

BIG's News Letter - 2009.04

English Version

Edito: Pilgrimage...

So why do I start with Pilgrimage? Oops, I have to apologize as I should not use why! New start: How come I use the word Pilgrimage to start the introduction with. Well, there are several reasons for that. One of them being our President who stated in his speech during the last meeting in Bayern: "Our religion here is the cycling activity and our small church is only the high mountain." So we are on a pilgrimage to several churches so to say. But some of our high mountains (read BIGs) are really a pilgrimage place. What to think about Col de Portet d'Aspet where Fabio Casartelli died, 25 years old, during the 15th stage of the 1995 Tour de France. Or even more a legend the Mont Ventoux where there is a monument for Tom Simpson who died, 30 years old, during the 13th stage of the Tour de France in 1967. Not all pilgrimage BIGs have such a tragic ring to it as there is also Madonna del Ghisallo, a hill close to Lake Como in Italy named after a legendary Marian apparition. Here there is even a small cycling museum that contains photos and artefacts of our passion. And, to close the circle that I started with Fabio Casartelli, here an eternal flame burns for cyclists who have died and there is one particularly notable artefact: it is the crumpled bicycle of Fabio Casartelli who was born in this region. So have fun on your pilgrimage but be careful out there also!

1. TOP5 BIG news

TOP 1: The BIG challenge will be 25 years old next year!

You must have noticed that next year the challenge will be 25 years old. Hence the committee has organised some special events. Here is a quick overview for you with some reasons to join a certain event:

1. 21.03.2010: B.I.G DAY

On the 21st of March 2010 members will gather on 25 places throughout Europe to cycle 1,000 altimeters to celebrate the BIG's 25th birthday. **This is your chance to meet other BIG members and experience the special atmosphere of a BIG meeting without a lot of travelling.** Just check out the nearest place to go (<http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/bigday-25photos.htm>) and join! You are more than welcome. Though we gather on 25 different places we will use the Internet to join on one webpage at the same moment. Pictures will be sent from the different meeting points and instantly displayed on a special BIG day's webpage.

For more information: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/thebigday.htm>

To subscribe send a mail to: president@challenge-big.eu

2. 12-16.05.2010: UK MEETING

The annual meeting is this year in the United Kingdom. Why should you come? Well, maybe you wanted more after you joined us on the BIG day, maybe **you like to meet BIG members from different countries** or maybe **you like extreme gradients** (Maximum gradients of Honister Pass&Kirkstone Pass: 25%, **Hard Knott Pass & Wrynose Pass: 33%!**). Or maybe you just want to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Lake District, a good English breakfast and cycling on the other side of the road than what you are normally used to. In all these cases my advise is: Please come and join us! It's an experience you'll never forget!

For more information: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/lakedistrict/lakedistrict2010.htm>

To subscribe send a mail to: president@challenge-big.eu

3. 01-12.07.2010 OPERATION 2525

It is not possible to subscribe any more for this event.

For more information: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/operation2525.htm>

4. 01.01-31.12.2010 IRONBIG25

If cycling 1,000 altimeters on the BIG day or cycling 25 BIGs during BIG tour of Operation 2525 is not enough for you. Or if you want to become immortal in the archives of the BIG then the IRONBIG25 event is something for you.

Climb 25 times the same BIG inside a given delay and you will become a Godfather of this BIG and will be mentioned in the description of this Big. So, choose one BIG that you know very well, or that you love or that is very near your home and challenge it by climbing it 25 times in 2010.

1. Claim a BIG 25 times inside 1 day if the difference of level is less than 200m.
2. Claim a BIG 25 times inside 1 month if the difference of level is less than 500m.
3. Claim a BIG 25 times inside 1 year if the difference of level is 500m or more.

For more information: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/ironbig25.htm>

To subscribe send a mail to: president@challenge-big.eu

TOP 2: Contributions 2010.

We want to remind you, if you are a contributing member, that it's time to pay your contribution before the 31st of December.

