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Heat slows, but can't stop, STP riders

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PORTLAND - As soon as Wayne Lane rolled across the finish line after two days and 204 miles of cycling, he reached for his cell phone to call home to Spokane. "I made it," he proclaimed. "A few cramps, but I made it."

Lane's blue jersey was covered with white patches of salt, the sweaty residue from riding the Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic in 90-plus degree heat. His arms were sunburned and his hands were blistered.

"This feels great," said Lane, who also did the ride in 2006. "This is the best part right here. The finish."

Lane was one of the 9,500 participants in the 29th STP, the Northwest's largest organized ride. Most of the cyclists finished the ride Sunday, but about 15 percent of the riders completed it Saturday.

M.J. Kelly of the Cascade Bicycle Club, the club that organizes the ride, said the event was a success with no major injuries. Last year a cyclist was injured when he was hit by a car in Oregon about 30 miles from the finish.

The cyclists' only complaint along the route seemed to be the heat. Temperatures climbed above 90 degrees each day.

Tom McAleese of Kirkland planned to do the entire ride Saturday before the heat took its toll.

McAleese finished the first 100 miles in 5 1/2 hours, a good one-day pace.

"Then I did the next 50 in five hours," McAleese said.

Even though he'd shipped all his clothes to the finish area in Portland, McAleese checked into the Comfort Inn in Kelso. At 7 a.m. Sunday he was feeling refreshed in his day-old spandex as he ate a bagel and prepared for his final 56 miles.

It was hard for him not to be happy, despite coming up short of his goal. Cycling is more than recreation for McAleese.

McAleese used cycling and training for the STP to quit smoking.



Riders cross S. 212th street in Kent in the early morning. Thousand of riders rode bicycles in the Seattle to Portland Classic which began on Saturday, July 12, 2008. Peter Haley / The News Tribune

“I quit smoking nine months ago and started biking to keep from smoking,” McAleese said. “You can’t bike and smoke, so I bought a \$3,000 bike because I knew I would ride it. I couldn’t just let a bike like that just sit in the garage.”

Tessa Valley had serious reasons for coming from Fairfield, Calif., to ride the STP, too.

Valley was raising money for Team in Training, a Leukemia and Lymphoma Society fundraising program.

On the front of her purple jersey she pinned pictures of her cousin and a college friend, both of whom are in remission after battling leukemia. And on the back of her jersey she pinned 22 small, round tags each with the name of leukemia or lymphoma victims.

“They are all going to cross the finish line with me,” Valley said.

The STP isn’t so serious for everybody.

Along the route, you could find all manner of competitors.

Scott Wagar of Federal Way took a break from doing the ride in one day to do it in two days this year. This meant instead of his usual 4:45 a.m. start with the hardcore riders, he waited until 6:30 a.m. to leave Seattle.

“We are starting with the joker crowd,” Wagar said.

Ahead of him two women had stuffed animals attached to their helmets and a couple had empty cases of beer on the back of their bikes. As he pedaled along he passed a man on a unicycle, a woman wearing a wedding veil and two guys gliding along on skateboards.

Ted McDonald and James Peters are world class long boarders. Peters set a world record by skateboarding 208 miles in 24 hours, but McDonald broke the record with 242 miles earlier this year.

They said they averaged 12-15 mph and spent the night in Castle Rock. McDonald said riding the board is a comfortable and efficient form of transportation and he’s trying to promote it as a way to commute.

However, he says skateboarding on some roads – like the hot chip-sealed roads north of Centralia – is not fun for skaters. Tar stuck to their feet and the rattling from the unsmooth road was annoying.



Kristina Willard came from Alaska to ride with her mother. They had black bears, as symbols of Alaska, on their helmets (but never mind that the stuffed animals are actually brown). Here she gets a little sustenance on a stop in Kent. Thousand of riders rode bicycles in the Seattle to Portland Classic which began on Saturday, July 12, 2008. Peter Haley / The News Tribune

“Skateboarding on that in 90-degree heat should be added to the list of things the United States can’t do to war prisoners,” McDonald said. “We were seeing God at one point.”

Then there was Matt Cittadin of Portland. He shaved a handlebar mustache and wore a dress for the ride. The rest of the guys on his team also wore dresses or skirts.

“We spent last night at Value Village shopping for dresses,” Cittadin said. “I had no idea how hard that is. But it was fun.”

So, why the cross dressing?

“No deep meaning,” Cittadin said. “We just wanted to add some flair to the event. Plus any excuse to wear a dress is a good excuse.”

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