What to Expect on a PA Brevet

10/16/24

A brevet (e.g. PA200k) is a bit different from the century or club rides that you may be used to. The following will give you an overview of what to expect, along with some tips that will hopefully make this an enjoyable and successful experience!

Before the Event

- Your responsibility as a participant includes:
  - Showing up in reasonable physical condition for the event
  - Bringing a reliable bike in good working order
  - Complying with all traffic laws along the course
  - Respecting the rights of all other users of the route (including pedestrians)
  - Planning for the situation where you can't finish the ride
- You MUST be a member of RUSA in order to ride randonneuring brevets in the USA. The membership dues are reasonable and you receive 'credit' for each brevet you complete. More importantly, if you plan someday to ride one of the longer brevets (e.g. PBP), you will need to officially complete a series of qualifying events as a RUSA member.
- One big difference between brevets and other organized rides is that the course is not marked with arrows. The route is defined by a cue sheet embedded into a GPS route file. The cue sheet in PDF (landscape or portrait) can be downloaded from the event website. You should print the cuesheet and take it with you on the ride. Cue text has important notes about hazards on the course as well as resources (food/water/bathrooms) and challenges (climbs, gravel, stream fords.)… Study the cues carefully before you ride so you can form your plan.
- It's best if you can refer to the paper cue sheet while riding, so you should have some sort of cue-sheet holder for your bike -- a binder clip strapped with nylon ties and black tape to the stem works very well. At night you'll need a headlamp to be able to read the cue sheet.
- Since navigation is a big part of brevet riding, its a good idea to study maps of the area and trace the route before you attempt to ride it.
- A GPS file is provided along with the cue sheet. You may use this with your GPS unit or phone to assist with your navigation. Unfortunately, safety warnings and other important text may not display on your GPS, so the cue sheet is still important. READ THE CUE SHEET!
- If there's a chance of rain, laminate your cue-sheet. Otherwise, the cue sheet becomes a soggy mess and disintegrates. Similarly, you should keep your brevet card in a plastic bag.
- Make sure you have all the equipment you need and it's in good working order. Generally this includes the bike, helmet, lighting and reflective gear.
- If you're traveling far to the event, consider staying at a nearby hotel or the start/finish hostel on the night before the event. Lodging information is provided later on the event site.
- Be alert for last minute announcements on the website or discussion blog.

Day of the Event

- Wake-up early enough to eat a good breakfast and give yourself enough time to arrive at the start without feeling rushed.
- Plan to arrive at the start at least a half hour before the event. If the event includes a breakfast buffet, arrive at least one hour before the start so you have time to eat.
- Check your email, the message board, and website for any last minute instructions or route changes.
- Do any last minute preparations (assemble bike, pump tires, fill water bottles, etc.) and review your checklist.
- About 10 minutes before the scheduled ride start, there will be a brief rider meeting.
- At the end of the meeting, the ride officially starts and riders depart as a group.

During the Event

- You may ride at your own pace alone, or with a group of like-minded cyclists. While brevet events are not races, there are some riders who will like to finish quickly in order to improve a personal best time. Other riders may choose to take a more leisurely pace and enjoy the great scenery on the route. Some riders prefer to ride alone while others enjoy the camaraderie of riding in a group. You are free to choose the style of riding that suits you best. A list of registered riders is posted before the event so you can make any group arrangements ahead

of time.