If you are not a contributing member then here are a few reasons to become one:

- It does not cost much. For €5.00 you can find extra information on our webpages such as:
 - A description of each BIG that contains the following information:
 - Scores that rank the BIG on a mediatic scale, tourism scale and toughness scale.
 - Time indications that show how long it will take you to climb a BIG.
 - We are adding slowly but surely GoogleEarth tracks
 - GPS tracks are available for the BIGs that also have GoogleEarth tracks.
 - If you need an MTB due to the surface of the BIG.
 - Links to other web pages so you can find even more information of the BIGs,
 - Topographic maps that show the precise height of feet and summit.
 - See the member and BIG rankings for 2009.
- For €15.00 you will also get a certificate whenever you reach a certain BIG level (E.g. at 30 BIGs, 90 BIGs, etc) and you will get the annual review magazine. A magazine with pictures and stories written by fellow members. See for example: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/reviews.htm>

TOP 3: Round numbers

After the regular inflow of VIP's on the round numbers:

- 500. Kurt van der Wouwer
- 1000. Michael Boogerd
- 1500. Jeannie Longo
- 2000. Maria Canins
- 2500. Eduardo Chozas

We have found for the 25th birthday of the BIG another VIP for our special number 2525. It's Carlos Sastre (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/2525.htm>). Carlos Sastre was born on the 22nd of April 1975 in Leganés, Madrid and is of course a well known professional road bicycle racer as he won the Tour de France in 2008. He has also ranked consistently in the top 10 of the Vuelta which indicates he is a strong and stable climbing specialist. A perfect choice for number 2525 and we are very pleased that Carlos Sastre was willing to join the BIG challenge.

But we have passed more round numbers:

- We have more than 100 female BIG members now.
- We had more than 1,000 climbers who claimed 1 or more BIGs in 2009. We never had so much claims before.
- We have 6 people who scored more than 100 BIGs in 2009.



TOP 4: Changes

We have a few changes to announce. First of all we would like to thank Bernard Giraudeau who has so well managed our clothing business for all these years. Yes, in case you did not know, we have our own jersey and cycling trousers. Look on <http://www.challenge-big.eu/jersey.htm> for more information. So, from the 1st of January 2010 we will have a couple (husband/wife) from Chatel, Marie and Xavier Dredemy who will manage this job. They live near the enterprise who produces our clothing and that is an advantage of course. Pierre Chatel will assist them and this will ensure a smooth handover from Bernard Giraudeau to Marie and Xavier Dredemy. Thanks to Bernard for helping us and to Marie and Xavier for taking over.



Then there are of course the yearly changes in our Superlist:

BIG changes					
BIG number	Old BIG	New BIG	Zone	Country	Reason for replacement
38	Bispbergs Klack	Klevaliden	1	Sweden	Point 3.3, art. 1.2, UNRIDEABILITY*
236	Pic de l'Aigle	Chaudanne	5	France	Point 3.3, art. 1.2 UNRIDEABILITY*
237	Crêt Pela	Haut-Crêt	5	France	Point 3.3, art. 1.2 UNRIDEABILITY*
239	Crêt de Chalam	Cirque des Avalanches	5	France	Point 3.3, art. 1.2 UNRIDEABILITY*
363	Collade des Roques Blanches	Port de Balès	5	France	Point 3.3, art. 1.2 UNRIDEABILITY*
484	El Almadén	Puerto del Sol	6	Spain	Point 3.3, art. 1.2 UNRIDEABILITY*
751	Capo Berta	Muro di Sormano	9	Italy	Point 3.3, art. 1.3 MEDIA LOSS*
774	Montefiascone	Montelupone	9	Italy	Point 3.3, art. 1.1 TRAFFIC*
864	Pasui Predeal	Stana de Vale	10	Romania	Point 3.3, art. 1.1 TRAFFIC*
866	Chorrgorr Pereval	Akhun	10	Russia	Point 3.3, art. 1.2 UNRIDEABILITY*
867	Sverlovsk Pereval	Pereval Beloretski	10	Russia	Point 3.3, art. 1.4 COMPETITION OF DIFFICULTY*
868	Abzakova	Pereval Gumbashi	10	Russia	Point 3.3, art. 1.5 COMPETITION OF ALTITUDE*

