



The Driftless Flèche

- My favorite randonneuring ride!

The Rules



- ▶ In a sport with sometimes inscrutable rules, the flèche sets a new standard ;-)
 - ▶ But the rules make sense when taken in the context of the “purpose” of the ride:
 - ▶ Everyone starts at the same time, rides 24 hours toward the same destination
 - ▶ Canonical route is point-to-point (flèche = “arrow” in French) like an arrow aimed at the target
 - ▶ Rules designed so all teams arrive “close to” the same time
 - ▶ Party!

The Rules



- ▶ Team of no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 machines
 - ▶ Tandem counts as 1
- ▶ Outside support only at designated controls
- ▶ No more than 2 hours stopped at any location
- ▶ Minimum of 3 machines must finish together to receive credit
 - ▶ All riders finishing together will receive credit.
 - ▶ A rider finishing ahead of or after the rest of the team will not receive credit.
- ▶ Route of at least 360 km
- ▶ The team must ride a minimum of 25 kilometers in the last 2 hours

The Route



- ▶ Teams design their own route of at least 360 km
 - ▶ Point-to-point preferred but more logistically challenging
 - ▶ Loop routes OK, out and back routes are prohibited
 - ▶ Controls must be placed to prevent obvious shortcuts
- ▶ At least 25 km must be ridden in the last two hours
- ▶ Completed ride must be at least 360 km and within 20% of the team's approved route distance
- ▶ Routes must be submitted to me no later than 30 April
 - ▶ I'm happy to work with team captains to give feedback on their proposed route

The ride



- ▶ Teams must provide proof of passage at each control on their route plus the “22 hour” control
 - ▶ Preferred form is gpx track (Strava, Ridewithgps, Garmin Connect)
 - ▶ Other forms include: time stamped photos, brevet card/receipts
- ▶ “22 hour control”
 - ▶ This is a special case of proof of passage – team *MUST* provide proof of their location at 22 hours into the ride
 - ▶ Given our 16:00 start, that’s 14:00
 - ▶ Acceptable forms include a time stamped photo with location data; an ATM receipt showing time and location, a convenience store receipt showing time and location

The Team



- ▶ Each team appoints a captain who is responsible for submitting the route and associated documentation
- ▶ Team members should be chosen wisely!
 - ▶ Ability to complete the distance
 - ▶ Compatible riding styles (stops, speed, etc) become much more important when you're going to be together for 24 hours!
 - ▶ That person that's always charging ahead, lagging behind, screwing with their equipment, last out of the controls, etc., becomes really annoying over 24 hours!
 - ▶ Minor annoyances have a way of becoming major as you get tired!
 - ▶ Ability to ride safely in a group

The Team



- ▶ Something to consider: when to leave someone behind.
 - ▶ Two schools of thought (no “right” answer!):
 - ▶ We’re all in this together, either we all finish or none of us do
 - ▶ Don’t let one rider jeopardize the team success
 - ▶ To emphasize: in instances where someone “gets left”, in my experience it has ALWAYS been voluntary
 - ▶ Nobody wants to see the whole team DNF because of them
 - ▶ No “side of the road” mutinies as far as I know!

Tips



- ▶ Having a plan that shows arrival times at controls, the average speed needed to accomplish that, how much time spent at each control, etc., is helpful for keeping the team on track
 - ▶ This becomes especially important if you're delayed for some reason
 - ▶ If the whole team has a copy then the captain doesn't have to keep nattering after them to get moving ;-)
- ▶ Route and plan should include one or more rest stops
 - ▶ That "park with picnic tables" looks pretty good if the weather is mild, not so much if it's cold, wet, etc.
 - ▶ Options include a hotel or some other indoor place (restaurant, c-store) that you're sure will be open
 - ▶ Creative options: post office, laundromat, park with picnic tables ;-)
 - ▶ Key is to make sure it's open when you plan on being there

Sample plan



- ▶ It's helpful if the whole team has a copy to refer to
 - ▶ A good idea for the team captain to announce the departure time when arriving at a control

Control Name	Distance from last control (M)	Distance Today (M)	Arrival	Time at control	Control departure time	Total Ride Time
Naperville	0	0	16:00	0:00	16:00	0:00:00
Maple Park (Casey's)	35	35	18:31	0:30	19:01	3:01:00
Harvard (Casey's)	50	85	22:34	0:30	23:04	7:04:00
Whitewater (Kwik Trip)	40	126	1:57	0:45	2:42	10:42:00
Milton (Kwik Trip)	16	141	3:49	0:45	4:34	12:34:00
Edgerton (Quality Inn + McDonalds)	7	149	5:06	2:45	7:51	15:51:00
Cross Plains (Vintage)	59	208	12:23	1:37	14:00	22:00:00
Finish	18	226	15:28	0:00	15:28	23:28:00

