

You ride 16 Centuries and what do you get
Scorpion Challenge 2005
A Chronicle
By Greg "Bulldog" Fisher

Somebody that sits on a bicycle for 130 hours would get one of two things, a great sense of accomplishment or saddle sores. That is about how long I sat on the bike this year or more like 11 months in this years Scorpion Challenge 2005.

My purpose for writing this is not to bore you with details from every ride. Some centuries had some really neat stuff happen that was a blast to write about. While some of the other rides were fairly uneventful and were kind of like a day at the office.

There were however some special things that happened on some of the rides that I have written about. There are some very special people on those rides that are very dear to me and I will always be indebted to.

Century Tuscaloosa January 15, 2005. This was the first ride of the challenge. The first 25 miles of this ride are as tough as it gets. Gary Falls, a dear friend was struggling a bit on the first leg of the ride. He was late getting to the first stop. The front group was leaving as he arrived. I offered, or more like insisted, that he let me ride with him the next 75 miles and that is what we did. That was a special day.

Bratgap February 19, 2005. This would be the ride I struggled and suffered and hurt. This ride starts out from Capitol Park and winds it way down into Greene, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties. I was having some trouble with my back which causes some pain in my legs. Bratgap is a brutal ride on some terrible roads that will beat the stuffing out of you. My old century buddy Dodie Morris was having a bad day and was losing the pack. He told me to go on and ride ahead as it looked like he wasn't going to pick up the pace any. I would ride the next 50 miles alone and in great pain and fatigue, except for a considerate person doing a make shift sag on the ride, thank you Michael Hayes.

March rolled around and it was the **Natchez Trace Ride March 5, 2005.** This is an out and back 100 mile ride on a chip seal surface, mostly flat, piece of cake, WRONG! The headwinds and the surface would beat the bulldog almost into submission. The ride started out cool and windless. The day would wear on as the headwinds would startup and fatigue would set in. I would lose the group and ride most of the time solo. I thought I was the last one in but by chance, would Jim Cockrell and Dodie Morris make a wrong turn and veer! off the beaten path to get beat up by the road surface even more. This was a very tough day on an easy looking course.

The **Cheaha Warm Up** was a good ride **April 9, 2005.** I have never done this ride in its entirety, but since it was on the list, so I had to do it. The group was small that day for the century, Larry and I would ride in the back .I would finish the ride in good shape.

The next ride was **Cheaha Challenge April 17, 2005,** the great hill, the Holy Mountain. The ride is trilling and grueling, an exercise in insanity. This is not one of my favorite rides. It messes with my mind and body. It was also one of the Scorpion rides I had to do in order to do all the required rides. The Tuesday before the Sunday rides Larry Pierson and I were riding on Black Warrior road and we decided to turn around. I didn't look and was hit by an upcoming bike rider at a high rate of speed. I was knocked off my bike and landed very hard on my hip.

At that moment I didn't think I would be able to do Cheaha that Sunday. I went ahead and did the ride with the help of many prayers being lifted up and a lot of encouragement from my friends. It was a great feeling and a great sign of relief to have finished this ride. The first ride in May was the **Black Belt century May 14, 2005**, which starts out from Aliceville this was a great ride in the fact we all stayed for most of the ride. I would tire about 80 miles into the ride and would slow losing the group. Larry would hang back with me. We all got back fine on this a good ride day.

I would do **Stephanie's Warm Up May 21, 2005** in good fashion, feeling strong that day. Stephanie however would get too much sun from the reflection off the chip seal surface on the Greene county roads and get sun poisoning. She recovered in a few days. June would prove to be true test of my determination and grit. This month had two rides two days apart. **The Mule Day Ride** was on a **Saturday June 4, 2005**, which is a 100 mile ride. **The Ride Of Love** was that following **Monday June 6, 2005** that ride was 150 miles. This means I had a day's rest in 250 miles of riding. Again I was pitted against doing the required rides and perhaps not being able to finish one of them. At the time my other riders for the Challenge grand prize were in the same boat.

I would do the Mule day ride and the Ride of Love both. I was amazed by what I had done. Surely the Lord was with me. I was also very glad I didn't disappoint my dear friend Stephanie Wilkins who puts on the great ride for kids with cancer.

Both the **Freedom Ride June 7, 2005** and the **North Arbor Hot hundred August 13, 2005** would be a day at the office ride. The North Arbor Hot hundred we would do a week before the actual ride, when the weather was a little cooler.

Starting with the **BBC or Birmingham Bicycle Club century September 10, 2005** I would start to sort of self destruct. The BBC ride is a super ride. It is put on by some super people. This is a very tough ride. I would have flat on this ride and then another and also make a wrong turn and add 11 miles to the ride. I would finish the ride and get my barbeque.

The month of October would again offer the double whammy, two required century rides in a month. The MOMB ride or **Mississippi On My behind October 8, 2005** is a butt buster, a very long ride. This ride would have wrong turns and more wrong turns, frustration, and friendship. I had the great satisfaction of helping a dear friend Mandy Nichols complete this challenging ride. She is the only woman to have ever done this ride. It would be the trio of Mandy, Dodie Morris and the Bulldog seeing this ride to the end, another great day.

The **Four Bridges ride October 22, 2005** is my personal ride that I have led for the last four years. The ride was again just another ride at the office. The neat thing about this year was the presence of Stephanie Wilkins who always wants to do this ride but always had schedule conflicts. I never thought this ride was all that tough but Stephanie seemed to think it was.

At this point I had 14 rides down and two more to go; Phil's Folly and with my pals to Palmetto. **Phil's Folly** is always in early November so it isn't really cold. I had done this ride in the spring so I was well acquainted with the ride. I rode well and a comment from the ride leader Phil Hardee encouraged all the more. He said I had never looked better after a century ride.

Finally the last ride, **With My Pals To Palmetto** came **December 10, 2005**. The morning would start off very cold at 24 degrees. It started out sunny but quickly became

cloudy. This ride starts off in Coker and winds back around to Mount Olive church in Coker. It was cold and windy all day but that wouldn't stop me from finishing this ride. I would again have Dodie Morris riding shotgun and Stephanie Wilkins who wanted above all to do this big ride with the bulldog. Stephanie is not a cold weather rider. She braved the harsh elements all day for the bulldog, I am very honored. I would ride surprisingly well in this ride despite, the cold and wind and lack of sunshine. I have ridden in the cold before but it has been a while. When we on the last leg of the ride, about 20 miles out, Stephanie had a shifter problem. This would limit her to only 14 mile per hour pace. I dropped back and checked on her, and we were able to get the chain to a higher gear. She told me to ride ahead and send someone back after her. Yeah, like I am Tippy the wonder dog racing ahead at light speed to bring help back. I told her I couldn't leave her out there alone. I rode with her till we got back. I can't tell the feeling I got when I got back to the church parking lot and saw everyone clapping and cheering. I say this much , the first time I did all of Cheaha, The Ride Of Love and my first century feeling come pretty close. I did all these rides not to prove how great I am or how tough I am. I will say it my greatest physical accomplishment as I don't consider myself much of an athlete. ***I did for the bike, there I said it!*** I want to thank all of those who prayed for me, encouraged me and supported though this long challenge.

Bulldog

“It ain't all about pumping the pedals”