847-845-9663
Sun 8/14	9:00	Sunday Short Ride	Long Grove Commons See Above	31-55	Patty & Brian Blome 847-358-4807
	8:00	Kenosha Bound - Long	Long Grove Commons See Above	87	Emily Qualich 847-821-1009
	9:00	Kenosha Bound - Medium	Old School F.P. St Mary's Rd, north of Rt 60 on the east side of the road. Enter forest preserve and turn right at Stop sign. Meet in first parking lot on the left.	61	Vince Kelley 847-259-6899
	9:00	Kenosha Bound - Short	Wadsworth Village Office 14155 W Wadsworth, Wadsworth On the south side of West Wadsworth Rd, just west of N. Delany Road	37	Carl Droege 847-785-9343
Sat 8/20	8:00	Honey Do	Paul Douglas Forest Preserve See Above	30-58	Laura Randazzo 847-917-6778
	8/8:30	Waterford Factory Ride	Waterford Precision Cycles I-94 to Hwy 20 west. Take Hwy 20 for 14 miles. Turn left on Hwy D for 1/5 miles to Hwy W. Turn right (north) on Hwy W for 1 mile, then turn left (west) onto Bakke Avenue. 4th building on right.	27/41/68	Kevin Moore 847-373-7378
Sun 8/21	9:00	Sunday Short Ride	Long Grove Commons See Above	31-55	Betsy Burtelow 847-541-1325

Day	Time	Ride Name	AUGUST (continued) Start	Miles	Ride Host
Sat 8/27	8:00	Honey Do/ Extended Do	Paul Douglas Forest Preserve See page 3	30-72	Jim Flechsig 847-584-4517
Sun 8/28	7-9AM	Club Member Harmon Pre-Ride	Wilmot High School 11112 308th Ave, Wilmot, WI I-94 west to Exit 345 (Hwy C). West to Wilmot. Turn right on Hwy W, Left at 308th Ave. to school parking lot.	25/50/ 75/100	Erich Massat 847-253-5815

WEEKLY RIDES					
Day	Time	Ride	Miles	Start/Directions	Ride Host
Tuesday & Thursday	9:00 am	Deerfield Bakery Ride	25-45	Willow Stream Park On Old Checker Rd. a few tenths of a mile west of the bakery. Turn west on old Checker Rd. to parking on the right	Kilian Emanuel 847-296-7874
Tuesday	6:00 pm	Working Stiff's Ride	18-27	Stempel Parking Lot On the west side of Old McHenry Road, behind the Read Oaks Store. West of IL 53, Long Grove, IL	Tom Wilson 847-632-1412
Wednesday	9:30 am	No-Drop Road Ride	30-40	Woodland Trail Park 1-1/4 miles East of Route 83 on Euclid Ave- nue, Mt. Prospect	Dennis Ellertson 847-255-9323
Wednesday	6:00 pm	Hill and Dale Ride	25-35	Grassy Meadow Forest Preserve The F.P. is on Central Rd. 1½ mi. west of Roselle Rd, just north of I-90	Jeff Rossi 708-648-9170
Thursday	6:00 pm	Thursday Night Ride	30	Heron Creek Forest Preserve Located on the SW Corner of RT 22 and Old McHenry Road, park at shelter B.	Paul Lefevre 847-670-3501
Friday	10:00 am	Libertyville Picnic Ride	30	Willow Stream Park On Old Checker Rd just west of Buffalo Grove Rd. North of Lake Cook Rd	Frank Bing 847-814-9925

Be sure to be on the Yahoo group and/or Facebook for last minute changes

<p>■ INVITATIONALS</p> <p>■ Aug 7, Two Rivers Century, Kankakee, 22/45/62/80/100/124, tworiverscentury.com</p> <p>■ Aug. 20, Bike Psycho's Century, Coal City, 30/50/70/100/124 miles bikepsychos.org</p>	<p>Aug 20, Ride Like an Egyptian, DeKalb 25/50/75/100 miles info@egyptiantheatre.org egyptiantheatre.org/ride-like-an-egyptian</p> <p>Aug 21, Wright Ride, Oak Park, 10/30/50/68 miles, opccwr@yahoo.com www.oakparkcycleclub.org/wright-ride</p>
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racers, hoping nothing would happen to my bike. And I felt my drivetrain locking up. Waaaaah!