More tips



- ▶ All team members should ensure their clothing and equipment are up to the task
 - ▶ Very easy to die the “death of a thousand cuts” dealing with small issues
 - ▶ An equipment cross check a couple of days before the ride is a good idea
 - ▶ How many tubes will we have? Anybody going to have sealant? A good pump?
- ▶ It's suggested that the “22 hour control” be somewhere you can hang out for a while. A well-executed ride with no hiccups should have you arriving there with ample time
 - ▶ This is NOT a requirement
 - ▶ Your plan could be to stop at an ATM 25 km from the finish and get a receipt or simply to stop wherever you are at that point (again, at least 25 km from the finish!!!) and take a time stamped photo with the location

More tips



- ▶ Don't bite off too much distance or elevation
 - ▶ Those 5% rollers starting at 250k might not look like much "on paper" but take their toll after 18 hours of riding
 - ▶ Pay special attention to the last half of the ride and last 25 km!
 - ▶ But note that with the destination in Sauk Prairie it gets hillier the closer you get to the finish – plan for that!
- ▶ If you DO decide to attempt a longer distance it's not a bad idea to take a team photo at 335 km and 360 km
 - ▶ That way those in the photo will get ride credit if you get held up

Points of confusion/Examples



- ▶ Do we have to finish at exactly 24 hours?
 - ▶ No. The rules say you have to ride 25 km in the last 2 hours. Your arrival time is set by however fast you ride that 25 km
 - ▶ For example, if your 22 hour control is exactly 25 km (15 miles) from the finish and you ride it at 30 MPH you'll finish in 22.5 hours
- ▶ Do we have to reach the finish control at 24 hours to receive credit? What if we're held up late in the ride?
 - ▶ Read the rules carefully: the requirements are route of 360 km, 25 km in the last 2 hours, within 20% of approved distance
 - ▶ For example, if you were to take a time stamped photo at the 24 hour point at a location that was at least 360 km from the start and was within 20% of your approved route distance, all team members in that photo would receive credit.

Points of confusion/Examples



- ▶ Wait! What? 20% of your approved route? What's up with that?
 - ▶ This is one of the rules that supports teams finishing at roughly the same time.
 - ▶ Suppose e.g., your approved route is 450k but you run into trouble and at 360k you stop and take a photo of the team at 16:00 (hour 24)
 - ▶ All good
 - ▶ 20% of 450k is 90k, $450k - 90k = 360k$
 - ▶ PROVIDING you've ridden 25 km in the last 2 hours and can prove it!
 - ▶ Suppose instead your approved route is 475k and you stop at 24 hours/360k to take a photo
 - ▶ 20% of 475k is 95k. $475k - 95k = 380k$
 - ▶ DQ (and you miss the party!)

Points of confusion/Examples



- ▶ What happens if someone gets separated from the team?
 - ▶ If they continue, take a photo at least 25 km from the finish AND finish with the team – all good
 - ▶ Rules don't require the whole team to be in the 25 km photo, only that the team must finish as a group
- ▶ “No more than 2 hours stopped” – really?
 - ▶ Yes, really. The rules says “No rest stop may exceed two hours”
 - ▶ Note that the clock starts ticking when the wheels stop turning – NOT when your head hits the pillow ;-)
 - ▶ Note also that it stops ticking when you start moving again, no matter how little the distance
 - ▶ For example, you could take a 2 hour rest stop then go to a c-store just down the road and stop again



After the ride

- ▶ Always fun to roll in to the finish and applaud the other teams as they arrive!
- ▶ We'll have an area (indoors or out, weather depending) where we can gather, have a beverage and exchange ride stories
- ▶ Experience suggests we'll be pretty tired though so it'll likely be rather subdued ;-)
- ▶ Breakfast next day at the Spring Green general store
 - ▶ Approximately 1 hour drive from Sauk Prairie. Time TBD.

Final thoughts

- ▶ The flèche is unique
 - ▶ It's an interesting mix of “challenge” and “chill”
- ▶ Lasting bonds are formed by the shared experience

