

Rally Report

Somewhere you go from “going for a ride” to “training.” It happens when you decide to actually go to an event. Till then, you do your miles, meet your friends, get tired and have fun – but you know you’re missing something. Sure you can work yourself up for City Limit signs, or maybe work on a standard route constantly trying to beat a standard time ... sooner or later, all that just doesn’t make it. So you and probably a buddy, actually look through the calendar on page two and pick out a rally.

You might do some google research to find some reviews. Better is to ask from of your friends or maybe the local shop. Everyone will have an opinion, but talk to a couple of people who’ve done it before. They’ll set you straight.

Okay, now that you’ve decided on the event; decide on the distance. If your training ride is 30 miles – don’t do the 50 mile. But, on the other hand, don’t therefore decide on doing the 25 mile – just lengthen your training. If you’re doing 40 – 45 miles of training you’re good for the 50 mile event. If you’re regularly doing 50-55 on your weekend ride, you’re good to go for the metric century or 62 miles. In my opinion, events should be adventures and should be milestones. Stretch your training and push yourself – you can do it.

You’ve trained. Two weeks before the event do the last maintenance to the bike and adjust or add the last piece of equipment to the bike. You want three good rides on your bike after any change before riding an important event. You want the confidence that everything works beautifully on the big day.

Two days before the event is the time to

start hydrating in earnest. We’re in Texas – you’re going to sweat and you’re going to be excited – you need the fluid. Carbo-load a couple of days in advance – and don’t stuff yourself at the spaghetti dinner the night before no matter what their poster says.

The night before is the time to put everything together. Pack your stuff and bike remembering to bring clothes enough for a significant temperature change (either way) and some clean clothes in which to ride home. I mix my bottles and load the camelback then as well. Remember to load helmet and shoes where you can see them so you don’t have to worry about forgetting them at O Dark Thirty when you leave the next morning.

Take more food than you think you’ll need. Remember, once you start using Gu or the like you’ll need to take it regularly till the end of the event.

Do a light but carb-heavy breakfast. Experience says unless you want Technicolor yawns, Egg-McMuffins® or Breakfast Burritos are right out.

My wife complains, but I like to get to events very early. I am often the first to pick up my registration stuff. I have a good parking place. I can warm up. I have the luxury of screwing up, getting lost, changing a flat tire and generally make up for any of my goofs by planning on arriving very early. That way, no matter what happens, you can be there at the start without any undue tension. Even when I was younger, I would always visit the port-a-potties a couple of times before lining up. You want to be empty when you start.

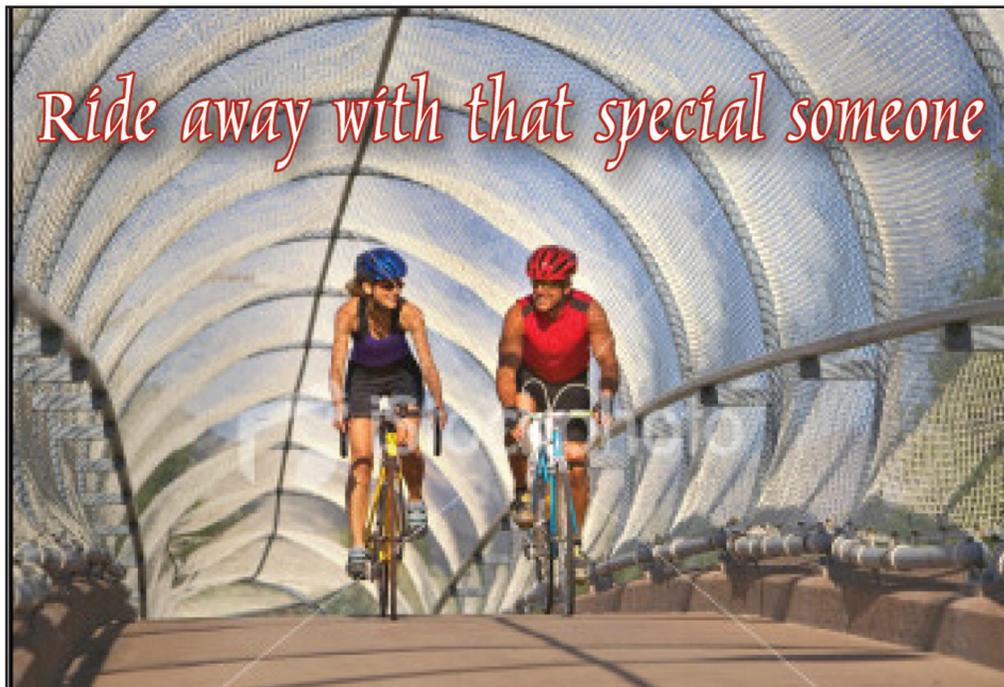
While it is rude to line up with the Pros or the Big Boys if you’re not one – don’t seed yourself too far back. Be optimistic and be close to the front of your group. While to some it’s “cheating” to leave with the 100K when you’re doing the 50 mile – at least be at the front of your group. People can pass you if they will and you’ll be surprised how much help a group of people slightly faster than your normal ride can be.

At the start, just concentrate on riding straight and paying attention to those to either side and ahead of you. Pass widely and tell people you’re coming. “On your left” is the type of thing to say.

You’re in search of a group of people of your general ability and speed – and who are friendly enough to make you feel welcome. There is not a lot of conversation in packs, but you’ll know if you’re with people you like or not. Time on the bike is too precious to spend it with sour people. This is where buddies or a club come in handy. It’s a team sport and rallies are always more fun with people you like.

Tradition holds that “Rest Stops” come by about every ten miles. My advice is that unless you’re in trouble, don’t stop. Trying to re-warm up stiff legs or get your rhythm back is hard and often painful. If you’ve got some food and enough fluid, you can make it. Check the computer now and again, but don’t focus – enjoy yourself.

Before you know it, you’ve done the event. Now you want more ... but that’s the point. You’ve had an adventure and achieved a goal ... the point is that it is the beginning of a whole sport of goals. See you there.



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