

## BP –MS150 2005 Summary – Team T

This is an update to all of sponsors, who where so generous to support us. WONDERFUL.

All of us made it as the picture show.



*Above left: Gordon, Rob Satter (Gordon's friend) and Thor  
Above right: Leon, Gang, Kurt, Dave and Thor.*

We are writing this note as a summary letter from all of us to all of you here are our initials as we will mark personal sections with our initials. GH – Gordon Holmes (bp), TH - Thor Hanson (long term bp team member, ex-Shell), LT - Leon Thomsen (bp, Team T captain and college buddy of Thor), GY - Gang Yu (KMS technologies, bp contractor), KS - Kurt Strack (KMS Technologies, bp contractor), DC - Dave Carlson (PGS, bp contractor). Absent: MM - Mike Mueller (bp)

Long training ride got us prepared for the BP-MS 150. We started end of January and did between 20 to 60 miles per weekend. Some of us patch in with daily ride, other were on vacation or business trip and had to catch up. During the last training ride (organized by the ConocoPhillips bike club) we were all there (almost all). GH: This brings us to Yu Gang's most amazing accomplishment. His first ride was in an old business suit (Chairman Mao suit) on a bike so old that the spokes were like spaghetti (I kid you not!). Every training ride he improved his attire and his bicycle piecemeal, and would consistent beat his personal best in distance! Finally, just to show off, he apparently decided to ride the MS150 with just one leg.

The equipment is always a challenge. This year we had news bike to be broken in. As several of us carry extra front end counter weights, we had to break the spokes before the big ride and argue with our bicycle suppliers. Cleats and straps needed to be broken in (it appears that our all Ph.D. team prefers straps to cleats!! 3 to 2). As usual the most common problem was the choice of grease (here we stop.). This year we even enlisted our own volunteer or SAG wagon driver which turned out to be a blessing for our team success. We clearly supported each other in better behavior. Drinking of water (versus alcohol in the past) was handled much better than before. Only one 'dry tongue' complaint during the BP-MS150 ride.

KS: The most awesome time for me was the start. Seeing the organization and how volunteers and police work together to gather the bp team, everybody is relaxed, but 100% safety focused, is just awesome. Everybody is sensing in the morning the importance of being able to make this contribution. I had many times tears in my eyes when the friendly volunteers made everything happening so smoothly. In the bp cafeteria, our gathering spot, the PA system blared obnoxiously in our ears until we had our silent minute for the victims of the Texas City incident.



*From left to right: Dave, Kurt, Gordon, gang and Thor in BP cafeteria around 5:50 am*

Shortly afterwards we moved in extremely coordinated fashion under police escort to the starting line. It was still dark. Everything was very quiet as about 600 people moved in one group... almost serene... then a police siren. The motorcycle cops passed us and secured the cross-road for our ride. Soon thereafter the talking started. First some jokes, then some stories then people started talking. The serene moment was over. LT: I usually find it even more moving when the MS patient is sitting in there wheel chairs along the road and waive... he was right we spotted several of them.

Here are some shots from the start:



*From top left to bottom right: Thor, Leon, Kurt and Dave and Gordon.*

Katy stop.

Our first breakpoint flew by. We just got a glimpse at the 3 mile ahead sign but never saw the breakpoint. After 20 miles we finally stopped. We were greeted by bands and long rows of portlets. Governor Rick Perry used the moment to skip the race and left with escorts and bodyguards in a black suburban. The photo opportunity was over. We had to stay 1 more hour at the breakpoint as the ride was halted due to an accident which required a life flight. It was impressive how they stopped 10 000 people in the track waiting for the road to clear.



*Second break point: not the prettiest but sure a lot of energy goes in it (and out).*

Finally after we were ready to go, Yu Gang had a flat tire with 20 yards of the stop. With combined force we fixed it in under 5 minutes and were back on the road trying to catch Dave. Leon and Dave tried on several occasions to have Kurt arrested by the ride marshals but did not succeed. One ride marshal thought Leon was so serious that he came up to Kurt and complained about him... so much for our humor. As usual the motorcycle marshals and the MES riders were the most dangerous one. Often stopping in front of riders or blocking the road. One EMS guy tried to lecture us when to sit on the saddle and subsequently stopped to adjust his own saddle to improve his ride and reduce his knee pain (we have no way of knowing if our suggestions very right but we were more convincing than he was).

#### The low number riders

The champion fund-raisers wear low numbers. It is fun to chat with them while riding; they always have heart-warming stories, usually involving a family-member with MS. The very lowest numbers usually have important corporate positions (which might help with their fund-raising), but most are just ordinary folks with extraordinary commitment.