I immediately stopped cranking and got off the bike, and looked at the rear derailleur. Good, it was intact not broken. After removing the heavy mud chunks, I rotated the cranks with my hand and it was okay, so I got back on bike. Yet, my gears were skipping. I saw a man throwing his bike into the woods with anger. His derailleur was probably done for, his race must be over. That was waaay too early in the game. "I don't feel good about this, I've got to address this." So, I was off the bike again. I found a little pond (or was it a creek?) on the side of the gravel road. Without hesitation I jumped in with my bike, and started to wash off the mud from both derailleurs as well as chain. Other racers joined me saying it was a good idea. Yes, it was a fabulous idea!

Alright, enough time spent off the bike already. I've got to go... Much better, but yet my gears were still skipping and neither shoe would clip in, due to too much mud in cleats, but I just kept going. There were no big packs anymore, so I rode alone (Shoot, solo effort already?!) but picked up a few riders and formed a small group. I passed riders who should not be in front of me (sorry, no offence but I was being realistic and analyzing the situation) and wondered how far behind I was from where I wanted to be. But I told myself, "Well, I cannot really worry about it, it's way too early in the race to think stuff like that. We have 190 miles more to go."

Some of the mud was stuck on the bike frame like cement, especially on the top of inside of the front fork but the most unwanted caking around the chain stays must have fallen by the vibration; eventually the skipping stopped and my shoes were again one with the pedals.

I wasn't really feeling very strong for the 1st hour. Finally around 1 hour 25 min into the race, my switch came on. I focused on riding with strong riders so I could keep a good speed going as long as possible, as it was going to be a long day.

The course let us traverse onto open cattle ranges, going over the cattle guards (depression in the road covered by a transverse grid of steel bars), now we were actually riding in the backyards of the local ranchers, their private lands! (Of course pre-arranged permission was required. Thanks, DK organizers!)

Last year, the free range cattle almost blocked my paths. This year, they were within their fenced area. Whew, up close they are big, really big. Having seen very many cows in IL, MI and WI during races and rides, it was my first time to see the "running cows"; they were galloping like horses for so long!

I came upon the area where we did the "miles of mud-walk" of last year. I was surprised to see there were some pretty good inclines and remembering we actually walked on foot/ carried the bike, so glad at the same time we did not have a repeat. So far all was good, I was really happy with my current energy level.

The gravel here in Kansas is not the kind we get to see usually in Illinois, not round, not marbles but more like small jagged rocks, sharp! Native Americans used to make arrowheads out of them.

The Flint Hills' terrain was so rocky and uneven, I had to be careful not to let the wheel spin without grabbing the surface, no standing, and also not to slip off of the rock surface or get stuck in between. Yes, there were a few times I almost lost my balance due to combination of high speed and very loose gravel, but I recovered well and kept on.

I could tell I got much better in bike handling than 2 years ago, when I first started Gravel Grinding, and that made me happy. Back then, especially my first ride on gravel, I had a death grip as I was so scared of riding on a loose surface.

When it goes down, it comes back up again and again. Unlike pavement, it was very unpredictable; the very bottom of the hills (the end of the downhill) were covered by pools of muddy water so we could not tell

what was hiding underneath. Or if upon seeing there were mud tire tracks, which one could I trust to take the wheel in the right direction and not into a submerged rock?

I observed that many of the racers slowed down before these pools, a cautious move. And that I wagered. It was my chance to close the gaps. Full steam ahead! I braced myself and added more speed instead of slowing down, hoping I would not hit any sharp rocks in the water. I could feel the water pushing me back (the puddles were deeper than they looked) but momentum carried me across water or mud and onto the other side, often closing the gaps to the racers in front of me. Also I got rid of some of the racers behind me, including the last year's female runner-up.

When the terrain flattened a bit, we had a good group going. All racers were steady good riders. One of them spotted a town miles away and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Madison." I was excited we were almost at the first checkpoint.