* For more information: http://www.challenge-big.eu/index.php?pag=html_rules

BIG name changes				
BIG number	Old BIG name	New BIG name	Zone	Country
145	Gorges du Loup	Berdorf Gorges du Loup	3	Luxembourg
388	Monasterio de Obona	Piedratecha	5	Spain
454	Puerto de Eslida	Alto Eslida	5	Spain
470	Alto del Campello	Portixol	5	Spain
673	Auf der Schanz	Auf der Schanz - Schanzsattel	8	Austria
756	Passo Penice	Monte Penice	9	Italy
796	San Pietro Tore	Picco Sant'Angelo	9	Italy
830	Cyrhla nad Bialka	Glodowka	10	Poland

BIG height and name changes						
BIG number	Old BIG name	Old Height	New BIG name	New Height	Zone	Country
194	Allgauer Berghof	1171m	Allgauer Berghof Spitze	1266m	4	Germany
608	Fiß	1720	Möseralm	1812m	8	Austria
709	Passo Furcia	1759m	Plan de Coronas	2273m	9	Italy

TOP 5: Review.

Martin Kool is asking input for next year's Review. The paper version will be send to you in March (if you are a contributing member and pay € 15.00) and half a year later it will be available in PDF format on our site. Our Review contains stories written by members about BIG's or tours that include BIG's, rankings, etc. If you want to see what a review is like you can go to <http://www.challenge-big.eu/reviews.htm>

So take the time to look back and search your memories for your BIGgest bike adventures. So please put your thoughts, plans, ideas about cycling the BIG challenge on paper for publishing in the 2010 Review.

It is important to get a good overview of all the zones, so don't hesitate and start writing down:

- Your personal opinion about BIG
- Your latest climb
- Your biggest effort ever
- Your tour in a bizarre 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.

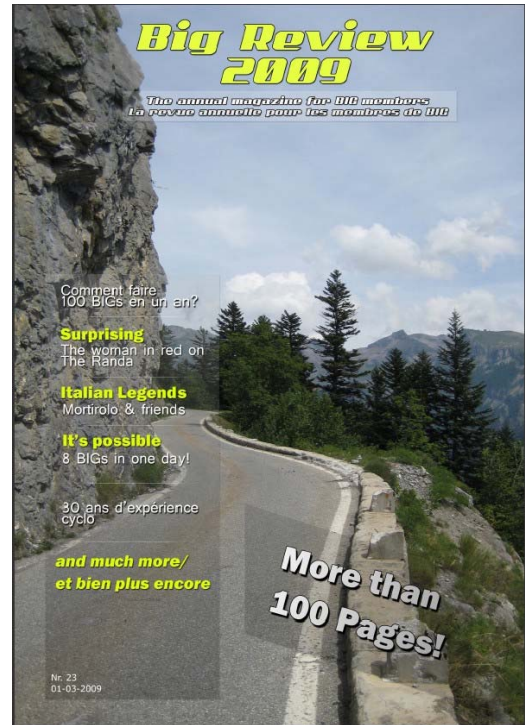
Off course it will take some time to edit your articles, **so please make sure that we receive your data before 15 January 2010.**

Please send your article in MS-Word and your pictures in JPEG-format to Martin Kool:
mm.kool@quicknet.nl.

There is a contest to select the picture that will be on the cover of our 2010 Review. Do you want to join? Then send a picture that fulfils the following entry criteria:

- Sharp photo in a "portrait" format.
- High resolution (more than 6 Mega pixel)
- A BIG on the photo (last years, for example, we had pictures of:Lac de Tseuzier, Honister pass, Izoard and Stelvio).

The photo of the winner will be on the cover of the Review 2009 and the winner receives a small attention. Enthusiastic? Send your pictures before the end of 2009 to Martin Kool
mm.kool@quicknet.nl



2. The BIG is online.

This story begins on the web and finishes with a Belgian-Luxembourgian Top-meeting on the peak (of Belgium). My first upcoming in the French Use-group [fr.rec.sport.cyclisme](http://groups.google.fr/group/fr.rec.sport.cyclisme) (<http://groups.google.fr/group/fr.rec.sport.cyclisme/topics>) must be in 2000. The first contact with the so-named user Cyclosite should be in that year too. So it makes about 9 years that we know each other and communicate.

