

BIG's News Letter - 2008.04

English Version

Edito: 2008 BIG Bang year

The year 2008 will stay in our memory for ever as a landmark in the BIG's history. Remember, we were with 635 members at the beginning of the year and here are 1100 new members. What are the explanations for such a BIG BANG? First of all, the new website. The remarkable work of Wouter gave us a very effective administration tool and also a visible window for whole Europe. This enabled us to recruit many Czechs, Irishmen, Polish, Rumanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Slovenians, British, our first Danish that we missed for our diversity. Secondly, the recruitment of VIP members and the promotion. After an article on the website of the Dutch magazine Fiets on Michael BOOGERD and the BIG Challenge, 75 Dutchmen joined the Challenge within two weeks. Obviously this type of explosion creates imbalances. Our Batavian members who accounted for 36% at the start of this year now only represent 29% of the BIG team. On the other hand, Germans, Swiss, Austrians curiously did not receive our message. Frenchmen, Italians and Spanish are under-represented in comparison with their population. And we still wait for our first Greek, Russian, Bulgarian or Icelandic. Here are many exciting aims to reach for next year.

1. TOP5 BIG news.

TOP 1: Jeannie Longo

It is a BIG honour for our challenge that **Jeannie LONGO** accepted to be our member **1500**.

Jeannie LONGO's prize list is simply amazing: Olympic champion (Atlanta), 3 tours de France, 13 world champion titles (road, chrono and track), 38 world records, 48,159 km within hour, more than 1000 victories (several in men races) and still this year, on the eve of 50, France champion on road and time trial, in that last speciality she finished 4th in Beijing Olympic Games (2 seconds from bronze medal).

In France, Jeannie LONGO is a celebrity admired by the general public and representing high-level sport and longevity. Holder of superior university diploma in law and sport economy, she is also member of the observatory of the parity men/women and elected sportswoman of the century.

It is thus a double honour for BIG Challenge to welcome the most famous female champion ever and for France to be represented by its national sportsman who owns the most impressive prize list in any sports.

More information on Jeannie LONGO: <http://jeannielongo.free.fr/pages/cadres01.html> (her website in French language) or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeannie_Longo in English



TOP 2: BIG 10 for Karl Brenner

Our highest ranked German member (5th in our overall classification), Karl Brenner, passed the magical border of 500 BIGs. Waw! He has reached the BIG10 level and is the 5th member to do so. And he's the first non belgian member to do it. He has notably ridden the fantastic adventure Paris, a memorable trip starting at the Eifel Tower and ending after covering 12.850km and 54,000 altimeters at the Great Wall. Paasing through 12 countries and through a new "BIG" continent for Karl: Asia. Congratulations, Karl. A new goal is perhaps to add one more "BIG" continent to become a BAG (Adventurous Cyclo-climber) or to come back to the current leaders?

TOP 3: Contribution and Classes

First of all our apologies if you have received a mail to inform you about the change we have implemented to introduce 4 different classes. The text has perhaps due to a bad translation not always been very clear. So we'll repeat our message here and explain it in more detail

1. Membership of the BIG challenge is for FREE (Class 4)!

If you do not act you will be a so-called class 4 member and you will not pay any contribution for this membership. The will keep offering a **free** membership and this will still allow you to add new claims and have basic access to the website.

Details can be found on: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/contribution.htm>

Note: In case you want to see what you can do when you are a class 3 member you can sent a mail to Daniel Gobert (danielgobert@swing.be) with the title "present" and you'll have access to some of the features normally reserved only reserved for class 3 (contribution 5€) and higher until the end of the year 2008

2. BIG membership €5,- / year (Class 3)

We have introduced a new contribution level that allows members to get more out of the BIG website while paying just a small amount of money. Members who will pay €5,- / year will become a class 3 member and can enjoy extra features on the website compared to class 4:

Details can be found on: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/contribution.htm>

Note: We are working hard to get an easy way to pay like PayPal a like service. We will mention when it is available in the newsletter and on the news page on the web site (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/news.htm>)

3. BIG membership €15,- / year (Class 2)

This is a good membership for families or couples who live on the same address. It adds to class 3 that 1 Review magazine can be ordered (paper version) or downloaded (PDF version) a year. And members can ask for diploma's when they have reached a new BIG level via our diploma manager Pierre Chatel (cyclodocus@wanadoo.fr).

Details can be found on: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/contribution.htm>

4. BIG member ship costing more than €15,- / year (Class 1)

In case you want to sponsor the BIG than you can pay a bit more. And we'll show that you do that to other members on a special page.