After a while, I saw many colorful tents ahead with lots of people. My legs were still quite fresh and rolled into the checkpoint with nice speed. There were so many people and they were all cheering, which made me feel good. I was the female leader at that point. I heard Dan calling my name and I rode straight into where our minivan was parked. While I was running to the bathroom, Dan inspected the bike, cleaned and lubed the chain. When I looked at myself in the mirror in the restroom, I surprised myself as I was so filthy top to bottom with mud. Well, I kinda expected it... and I was officially one of the "Dirty" Kanza racer. I discarded all the gel wrappers and picked up new gels, got full bottles, and ready to go!

[Leg 2] My bike must have been really happy to get some TLC. She was shifting fast and smooth. But so sad, within a few miles, she met a huge puddle again.

My GPS was acting funny, telling me to make U-turns. It was so useless giving me

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false information. Luckily, there were other riders in sight and I just decided to follow where they went.

The riders were beginning to settle in, far and few between. I have been soloing for a while. When I glanced over my shoulder, I noticed a small pack, maybe 3 or 4 people, gaining slowly. I joined in as they passed, noticing another female in the group. I did not recognize her. There was no smooth terrain; what we define as “obstacles” around Chicagoland were the smoothest part of the road out there. It would have been nice if a pack could stay together for a long time, but due to occasional super rocky hills and dried-up deep mud ruts the group was shearing apart. The female rider sneaked away from me, but I wasn’t too concerned. I had all day to do this.

I heard a pack approaching. “Good, I’ll recover behind them.” Here comes the last year’s Queen of Kanza, the California chick. The Queen had her domestique (a male rider with the same kit. It was obvious he was not going for his own win) with her... and a few more riders. “Good for her, he’ll protect her all the way to the finish line.” It was no easy ride behind them, they were carrying more speed. I focused on not letting a gap open. We rode for several miles together but I started slipping off in the back. I got back on many times but it was tough; I was feeling it.

When I found myself going backwards again, this racer came from behind... “C’mon, you have to get back on!” It was Dan Huges!! He’s the 5 time King of Kanza, one of my bike celebrity heroes! I got his autograph at a race in Nebraska last year. He gave me a wheel to follow!! He looked back several times to make sure I was on his wheel. I was delighted just to have an opportunity to ride with such a high caliber racer. (Just how it was being able to race alongside Rebecca Rusch, the Queen of Pain last year.) It was really rough and demanding for some miles, but once the toughest part passed, I was back in a comfortable state again.

Here and there, a rider, another rider, and more stopped due to a flat tire. One of the guys in our pack had a leak, too. His rear

tire started spitting the tubeless sealant from the center tread area. I told him the sealant was leaking and we thought maybe it would seal itself, but it did not. He had to stop to fix it.

There were consecutive huge hills over a couple of miles with strong crosswind with nowhere to hide. The earlier solo efforts must have taken a toll on me, I tried to stay on and I did for the 1st hill, but got dropped from the pack later on. But oh well, don’t despair. Even if I went all out to get them on the hill, I would have gone kaput, this was not the time.

I got back to my pace and kept on riding alone. The surface was still rocky and loose, with much ups and downs, so I had to be alert and tried to be “light” on the bike at all times. The wheels and tires took much abuse from the terrain. I was pleasantly surprised to see how much abuse they took and had no issues.

Mile 70 ish, and the dreaded moment had arrived... I did not feel good... I call it a diaper moment, the saddle felt like it was sliding oddly underneath me. Yup, I flatted in the rear. I was riding reputable durable gravel tires. But considering the terrain, you’d be lucky if you didn’t have any flat or mechanicals. I looked but could not find a hole; good thing it was not a tear in my tire. I did have a tire patch kit but it’s better if I didn’t have to use it.

It was my first time to “fix” a flat on a tubeless tire, and it went fairly easy. My thumbs and fingers that usually only do computer work had to work a bit to separate the glued tire from the rim. But after that, I just threw a new tube in there and done! I don’t claim to be the fastest flat fixer and many seemed to pass me while I was working on it. I just hurried to get back on course.

