

Things Crew Should Know

By Steve Red Tail Hawk Steve Scheetz

The List of Needs

Some of my thoughts of what is needed. Bear in mind some things have already been thought of, and this is just making sure that they are not overlooked.

BIKE

- Complete Bike w/computer, taillight and headlight (I don't use a computer on these events. I already know it is 508 miles to the end, I don't need the computer to tell me so, but there it is.) Headlamp does not have to be on at the start, but should be easy to stick on when the lights get dim. Extra tires, tubes and/or wheels
- Floor Pump
- Extra saddle or saddle pad (for saddle sores)
- Small saddle bag with tube, levers and CO2 or mini-pump
- Extra headlight and taillight with extra batteries
- At least six (6) water bottle
- Camel back (I hate anything on my back, BUT...)

RIDING CLOTHES

- (4) Riding shorts; maybe a set of tights just in case.
- (4) Cycling jerseys, short sleeve (maybe 1 long sleeve)
- Wind vest
- Wind Jacket
- Pair arm warmers
- Pair knee warmers
- Heavy winter riding jacket
- Pairs of cycling gloves, warm weather (I don't bother with gloves in the desert, but if you wear gloves, my suggestion is 3 pair)
- Pair cycling gloves, cold weather for the top of Townes Pass Again, I am good in the cold, but not everyone else is. This is a strong suggestion!
- Sunglasses (It is hard to change lenses super quick on the fly, so 2 pair is best)
- Night glasses, clear or yellow lenses (I recommend clear, but it is personal preference)
- (8) Pairs of light socks
- Pair of heavier socks

- Pairs of cycling shoes. Rider should only need 1 pair, but plan for all eventualities! There was a guy on a 600K in the Catskills who broke his shoe. It was beyond all comprehension that he had an extra pair in his drop bag, and that the guy who had his drop bag was at the control point at the time he broke his shoe! Anyway, bring an extra pair just in case!
- Helmets (again, just in case...)
- iPod, MP3 etc. (I don't use this sort of thing, but if the rider uses iPod, have two so that one can be recharging in the van.
- Sweat bands, bandanas, etc (whatever is the preference should be changed at the same time as shorts.)
- Heart Rate monitor (I don't bother. I know what my heart rate is, I don't need a strap around my chest to tell me, HOWEVER...)

NUTRITION

- Enough Endurolytes/salt supplements for 48 hours of riding at set dosage (I screwed this up HUGE in 2006. Bring at least 3 bottles)
- Enough energy powder for 48 hours at set dosage
- Enough alternate energy powder for 48 hours at set dosage
- Enough energy gel to "take a break" from liquid energy
- Powder Gatorade (or whatever) mix for bottles. Include alternate flavors.
- Any other tried and proven supplement the 508 is not a place to experiment!
- Sun Screen. It is the desert, nuff said! Preferably something that does not leave a greasy residue that dirt/sand might stick to.
- Solid food can be decided upon at the supermarket down the street from the starting line. Soups are nice, but again rider preference.

SUPPORT VEHICLE

Flashing Amber Lights for the roof, caution bikes ahead signs, reflective triangle totem signs for all 4 sides (all listed in rules). I suggest clear contact paper as opposed to any sort of tape to affix signs to your vehicle because it does not leave crappy goopy residue

Driver. At night, when crew is doing hand offs out the window, pay attention to the road in front of you! DO NOT look at your racer! The van tends to go where your eyes are looking, and it is very possible that you could shove your racer off the road. Let the person doing the hand off tell you to speed up or slow down, your racer can then figure out where you are.

The Course

Whoever may have a chance at navigating absolutely NEEDS to have a 1000% grasp of the course. There are no excuses for not having this knowledge given that there is a cue sheet and maps available.

There are climbing sections that the riders need to be aware of.

The first 25 miles is an upward trending rolling section. It may seem longer than 25 miles, but that is because it is going up!

After the first meeting with the support van, there is a fast descent followed by a very slightly upward trending flat so slight in fact that it will be done at a fairly rapid pace. STOP AT STOP SIGNS!! Remind riders that then need to have a "COMPLETE cessation of forward motion" If the rider OR THE VAN gets caught, the first is a 15 minute penalty (vs a 15 second loss in time). After the right turn, the road is a bit rough till the left turn toward the windmill climb. Once the left turn is made, the road is fairly smooth. This gradual up on the flat will become a bit more up until you get to the climb itself. At the top, DO NOT LET THE RIDER BLOW BY THE TURN! (Yes, it looks obvious, but for some reason people miss it.) The next stretch to California City should be fast. A ripping descent into Mojave, (STOP AT THE STOP SIGNS! Someone will be there looking!) After the descent, the section is very flat all the way to the time station.

