

The508.com Solo Team "Rottweiler"
0700 Saturday, October 4, 2008 to 0102 Monday, 6th
42.06.19 43rd out of 61 male solo racers
David Hunter-Inman, Crew Chief
Ralph Jacobson, Racer
Steven Jacobson, Crew
Bruce Moore, Crew



LIFE LESSONS LEARNED IN THE 2008 508

I FINISHED THE FIRST 508 I ENTERED IN 2006. Here's that story: <http://www.the508.com/articles/2006/rottweiler.pdf>

I was not able to race in 2007. I was anxious to try it again in 2008, just to make sure that 2006 wasn't a fluke. During the entry application process I was concerned that I would not be accepted into the race because for the first time in its history, The 25th Anniversary 508 would not be a "first-come" entry process. I actually had to prove I was worthy of the race as part of the entry application. My cycling pedigree pales in comparison to most of my fellow racers. This is more of a story about "Joe Six-Pack" getting off the couch than a real athlete training for the "Toughest 48 Hours in Sport". The good news is that I had finished in 2006, so that must have helped. I have only ridden two organized centuries about fifteen years ago, and tried one criterion a few years ago that I failed miserably. Not much to brag about.

If you read my 2006 story, you would be shocked at how much less training I did this year. What an embarrassment. I found every excuse I could to not ride my bike. When I did train, I forced myself to only do one route: As much of Stage One of the 508 as I could. I live in the town in which the race begins, Santa Clarita. As many times as I rode that route, and as well as I knew every crack in the pavement, I actually hit a pot hole that I knew was there and bent my rim one week before the race. I had to buy another set, as it couldn't be fixed in time. What an idiot. I grew to HATE that ride and also, more importantly, riding became a chore and was no longer any fun. I rode only one century in all of 2008 leading up to the race. Am I absolutely nuts? What a loser.

On the day of the race, I had the same crew as in 2006, David, Bruce and my now 20-year-old son, Steven. A ROCK-SOLID TEAM. David rented a minivan this time, since he actually raced in 2007 and found the convenience of a minivan better than the SUV we used in 2006. The van worked well. At 7:00am, the weather was cool, very thick fog and the air was heavy and wet. We hadn't had any clouds in months here. What is happening?! We start off and I am feeling very weak and heavy... probably because I was... about 20 pounds heavier than in 2006. About 20 miles into Stage One, a route that I have now traveled a hundred times, the fog becomes so dense that I cannot see more than twenty feet in front of me. Immediately out of the fog I see a racer stopped on the white shoulder line fixing his chain! By some act of God, I miss him by inches. That could have been a mess. Why couldn't he move off the road?! Another couple miles, I begin a nice quick decent coming up to where the crews await their racers. I also almost lose it going down the hill since it's so slippery.... Another potential disaster narrowly averted. Our luck was to run out shortly.

After stopping briefly at the van, I began to descend into The Antelope Valley and the skies opened wide up and the sun shone on me and warmed me up finally! I began to sing "Here Comes the Sun" by the Beatles out loud. As I am going

at a fairly fast speed the van is up head waiting on the side of the road. I can see Bruce, 61ish, is standing on the shoulder with a bottle, ready for our first hand off. As I approach, I realize I am coming in way too fast. It has been two years, and I didn't think about it until too late. Bottom line, I am "coming in hot" to Bruce. He starts running like there's no tomorrow. Bruce always gives 110%. We execute the hand off technically perfectly, with one problem: After I grab the bottle, Bruce trips on the gravel at full speed and braces his fall with his left arm and falls to the ground. I look behind and see he is down. OH, MY GOD!!! I turn around and come up to see him. He is sitting on the ground and a bone in his arm is protruding through the skin. OH, MY GOD!!! No, not Bruce! Not now! OH, MY GOD!!! I kissed Bruce on the head, told him, "I love you", and resumed riding, not knowing if he would be alright or not. One of The 508 Race Officials, I can remember her name, but I want to say she was the lady who spoke about safety (ironic) at the pre-race dinner meeting the night before, stopped to see what had happened. She wrapped his arm, and the crew drove to catch me.