Getting back into my zone, the view opened widely, horizontally and downward. It was a very sketchy fast downhill. I was somehow very confident, and I took it fast. I was bombing down on it; picking the best line and being light on the saddle. I was clamping my teeth shut... “Aggrrrr I can do this!!!” And I did it! I rode it so well. I was so happy

that I was able to take it so aggressively and made it to the bottom!! Then..., a flat in the front....WHAT?!

I found sealant leaking from the center tread. The hole looked small so I was hoping the sealant would seal it up but it was a wishful thinking. Two flats within the same mile...! I was not happy. I rarely flat. Even on the gravel races, this was my first run of flats ever.

A tube was in, and I started inflating, only to find out that the new tube had a bad valve. Ummm. I had two spare tubes, and I just used up two tubes. No matter how many times I did the simple math, the equation was 0 tubes left. While I was thinking of some sort of solution (which was really none) many racers flew by, including the guys and girls I dropped earlier. I was feeling pressed, DNF was not my option, I had to go on!

“What am I gonna do, what am I gonna do?? I have 30 miles to Checkpoint 2, I cannot walk that much!”

Race rule: No outside support is allowed. You’re on your own. Racers may help other racers. So my only option was to ask help of another rider. Would I be lucky enough to get such help this early on in the race? I had no teammate to help, either.

Not sure of how many minutes had passed,. One of the many riders coming up was yelling, “Do you have everything you need??” I yelled back, “I need a tube!” but I was not thinking anyone would actually stop to spare this hot commodity. But this guy did... he stopped, turned around, and came back to give me a tube!! I thanked him many times. He was a savior. I asked him to look for “+One” banner flag at the next checkpoint and tell Dan that he helped me with a tube, so he would get one tube back in return.

Finally, I was back on course. I was now so afraid of pinch flat and I stopped again to add more air. The wind had picked up a lot more than earlier, and when the road turned directions, it really was hard to go on. Downshift to an easy gear, head down, and just go!

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I lost a bottle on one of the super bumpy roads. "I'll manage without it." I was not going to go get it; I did not want to spare any seconds going backwards. Luckily, we had a tailwind for the last miles into the 2nd checkpoint. I did not have to work really hard to get pretty good speed. This only meant we had to fight against the headwind later on, but all my concern at that time was to roll into the checkpoint before my last bottle became empty.

Right after the last drop of water gone, I got into the town of Eureka. When I rode into the checkpoint, I saw one of female riders who passed me earlier. "I am still in this game!" I washed my face and felt fresh. I picked up more spare tubes and was soon on my way to Leg 3.

[Leg 3] I was getting sort of upset with my unreliable GPS navigation, but the terrain was wide open and I was able to see riders ahead of me. I turned off my GPS after a while. I had a cue sheet to navigate in an old fashioned way if needed.

I caught up with two riders, and we caught up to another. It was a 4-person group for a while.

It was getting really hot. Heat was depleting us slowly. The sky was clear and deep blue. Along with lush green prairie, it was a beautiful sight..., but I could not enjoy it as much as I wanted, too busy riding.

Riders caught on and riders fell off. Not much of "working together" was present. It was very hard to make a pace line due to loose and rocky surface. When we had crosswind, we could not form an echelon. We were all battling with every element the nature was throwing at us.

Once the course turned to north, that was a heck of a challenge. About 35 miles of Leg 3 was northbound, right into the strong headwind. The racers were scattered with much distance in between, we were basically all alone.

I had no issues with nutrition or hydration. No cramps, no fire foot (which I was pleas-

antly surprised), no chills which would be a sign of dehydration. I did inventory of my body parts once in a while, and everything was working fine, I had no pain or discomfort whatsoever. However, I found myself difficult to focus sometimes. My vision was not as clear as it should have been. And I just sometimes wondered why I wasn't moving faster than I was going. I shut out the thoughts of negativeness completely and kept repeating to myself in the head, "Kae is awesome, Kae is awesome, Kae is awesome...." like some magic spells.

Leg 3 was the longest of all, 59 miles. After riding so long, I was thinking "It's gotta be 15 miles or more to go." Then, when I checked my logged mileage I found out that there actually was over 30 miles to go... It was VERY disappointing at that time. I saw quite a few racers resting in the shade. I wonder if they ever made it or they already had given up, waiting for an outside assistance to bail them out.

