

DK200 – You Butt’r be Prepared!

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The Dirty Kanza 200 is the Premiere Endurance Gravel Road Race, held each year in the Flint Hills of Kansas. The DK is not just a physical challenge, it is also mental, emotional and at times, almost a spiritual challenge. For me, the DK is like a wrecking ball that repeatedly smashes against my human façade until I yield or transform into whatever type of animal I have to become to finish. It can get raw.

As the “Captain” of the Chamois Butt’r Cycling Team, I get the privilege of helping other team members prepare for race/touring events, in particular the Dirty Kanza. Over the past 3-4 years as I have prepared for the DK and successfully finished it 3 times, I have developed a few “rules” to follow that I feel are the most critical in order to achieve success.

### **READ THE DK RIDERS BIBLE...TWICE!!!**

There is a lot of information and approaches to “giving advice” for the Dirty Kanza...equipment, clothing, food, training, nutrition, hydration, checkpoint management...etc etc etc... I just hope to give you a bit of information on how to manage your day(s) at the Dirty Kanza...and hopefully some of this advice will help you achieve success, as you define it.

**Define what your goal is:** To finish or to race it and win! For the most part of today, I am going to give you recommendations and talk toward the goal to FINISH the DK200.

**Curt’s DK Finishing Rule #1** – Do not go out too fast. It is very easy to get caught up in the early race excitement of 900 riders rolling down the main street in Emporia, KS, but don’t do it. Pedaling effort should be moderate, don’t get caught up in the early surges and reckless use of glycogen stores. Try to go up the hills with the same amount of effort as you exert on the flat. This will save a lot of “matches” for later.

**Curt’s DK Finishing Rule #2** – Drink a bottle of fluid per hour (more if it gets over 80 degrees). Hydration – electrolyte balance is super critical. I recommend using SaltStick Caps. 2 caps per hour, possibly more if it is hot. I like using the caffeine version in the last ½ of the event. Pickle juice(???)

**Curt’s DK Finishing Rule #3** – Eat something every 30-40 minutes. Gels and bars are fine but you have to eat some real food! Pizza and chicken fingers, bags of mixed fruit, boiled potatoes, boiled egg, peanut butter bagel, almonds, ensure, coke/pepsi.

**Curt’s DK Finishing Rule #4** –Control your speed on the down hills. I have been a gravel road rider for over 15 years, finished 3 DK’s and multiple other 100 mile gravel events, so I have seen a lot of flat tires. In my experience and observations, most of the time flat tires occur right after a fast downhill section. Slowing down reduces the risk of a flat from hitting a rock and either pinch flatting or cutting a tire.

**Curt’s DK Finishing Rule #5** – Know where you are on the map, do not just follow the riders in front of you. Unless you know where you are on the map...you are lost. This is a basic warning that is in the DK Rider’s Bible, is stated in the Rider’s meeting and is repeated over and over many times during the event. This year is going to be interesting, they are going to post the route prior to the event, so you can download it to your GPS device and use it the day of the event. Batteries die. This could really make a

difference in success or failure for you on the day, even with the GPS, and the route markers, I strongly encourage you to know where you are on the course map. Put the course map in a Ziploc bag and stuff it in a jersey pocket or mount it on your handle bars, or take a picture of it with your phone, but you can roll along, pull it out and just check that you are going the right direction.

#### Checklist – Required items

1. Cycling Computer – GPS will be allowed this year (see Curt's DK Finishing Rule #5 though)
2. Red taillight
3. Front light (save weight, put on a little light to start and have on, have your "real" lighting system available at the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> checkpoint if you calculate that you will not make it to the next checkpoint or finish before dark. Allow time for Murphy's Law to be applied.
4. Minimum of two liters of water or sports drink. Recommend either wearing a hydration system or at a minimum have one available at each checkpoint, so if it gets hot, you can pull it on for the next leg.
5. Two spare inner tubes-make sure you have extra ones at the Checkpoints in case you use 1-2.
6. Air pump or inflation system (Recommend you have CO2 AND a frame pump, patch kit and something to boot a tire with) Wrap a foot of Gorilla tape around a CO2 cartridge and have it available if/when you cut a tire.

