

BIG's News Letter - 2009.01

English Version

Edito: Silence!

Have you ever heard the sound of silence? Well we, the committee that is, did! For us it seemed that the BIG members were hibernating to get through the cold winter time. So the committee did not hear a lot from the BIG members. But the BIG committee did not hibernate as you can read in this newsletter (see the top 5 news). So, are you ready now? Ready to live up to the challenge. To the challenge that BIG offers? Let's go for that challenge and make it again a fantastic cyclo climbing year. Here is the first newsletter to get you on track again. So have fun out there and enjoy.

1. TOP5 BIG news.

TOP 1: Evolution

As stated in the previous newsletter, we had a BIG Bang year last year. With this tremendous growth we had to think how we would manage a challenge of this size. So first a check up with 66 questions was sent to more than 50 key BIG members, mostly members who work in the committee. This check up showed us our strong points and points where we should improve.

As a first step it was decided in a small committee to introduce 4 classes for members. One class still offers the free subscription to the challenge (Class 4) and others offer more depending on the contribution paid (Class 1 up to 3). See for more information: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/contribution.htm>

A meeting was organised also in Namur in January with a wide committee to take decision on some other improvements. Here is a quick overview:

- A new committee structure has been agreed upon that is more efficient.
- The national delegates have been created and they will be useful during the season.
- The tasks have been better dispatched in the goal to help the ones who have been so kind to help us.
- New tasks have been defined and are already under work:
 - Feet and tops are revisited to get better data.
 - The promotion of central Europe has been taken at hand. And the German promotion is already a success when you look at the new German and Austrian subscriptions. For more information you can read also the Top 4 of the BIG News items.
 - José BRUFFAERTS has added links to other internet sites in the descriptions of the BIGs up until zone 6 already!
 - A new excel file has been created by Daniel GOBERT that gives points to our 1.000 BIGs for media (well known races) and tourism. And to ensure the data's.
 - The Review has been edited by Martin KOOL and thanks to Dominique JAQCUEMIN, the group working for this annual review increased and is more efficient, too.

Then we, Daniel GOBERT and myself had a meeting end of February in Landegem to discuss 5 pages of improvements with our webmaster Wouter DE RUYCK. So in time the website will be better and better. The 5 pages were based on feedback received by members and as a result of the check-up.

Then a word of our president: Daniel GOBERT:

The group of people who are working for the challenge is a fantastic team. I want to thank you all for all those jobs, done in the intimacy of your home, on your PC, or on your table, inside your family's life. I would like to thank your families too, to give you the time to help this challenge that is a child of us all. Be sure that we will not forget your help in this way.

Gratefully yours, Dan.

TOP 2: Malga Palazzo OUT!

The toughest BIG in our list has been since 2003 BIG 743: Malga Palazzo. It has always been a controversial climb in our list. Either you like it or you hate it. Look for instance at the discussion in the forum: <http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/sondages-polls-f28/wonderful-big-t30.htm>. This discussion has come to an abrupt end now as early this year the news came to us that this climb is now banned for bikers! For security reasons, the town of Besenello has limited the road only to the local people with only tractors and 4x4 cars. This means Malga Palazzo will eventually be removed from our list and a new climb will take its place. Eventually? Yes, as we are waiting until the end of April to see how the municipality of Besenello will react to the numerous requests to allow bikers access again to Malga Palazzo.

If you have cycled Malga Palazzo and it is replaced by another ascent then don't worry as the rules of the BIG state that the number you claimed counts, look at point 1.3 on <http://www.challenge-big.eu/rules.htm>. So if you have cycled BIG 743 when it was Malga Palazzo or when it was Monte Isola (prior to 2003) then your claim of number 743 is still valid!

TOP 3: BIG Women

Yes they exist! Women who have taken on the challenge that BIG offers. Hidden away between the majority of male BIG members, we currently find 78 female BIG members. 16 French, 15 Dutch, 13 Belgian, 12 Italian, 5 German and 5 Spanish, 4 Romanian women, 2 Czech Republic, and 2 Sweden and 2 Hungary, 1 woman from Switzerland and England. And note that the top 5 ranking of the women show incredible claim numbers. Numbers to be proud of!