There were two creek crossings on Leg 3. These creeks were wide and deep, and the current was fairly strong. The bottom which we could not really see was slippery plates of rocks with algae so I decided to walk across instead of riding. It was very refreshing. There were spectators around, enjoying cool water, too. One of them was right in the middle of the creek, knee deep, and he was saying something, but my brain did not comprehend what he said at all. As I was carrying my bike and trekking across, there was a drop-off and my left foot got caught. "That's what I was warning you about!" said the man. It was not until later that night I realized one of my toes got really black and blue and painful by getting jammed in the creek. While some riders decided to stay around the creek to cool down, I kept on going, again some solo time. Well, it seemed like I was doing pretty well compared to other guys. When a small fluffy cloud covered the sun for a little bit, it was such a relief.

Getting close to the last checkpoint, the town of Madison, I was counting miles. Each mile felt like several miles. When I passed one of the farmhouses, the spectators in front the house yelled "1.5 miles more

and turn left, and you'll be there!" Was it really only 1.5 miles?? THAT was the longest 1.5 miles I ever rode!

Upon arriving at the last checkpoint, the large timer read 11 hours 15 minutes (or something like that, not sure if I remembered correctly). I was recalling that in one of the past years, the top rider already finished at around 11 hours.

Seeing the team banner, I focused for the vehicle and Dan. When I got off the bike I felt delirious. I had both of my hands on the minivan to keep straight and stretch my back out. When I sat down at the porta potty, it felt really good to sit down on a seat that's not a bike saddle. Dan did the maintenance routine and I did the nutrition. I drank a whole bottle of 16 oz water, chugged down a small bottle of honey, and stuffed front and back of the jersey with ice that I grabbed from the cooler. I took much longer than the previous stops. It was hard to leave but I had to go. I was wondering why there were so many racers hanging around in the town, as if they were not going anywhere. Later I found out that there were many who decided not to continue past checkpoint 3. No wonder they looked very happy.

I packed more calories than what I thought I'd use, but you'd never know on this course. With many spectators' cheering I was off to the last leg.

[Leg 4] It was the shortest leg, 45 miles. With my tired body and expected headwind, finish line in 3 hours? maybe? I started out slow. I was still drinking well and taking in calories. I did not feel weak, but I did not feel strong, either. "Where is my turbo-charge?" My engine was still running, but was it running on fumes? My body must have switched from the race mode to the survival mode. I never felt like stopping, though.

Again, my vision was a little blurry. I kept telling myself to focus so I could pick a good line around the rocks. I was riding okay. I dropped a bottle on a bumpy slight downhill. I stopped, I left the bike where I

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stopped, and walked back to get my bottle. I was annoyed and felt fatigued. Another female rider went by when I was picking up the bottle. "Where are they coming from?!" I thought. Back on the bike, I started pedaling again.

When that female rider who was ahead of me hesitated and slowed down in the rough area, I rode right through aggressively and opened a good gap. I did not want to give up any more placings. But I missed two turns, as I was not very careful at reading the cue sheet (blood sugar level low?), and she was long gone, ahead of me.

Then, it happened, not again, another flat. I moved myself to the shady area, and removed the wheel. A piece of small rock had pierced through the tire. I quietly sat down in grass, laid out everything I needed, and started working on tube change. The tubeless tire was locked in pretty good, my tired thumbs had a hard time removing the tire from the rim, it was much much harder than earlier for some reason. I finally put a new tube in but the air did not go in. I did not have anymore CO2 cartridges so I used a hand pump. Many pumps resulted in nothing. "Is it the pump? Is it the tube? What is going on?!!" I was sitting in a daze for a while. I saw Dorothy smiling. A few riders passed by, and one of them stopped. I asked if I could use his pump and his did not work, either. So it was the tube. I thanked him and told him I had another tube so I would be fine. He was concerned, and before he left he gave me one tube saying he had a few spare left.

I was looking at the new tube. I knew what I had to do but I did not feel like doing it. I was definitely going to finish the race, but I just wanted to do nothing at that time.