#### Additional Supplies

1. Cell phone – put it in 2 plastic zip lock bags
2. GPS – know where you are on the map! Batteries die.
3. Small rucksack/hydration pack
4. Waterproof / windproof jacket
5. Extra thermal top or warm layer to wear if stopped
6. Emergency / survival blanket
7. Food – eat some REAL food – PIZZA!!!
8. Tire levers – duh
9. Puncture repair kit
10. Chain tool
11. Allen wrench set
12. Spoke wrench
13. First aid kit
14. Chamois Butt'r
15. Chain lube – T9 Boeshield
16. Cash, debit/credit card
17. Handlebar map case
18. Compass
19. Extra shifter cable – insert in seat post or in saddle bag. Put in new shifter cables (inner wires) 2-4 weeks before DK
20. Sunscreen – Solrx 8 hour sunscreen

Other considerations

Hills...do not spike your effort going up a hill...waste of glycogen.

If you are going faster than 20 mph...stop pedaling.

Drafting does help...work in a group, trade pulls, even if you have to go a little slower, use the power of a group...save your legs/energy/mind for later in the day. If you are in a group...do not, REPEAT...DO NOT pull faster than what everyone else is pulling...match their speed and length of pull. If you are in a group and they are pulling faster than you can...do not pull...if you are in the draft and it still feels too fast...back out of it and go at your own speed. Do not get caught into racing.

Eat some real food.

Tires. This is probably the single biggest question and it has probably has wasted more internet ink discussing the topic than any other subject on the DK!!!

First off, no matter what tires you decide to ride, make sure they are basically new at the start of the DK. 7-10 days worth of riding at the maximum.

Tube vs Tubeless – I am a big proponent of running tubeless, but they can be a bit tedious on the set up, unless they are tubeless specific (and there are not many, if any, viable tubeless specific tires for gravel/DK to my knowledge at this time). Risk of pinch flats are minimized, rolls easier, handles better, seals up sticker punctures, easier on your body, better traction.

You must however be comfortable with what you are running. You will be out on the prairie, very isolated and if you cannot fix a tire, you could be waiting for a long time.

My first DK I ran tubes. I knew I could fix them and knew what it would take...I understood them, so there was a lot of comfort in knowing I could handle pretty much any tire problem.

Plan to run at least a 700 x 35c tire. 700 x 40c is also a popular size.

Schwable Marathon Extremes

Clement USH

Clement MSO

Kenda Happy Mediums

Schwable Sammy Slicks

Managing checkpoints and food bags. Check points can be very uplifting...but they can also cost your energy if you push to hard and not have yourself organized. Charging into and out of a Checkpoint will be an unnecessary use of your energy stores. It also can be a bit of a challenge to manage your adrenalin, it is very exciting to see your “crew” everyone is cheering and trying to motivate you, so it can amp you up a bit too much and you go flying back out for the first 4-5 miles and then have an energy crash/let-down. So just remain calm, set your plan and follow it.

I manage my Checkpoints with this basic method. 1 gallon Zip Lock bags with a complete re-supply. Come into the check point, empty my pockets, grab the zip lock bag, refill my pockets, drop water

bottles, grab fresh ones. Replace any tubes/CO2 cartridges from my saddle bag, put on a little chain lube, check front and rear wheels to see if they are true, quick exam of the tires, look for cuts or bulges, if all is in order, make sure I have replaced my map with the next leg and head out. I ride easy for the first couple of miles, use this time to push in some extra calories and fluid. Then get back to the business of getting to the next Checkpoint.

Even if you AVERAGE 15mph...it will take you 13:20 minutes. You have to EAT forward, not for 2 hours, but for 6 or even 8 hours. Set a plan to eat and drink and stick as close to it as you can. If you get behind on energy/hydration, it is almost impossible to catch up.

Keep moving. Do not spend too much time in the Checkpoints, it is a long day and the longer you stay out the more time there is for something to happen.

Best of luck to you, I think you will have a great time at the DK, it is truly an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life.