Motivated by Arnaud's (that's his name in real life) interesting travel-reports, I found the BIG-challenge! So what more logical than to meet one day, of course while climbing a BIG.

In the NG (News Group), Arnaud wrote that he would be around Malmédy/Stavelot (Belgian Ardennes) on May the 1st to ride some BIGs in that area. Since this is just about 1 hour (with car) away from my home, I decided to participate too.

No trouble to define a meeting point: the highest point of Belgium, to be found in the high moor (Hohes Venn, Hoge Venen or Hautes Fagnes) : Signal de Botrange; BIG 126.

As soon as I started in Spa, I had to climb up to the Col du Rosier (BIG 131), just to enjoy the downhill on the other side. Funny, that so much cyclists where coming up the other way. Where they, or I, in the wrong direction? For those who don't know this area: I was moving just the opposite way that the Liege-Bastogne-Liege Race turns around. And all these people were in the search of a part of glory, eventually lost by one of the Pro-racers...

While Arnaud started our Nr. 126 from the north, I was approaching the climb from the south side. Climb is a strong word for some elevation, which represents 3% average, and a max of 7-8% climbing. Seems to be easy. But, if you're not in the right shape, and you even have done some elevation meters before, this small gradients can hurt. Especially if one takes in consideration that they are stretched over some 14 km.

Timing was perfect! It took me just 6 minutes more than Arnaud to reach the summit. No doubt that we instantly had much cycling themes to talk about. We moved over to a View point, to take a picture of this memorable and historical important event.



It's at that time that I discovered, that my friend is a real VIP. A newbie, coming of course on bicycle too, was asked to take the image. He instantly recognised Arnaud's bike "Grimpe-Tout" (climbs-anything). He told him that he visited regularly Cyclosite's Internet page: <http://www.cyclosite.be/>.. On the way back, we had the pleasure to drive some kilometers together, and where immediately making plans of a bigger meeting, involving our other friends of the use-group.

After Arnaud made his way back to Eupen, I turned with lots of pleasure downwards to Jalhay. Even if this downhill seemed much shorter than the uphill. The way back to Spa was a torture! Every little up-way had the meaning of a BIG to me. Making some 1140 ascent meters on a 62 km tour is a kiddy tour, you will tell me. But this ain't true if you have nearby no training at all.

But I should not complain, knowing that Arnaud made the day before the Cols de Rosier (BIG 131), Stockeu (BIG 133), Haute Levée and Ferme Libert (BIG 127). And for sure was in significantly better in shape than I was.

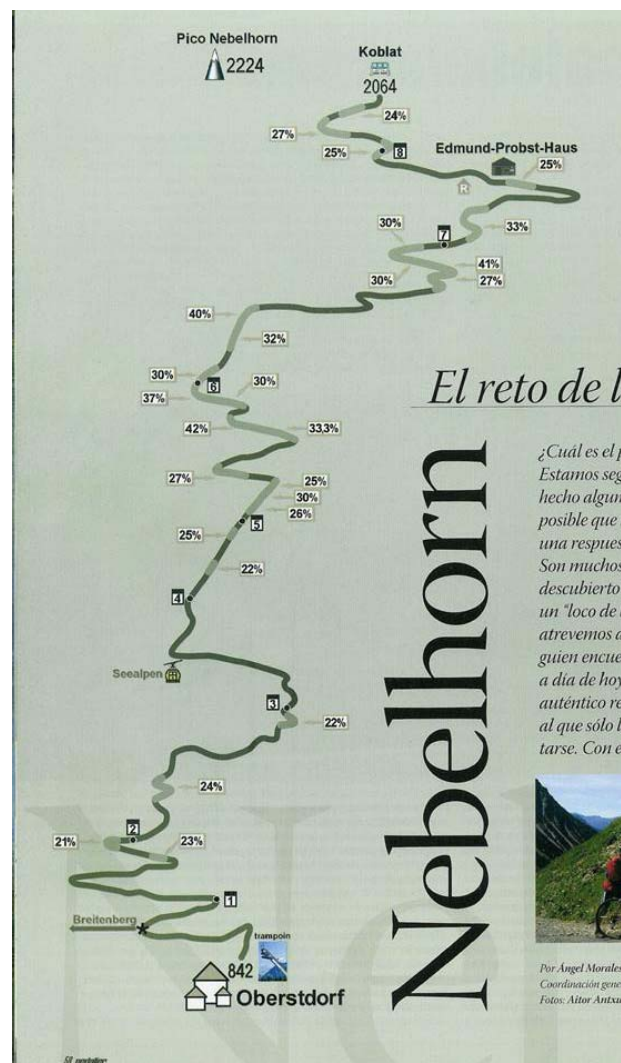
This might give you the idea of discovering Arnaud's website : <http://www.cyclosite.be/>. You will find there a lot of pages (in French) about Arnaud's passion for bike and travels all over Europe. Arnaud likes riding in autonomy and cyclo-camping. You will discover many narrations of his travels and many pictures. You will also take benefit of all his tips to ride in any conditions, for equipments, transport and use of GPS. Arnaud is also fan of cyclo climbing. He joined our challenge and already claimed 155 bigs. And so did also his son Adrien, only 8 years old, but already claimed 5 BIGs in four different countries ! Certainly one of the youngest biggers.

