

Day 1

Well here I am again, another M2M. Last one I didn't think I'd make it but I did and this one I didn't really want to do it but here I am !! Just about enough training done so hopefully I'll survive. Numbers are down this year with 54 people hoping to complete the challenge. I'm not going anywhere near group 1 this time and I'm helping out with group 3a. Except for today when I took 6 other cyclists from Mizen head to Killarney for the first leg of our journey .

We all had to be in the club at 4 15 this morning to get the bus to Mizen, stopped in Skibbereen for breakfast and then got to Mizen around 11.

My group was the slowest so we headed off at 11 15 on the 120k spin to Killarney. Forecast was good and the sun was out so off we headed with our raincoats left in the van. 10mins down the road it started to lash rain and with the van unable to pull in on the narrow roads we got drowned. Thankfully it stopped after 15mins and the now sunshine dried us all in a short time.

We stopped in Bantry for a 10 min coffee that took 20 mins (slow group) and then on to Glengarriff for lunch at a small garage...we're half way now. From here it gets a little bit tougher, we've 2 mountains to cross first the Caha pass which is just after Glengarriff about 10k long and with a gradient of up to 9% then down into Kenmare and then up Molls Gap which is 8k long and a similar gradient. Nice challenge for amateur cyclists.

We've a little bit of a celebrity in the group, Annie Hill , Arnie is chairman of Breast Cancer Ireland and well respected surgeon in Beaumont hospital.

After 5 M2M cycles we've raised nearly €300,000 for Breast Cancer Ireland and Arnie is the guy that we've always handed over the cheque to. After the first couple of handovers he said he couldn't keep just taking the money so the last few times he's always cycled one day of the challenge with us. But this time he's going to do it all !! In fairness to him he has trained really hard so hopefully he can make it.

So back to the Caha pass, Arnie's first real challenge, 4 or 5k up the rest of the group had pulled away leaving just the 2 of us , he was slowing down and I was beginning to think he might not make it and have to get into the van , which he really didn't want to do, especially on the first day. In fairness to him he dug really deep and plodded his way to the summit. (No way he's gonna make it up Molls gap) !! We whizzed down to Kenmare where we stopped for a massive 99 and a couple of packs of fruit pastiles but I still didn't think this would be enough. I had a "gel" in my pocket that was strictly for emergency use only, laced with caffeine, gave it to him which he gobbled down without hesitation. Out the road we headed for the 8k climb with the group, my job was to stay at the back where I thought Arnie would be too but 1k into the climb there he was at the front. After a few k's he drifted back to myself and William . For the last 2k William and Arnie sang there way to to the summit and Arnie greeted Liam ,our van man, with a big hug at the top. Jesus I hope Arnie isn't drug tested when we get back home. On to Killarney from here and all cyclists safe and sound in our hotel. We'll done Arnie !!

I've lost my old room mate Mark and this year I'm with Richie, took me 3 trips to train Mark so let's see how this goes !! He's currently snoring to the tune of Slieve na mban after his busy day with group 1.

I've a group of 14 tomorrow so should be interesting and a distance of 200k to cycle. Arnie is returning to group 3b with Bomber in charge so I won't have to deal with his withdrawal symptoms!!

Been a very long day so goodnight till tomorrow's news.

Donie.