

# BIG's News Letter - 2010.03

## *English Version*

### Edito: Mind over matter.

What's in it to reach a summit by bike with pain and plenty of effort? Is it that we want to feel ourselves stronger, better than others? I doubt that. This is not how most, if not all, BIG members are. The effort needed to conquer a summit however gives self-confidence. Both mentally and physically. You feel that you are alive and that your body is functioning optimally. The heart is beating, your senses are sharp and the muscles are working. It forms character. Cling to the task, don't give in! Mind over matter so to say. So up we go to get stronger, mentally and physically. But do not forget to enjoy the euphoric feeling when you have completed your task successfully and have arrived at the top. Yet another mountain conquered and another claim can be added to your Pal Mares. YES! That's what's in it for us.

*Edito based on a quote from the book "The new bicycle" written by Dirk-Jan Roeleven.*

## 1. TOP5 BIG news

### TOP 1: Renewed Website

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July our renewed website was launched. Since the opening we see one trend: An increasing number of visitors. Compared to August last year we had 3,000 visitors more (12,719 to be precise). On the day of the launch itself we had 1,100 visitors which is quite a lot. The number of visitors per day is on average 400 where it used to be 300 per day. What has increased even more are the page views. The last peak was when the previous website was launched with 122,512 page views and then we did not come above 100,000 anymore. Now with the new website this has increased to almost 200,000 page views in August!

The reactions we on the renewed website show that it has been received positively. Sure, one has to find its way again and I got some questions how certain things work nowadays as for instance the claiming of a BIG has changed. We also got feedback that with the changeover some features have been lost and this is a pity. On the previous website one could see the last 5 pictures uploaded by members for instance and this is gone now. And we got some mails that not all is working correctly.

In case you want to report problems, features we had on the previous website and that you miss on the new one, ideas to improve the website, etcetera, then you can send me a mail: [secretary@challenge-big.eu](mailto:secretary@challenge-big.eu)

I made a list of the ideas, problems and missing features so we can rank them and hand them over to our webmaster so he can work on them according to the assigned priority. The idea is to have an update of the website every 2 months. But do note that all work on the website is done voluntarily (as for instance also the writing and translating of the newsletters) and that hence it can take time before problems are solved, missing features have been restored and ideas have been implemented. We ask your understanding for this.

### TOP 2: Man at work

No, no, this part is not about the Australian rockband from the eighties it's about your fellow BIG members who help out to improve the BIG website for instance. Some members help out to translate the texts so we can offer the website in many languages, others help out with GPS, etcetera. And again, all on a voluntary base.

Work is ongoing to give a better insight on the gravelled BIGs. The new website shows now if a BIG is completely surfaced with asphalt, is partly gravelled or if it is a cobbled ascent. And there is also an indication if you can cycle it completely with a racing bike or if you need an MTB. Look for example at the famous Colle delle Finestre ([www.challenge-big.eu/en/bigside/1278](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/bigside/1278)) or the notorious Kemmelberg ([www.challenge-big.eu/en/bigside/206](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/bigside/206)). The information is found per side of course and not in the main window of a BIG. And last but not least there is an overview of our gravelled and cobbled BIG's on: [www.challenge-big.eu/en/news/502](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/news/502)



Gravelled BIG 680: Colle delle Finistere

We have help pages now with the new website and these explain in text how to do things. See for instance "How can you find a wanted BIG?" on [www.challenge-big.eu/en/page/help/7](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/page/help/7). But we are adding pictures to explain this to BIG members who are more visually oriented. See for instance "How can you change your profile?" on [www.challenge-big.eu/en/page/help/4](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/page/help/4). If you are interested to help then please let us know and send a mail to [secretary@challenge-big.eu](mailto:secretary@challenge-big.eu) or [president@challenge-big.eu](mailto:president@challenge-big.eu).