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 1. PIRET Véronique | Member number: 35 | Belgium | 351 BIGs |
| 2. SOMMER Claudia | Member number: 192 | Germany | 286 BIGs |
| 3. SALA Chantal | Member number: 115 | France | 185 BIGs |
| 4. BERTING Corrie | Member number: 432 | France | 178 BIGs |
| 5. VERKUIJLEN Tineke | Member number: 165 | Netherlands | 165 BIGs |

These women have all passed the magical number of 164 BIGs that awards the title: BIG (level BIG05).

For all women within the challenge a separate entry has been created in the Forum where they can share their cycling experiences: <http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/honneur-aux-dames-place-to-the-women-f31/>

TOP 4: German promotion.

Thanks to the work of François CANDAU, Claudia SOMMER (article in the German Tour: magazin <http://www.challenge-big.eu/press.htm>) and Ferenc SUPLICZ we have seen a good and most welcome increase in the amount of German and Austrian members. Here you see the statistics up until now:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Germany: | +67 members, WAW! |
| 2. The Netherlands | +30 members |
| 3. Belgium | +24 members |
| 4. Italy | +20 members |
| 5. France | +15 members |
| 6. Switzerland | +12 members, GOOD! |
| 7. Ireland | +9 members |
| 8. Czech Republic | +8 members |
| 9. Austria | +6 members, GOOD! |
| 10. Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine England, Scotland and Poland | +2 members |
| 11. Rumania | +1 member, OK! |

A BIG thank you for our promoters: François CANDAU, Claudia SOMMER and Ferenc SUPLICZ!

TOP 5: Official Meeting, Crossroad and Regional Meeting

- a) In case you want to join the official BIG Meeting in Sonthofen from the 3rd to the 7th of July then here is the reminder that you have to register before the 1st of May via the Forum:
<http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/meeting-2009-sonthofen-f39/>

Why should you go? To meet and greet other BIG members. To cycle BIGs together with fellow BIG members. And to share and enjoy the good atmosphere of these meetings. Come on, where are you waiting for?

- b) And there is also the possibility to join the Liguria Crossroad organised by Gabriele BRUNETTI with help of Alberto FERRARIS and Mauro REPETTI. The exact data has not been set just yet but it is planned for September or October 2009. The location of the Crossroad will be Varazze, a seaside resort that is 30 km west of Genova. Read more about this event at: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/liguria.htm>.

You can either register for this crossroad via the Forum:

<http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/crossroad-liguria-2009-f42/>

Or by sending a mail to Gabriele BRUNETTI (gabriele_brunetti@fastwebnet.it), Alberto FERRARIS (alberto.ferraris51@virgilio.it) or Mauro REPETTI (alexrepe@libero.it)

- c) Then we have seen a so-called Regional Meeting organised by Martin KOOL. Next to our annual Official Meeting (in Allgau in July this year with tours and accommodations managed by the BIG challenge and the presence of many members of the committee) and to our Crossroads (one already managed in Liguria in September this year with tours but no accommodations managed by at least three different members), here is a third form of meetings: the Regional Meeting. An excellent idea because our challenge (like our meetings) often asks for long travels and hard work to get to the climb and to meet the other members. Here with just a few kilometers to go, you can meet other BIGgers, talk with them, share your experiences and plan together some coming travel.

So for BIG members living in the Province of North-Holland in the Netherlands Marin KOOL organised a Regional Meeting following a first idea of Hans KOEDIJKER. 13 BIG members from North-Holland came to Heerhugowaard for the 1st regional BIG meeting. After the welcome word of promoter Hans Koedijker the BIG members cycled a small 50 kilometers. They cycled through the beautiful polders, see below.



And in the meanwhile the participants talked about their BIG plans in 2009. They returned to the base, rowingclub Ossa, where coffee and apple pie was waiting. On the computer a slideshow was run with pictures of BIG climbs. More than 2 hours the members talked about the BIG challenge. The BIG members present were: Gelbert KOK, Henk and Ria VEUL, John and Wil TIMMERMANS, Pete THOMAS, Meindert BRUGMAN, Ary GELUK, Mark HINK, Jaap DE GROOT, Willem VODDE, Hans KOEDIJKER and Martin KOOL.