Once past the time station, the road will be very nice and downward trending flat for something like 8 miles (maybe more). BE CAREFUL ON THE TRACKS; the tracks are situated at the very bottom and can be seen from a distance. The STOP SIGN signals the start of the long rolling section leading to the climb to Randsburg. The tracks are fixed from time to time, but never so well that they don't still suck. The climb to Randsburg looks flat, just remember, if the rider is looking at his/her speedometer, he/she is climbing and to stop looking at said speedometer!

Once the rider is through Randsburg (STOP AT THE STOP SIGN!) and makes the left past the Gas station in Johannesburg, he/she will start the section with the giant rollers. There are 3 big ones followed by a very fast descent, and a downward trend the rest of the way to Trona. Van will want to get gas in Trona, and the Chicken Burritos at the gas station across from the control point are highly recommended!! Remember, it will be 200 miles before the next possibility of purchasing regular food.

This stage is home to the steepest climb on the course, but it does not come for almost 50 miles. Once over the gentle climb outside of Trona, the road is narrow, twisty, and the descent is very fast. Though the elevation profile shows the trip through Panamint Valley to be a slight down grade, there are some things on this section that will slow the riders down in certain conditions. The road feels like a washboard, and it is possible that the mechanical aspects of the bike will be thrown off a bit. After the left turn onto Panamint Valley Road, the rider will be on a rolling section that should not interfere with the overall pace.. It will remain like this all the way to the "T" intersection where everyone makes the right turn to start the climb up the pass. STOP AT THE STOP SIGN!! This would be a good place to ask the racer how the bike feels, and it would also be a good place to do any mechanical adjusting before the climb, but more importantly, before the DESCENT!!

The climb is about 4,000 feet in 12 miles. The only thing to note. If it was not dark before, it will most likely be dark at the top. Not quite half way up, everyone will be treated to the sight of the headlights of the people behind you turning to climb up the pass. From here to the 1 mile worth of false flat at the top, the rider needs to be vigilant about rocks on the road. I hit one in 2006, and shredded a tire at a very high rate of speed while going down the other side, so be careful. It will be cold at the top of the pass. 41 degrees every time I have been there during the night (if by some chance it is still light, it will still be cool)... DO NOT STOP! It will be anywhere from 60-80 degrees at the bottom of the hill. If the racer needs a jacket, keep him/her on the bike and rolling, or back on the bike as quickly as possible. It will be very cold at the top, and this is the fastest section. On the up side, it is over quickly.

At the bottom, Furnace Creek is not terribly far up the road. Try to keep the racer rolling, because it is much better to climb Salisbury Pass in the dark than in the light. (it plays tricks on you because it looks like it is going down, when it is going up, and it is much better to not see that.)

Shoshone is a gas station, it may be closed depending on how early you arrive. Don't waste time here, the clock is ticking! Ibex pass is nothing to write home about either on the up or on the down. It is a very gentle downgrade, and it is not one that can be ripped down unless the rider is working hard. At the bottom, he/she will be doing an upward trend, pretty much all the way into Baker. The power lines mark where that stops and it becomes a downward trend for the last few miles. (if you are really lucky, nobody will see these power lines! The gas station here is not a bad place for crew to stop and get coffee etc.

This is the climb that just goes on and on! A few miles in, there will be a place to see pretty far ahead, and there will be power lines way out in the distance. Yes, everyone goes there, and at the top of the climb, there is a cattle grate and some of the worst road CA has to offer, and it will be like that during the long descent into Kelso. Once across those tracks, the next climb starts, but the road is smooth enough that everyone's teeth will stop rattling a few miles up the road!

The next climb is 10 miles or so, followed by a VERY long descent (at least it will feel that way) gentle down grade pretty much the whole way to Almost Amboy. STOP AT THE STOP SIGN!! Once around that corner, it is flat till the climb to the top of Sheephole Summit. Once over this, there is a shortish down hill followed by an upward trending flat all the way into 29 Palms.

I can't stress this enough. Schedule more Endurolytes than usual on this ride; at least one more per hour than typical. Do NOT be afraid to add more, it is next door to impossible to over dose on Endurolytes on this ride! Crew people need to make sure their racer is drinking and DO NOT FORGET TO check the bikes thoroughly after the Panamint valley rumble and the descent into Kelso.

Good luck and have a great race!!