It seemed like many racers passed by. Maybe they did? I'm not sure. I could tell that the sun was lower, the evening colors were beginning to show. "How long am I going to sit here, I have to get out of here." I snapped out of my daze, and started removing the tire. But the tire would not come off!!!! "Are you okay?" Two guys yelled as they went by. "I am not okay." I responded quietly. They must have heard me saying that,

they came back to assist. I did not want to delay them and told them they could go as I knew what was wrong, but they insisted on helping saying at that point of the race stopping for a few minutes would not make any difference. So they put in a new tube in the tire for me, and they were on their way.

I come to believe that Gravel folks are so kind. They are serious cyclists and we have a fierce competition going, but the "unsupported" "you're on your own" nature of gravel grinding must be giving the cyclists the sense of helping each other. A camaraderie among competitors..., especially when the race takes place in the middle of nowhere, away from civilization. (No cellular reception, that remote!)

Wheel back on the bike, and so was I. About 30-35 miles left to go. Most of the Leg 4 was again northbound, where the wind was coming from earlier. As the sun was going down, the wind died down and the temperature went down as well. I wanted to finish before the sunset, but it did look like it was happening. There was an award given to racers who return before the sun was down, called "Race the Sun" award. I later learned only 91 racers (about 10%) crossed the finish line before sunset.

Okay, the sun's gone. And it was really very dark at night in Kansas. The only light are the stars above and the distant tail lights of the riders way up ahead. The air has taken on a cooling effect, and I felt like I could pick up the speed. I had to! It was survival now chasing those taillights. I was thinking I was really glad that Dan and I had done a lot of night riding in the past. I kept my focus but a new thought entered. "Where is the town?" I knew many racers were still out there, I glanced back occasionally and saw distant headlights bouncing behind me, riders back.

Finally to my left a highway ran parallel and the noise of trucks barreling down. For the first time that sounded like music to my ears which was a good sign. The course veered left through a tunnel that ran below the highway and emptied onto the college campus in town. Wow, street lights and pavement! It just kept getting better. I made my

way twisting through the campus which brought me to Main Street, the home stretch, parallel safety cones ran down the middle of the road.

The entire downtown was in a loud festive atmosphere. The night sky was lit with lights and music was blasting. The cheering was truly overwhelming. Everyone on both sides on the finish line ringing cow bells, clapping and wanting to do high five, congratulating the incoming racers. The race announcer was calling my name over the loud speaker as I came in. Upon crossing the finish line, the two main race organizers, Jim Cummins and LeLan Dain, welcomed and congratulated me (and all finishers) personally, and camera flashes were everywhere. Surrounded by so much rooting, I felt like a rock star!

I was so relieved once off of the bike. My walking steps seemed circular for about 10 paces. It was sometime after 9:30 PM already. I had that distant stare in my eyes realizing that the ground finally stopped moving. I walked over to a huge signature board where finishers get to sign, and got my name up there. Dan suggested that I go over to one of the tents where about 8 massage tables with therapists busy working on the finishers, I took my place there. Dan took the bike to a cleaning station where some hoses were set up to wash the bikes.

The result was 9th overall female, 3rd in the age group for female. Making it to the end alone was such an accomplishment, and I consider it something I can really be proud of.

But I want more! Now I've done it, next year's going to be easier. Both mind & body will know what to do better. With some tweaking on our preparation, I already have a feeling we will have an even greater race in 2017.

p.s.

Just a shout-out to thank Dan for his much dedication and impeccable support before/during/after the race. This was definitely a team-effort!

Kae Takeshita

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HARMON 100

Sunday, September 11

Wilmot High School, Wilmot, WI

EVERYONE WORKS

Contact Erich Massat at erich@erichmassat.com,
 text 847-420-5437, or call at
 home 847-253-5815 to volunteer



BANQUET PICTURES

We will once again be doing a slide show at the banquet (November 20) and are asking for contributions this season. So be sure and take pictures at rides and events and share them with our club members.

Send your pics by October 31 to Johannes Smits @ johannes.smits@comcast.net



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SAVE THE DATES

Harmon 100 - September 11
Sept. Club meeting - Sept 22
Banquet/Holiday party - Nov 20

CLUB DISCOUNTS

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