A special thanks goes out to the spontaneous cooperation of rowingclub Ossa for their hospitality!

2. The BIG is online.

This month, we highlight a BIG pioneer's website. Belgian José Bruffaerts is indeed present in the BIG team since the origin of the challenge (1985) and has been awarded the prestigious number 3 in the collection of our members.

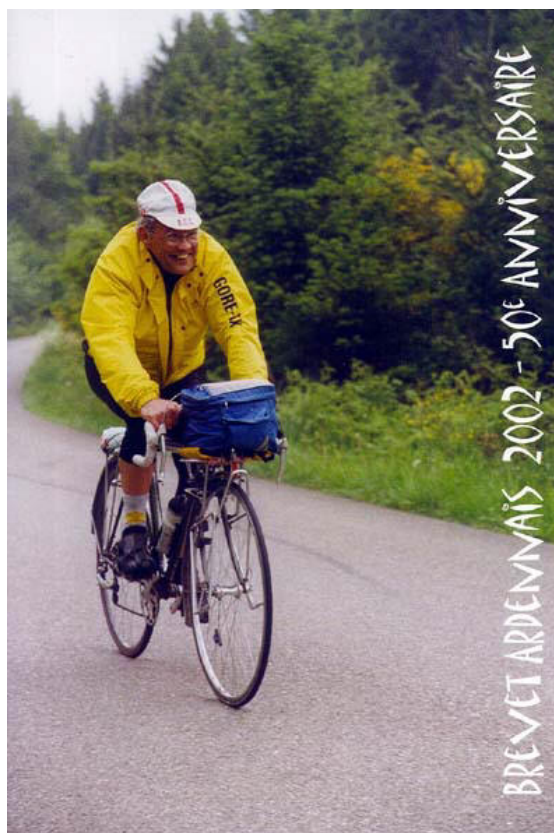
We will not make an exhaustive presentation of JB3's career since he presents himself in a very complete way on the BIG website in its personal page at the following address: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/personalpage-3.htm>

In a very general way, it should be known that Cyclo José, as he calls himself, belongs to the category of the eclectic bikers for which the pleasure of cycling (in all forms but always without assistance) is accompanied inevitably by the pleasure of writing. He asserts his membership to the race "of gossip writers and chroniclers", those who handle with as much greediness the gear ratio as well as the feather. Official chronicler in the Cyclo, the FBC official magazine, he is a honourable member in many challenges and in particular those devoted to cyclo-climbing.

Under this address: <http://www.cyclojose.be/> you will find an incredible amount of information about cyclo-tourism:

- A portrait of the author several different forms
- The list of its personal books and his collaboration with our President Daniel Gobert and JP Legros for the Cotacal Encyclopaedia of Belgium climbs.
- A multitude of texts about excursions, travels, circuits in France, Belgium and elsewhere, in beautiful French, Dutch and even Brussels languages (some of them are devoted to our dear BIGs).
- Personal, humoristic, good and bad thoughts.
- Sonnets.
- Practical advices to be followed in the event of storm, on the lodging of a cyclist
- A remarkable encyclopaedia of the velocipedic quotations
- Literary texts about bicycle
- Cycling jokes
- Old posters

You may spend hours and hours on Cyclo José's texts and in his mini museum devoted to cycling practices. You will be allowed finally to end your visit by leaving your testimony on the gold book of the site.



Then, it was natural to kindly request Jose to lend us his feather to feed the next chapter and to lead us towards a country where the BIG's newsletter had never gone before:

3. About a BIG.

In Malbun mountain pastures (BIG 600)

United with Switzerland since 1921 in mail, customs and monetary domains, the Principality of Liechtenstein is situated 50 km south to Lake Constance between Vorarlberg (Austria) the Swiss cantons and St Gall's and Grisons. The Rhine and the high mountains enclose this tiny state, of which the main city Vaduz attracts in particular philatelists and art lovers. It also gives cyclo-climbers an opportunity to rise from 1141m in 14 km starting at Schaan (450m). The average 8,1 % is superior to that of l'Alpe d'Huez which presents an identical difference of altitude but then in 16 km distance. Schloss-Strasse is the road to be followed because it leads to Malbun (1604m) via the castle, which is the sovereigns' residence. On the other hand, if this road is closed, it will be necessary to use one of two others access roads, the one at Vaduz exit in direction of Coire and the other one at Triesen

Head on Schloss-Strasse. 2 km from the start, just in the bend of the second lace, the princely castle looks down on you from above. This medieval fortification, which stands on a rocky peak, controls the whole Unterland valley. Photo!