The youngest riders are perhaps the most impressive. Imagine a 9-year-old with the character and determination to ride 180 miles, on a mountain bike! Consider the legions of other 9-year-olds playing with their Game-boys instead.

#### Special events:

One of the most surprising jerseys was one which read 'To Austin with Bust'. When you saw it was usually associated with large counterweights below it. After about 80 miles we finally decided to find out about it and asked. The jersey belongs to a club from Austin, which used to consist of only women (single) but now in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year they have added 3 men and do no longer a chest size requirement. In any case they are fun gals with a brave president who came up with the outrageous slogan. Below are the proof picture... (KS: Only in America!!)



*Proof that the 'To Austin with Bust' jersey really exists. On the left is the club president. All of them entered the finish line together!*

Yu Gang had finally a perfect bike, perfect shoes and just everything you could get to make a bike ride comfortable. Unfortunately his tire went flat after the first breakpoint. Between Leon, Kurt and himself he was back on the road in less than 5 minutes (the tire was still warm). At lunch he decided to compensate for height and selected the row of seats above everyone else (on the stair-like stands). Going back for many helpings of ice cream and noodles, he twisted his right knee by either getting in or out of his seat or holding up his peanut butter sandwich.... Soon it was all from medical tent to medical tent. At night he could barely walk and thanks to Theresa he was cooled and driven. The first hill was difficult for him and only after threatening to lose his matching funds, did he give in and accepted his personal SAG and rode 20 miles past the park. When he showed up at the BP tent where we were eating, it appeared as if he had not been gone.



*Yu Gang is rejoining the team..as if he never left. (From left to right: Leon – Kurt – Dave – Gang)*

GH. Once again Thor proved to be a machine, traveling at seemingly a constant pace from start to finish. Riding with Rob for his first century (the coveted 100 mile landmark) was a thrill as people discover their greater strength.

Clearly some companies from the energy space (we saw Baker Hughes, Fugro, Amerada Hess) did not want to put BPs name on their jerseys and called it MS150. Wouldn't it be funny if they had to reprint their jerseys and collect the old ones?

### The awesome bp volunteers

This year we had some new super stars. Sharma showed up as tent coordinator and we were served like Indian Maharatchas. Theresa Garza served as Sag driver and Yu Gang owes her half of his knee. She almost won a bet against Yu Gang that we could get their bikes out of storage to gain the freedom of the night time and starting line in the morning. And of course Pat Thomsen and the other fantastic volunteers make the ride easy. She ensured the always welcome and comfortable space in the tent after a day long ride... and there were the surprise volunteers: small or big even in wheel chair.



*The smallest volunteer and the master organizer Pat next to her husband Leon and his friend Thor.*

### Finish line to Austin

TH: This year's ride was outstanding - cool temps and winds pushing us most of the way (somehow there never seemed to be any significant headwinds). The hills of Bastrop continue to be a challenge as I crept up them in my lowest granny gear, while Gordon and Rob sped ahead to the lunch stop where I finally caught up with them. Wish I could have seen Leon's awesome assault of the hills as he accelerates at the bottom to build up momentum and guns it up to the summit in high gear - it exhausts me to think about it!! Leon, Kurt, Dave and Yu Gang's group arrival in Austin was fantastic and a wonderful climax to the "T" Team ride. The Team BP tent at the finish was great - good food, cool drinks and perfect vantage point to watch riders finish. While rehydrating on margaritas may not be recommended, they sure were refreshing!!!

Thor provided the great shots of the gang of four. Entering Austin was a challenge because our 'one-legged' cyclist was in auto-pilot and could not slow down, leading the pack, while the tallest of us was chatting up 9 year old riders and delaying the tail. As usual traffic lights are the most dangerous place as stopping is difficult. .. and sure enough being strapped to the pedals caused one of us to fall right in front of a policeman. Luckily, other team members could block the back so that nobody ran into him.



*The finish line: Gang, Kurt, Dave and Leon.. we made it*

The best part after the finish was the Starbucks coffee and the snooze through the sight seeing trip trough San Marco.

### Our feelings about MS

MS is a terrible illness. Most of us know somebody who has it. Those that do not; see the MS patients lining the roads cheering us. They and their families are thankful to us for riding and raising the money and we are thankful for them cheering us. This year there were several MS patients in wheel chairs in Fayetteville.