Other jobs that we could use some help with can be found on our "Wanted" webpage: [www.challenge-big.eu/en/page/wanted](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/page/wanted)



Cobbeled BIG 112: Kemmelberg

### TOP 3: Operation 2525

8 years after the last official international BIG travel we finally had a new one in 2010 called: Operation 2525. The aim was to cycle in 10 days through 5 countries (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Italy and Slovenia) 25 BIGs! The operation 2525 was successfully concluded by Marc Desender, Bernard Frogneux, Michel Renwart, Anja Von Heydebreck, Dirk Buschmann, Axel Jansen (light), Olivier Frezin (light), Michel Langhendries (light), Gert Wauters.



Many pictures were taken during this great journey and you can find them via the following link:  
[www.challenge-big.eu/en/news/486](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/news/486)

### TOP 4: Special IronBIGs

Many BIG members seem to be attracted by this specific challenge within our challenge. It started as an event to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BIG challenge but due to its success it will stay a challenge within our challenge as you can read on [www.challenge-big.eu/en/news/495](http://www.challenge-big.eu/en/news/495)

We have already 36 Godfathers, 2 Godmothers and even 2 Godparent couples even! As the list is still growing and will keep on growing over the years we will from now on only highlight the special ones.

### 25 times with 25 different jerseys:

For instance the attempt of **Mauro Repetti** to cycle the very tough Passo del Mortirolo 25 times in a year with 25 different jerseys. Look at them on: [www.myalbum.com/Album=IU3MGQTW](http://www.myalbum.com/Album=IU3MGQTW)

Mauro is just 7 jerseys away 😊 from becoming a Godfather of Passo del Mortirolo. We wish him good weather and courage to conclude his attempt successfully.



### Beyond 25 times:

Some have taken this challenge beyond the limit. **Axel Jansen** and **Jean-Marie Pique** cycled the Côte de Wanne 25+1 times to become Godfathers and to reach the magic level of 5,000 altimeters in the same event. We now want to highlight the Iron BIG adventure of **Xavier Rutten** who cycled BIG 149, Birgerkraiz **25+25 times in one day**. Here are the incredible figures that go with this event: 265.3km with 5,470m difference of level. 13 hours and 03 minutes of cycling plus 1 hour for breaks to recover in between. The average speed: 20.3 km/h. He finished in the dark with the lights on the bike. Congratulations Xavier with this amazing Iron BIG. If you want to read the complete story then you can go to: <http://data.challenge-big.eu/xavier-en.htm>

### Plural Godfathers:

And then we have BIG members who think being Godfather of 1 BIG is not enough within one year and who have taken on a 2<sup>nd</sup> BIG even:

- **Giordano Castagnoli** cycled BIG 771: Bocca Trabaria and BIG 795: Monte Nerone
- **Olivier Hochtuli** cycled BIG 532: Le Chasseral and BIG 531: Vue des Alpes.

### Iron BIG couples:

We have 2 Iron BIG couples now. The first Iron BIG of this year, BIG 1312: Col du Rosier, was cycled by **Dominique Jacquemin** and **Dominique Vanstiphout** and now we have again a couple who became Godfather&Godmother of BIG 572: Pas de Morgins. We congratulate **Marie and Xavier Dredemy** as our 2<sup>nd</sup> Iron BIG couple with their achievement. Marie and Xavier Dredemy are also our BIG clothes managers nowadays.

### Future Iron BIG specials?

By chance all Godmothers are part of an Iron BIG couple. So, who will be our first single who will become a Godmother of a BIG?

And we have already seen a Belgium team trying to become Godfathers of BIG 129: Col du Rideaux. We mentioned them in our previous newsletter. But what team will be the first team to bring this mission to a successful end?

### TOP 5: Our Mediatic way

It's nice to see that BIG's that were selected for our Superlist for their mediatic attention are still visible. So we know that the choice we made was a good one.

## Germany

There is for instance BIG 151: Waseberg. A lonely BIG in the north of Germany. Not so long, just 700m and it's the last 300m that count with an average of 16.6%.