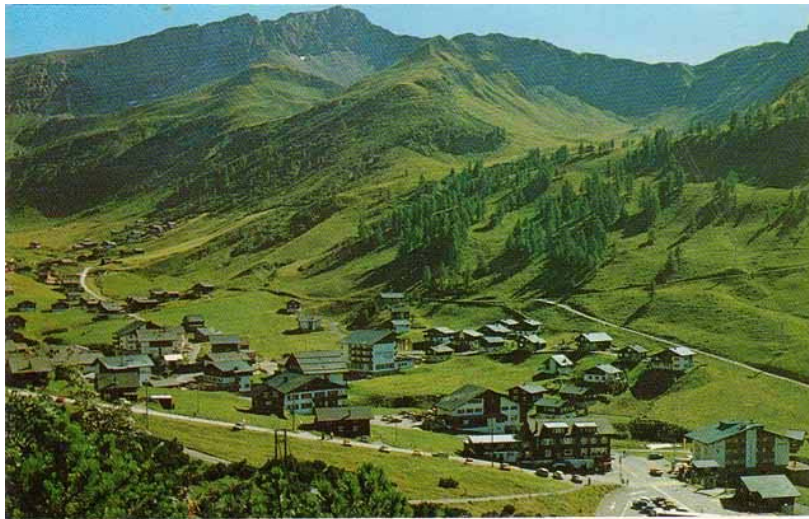


Then the road infiltrates the broad-leaved trees where paths are marked out with the sovereigns' effigy. The ascent goes on, more than 2 km under this vegetal roof. As the stroll in the national forest collides with a 13 % wall, the road marries the side of the mountain. The first thatched cottages of Triesenberg appear immediately. They overhang the Rhine valley.

The bulb of the belfry is the curiosity that attracts the tourists' glance. The "Rathaus" of this picturesque village (850m) is exactly situated in the crossing of the various access roads to Malbun: the Liechtenstein ski resort. Here is an ideal place to review.

From there, an excellent road in ledge starts and reveals the Rhine valley. Stop! This stop offers a magnificent surrounding view. Downstream, the foothills of Alpstein (Säntis) raise its haughty rocks to the sky; upstream, the Rätikon headway forces Rhine to turn in an elbow as it does with Lorelei in the Rhineland plain. In front of this one, the Churfirsten crest, which looks like the spinal column of a prehistoric animal, is scary.

The tangent of the main way, starting at once with a 25 %, winds along the sides of the rocky



 **malbun**

face after the crossroad Gaflei / Malbun. It is up to you! On my behalf, I was just happy with progressing on the main way. Around 2/3 of the ascent, the crossing of the tunnel (1270m) enables to recover your breath. Especially since it is correctly lit, cycles move safely there. Less than a kilometre after the exit of tunnel, we enter Steg (1300m), the last village before the Malbun resort.

The slope becomes steeper in a place called "Jugendheim" (1360m). The final straight, a 14% passage, bypasses a coomb with conifers and the visitor penetrates into an alpine cirque where the slightest metre is exploited for winter sports when nature wraps itself in its white coat.

José Bruffaerts

4. Conclusion:

And, have you woken up from the hibernating state? Has this newsletter got you going again? I hope that attempt has succeeded and you are now dreaming of BIGs in the Algau, Hungary, Liguria, Liechtenstein or anywhere else. It doesn't matter where yo go there will always be a BIG there too. And don't forget that this is even valid for Asia, Africa, Oceania, North-America and South-America!

The newsletters team,

*François CANDAU
Helmuth DEKKERS
Daniel GOBERT
Claudio MONTEFUSCO
Piero ROTA
Nico STAES*