



# SPOKE 'N' WORD

MAY, 2009



“When spring comes the grass grows by itself. ”  
-Tao Te Ching

## Big hills, rain, and a flood

### BHC a success despite deluge, flooded roads

**WRITTEN BY** NICK SULLIVAN

The dark clouds from the torrential downpours that had dumped several inches of rain on parts of Middle Tennessee were still hanging low over the hills of Wilson County when cyclists began unloading their bikes and warming up at Watertown High School.

The forecast for this Saturday, May 9, was not promising for the Big Hill Challenge.

Radar showed more rain on the way.

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A total of 101 riders had registered for the BHC, which is sponsored by the Veloteers and Historic Watertown Inc. Despite the threatening elements, most had shown up for the ride.

Ride officials were up to the challenge, however.

Ride coordinator William Anderson, Jeff Tunks of Historic Watertown, and others hustled out early checking the routes for



-- NICK SULLIVAN photo

**A cyclist checks out a map showing changes in the route prior to the start of the Big Wheel Challenge.**

problems. There were many.

“I’ve never seen so much water,” Tunks said. “We’ve got low roads and high water.”

Anderson reported that roadways in Alexandria, one of the major attractions



--JENNIFER GHOLSON photo  
Rain gear was the attire of the day for this year's BHC.

on the ride, were flooded and that other roads on the routes, especially the long century ride, were in bad shape.

“We’ve got washouts and ditches in some roads,” Anderson said. “There is a tremendous amount of debris on the roads.”

The decision was made to delay the start of the ride for an hour, until 9 a.m., to allow some of the water to drain off the roads, and the 100-mile century ride was cancelled. This left the 10-mile loop and 31-mile and 62-mile routes.

Most of the riding was in DeKalb County as the Wilson County roads were still flooded or in bad shape.

“We really had no choice,” said Anderson, about canceling the century ride.

With the routes redrawn to avoid flooded areas, the century ride cancelled, and Alexandria’s route now open, about 65 cyclists began to spin out of the square at Watertown just as

### BHC Vital statistics:

- 101 cyclists registered for the ride, including 71 males and 41 females.
- Ages ranged from 9 to 71.
- The average age was 45 and the median was 47.
- 13 riders registered for the 10-mile loop; 25 for the 31-miler; 46 for the 62-miler, and 17 for the century.
- Temperature at ride time was 66 degrees.

raindrops began to pepper down again.

This rain, however, was not nearly as severe as the overnight deluge, and the cyclists got in a damp but enjoyable ride through the scenic DeKalb County



--JENNIFER GHOLSON photo  
A rider struggles to change a flat in the rain while Veloteers’ support team member Bob Osterow sees if he can help.



--JENNIFER GHOLSON photo  
Cyclists in the BHC seek food and a break from the elements in a picnic shelter beside a rain-swollen stream.

countryside. Some of those taking the longer rides even got to ride for an hour or so without any rain.

“The talents and hard work of many helped pull together the makings of a terrific event, but we couldn't have anticipated the severe weather impact,” Anderson said. “Thanks to on-the-road spotters, WEMA and the Watertown Police Department, information was gathered to determine safe alternative routes.

“Literally, seven minutes before the delayed start of 9 a.m. it was not known if riders could enter DeKalb County, and the city of Alexandria, due to flash flooding,” he said.

“Everyone's dedication is appreciated for helping to provide a safe event.”

No food went to waste. That which wasn't consumed by the hungry cyclists was donated to an agency that

feeds the homeless.

For more of Jennifer Gholson's pictures from the Big Hill Challenge, go to [www.photobucket.com/veloteers](http://www.photobucket.com/veloteers)



**VELO GEARS**

**WRITTEN BY** TIM COBLE

## Stuff You Hope You Never Have To Know

Sometimes it doesn't take much more than "hello" to let you know that a phone call is going to take an unusual turn. That suspicion was confirmed by the sheepishness in the voice that asked, "So, Tim, do you think you'd have time to look over my bike?" Wait a minute – didn't I just do a tune up on that bike? Oh boy...

*"Yeah, I was riding home from work today and this car decided to pass me just as I was coming up on a storm drain. It didn't leave me enough room to ride around, so I figured I'd take my chances and try to clear it. After all, the metal parts were as wide as the spaces between them, so I figured my odds of making it were about 50/50.*

*"Didn't exactly work out that way, though. My front wheel dropped into one of the gaps, and when it hit the far side the bike stopped real suddenly. Funny thing, my shoes didn't clip out right away, so I was sorta hanging upside-down for a while. I finally got one foot loose, which turned out to be a bad thing because that freed me up enough that I fell off the bike and landed on my head hard enough to crack my helmet.*

*"Anyway, my wheel is scratched up a little and my shifter is bent out of position, but I'm pretty sure my bike is okay otherwise. I mean, I was only going about ten miles per hour when I hit the grate. That's not fast enough to do any serious damage, right?"*

Aside from an, "Oh my gosh, I hope you're okay" that my brain managed to spit out reflexively, I was completely speechless.

There was so much wrong with that story that I had no idea how to respond. Unfortunately, enough time has passed that it would be a little weird to call my friend back and pick up the conversation where we left off. ("Hey, about your accident...")

So, all of you get to be my audience for the list of

things that I should've said but didn't think of in time.