But look here and get a feeling for the reason this climb is in our Superlist: <http://www.vattenfall-cyclastics.de/index.278.html?random=6ed692>. It's part of the Vattenfall cyclclassic in Germany. The Waseberg became the last ten years a national German symbol of cycling sport. Let's imagine the German people all around this race and this climb. 800,000 spectators in Hamburg, 22.000 cyclists in the morning climbing this BIG in 55km, 100km or 155km tours, 6 races afterwards with the final pro-tour for professional racers. So Waseberg is indeed a must in Germany.

## Portugal

Two Portugese BIGs were part of this year's Volta a Portugal (Tour of Portugal). These BIGs are BIG 501: Nossa Senhora da Graça and BIG 507: Torre da Estrela. These were major final ascents in this tour! It's another proof of the mediatic quality of our superlist. And on the rest day of this race on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August there was with a stage called "Etapa da Volta" for racers and cyclesportmen of 67km with the final climb to the BIG 501: Senhora da Graça. This climb is called the "Alpe d'Huez" of the "Volta a Portugal". Look at the height profile of this stage on: [http://www.volta-portugal.com/etapas/etapa\\_volta/altimetria.html](http://www.volta-portugal.com/etapas/etapa_volta/altimetria.html)

# The BIG is on line

This was a very good opportunity to pay tribute to our wonderful host of last May in UK.

If you click on this address: <http://kevinspeed.com/home>, you will discover Speed Travel. What it is about ? It is our friend Kevin Speed's travel stories, mostly on one or two weeks long throughout Europe.

Kevin's technique is the following one: in United Kingdom, travel by train. Farther, plane from Liverpool with bike in the hold.

On the left part of the webpage, you may choose your destination for a long journey in complete autonomy where the BIGs falls one after the other during long days of biking. Spain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Ireland, United Kingdom, Cyprus and even South Africa. It is impressive and this is the way to reach the 7<sup>th</sup> place in the General Classification of BIG Challenge with 550 claims.



Narratives spread from 1966 to our days, the last ones show photos.

Kevin does not enlarge on the technical details of the climbs but on the anecdotes of daily life and his personal course. Read it before your departure in the concerned regions to learn tips about it.

You can also find tips how (not why) to pack your bike when taking it aboard a plane. But you'll have to search for it! Or contact Kevin to cut to the chase at: [kevinandruth@speed3146.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:kevinandruth@speed3146.fsnet.co.uk)





# About a BIG (Aqui BIGs in Andorra)

I needed the challenge BIG to understand that Andorra is not only a long commercial street which follows the valley of the Valira river. For this, it is absolutely necessary to deviate from the valley and to go climbing east or west. This time, it was east for me with Bosc de la Rabassa, Els Cortals and obviously the exit with Port d'Envalira (2408 meters), the highest road pass of Pyrenees.



From Sant Julia de Loria begins BIG 441, Bosc de la Rabassa. The first hectometers are the most difficult ones, the exit of the Commune is very stiff and you will have the time to look at the trading valley and its numerous cranes testifying of a constructive fury.

The continuation of the road turns out more peaceful. This BIG extends over 18 kilometers for a 1151 meter ascent is an average percentage of 6,4 %. You will discover there some beautiful mountain landscapes.



At the top, 2060 meters, you will reach the kingdom of Naturlandia. In winter, it is a domain of cross-country skiing.



In summer it is a park for sports activities: hikes, mountain bike, quad bike, archery, sledging strip, equitation, ice rink where the children are kings. Vuelta 2008 registered this summit arrival in its program.



The ascent of BIG 438 Els Cortals is shorter (9,6 km) but rougher (7,4 %). More than Rabassa, it gives the real image of nature in Andorra. You will quickly leave the Commune Encamp from where the cable railway marks the foot of the ascent and you will quickly ride in an authentic environment of torrent, sheepfold, isolated village or old stone church.





The ascent comes to an end in the intermediate station of the cable railway which marks the departure of the ski slopes.



François CANDAU

## Conclusion:

The tough part is sometimes the end of the BIG. You may have started too fast or it has been a long ascent or perhaps the venom was in the tail. For me it's always hard too to reach the end and to conclude the newsletter without repeating myself. We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and please let us know how we can improve it.

***Regards, the newsletters team:***

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