

Ride Softly and Carry a Big Quad

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Two months ago when we began this...this...whatever you'd call this trip, I didn't bother looking more than a couple of weeks down the road. The way I figured it there were any number of catastrophic failures (equipment, body, mind) that could end this trip while still in its fledgling stages. It's not that I wasn't optimistic, but when an out of shape man makes grandiose plans to conquer the physical world it is ok to cast a shadow of doubt on said plans.

It wasn't until we coasted uneventfully into Adelaide yesterday that I finally allowed myself to believe that that we may actually have a shot at this circumnavigation. As of this writing we have completed just over 1500 miles. To put that into perspective, it's the distance from the Mexican border south of San Diego to the Canadian border north of Seattle - or if you are from the East Coast from NYC to Key West. While we haven't shattered any land speed records (the fastest person to circumnavigate Australia completed the 10,000 mile trip in 57 days...we are at 64 and counting), there is nonetheless a sense of personal accomplishment in what we've done.

While my personal energy reserve (ok, my gut) is getting smaller, I must admit that I was surprised to discover that my legs have fallen into rank and are also dwindling in girth. At this point in the trip I had expected them to take on a decidedly Chuck Norris like appearance. The fact is that once the fat melted away I wasn't left with much. I guess slow-twitch-muscles don't demand the same real-estate of fast-twitch muscles. Nonetheless, pat and I are conducting a "whose legs are prettier poll" and we invite you to vote (look on the left hand side of the main web page). I am amazed at the power of the human body when I look at those uninspired legs and realize that they carried a 230 pound man 1500 miles without significant complaint.

But we mustn't congratulate ourselves too much. We are only 15% complete and the hardest leg of the journey lays just over the horizon. Within a few weeks we will be crossing one of the hottest parts of the world - and in the middle of summer where temperatures commonly surpass 120 degrees. More than a few weary travelers have shuffled off their mortal coil along this stretch of Earth. What encourages me is that I've discovered that mental growth is inexorably tied to the hardships we endure. The harder I push myself physically, the more readily the mental fog parts. I look forward to the coming months in the same way a student looks forward to an interesting lecture from a teacher.

PS - thank Patrick for this article's title...I loved it so much I decided to steal it.