Text provide by: Jean Gangolf (441)

3. About a BIG :

We all remember Mauro Repetti's the narration about Malga Palazzo on the BIG Forum (<http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/sondages-polls-f28/wonderful-big-t30-15.htm>). We bear in mind his description about these terrible slopes and the debate around this climb (which is no longer in the Challenge for the moment). But Mauro did it without stop, everything on the bike. He left the last meeting in Oberstdorf without attempting to climb Nebelhorn and we saw he really regretted it. A month later he came back there and went for it! Here is his narration and pictures.

As you may know, I live in the Italian Alps in the middle of great slopes. Thus I am used to very difficult climbs (remember Malga Palazzo last year). But Nebelhorn is something else. According to me Nebelhorn is impossible to climb without walking. The major problem is not only the slope, even if it is incredible (see this scheme to the right).



The major problem is the road cover: on the parts without asphalt it is really impossible to pedal. I even tried to deflate my rear wheel but with the combination of slope and road cover, it was not sufficient. I climbed some parts in company of a young boy (23 years old) leaving near Obersdorf, very fit. He uses Nebelhorn road for his usual training but nevertheless, he had to walk in the non-asphalt parts.



So my conclusions are:

- You will absolutely need a mountain bike to climb Nebelhorn with triple gear in front and 32-34 rear.
- Moreover you will absolutely have to have DISC BRAKES FOR DESCENT. During my descent, I never walked even a meter with my disc brakes but I would never go down with normal brakes !!!

If the road cover were 100% asphalted, it would be possible to climb it entirely by bike. I myself walked only in the non-asphalt parts, i.e. 200-300 meters!!

Nevertheless this slope in some parts is something inhuman, but with great legs, and above all, great MIND (and some exercises of balance), it is possible to climb it (maybe not for everybody!). For me this climb has something of legend.

End of my story: I also climbed the last part from Edmund Probst Haus 1932 meter high until Nebelhorn summit 2224 m. Only the last 300 meters can be done on the bike, for the rest you will have to carry your bike on your shoulders as I did. And people will certainly ask you: "what are you doing?". I answered "I am training in high mountain"!!!



Whatever, I really enjoyed this day, the weather was excellent, even too hot (message for the attendants of the meeting: 30° in Oberstdorf!). My wife came along with me; she went up with the cable-car and down walking and shooting these incredible pictures:

Find Nebelhorn and the meeting of the BIG in the excellent article of Pedals written by Claudio Montesfusco in the Press heading site of the BIG.



Mauro REPETTI

4. Conclusion:

That's it for 2009. I want to thank my fellow members of the newsletter team who have helped me to fill and translate the newsletters. And I want to wish you all nice holidays together with the ones who are dear to you. And last but not least all the best for 2010. We wish you a good year and good health so you can add many BIG's to your list.

The newsletters team,

Enrico ALBERINI

François CANDAU

Helmuth DEKKERS

Jean GANGOLF

Joël GANGOLF

Daniel GOBERT

Claudio MONTEFUSCO

Nico STAES