Bruce was in terrible pain, so as soon as the crew got cell phone reception, they called Bruce's wife and asked her to meet them in Mojave... another thirty-five miles up the route, and a three-hour drive for her from their home near the finish line in Twenty-Nine Palms! Ugh. As the played leap-frog with me, they would park on the side to let me catch them. As Steven was driving, he pulled onto the shoulder to park and wait. This shoulder, however, was very soft sand. Yes, the van slid down the embankment and yes, got stuck in the sand. As I approached the van I saw Steven and David frantically digging sand from the tires. I shouted, "Is everything OK?" The said, "Sure!" and I kept riding. Later I hear that other crews tried to help them, but what eventually worked was a pickup truck that had a winch and pulled them out. Ugh! If this is only the first stage, what are we going to be in for the rest of the race?!

After what seemed forever, the crew finally caught me and everything was OK... except Bruce was visibly in pain in the front passenger seat. We arrived in Mojave and dropped off Bruce. I felt terrible. I felt I knocked him over, having come up to him to quickly at the hand off. He swears I didn't hit him. He just tripped. He ended up staying two nights in the hospital and had a permanent plate inserted into his arm. I am so sorry, Bruce.

I had a nice tail wind by the windmills and coming out of Mojave into California City. I checked into Time Station One. I went down Neuralia road and got caught in a bone fide sand storm. I saw it moving across from the left and I was going too fast to want to stop, so I plowed right into it. Sunglasses don't do much to keep the sand out of your eyes. My left

ear was getting full of sand and I couldn't see a thing. The good news is that it was over quickly. Steven and David passed me in the storm and we were out of it with clear sailing ahead.

We were making really good time. I was about ninety minutes ahead of 2006's pace coming into Trona. After having a nice strong tail wind, I got hit head-on by a strong wind coming into Trona. I was pumped at the Trona Time Station being so far ahead of 2006. We pushed hard up to Townes Pass. We could see lightning over the mountain in the distance. I later found that some of the faster riders got caught in the rain. See, it pays to be slow! However, now it was apparent that I was running out of gas. Plain and simple. I bonked. Even though the wind was at my back for so much of the ride until now, I also pushed very hard to keep up a steady pace. 40+ MPH on the flats at times. But all that hard work killed me on Townes pass. I had to stop twice just to rest. I did focus though on making my stops shorted than in 2006. We reached the top, still ahead of schedule. After the Furnace Creek Time Station was when all was almost lost. I now call Death Valley, "The Valley of Despair". While riding near Badwater, at the bottom of the world, some 300 feet below sea level, I started getting very sleepy. Just about at the same point where I fell asleep on the bike in 2006 and stopped for my only 30-minute nap. I did that again this time and David woke me up 30 minutes later. I slept in the front passenger seat. I started riding again, and feeling sorry for myself, I stopped again. I said I needed another nap. David let me sleep another 30 minutes. I had absolutely no energy when I woke up. I knew I had to get back on the bike. We made it up to the next climb, Jubilee / Salisbury Pass. This is where I lost it. I kept stopping. David asked what hurt. I said nothing hurt; I was just out of gas. Just stopped repeatedly, looked up at the pitch black sky and the billions of stars. I told David I didn't have anything left to go on.

This is where I know David was responsible for making me go on. He didn't try to be a cheerleader. He didn't say I couldn't quit. He just looked up the hill. Pointed at a tree, and said, "See that tree? Get on your bike and ride to that tree." I did. Then I stopped again. He said, "See that sign? Get on your bike and ride to that sign." We kept doing that and we finally got to the next Time Station after what could have been a disaster. Later David reminded me that when he was coaching me to just keep going, we were at the very spot where he had to abandon his race one year earlier. I cannot imagine what he was mentally going through in the van as he watched me through a similar mental challenge. I hear many people struggle at the 300-mile point in this race. It is just a really crappy stretch and a really crappy climb. To be fair to David, I must say he had a severely painful tendon injury that he was trying to fight off at that point. I had no pain to use as an excuse. I was just feeling weak. Mentally weak.