TOP 4: Wanted: Cycling stories for the 2009 review

To be able to create a Review magazine we need input. Hence the request of Martin Kool to you to deliver input. If you are not sure what to send then here are some suggestions made by Martin:

- Your personal opinion about BIG
- Your latest BIG or BIGs.
- Your biggest BIG effort ever.
- Your BIG tour in a bizar environment.
- The time you fell in love on a bike
- Your personal frustration
- The day you met the pro when you where training,
- Or share your knowledge about hard to find climbs, beautiful tracks, undiscovered websites etc.

The Review 2009 will appear in march of 2009 and contains as usual several rankings, experiences and news about BIG-activities. It is important to get a good overview of all the zones, so don't hesitate and start writing!

Off course it will take some time for me to edit your articles, so please make sure that I receive your data before: 15 januari 2009.

Please send your article in MS-Word and your pictures in JPEG-format to Martin Kool (mm.kool@quicknet.nl). Thanks in advance for your input!

TOP 5: The Checkup results

In September the challenge B.I.G asked 51 key members to answer a huge questionnaire with 67 questions to check how these members feel about the BIG, the future of the BIG, the website, the clothes, etc. The questionnaire was answered by 34 persons (66%).

A summary of this checkup is available thanks to José Bruffaerts but only in English and in French: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/chup08.htm>

On the 10th of January 2009 the leading team of the committee (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/comity.htm>) and a few other key members will meet to discuss the results of the checkup. This meeting will of course give direction to where our dear challenge is going in the coming years.

We'll keep you posted of course on the outcome of this meeting via the newsletter and news page on the web site (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/news.htm>)

2. The BIG is online.

We are happy to present the website of a member of the newsletter team. Claudi Montefusco was the third Spanish to join the BIG Challenge. He is since then a passionate supporter of the challenge and one of the members of the promotion group. He wrote an excellent article about our challenge in the Spanish Cyclotourism Review Pedalier under title "BIG, otra forma de coleccionismo".

His website <http://www.claudi.blogspot.com/> is called "bicicleta y puertos de montana". Claudi relates his cyclotourism discoveries over the years mostly in mountains. You will notice that Claudi like to mix in his descriptions any cultural points of view (historic, geographic, artistic, tourist) with the story of cyclist sport that he knows better than anyone. The text includes photos, maps and videos. The quality of writing is absolutely excellent. No wonder that many texts you will find on the website have been published in the review Pedalier. If you want to benefit from this you must be able to read Spanish language (though Claudi is fluent at least in English and Italian).

Claudi is also very faithful to his club Esport Ciclista Sant Andreu (close to Barcelona). That is why you will often see him below dressed this way, here on Col de Stockeu.



3. About a BIG.

The Netherlands! Spontaneously, that does not remind you of cyclo-climbing. There isare nevertheless 10 BIGs in this flat country. 7 are located in the Limburg region and make the enjoyment of the participants to the Amstel Gold Race (among which famous Cauberg N 104 and Keutenberg N 105).

I had the BIG pleasure to ride them under a radiant sun with our secretary Helmuth Dekkers and Stan Nijsten.



And we sticked on them the famous stickers of the BIG.



The three others are more in the North around Nimègue and Arnhem. They are all three charming to their way: Oude Holleweg N 103 makes us discover the magnificent houses of the neighborhoods of Nimègue. For more cycling in this area you can follow the following link: www.klimbijnijmegen.nl. The text is in Dutch but there is a good map showing the 55km long route that covers 625 altimeters while taking you past all the steep hills in this area including Oude Holleweg or Haneberg as it is also called.

N 102 Italiaanse Weg is a paved road which starts from a river into a magnificent undergrowth (mind the walkers and their dogs!).



Finally Posbank N 101 leads you in the national park De Hoge Veluwe. It is a magnificent natural site consisted of moors, dunes, flowery meadows, colored shrubs (heathers), forests of big broad-leaved trees (oaks and beeches) and trees in colored foliage (maples). At Posbank top you will find a modern house dedicated to sustainable development as well as a statue of the Queen with cycle.



No need to bring your cycle here, the park lends you one of its 1 700 white cycles for free. You can join the Kröller Müller museum famous all over the world for its Van Gogh's paintings.

I recommend you this total disorientation in the country of the Fiets (cycle). You will so honour our Dutch members who constitute henceforth the biggest battalion of the BIG.

François CANDAU

4. Conclusion:

Here is thus a historical year for the BIG which is completed. The next one is announced enthralling with the historical gathering of all the nations which make up the challenge for the beginning of July in Sonthofen (Bavaria). Good festivals of end of the year to you, your families, your bicycles and be ready to attack BIG year 2009!

The newsletters team,

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