- On the route, there will be a number of 'controls' or checkpoints. Each control has an opening and closing time. You should try to reach each control before the closing time in order to have the best chance of finishing before the final cutoff. If you don't reach the finish in time, you will not be recognized as a finisher. While the minimum average speed to reach the controls is rather modest (about 10 MPH), the clock is always ticking even while you are stopped. It's best to keep your scheduled stops as short as possible. Newcomers are often amazed at how efficiently experienced randonneurs are at getting through a control.
- Brevet riders must obtain *proof of passage* at every control. If you are using the eBrevet app for control check in, look for the green checkmarks indicating that your check-in has been officially recorded. If your checkin has orange dots instead, that means the checkin is only recorded on the phone. Eventually those may turn green, but it's a good idea to write down your check-in code phrase on your brevet card as proof of your checkin.
- If you don't use the eBrevet app (using the app is not required) you need to provide proof of passage some other way. The usual way to do this is by having your brevet card stamped or signed at controls, or obtaining merchant receipts for small purchases, or ATM receipts. Controls are often at a convenience store … you may buy some food and at the check-out counter, you present your brevet card to the clerk. Ask the clerk to initial or stamp the card in the appropriate box and fill in the time using 24-hour notation (e.g. 13:30 for 1:30PM). If the control is staffed by a PA Rando volunteer, they can sign/stamp your card. It's also reasonable to ask another rider to sign your card testifying they saw you at the control.
- There may also be 'information' controls and/or 'postcard' controls. Info controls are usually located at some out of the way area (like the top of a long climb). At the designated area, you stop and fill in your own card with the time and record the answer to a question about something in the general area listed in your card. A typical question might be: "What is the percent grade listed on the downhill truck warning sign?" For a postcard control, the control is at a mailbox where you sign a postcard given to you at the check-in and drop it in the mailbox. Indicate your time on the brevet card and write 'PC' as a stamp. If you are using the eBrevet app, you still should mail your postcard and answer info questions on your paper brevet card.
- There may also be an unannounced 'secret control' along the way, staffed by a volunteer. It's important to stay on course. If you get lost, you must work your way back to the point where you got off course and avoid the temptation to take any shortcuts. Otherwise, you risk missing a secret control which at minimum will result in a time penalty and may result in a DQ.
- Randonneuring is all about self-sufficiency: you are not allowed to get any support from a following car between controls. You may however, have a support car meet you at a control. You may also stop along the way to get anything you need, you may get help from your fellow randonneur, or you may get assistance from event volunteers.
- In case of an emergency, call 911 if you need medical aid. Be sure that you have personal ID with you that has contact and medical insurance information in case you're knocked unconscious.
- Be sure to read and carry the Safety Instructions with you -- these are posted on the event web page.
- The cue sheet has phone numbers (cell phone and controls) to contact the organizer if you run into difficulties or plan to withdraw from the ride. If you feel like quitting, it may be an indication that you're not eating enough. You may encounter a particularly tough stretch and feel overwhelmed if you think about the whole ride remaining ahead of you. Instead, think about just getting to the next control or store, take a break and eat something -- before you know it, you'll be making that last turn back to the finish!
- If you are still out riding past the cut-off time, please try to contact the organizer. Their phone number is on the brevet card.

<u>Post-Ride</u>

- When you arrive at the finish, before doing anything else, have your brevet card accepted by the finish volunteer.
- If using eBrevet, the minimum to complete a brevet card and have it accepted is to 1) have the finish volunteer note and sign the arrival time at the finish control on the inside of the card, 2) write the eBrevet finish code on the back of the card, and 3) sign your brevet card on the back (where it says RIDER).
- Once your brevet card is complete, present it to the volunteer at the finish. NOW you can go

take a shower and get something to eat.

- Brevet cards will be validated by RUSA/ACP and then mailed back to you at the end of the year.
- If you are very tired, it may be a good idea to take a nap before a long drive home.
- Within a couple of days, preliminary results will posted on the PA Randonneurs web-site. After that, the results will be sent to RUSA and eventually posted on the RUSA web-site.

Chamounix Hostel Reservations

- The Chamounix hostel offers cost-effective overnight accommodations, for the SR events that start from Philadelphia.
- Reservations can be made when you register for an event.
- Do not park a car long-term at Chamounix. See the event website for parking directions.
- Tyrone is the hostel caretaker … if you meet them, you can identify yourself as being with the "Bike group/PA Randonneurs"
- There are dorm rooms throughout the building. Check the message board for any room assignments.
- You can claim a bunk in your assigned room. Sheets and pillow cases are stacked nearby.
- There are kitchen facilities available for your use (refrigerator, stove, etc.).
- Various pubs, restaurants and fast-food joints are a short bike ride away (City Ave or Manayunk).
- You may store your bike indoors. Ask a volunteer where.
- There are showers available at the hostel.
- When you are ready to leave, strip the sheets off your bed and place them in a pile near the main entrance.
- You may want to consider bringing along:
    - Pillow
    - Soap/Shampoo
    - ear plugs and eye mask
    - Flashlight
- If roughing it with the dormitory-style hostel accommodations is not for you, there are several chain hotels in the Philly area.