At the Shoshone Time Station, I took a long break. It was Sunday morning now. Steven called my wife, Jackie, to tell her where we were. She and my 14-year-old son, Alex were following us on the Webcast. They were worried why that stage had taken us so long. As I sat in the chair, I told Steven that I didn't see how I could go another 180, miles feeling as weak as I did. This was Steve's time to shine. I feel I owe finishing the race to him for what he said next: "Dad, as long as you can still turn the crank and move the pedals around, stay on the bike." That was it. That was all I needed. I got up. Started off to Baker, and kept looking down at my feet. I thought to myself, "Yup, their still moving around".

On the way to Baker I began to get back into my groove. We went on to Kelso, and moved through the rest of the race, all the way up to Sheephole Summit, the final of ten mountain climbs. This one was tough. I was really tired. Again, nothing really hurt; I was just winded and plain out of shape. At the top of Sheephole, I looked at my watch and it was 11:00pm Sunday night. We had about 28 miles to go. I'm thinking, hmm, 15 MPH, about two hours... putting us in at EXACTLY the same time as 2006. After the struggle in the Valley of Despair, I was happy to even be close to 2006's time. We headed down the descent into Twenty-Nine Palms, and as we make the turn onto Amboy Road and hit a direct, strong headwind. Geez! All I wanted to do was make the 2006 time. Now this wind is gonna kill me! I am hammering on the crank with everything I've got left, not caring what I would feel like tomorrow. I just got so tired. Still pushing up the slow incline into town. Make the turns on the highway, leading to the last four miles to the hotel. I am cranking with everything I have left. We cross the finish at 42:06:19... FOUR MINUTES SLOWER than 2006! After 42 hours on the bike... to be that close is crazy. Ugh!

We sleep for a few hours at the hotel and head back to meet Jackie at David's house halfway to our home, so Jackie and I can catch a flight to that Monday evening at 5pm Chicago so she can visit friends and so I can give a presentation on stage for an industry trade event for work! Ugh!!!

LIFE LESSONS

In 2006 I told every one this race is 98% mental. This year, I learned it was fully 100% mental. I will never be up at the front of this race with the world-class athlete but I can do much better than I have so far. I have learned at least three things this year. And I owe all of them to my crew.

When I felt terrible that Bruce got hurt, he showed no remorse nor anger toward me. He didn't complain. He knew the risks of being on the crew and he accepted that challenge. He was positive and gave me the inspiration to go on. He is a true competitor in the original spirit of The 508.

When I was going to quit in the Valley of Despair, David taught me to take challenges one little piece at a time. "Just ride to that tree." He didn't force me back on the bike, but in his own way he showed me how to keep going when I thought I had nothing left.

Then there is Steven. My son. My 20-year-old, focused on every distraction 20-year-olds have in their lives. For him to say something so profound, like "Until you literally cannot make the crank go around any more, stay on the bike". What a genius. This kid is incredible. I owe the finish to him.

I am not proud of this year's race. I was no where near the shape I needed to be in. I weighed 225 pounds at age 48 and looked like crap. My wife said, "Well, you've done it twice, so it must not be a fluke! Now you HAVE to do it three more times to get into the Hall of Fame". Ugh. OK. I'll do it. But next time, I will train properly.... I hope!

Stay tuned...

Time Station	Miles into the Race	Arrival Date	Arrival Time	2008 Elapsed Time	2006 Elapsed Time	Avg Speed	Time from Last Station	Avg Speed From Last Station (mph)
California City	83.6	4-Oct	12:23	5:23:00	5:39:00	15.53	5:23:00	15.53
Trona	154	4-Oct	16:21	9:21:00	10:45:00	16.45	3:58:00	17.69
Furnace Creek	253	4-Oct	23:54	16:54:00	19:14:00	14.96	7:33:00	13.13
Shoshone	326	5-Oct	9:11	26:11:00	26:44:00	12.47	9:17:00	7.92
Baker	383	5-Oct	12:21	29:21:00	30:20:00	13.04	3:10:00	17.76
Kelso	418	5-Oct	16:59	33:59:00	34:00:00	12.29	4:38:00	7.54
Almost Amboy	451	5-Oct	19:40	36:40:00	36:55:00	12.31	2:41:00	12.58
Finish	510	6-Oct	1:06	42:06:19	42:02:12	12.1	5:26:19	10.72

NEAR MOJAVE:



AT THE FINISH:



