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Tracks #13 March 15 2003

12 Miles of Hell '03~ by Terry Spradley

Broken Bikes, Broken Bodies, Big Rocks

12 Miles of Hell, like NASCAR's Daytona 500 signals the start of another race season. A tough race with its own set of rules 12 Mile is a good chance to test your limits and off season conditioning in a mass of faceless competitors. It also gives you a chance to see who has been faithfully pedaling the winter months, and who has been on the cookies and milk diet. Over the winter months Team LATR joined up with bikers from Great Bend, Osborne, Salina, and even one member from the KC area to form the Central Kansas Mountain Bike Club. Great Bend's riders christened another race team for the club in Team Earthsurfer. Earthsurfer brought some much needed speed in the upper brackets with expert and sport class racers. Cameron & Doug Chambers, Nick Phillips, and Jon Shank, made the trip this year.

< Getting There >

New racer Henry "Hank" Bullock rolled in from KC late Friday night to join the rest of LATR's riders in an early Saturday morning departure. Salina members Ryan Cole and David Swanson joined up with the Lindsborg crew consisting of three veterans to 12 mile, Brian and Cale Holdsworth, Mark Flynn, and another newcomer to 12 Mile Eric L. Peterson. Hank and I waited patiently at the McPherson ramp filing in as they passed by for a nice convoy south. A quick call informed me that Team Earthsurfer would be hitting the interstate less than an hour behind us.

Great Bend's crew made up some significant time after we took a few laps around Oklahoma City's cloverleaf. I lost the rest of the team by slicing three lanes of traffic for a near miss to the off ramp. We also did a few laps trying to figure out how to get from "up here on the interstate to down there in Wal-Mart's parking lot". Henry got some video tape, I got an annoying squeeze bulb horn for the bike. A few more miles down the road Mark showed his team support. Driving sweep like he often rides on our group adventures, Mark lent some support to Salina riders when David and Ryan discovered that "exact



change" lanes will only accept exact "change". Dollar bills don't slide down them baskets worth a darn. While Hank and I wondered if we were watching the team's first DNF in a toll booth, Mark managed to pull up close enough to chuck the appropriate amount of "change" into the basket without too many bells and whistles going off.

By the time we got to Ft Sill's exit the club's other team was only minutes back so we decided to pull off at Burger King for a pre-ride fuel up. KC tandem riders Dan and Heather Jordan were rolling by as we made the turn. Heather has all my respect. Riding 12 Miles of Hell on the back of a bike with someone else steering is too tough for me. Course I guess the big difference between our rides is that when I close my eyes on the bad stuff, I still have to steer. Heather just has to pedal, maybe she is onto something. Earthsurfer's crew pulled up in time to join us for some fast food and we all hit Ft. Sill's gate for inspection together. The low hanging clouds had cloaked the Wichita Mountains behind a white abyss of nothingness, but slowly with each turn the old craggy mounds of rocks started to appear.

Hanks video camera started to whirl as my heart rate quickened a few beats. Vehicles burden with bikes or empty carriers started appearing at every junction in the road. The mountains came into full view as we topped the last rise and turned into LETRA's lot. Reminiscent of last year, Lake Elmer Thomas had ominous frigid waves blowing across the surface, but warmer temps and no snow! We picked up our packets and set off to change into riding gear.

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Frugality~ by TSLegends

The Nation's economy has taken a bit of a slow down as of late. Everybody feels the pinch; everybody does their own thing to cut corners, it's called being frugal. With fewer bonuses and less overtime, I decided it was time I tried to be a bit more frugal. I sat down at the computer opened up Quicken, and took a look at all my expenses; house, utilities, race budget, food, all the essentials. After much ciphering, I finally decided the grocery budget was taking too big of a bite, pardon the pun, out of my bike, I mean bank budget. To remedy that injustice I decided it was time to take inventory of all those food items dwelling in the back corner of the frig, freezer, and cabinets. You know all those things we buy over the year(s), that looked good at the time, part of some new diet, or just left over because you bought one too many. Eventually they all get shoved to the corners as new purchases take their place. They become relegated to the duty of filling the gaps, and holding up the stacks. I decided it was time to investigate these corner dwellers and see what wonders the shadows held. Here's a little of what I discovered.

Once you open the seal on something like chips, crackers, or Cheez-its, they are pretty well limited to a couple of days at best. Much after that and it doesn't matter whether you opened, chips, crackers, or Cheez-its, they all pretty much taste the same. On the other hand, if you don't open the seal they seem to last almost indefinitely. However the number of "chips" tends to go up as the size of them goes down. The Cherry Braid dessert I bought from my daughter's 5th grade fund raiser was a poor match with the salami I bought from her 6th grade fundraiser, (Antoinette is attending 7th grade as I write this). I learned if you find something in your freezer that is so covered in frost you can't identify it; attempting to cook it, (or identify it), by dropping it in a hot deep fat fryer is not a good idea! Hot dog buns make better Sloppy Joes than you might think. Easy Mac, most can goods and microwavable popcorn have an incredible shelf life. JELL-O, Kool-Aid, and Pork and Beans have the mystical ability to multiply. Peanut Butter blends in too well with the

color of my cabinet walls. Proof of that in the three half full jars of it I found in the corners along with the one I bought last week.

Apparently there are always more taco shells, than filling, cereal loses its appeal right after you eat it down to the level of the prize, and large amounts of chocolate syrup will cover up the taste of freezer burn on most ice cream.

What does any of this have to do with biking you ask? By ignoring expiration dates, (they really are only suggestions aren't they?), and combining stuff that probably wasn't initially intended to go together, I have saved enough money to replace a worn out bottom bracket. Saturday at the bike shop I saw a shiny, lightweight, thing-a-mbobber I want for my Sugar. Anybody have a recipe for a Cherry pie I bought from Antoinette's 3rd grade fundraiser, 3 half full jars of peanut butter, and 5 broken taco shells?

See you on the trails... T~

12 Miles of Hell '03 (cont.)

< Pre-Ride >

LMBC President Gerard Arantowicz caught up with us in the changing room and our happy little band of gypsy's added another newcomer to our pre-ride. Thirteen riders strong we unloaded the bikes and started grinding our way up 12 Miles' first big climb. Halfway up the hill I remembered I was one of those cookies and milk off-season folks. I also remembered how much more climbing was left in this 14 mile romp through the rocks.

For the first few hills the group stayed fairly close together. Waiting at the crest of each hill and grumbling together about how tough it was to go down with your glasses fogged over. Actually I think I am better off when I can't see. Sugar does a lot better when I am just along for the ride. A couple more climbs and the group started to spread out to the point where waiting on stragglers was no longer practical. As I waited on a crest for other team members Gerard and Earthsurf's speedsters took off for a quicker paced ride. Hank decided he had



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carried that Burger King food up enough hills and left his trail side critique of fast food. We caught back up to the group as they finished bounding through the last of 12 Miles' rocky fire roads and made the turn into the first serious singletrack. The sketchy fire roads claimed a casualty. I think he was a member of the group from the Kansas City. He had a badly torn jacket, cracked helmet and new respect for the rocky roads.

Cale was riding my Big Sur and it had been jumping gears on him, but the first real bike casualty came when one of Mark's Speedplay pedals disassembled itself on some rocks. Mark was left riding the spindle for the day but wisely retrieved the broken parts. His hotel room repair later that night definitely wins the team's MacGyver award. A navigational miscue brought us into the Kevinator from the side bypass. The group dismounted and hiked the legendary drop's crevices and ledges. It looked worse than I remembered it, but then it always does. There were no spectators around and no other riders coming down it, so we debated whether it was even part of the course this year or not. I noticed nobody suggested riding it anyway, before I knew it the group was mounting up and continuing on. As I was departing another rider came along and said he was pretty sure we were doing it in the race this year. I took another look up the Kevinator's craggy slope and decided it could wait for the "heat of competition" to try and break my neck! Hank and I chased down the rest our group.

Our trailing group rode the first section of trails out to the water stop and decided we had seen enough. The air was taking on a chill and my stomach was ready for more than the quick burger I had a couple hours earlier. Mark's broken pedal had been gouging his arch at about every other bump so when the vote was put forth to take the asphalt road back there were no objections. I knew Cameron and the rest of the Earthsurfers were well on their way to doing a full loop and miles ahead of us. I figured that would put us all ready to regroup for dinner at about the same time. We took turns tagging each others draft back to the parking lot. Gerard rolled in just behind us and plans were made for the evening's meal.

We all met at Bianca's Italian place for our ritual pre-race pasta feed. Us, half the other bikers in town, and the regular patrons. Pre-ride stories were told, plans were made, and for one of the few times we all got together nobody was trying to out run anyone else. Except maybe when the check came. After the meal we went back to hotel for our final checks and repairs.

(Continued on page 4)

Handicaps~ by TSLegends

My lack of a training program, and still donating a little cash to Phillip Morse and my local tax man keeps me in the also ran pack. That's cool, go too fast and you miss all the funny stuff I get to write about later. However, I would like to be able to keep up with the likes of Cameron, Lyle Riedy, and these other speedsters occasionally. Since I don't see myself joining any health clubs or enrolling in Tinker Juarez's mountain bike school, I look for handicaps! Thanks to loyal reader submissions and an engineering friend at work I have found a couple of promising crutches.

The CHRISTINI AWD consists of a patented lightweight, internalized, shaft-driven system that allows the rider to engage both wheels for additional power when there is "wheel slip". With the simple flip of a handlebar-mounted switch, the AWD system provides increased control, traction and stability on slippery or loose surfaces and unmatched power to climb steep hills. Simply stated, when the rear wheel slips — the front wheel grips.

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Handicaps~ (cont.)

And if the extra traction won't do it here is one that gives new meaning to 2-stroke where MTB rides are concerned.



(Story and photo credits from Design News magazine)

The Revolution Motor fits within the frame of a conventional bicycle and requires no modifications to the original equipment. The Revolution uses a 27 cm³ two-stroke engine and gear train that fits within the 3-inch-wide confines of a conventional bike fork. Using the 10 lb revolution motor inventor, Stephen Katsaros of Denver CO estimates OEM's can cut the total weight of a motorized bike to about 30 lbs. With a quarter gallon of fuel, he says most bikes will have a driving range of about 20 miles.

For more information contact Steve Katsaros, kats@ecentral.com.

20 miles hmmm, 12 Mile is 14 miles long, if I could paint it to look like a disc brake and convince them that loud screaming noise is one of my lungs, maybe...



12 Miles of Hell '03 (cont.)

< The Big Event >

Race morning temps hovered around 40 degrees as we loaded the last of the gear in the truck and headed to the post. By the time we had passed through inspection at the gate the wind had started to pick up and the digits on the thermometer in my truck dropped a degree. As we drove to the start line the temperature continued to drop with every turn. When we finally parked at the staging area it read 36 and the wind was gaining strength. Looked like another typical 12 Miles of Hell was about to start. I am not much of a cold weather rider. I jumped out of the truck and put on everything but my suitcase. I started to take on sort of a Michelin man look. Warm and toasty, plus when I crash more cushion! I did a couple of spins around the parking lot for a warm-up ride before I rolled off to the starting grid. Hank was busy running around getting camera coverage lined up for his inaugural race.

Team Earthsurfer's fast 4 were poised in the top ¼ of the starting pack, Newton ride Nathan Hobbs was a few rows back. I knew I was going to be a slow boy this year so I passed up the invite to join them and rolled a little deeper into the mass of riders. No sense in fifty people having to pass me on the first climb. I spotted the Team LATR faithful just past the midway point and wedged in with them. Hank showed up a short time later and slid in behind us, the group was accounted for. We sat and applauded all the announcements and credits. There's that 400 rider golf clap sound again. Finally all the accolades were given and the mic was handed to the Post Commander. The count down commenced, I realized suddenly I was way overdressed, the countdown continued, the artillery gun went off to signal the start. I coiled up to spring forward, and waited for the guy in front of me to move, and waited for the guy in front of me to move, and waited for the guy in front of me to move.

Okay maybe it only seemed like that long but there is a definite lag at the back of the start grid. I should have taken that time to peel off my suitcase. Motoring down the asphalt road I started to warm up pretty fast, riders slash by in their desperate attempts



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to get out of the crowd. Good Luck, I think the “crowd” goes on for about a ½ mile. We turned right off the pavement and onto the first of many miles of Oklahoma dirt and rock. A small dog was adding an additional obstacle to riders that turn too wide. My climb was going fairly well. I had a decent line and was holding my own. As I ascended the rock pile my internal temp started to rise as well. I got a little warm, a drop of sweat turned into several, a few yards more and I was at “stir, recover, and heat for an additional 2 minutes”! I relinquished my line to stop and remove my jacket. I have to admit I was a bit dejected, I know better than to overdress and I still do it repeatedly at 12 Mile. I won’t next year, I’ll have one less jacket to wear the blue one is still up there.

I got the jacket off managed to restart and get back into traffic to continue the climb, only 13.5 more miles to go. I topped the hill in the middle of a sea of mountain bikers, rolling over the hill top like a massive herd of Bison. Slipping and sliding on the rocks, jockeying through the crowd looking for a good line down the hill, all the while trying not to crash into your fellow Bison. I love this part, scares the crap out of me, but I love it. I’ve never been real big on conditioning, eating right, or long training rides, but I go downhill pretty well. Testing your metal by pedaling as riders around you are braking, watching the bikes in your peripheral vision slide backwards as you start picking up speed, realizing you can ride off that shelf you ended up drifting into, and sliding your fingers off the break levers as you spot a clear line to the bottom. All that and making it to the bottom with the rubber side down is a rush. I know I will never run with the Tilford’s, Chambers, and Riedy’s of the bike world but for those brief 50 or 60 seconds I feel like one of those North shore daredevils I see in the bike mags.

Unfortunately none of the courses I seem to ride are totally downhill and it’s not long before the momentum from the descent wears off, I’m dropping gears like a one handed juggler, and I am back to that head pounding struggle up another climb. This would go on about a hundred and fifteen more times over the course of the next two hours. Fortunately I am a slow starter, the exhilaration of the downhills kept me stoked longer into each climb and before I

knew it we were into the serious singletrack. It seemed like it took us hours to get to this point the previous day. So much is going on in the pack time passes much more quickly during the race. The first singletrack climb had bikes littering the trail on both sides as riders went down, went over, or went off course. My adrenaline must have been pumping I manage to wedge between miscued riders, using some as push off poles and others as traction I managed to make the first major technical climb and was on my way merrily bounding from rock to rock like Tigger on Winnie-the-Pooh, (at least in my head).

When the technicals start my mind set changes. I’m not out to win the race or beat other riders, (although a rock would be nice), I am just out to beat 12 Mile. It becomes a contest between me and her big old sharp ass boulders. How fast can I go before you make me bleed? I rode pretty well across the technicals, through the trees and just flew across those baldhead rocks back by engineer’s pond. I rode the Kevinator with a little dab, I gracefully dismounted once on another section, but never crashed, I finished 109th and I didn’t bleed! Does that mean I have to keep going?

Brian Holdsworth rode like a champ. Going into his third year of racing he rode hard and pushed well through the technicals. We were only bike lengths apart for most of the race. Having Brian pushing me or chasing him kept me from giving in to that burning desire to quit or at least slow down around mile 12 when the cramps start. Brian rode the Kevinator a few positions behind me, but a friendly bump from behind interrupted his descent temporarily. Rubbin’s racin’ eh Brian? Brian stepped up and got back on my tail to finish 3 places behind me at 112. Mark’s MacGyver pedal fix held together for a good finish of an even 150, and if I know Mark he probably stopped to help somebody along the way. Newcomer Eric Peterson rode a good inaugural race finishing only seven places behind Flynn at 157.

Team Earthsurfer’s flyin’ four took off in a smokin’ blaze of speed and glory. I can’t tell you much about their ride because most of them were finishing about the time I was bouncing through the



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rocks on the back section. I did see one of them on the course after the start I guess. My old buddy Doug, somewhere around mile nine or so I saw a biker off to the side of the trail as I skittled down a rock slide. I had a second to glance off to my right and recognized the rider. Chambers had his bike upside down and was in the middle of a flat repair, Doug and air at 12 Mile have not been a good combination of late. Last year we sat on the start line with the countdown under a minute when Doug settled down on his seat to find his rear tire half deflated. '02's race started from the back of my truck pumping air. He still beat me by one position knocking me out of rock contention. As I passed him I asked if he had everything and got an affirmative response. For a second I felt bad for him because I know he had a good run going. Then my mind moved to figuring out how many miles he would have left to catch me. This year he didn't quite make it, Doug finished 13 behind me at 122.

Jon Shank finished a very impressive 32 overall, 4th in the 35-39 division. Seems like just a few weeks ago I was sitting in the bike shop saying how my goal for Wilson this year was to be able to at least see Jon near the finish line. I'm presently Autocading up a bike mount for my binoculars. 16 year old Nick Phillips runs a pretty mean race in a pair of Nike runners as a member of Great Bend's cross country team. At 12 Mile he put out another great effort and netted the Earthsurfers a respectable finish coming across 82 overall, 7th in his age group. Newton teenager Nathan Hobbs evidently had a very good run through the rocks finishing second in the under 20 group and 28th overall! I think this young guy has been riding a bit since he drug my sorry butt around the Death Ride last July. Good job Nathan.

Cameron Chambers, CKMBC and Team Earthsurfer's shining star. Cameron rode his trusty 29" rigid single speed to 3rd place overall, 1st in the class. Not since Geronimo galloped through the boulders on his fiery steeds, have the Wichita boulders seen such a ride. I only wish I could have seen it. Cameron is a powerhouse of a rider and a true trail advocate with many hours of trail building. I almost admire him enough to help carry that big ass

boulder he got for winning, almost. Excellent ride Cameron impressed me!

I didn't see Gerard the morning of the race or after but I did hear of his finish. Unfortunately somebody at the scoring table didn't. G's results were not listed in the official tally. I know that he finished 74th overall which would have put him about 10th in his age group. You should have got a rock G, I would petition the 12 Mile gods for a recount. This was G's first time on the 12 Miles of Hell course. That was a very respectable finish even if it wasn't a well publicized one.

Lyle Riedy and Doug Long, Tracks friends of the family, also turned a very impressive pedal. I knew Lyle was fast, I watched him on the Fat Tire series last year. I also tried to direct him on a trail ride at K-Lake the weekend before. Tough to tell someone where to go when they are two terrain features ahead of you. Lyle is another one of these Cameron like riders that seem to kind of skim over the terrain, instead of pin balling through it like I seem to. I haven't seen Doug ride before, (and considering I was 92 riders behind him, I still haven't), but if he finished one behind Lyle he is obviously no slouch. I do know that Doug Long is a heck of a trail builder and event organizer. He is sponsoring a weekend event near Trenton MO April 12th and 13th. It is an event you should try not to miss.

Another Riedy finished 85th overall. Cathy finished 2nd in her class and about a 1/4 of a race ahead of me. I figure I was probably just getting my first cramps as Cathy was finishing her lap. I was impressed the first time I saw Cathy race and nothing has happen to change that. Good job Mrs. Riedy.





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David Swanson finishes as Mark looks on

Topeka must be training grounds for strong female riders. Trudi Rebsamen won Cathy's class finishing in 76th place, (and I thought my class was competitive). Besides being a fast competitor Trudi is also one of the examples of why I like bike folk. At the Saturday 's dinner one of our team members left a camera behind which she pointed out as we were getting up. The same team member also left a video camera behind that she brought out to us in the parking lot. Any respectable pawn shop would have given you the price of some new bike skins for that camera Trudi. Thanks a lot for saving someone's butt. Maybe next year he should pick up your tab at Bianca's.

Where was the rest of Team LATR? 200 riders had crossed the finish line and the never say die team still had 4 riders unaccounted for. Cale, Ryan, Hank, and David were still out there in 12 Mile's menacing rock terrain. It wasn't long before we got our answer on two of the riders. Cale and Ryan had both been playing mountain bike demo derby, getting reminders of how the team motto, "it's not a ride 'till somebody bleeds", came to be.

About 1/2 ways through the ride is a thing called the Kevinator. Feared by mortal mountain bikers, this descent is a heart stopper for most of us. However it isn't the only scary bump out there. Just about the time your heart rate has returned to something normal from your controlled crash descent down the Kevinator, there is an unassuming little rock roll off. It signals a welcome break to the rocks for a bit and leads you into the start of the woodland trails. Unassuming that is until you get close to the edge of it and see how steep, and how far of a drop it is. There is also a low hanging tree branch there waiting to clothesline you into next week if you sit too tall in the saddle.

I never got all the details of Cale's crash. I don't know if it was a solo effort, or if as it so often is at 12 mile "he had a little help" type of crash; but Cale performed the often imitated still unperfected cartwheel style of descending. He ended up bashing a wrist pretty good and destroying a Bontrager seat. Keyword "destroy". This seat was bent over so bad it was similar to sitting on a vinyl padded fence rail, as it bounces around in a rock pile. Cale was already struggling with a bad drive train that started jumping gears on everything but the smallest front gear. Cale did the team proud by pushing himself and the wounded Big Sur across the line 221st. Well done Cale.

Ryan Cole, Ryan came down to 12 Mile for the first time this year. Ryan is a young college student from Salina. Despite Ryan's relatively laid back, clean cut look, Ryan is a man after my own heart. I never got the details of his little insurance claim episode, but I saw all the hand gestures as he related the story to other team members. Things flying end-over-end, something whacking his foot real hard, hands around his throat feigning dead, okay maybe not all that but it looked pretty bad. He had one bloody sock to go with his FINISHER'S certificate, and later x-rays revealed a broken bone in his foot. Glad his parents came down to watch so I didn't get any irate letters about breaking their child. We're gonna miss you on the team if you and Dave go forest fire fighting this summer.

Lewis Henry "Hank" Bullock was my trip partner and roomie for this year. Hank is a



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newcomer to the bike scene. He entered his first race last fall at the Crocodile Rock. The bug had bitten him good. Suddenly his cherished first bike shop bike Lucy was not enough. Hank ran out to Heather Jordan's shop and purchased a sexy full suspension NRS. And he rode it, rode it on the dirt, rode it on the road, probably rode it in his dreams, (which I'm sure got him a good poke in the ribs from wife Kathy). Anyway Hank rode his Lucy 2, but neither Hank nor Lucy had seen the likes of 12 Mile's dastardly boulders. While his pre-ride rituals are still a bit chaotic, Henry rode well and inflicted minimal damage on himself or his pretty new ride. He piloted Lucy 2 across the finish line in 354th place. Kind of like a plane crash Henry any finish you can walk away from is a good one. This year should be a lot of fun, look forward to having you on the team.

One team member was still unaccounted for; David Swanson was still out there. Like the fisherman's wives in Gloucester Mass when the Nor'easters blow in, the team gathered at the trucks waiting word of our last remaining entry. Dave is another new member of the team and I haven't got to know him all that well yet, but I have seen him ride a few times. I knew he was LATR material, he wouldn't let us down. At Wilson Lake's Icicle ride he wouldn't let a jumping drive chain force him back to the car before completing a lap. On the way down he wouldn't let Oklahoma's "exact change" lane and a few alarm whistles stop him from rolling on. I knew he would finish. Then word came in; Dave had been spotted on the final switchbacks! The team gathered at the start/finish line to cheer David on.

Dave was grinding through the switchbacks a few yards behind another rider. We were hollering "Go Team LATR", some of the scorers started hollering "Go Team LATR", and sure enough team LATR went. Passing the other rider on the last climb Dave brought our final entry in, all hands aboard in 392nd place. Team LATR's eight and the Earthsurf four left the 16th Annual running of the 12 Miles of Hell with two broken bikes, two significantly battered bodies, one flat tire and a nice little pile of rocks.

12 Mile's Officials should just get a rubber stamp for the overall winners as two names seem to

be dominating the event of late. Topeka resident and National Champ Steve Tilford won his 3rd consecutive 12 Mile, while 19 year old Magen Long of Oklahoma City won what I believe was her fourth consecutive victory.

CKMBC had a good run at 12 Mile. The new bike coalition increased our club's size and resources. Great Bend's Team Earthsurfer gave us some speed, and shop backing. Team LATR provided the club with some drive, determination, and entertainment. (Those really fast guys rarely do anything funny.) All that rode deserve a cheer, all that finished deserve a medal! CKMBC had no DNF's, 667 signed on for the fray, 442 finished it. 225 riders didn't fair as well or never even started! Congrats to all that did.

T~



Eric, Ryan, Cale, Terry, & Hank

***Good judgment comes from experience,
Unfortunately, the experience usually
comes from bad judgment!***

***Watch Tracks Online for more stories and
information on Kansas trails at
<http://spradtracks.tripod.com>***

See you on the trails!