### Reflections:

GH: Last year's most-improved winner had to be Kurt, who started mid-season on an undersized mountain bike with exceedingly fat tires. I remember my first ride with him last year as he struggled up a hill on this most ill-equipped bicycle. I quietly suggested he consider thinner tires. His comment was that I should "F\*\*\* Off!". Apparently numerous people had already made this suggestion to him that day. Now the MS150 is just part of Kurt's routine.

GH: Let's acknowledge Leon's coming of age. From the crude, bulky body built around the vulgarities of rugby, to a sinewy, lean, and, dare I suggest, graceful physique of a cyclist, Leon has transformed himself over the past five years.

GH: For me, the 2005 ride felt like putting on an old baseball glove. I now know the curves, the feel, and the smell of the sweet, and simply enjoyed the familiar scenes and of course, the rolling hills of Buscher Park with always fell like a roller coaster. Conveniently for the photo above the roadside curb at the finish line allowed me to equal the height of the abnormally tall people with whom I was riding.

TH: Many thanks to Leon and BP for having me on their team for the past five years. I don't know if I would have ever gotten around to participating in an MS150 if Leon hadn't invited me to join Team BP and be on the "T" Team. It's been a great experience each year - not only the MS150 ride but the many Saturday morning training rides as well that toured scenic, rural roads around Houston. Getting up at 5am on Saturday is not my normal pattern, but one that I have come to appreciate - meeting fellow "T" Team members to carpool, having a "good luck" doughnut at the shop near Leon's home, assembling at the starting point with hundreds of other

riders receiving last minute instructions, biking 2-4 hours on a carefully planned ride with excellent support, powerade/dried fruit/pretzel stops and at the end having lunch with the "T" Team at a local BBQ joint.

DC: This tour is always a fun ride and a true challenge, particularly the ride through Buscher Park. This year, coming out of the park, I actually had energy to spare. Of course, Leon and Kurt were, once more, waiting for me at the top of the hill. It is very interesting riding with Leon, Kurt and Yu: Yu would shake away his knee pain and pass us all; Leon would fall back to talk to someone and zoom by going up a steep hill. And for Kurt - I could never predict what Kurt was going to say to someone. I wasn't sure about the reaction when I heard Kurt tease a hand-crank cyclist; Kurt pulled it off. This is my tenth MS150 ride, and the best. The last five have been with TEAMBP.

GY: This was the first bp MS 150 Bike Tour I have ever participated in. It was a great adventure and experience, one of the greatest in my life. It will be in my memory for the rest of my life. When Kurt asked me to join the bike training in January, I was not so sure what would I be facing during the next a few months. The last time I rode a bike for a long distance (10 miles?) was in 1987 in Sydney. I was a student at that time and rode a secondhand bike to work part time outside university campus before I could drive and then I bought my first car. The first day training of 20 miles was the longest distance I have ever ridden during the last 20 years! With the great help, valuable experience and advices from the "T" Team, I learnt a lot about the cycling and bike tours in the USA and in Texas. Thanks a lot to Leon, Dave, Thor, Gordon and Kurt for their great support, constant encourage, and help during the bp MS 150 Bike Tour to get me to ride from Houston to Austin. Leon even gave up his speedy race with Thor and Gordon from Houston to Austin to make sure our "T" Team members arriving at Austin safely and at the same time. This meant that he had to slow down and wait for us at many places along the road. This will not be the end of my bike riding experience, but a new starting point for many bp MS 150 Bike Tours in the coming years. I will also try to get my young son Louis to join me for next year's bp MS 150 Bike Tour. Greatly appreciate Leon's help to get me in to TEAM BP and KMS Technologies's support to allow me participates in the great bp MS 150 Bike Tour!

KS: The best part of this was the team spirit. BP gave us really everything we needed. ConocoPhillips provided us access to their bike club for the training rides and Leon the fatherly guidance and example of leading a team. Our team truly supported each other... and nobody was left behind!

KS: It is awesome when you get the chance to write at the end. Nobody will correct you. I wanted to express a special thanks to Leon. He changed my life when he insisted that BP consultants had to be healthier than I was 14 months ago. Yes, I did start with a mountain bike and went through a similar transformation as Yu Gang. But it was a good bike and now is super charged and almost as fast as my brand new road bike. My 'last year' hybrid was also supercharged just before the BP MS150 event and was almost broken in during the ride. This year I got my new bike around January and had it in the shop daily the week before the ride. Breaking in a new bike takes a good 3 months. No breakdown during the ride though. All 3 bikes are now competing for my attention and eye at me in the morning when I have to pick one. Being

able to ride on the BP team is great, being able to ride with the ConocoPhillips bicycle club during the training is better and being part of team 'T' is the best.

Thanks team!

If you want to sponsor, here is our email address:

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