First, never, under any circumstances, allow yourself to think for a minute that you can make it over a storm drain on a bike. At least not one of the ones that some genius from the Department of Public Works decided to install with the gaps running parallel to the flow of traffic.

About three years ago a certain rider who shall remain nameless successfully rode across one of these death traps, hands-free and standing out of the saddle, thereby consuming for all time all of the good luck that the universe had allocated to cyclists attempting such a crossing. From that point forward, everyone on two narrow wheels will forever be fated to crashing and burning immediately upon deciding to try their luck.

Second, if you're riding a bike, any scenario that involves moving forward at one moment and coming to a complete and instantaneous stop at the next is a bad thing. If there's one thing that I remember clearly from high school physics (and I'm not saying that there is), it's that force equals mass times velocity, divided by the number of electorate votes

the state of Utah has, plus Tuesday.

Loosely translated, this means that bikes don't like to stop suddenly, and when they're forced to do so by things like drains, walls, cars and garage overhangs, they tend to react somewhat inelegantly.

What's particularly insidious is that they seem to prefer breaking in places that aren't immediately evident. For example, handlebars almost always crack under the bar tape or at the stem clamp. Even worse, instead of cracking out in the open where you can see it, forks have this funny way of giving out around the head tube where there are lots of places for cracks to hide and grow.

Remember George Hincapie's crash-after-the-crash at Paris-Roubaix a few years ago? If so, you know how much you really don't want to find yourself in the same situation.

Second-and-a-half, the corollary to the previous rule is that human bodies respond to sudden stops even worse than bikes do.

If you're ever unlucky enough to find yourself unavoidably using your head as a brake, let me share with you the truest, most absolute words that

### Elections near

The two-year terms of Veloteers club officers will be ending this summer.

Riders who are interested in servicing in elected positions should let any of the club officers know. Instructions will be sent out in a club E-Comm in the near future.

The position responsibilities are spelled out in the club by-laws and are posted on the club website at [www.veloteers.org](http://www.veloteers.org)

you're likely to hear: Your. Helmet. Is. Not. Okay.

Yes, I realize that it just looks scuffed. The outer shell isn't even cracked, and there's just a little dent in the foam. You can barely even see it! I unconditionally guarantee you that none of that matters.

Unless what you keep in your skull is worth less than \$100, you absolutely need a new helmet. The good news is that most helmet companies, like Giro and Bell, will give you a

considerable discount on replacing a crash-damaged helmet. Take them up on it!

Whew, I feel better getting that off my chest. Can I interest anybody in a ride downtown???



### ON THE ROAD

*COMPILED BY NICK SULLIVAN*

## Make your opinions known

The Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is halfway through development of the first Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the MPO area, which includes the counties of Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson, and the cities of Springfield and Spring Hill.

The Plan evaluates roadways in addition to walking and bicycling facilities in the region and will make recommendations for projects, programs and policies that make connections and facilitate accessible and desirable transportation by bicycle and walking.

To learn more about the plan, visit the [MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Study](#).

Almost 1,700 people have filled out the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Survey. The survey asks questions about obstacles and opportunities to improve walking and bicycling conditions in the region.

Almost 40% of respondents live within walking or bicycling distance of work (0-5 miles). If provided with more facilities such as sidewalks, bike lanes and greenways, the majority of respondents said they would be likely to walk or bicycle to places such as restaurants, stores, work, and school.

Public meetings were held six weeks ago in the counties of Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Wilson and Williamson. Over 200 people attended the meetings.

## **TDOT wants your input, too**

Tennessee Department of Transportation is updating its Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and would like to get some bicyclist feedback on the friendliness of the following routes for bicycles.

TDOT is seeking information on several routes, including: Davidson/Wilson -- Hwy 70 - From the western Davidson County line through Wilson County to Watertown (#2);

Davidson/Rutherford - Hwy 41 from downtown Nashville to Murfreesboro (Murfreesboro Road)  
Wilson/Sumner - Hwy 231 from Lebanon to near Westmoreland.

Email back the following information about the route:

Start and end points of the ride; how wide was the shoulder?; were there any rumble strips?; Did you have enough room to share a travel lane with a car?.

Any other information:

Was there a lot of traffic, were vehicles speeding, were the slopes challenging, was there debris on the roadway, were there Share the Road signs? If some improvements were made to the road, could it be a more bicycle friendly route?

Please email back by **May 18th** to [leslie.meehan@nashville.gov](mailto:leslie.meehan@nashville.gov).

For map with routes highlighted go to: [http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/bikeped/pdfs/BikeMap\\_Reg3.pdf](http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/bikeped/pdfs/BikeMap_Reg3.pdf)

In 2005, TDOT produced a Long Range Transportation

Plan that included a bicycle/pedestrian element. As part of this plan, TDOT proposed several bicycle routes to serve as connectors to existing routes.

These were developed utilizing input from the suitability index, attractor and generator analysis, identifying scenic corridors, proximity to existing or planned bike routes in adjoining states, and regional knowledge.

However, these routes need to be field checked in order to see if they are still compatible with the needs of cyclists. If not, then TDOT needs to try and identify alternative connections on existing state routes.



### **From the Editor ...**

Do you have content for the Veloteers newsletter? Please continue to submit your stories, photos and items of interest as Word documents or jpg files [nickbiker1@aol.com](mailto:nickbiker1@aol.com) for future publication.

