

Day 4 Emporia to Raleigh

"It is a beautiful day and no one is even shooting at us" - OIF Vet

Day 4 brought the road 2 recovery group into North Carolina and that much closer to the goal of Lowes Motor Speedway. The next 2 days are going to be very exciting for the group. We are seeing more riders along the route and residents coming out to see us, even waving American Flags and cheering us along.

In all my years of cycling, I have never seen so many motorists be so courteous to riders on the road. It is not uncommon for total strangers to drive behind us with their emergency flashers going... You never see that...



Welcome to Possum Track....



Mike & Ferris

Justin is settling in on the bike and insists on using group riding protocol-- pointing out holes, signaling turns, and waving traffic through. Ken and I were chatting when Justin distinctively signaled the next right hand turn. He pointed for several seconds and then proceeded right past the turn. I chased him down and got him back on track. I said, "Dude, you signaled but then didn't turn."

"That's TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) for ya," he replied with a grin.



Wayne Stetina always tinkering with the bikes

I've heard that the pros don't get to enjoy the scenery while hammering around the Alps, Pyrenees, or Pacific Coast. Not so with Justin-- he is out to enjoy the ride. He'll point out puppies for sale and jet skis parked in the yard, even when he's careening down a hill at 25 miles per hour. My challenge is forcing him to keep his hands on the steering handles and his eyes on the road. The bottom line is he's having a ball, although sometimes it's not so fun for me.



Leaving Virginia

Justin called it a day after almost four hours in the saddle. Once he was in the van, Ken and I hammered to close the gap. We covered 25 miles in just over an hour. I sat on Ken's wheel and never pulled a turn. I tried to lead out, but couldn't keep the pace, an indication of what a cycling machine he is. I did get the privilege of reeling him in after he missed a turn about mile 98, but the only reason I still had legs is because I got to rest while he did all the work to get us back with the group.

I caught up with Sergeant First Class Keith Pace about mile 90. SFC Pace is a stud with various combat related injuries. He is not a cyclist; he's just a hard-headed warrior that won't give up. He was so saddle sore yesterday that he said he wasn't going to ride (an unconditioned rear end is not accustomed to 6+ hours a day in the saddle). Yet, he showed up in uniform for the start and completed the 80 mile ride. Today was no exception. He was completely spent with 15 miles to go, but the first thing he asked was the status of his "battle buddy," Ferris Butler. I wanted to push on to the finish, but SFC Pace wanted to pull over and finish the day with his battle buddy. When Ferris passed, Keith couldn't respond and watched him fade into the distance. So, like any friend would treat their green beret brother, I mocked him until he finished. I got a "fist bump" of gratitude after the ride, which was better than the alternative—a punch in the throat.



Fine NC Roads

Tomorrow is another busy day, but busy is good. We start at 8:00 am in order to cover the 80 miles to Asheboro before we load up onto a bus and head to Charlotte for dinner with the VFW at Lowe's Motor Speedway. I'll keep an eye out for things to talk about, although hopefully the message is clear: this is a ride you want to be a part of...

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